

Policies for Home School Religious Education

The Church teaches that parents are the primary educators of their children, and that some parents choose to live out their role of primary educators by providing formal catechesis at home. The parish pastor/sacramental minister and his delegates also have the responsibility to provide catechetical instruction for the children. The rights and responsibilities of parents and pastors call for a true partnership between the two. Compliance to the following policies will enhance and safeguard that partnership.

1. After making the decision to catechize their children at home, parents are to meet with their pastor/sacramental minister and/or his delegate for assistance in developing a catechetical plan for their family.¹
2. Anyone assuming the role of catechist for children or youth is expected to use the catechetical materials and recommended texts that are found to be in doctrinal compliance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on the Catechism.
3. Parents are encouraged and invited to use the Diocesan Resource Center, located in the Catholic Pastoral Center, and their own parish resource libraries to supplement their catechetical efforts.²
4. Parents and their children are urged and welcome to participate in parish liturgies and/or other events prepared specifically for children or youth and their families.
5. Parents are expected to prepare for their role as catechist by participating in courses and workshops offered by their parish or by the Diocese.³
6. Parents are expected to meet with their pastor/sacramental minister and/or his delegate periodically to review the progress of their catechetical efforts.

¹ Canon # 774.2: Parents above others are obliged to form their children by word and example in faith and in the practice of Christian life; sponsors and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equal obligation.

Canon #776: By virtue of his function, a pastor is bound to take care of the catechetical formation of adults, youth and children...

² Canon #779: Catechetical instruction is to be given by using all helps, teaching aids, and instruments of social communication which seem more effective so that the faithful, in a manner adapted to their character, capabilities and age, and conditions of life, are able to learn Catholic doctrine more fully and put it into practice more suitably.

³ Canon #780: Local ordinaries are to take care that catechists are duly prepared to fulfill their function properly, namely, that continuing formation is made available to them, that they understand the doctrine of the Church appropriately, and that they learn in theory and in practice the methods proper to the teaching disciplines.

7. Because of the communal aspect of celebrating the Sacraments, children home schooled for religious education must participate in a parish process of preparation for the first reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion and for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in which children from the Catholic schools and catechetical ministry programs are united. They must participate in all of its communal dimensions (ritual, service, spiritual retreats, etc.) and any other requirements determined by the parish.⁴

⁴ Canon #777: Attentive to the norms established by the diocesan Bishop, a pastor is to take care in a special way:

1. that suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments;
2. that through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time children are prepared properly for the first reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion and for the sacrament of Confirmation;
3. that having received Holy Communion, these children are enriched more fully and deeply through catechetical formation;
4. that catechetical instruction is given also to those who are physically or mentally impeded, insofar as their condition permits;
5. that the faith of youth and adults is strengthened, enlightened, and developed through various means and endeavors.