



*Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope -
To thee do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve;
to thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping
in this valley of tears -
Turn then, most gracious Advocate,
thine eyes of mercy towards us, and
after this our exile, show unto us
the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus -
O clemant, O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary -*



ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH
GUIDE TO CATHOLIC HOME SCHOOL -
CHILDREN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
(CY 2024-2025)



Religious Education

August 1, 2024



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August 1, 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Greetings and blessings in the name of Our Risen Lord Jesus Christ!

Congratulations on your decision to take on the responsibility of Domestic Church by homeschooling your child(ren) on matters of the Catholic faith by way of their age-equivalent religious education.

Catholic parents decide to homeschool their children for various reasons: costs; personal interest in the prescribed curriculum; child safety; etc. Many other issues factor into the decision of whether to homeschool also. For many Catholic parents, teaching the faith to their children and taking a more active role in instilling them with moral values is the biggest reason for considering homeschooling.

One of the first things you will need to consider when deciding whether to homeschool is if you can commit to the lifestyle and schedule it requires. Catholic homeschooling must not be treated as a hobby. Instead, you need to be present to instruct your child in some capacity, even if you share that responsibility as part of a wider homeschooling community in your diocese, area or regional deanery of parishes. You will need to take into account how much time you and your child can commit to daily studying while considering other important activities, such as socializing with friends or participating in sports related programs.

In addition to the homeschooling of your child(ren), parents and children are still expected to actively participate in their parish's Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation liturgies and scheduled communal activities, because they are a vital part of our faith learning and spiritual journey.

If you have any questions, please free to contact me in the parish office at (719) 347-2290.

Sincerely
Yours in Christ,

Fr. Bob Newbury Jr.
Pastor

A Guide To Catholic Home Religious Education

Introduction

Catechesis refers to “the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ” (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, 1). Catechesis includes, but is not limited to, intentional faith instruction. It is “an education of children, young people, and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine” (*CT*, 18).

“Catechesis is the responsibility of the entire Christian community” (Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 220). The environment and means for catechetical activity varies and is realized in many communities: family, parish, Catholic Schools, Christian associations and movements and small faith communities where faith is initiated and continued throughout a person’s lifetime. Catechesis “is a fundamental ecclesial service, indispensable for the growth of the Church. It is not an action, which can be realized in the community on a private basis or by purely personal initiative. The ministry of catechesis acts in the name of the Church by its participating in the mission” (*GDC*, 219).

Foundational Catechetical Principles for Catholic Home Schooling

St. Pope John Paul II challenged us to a New Evangelization in which the family becomes a sign of Christ in the world and a privileged place of His presence and action. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) reminds us, the home “is therefore the first school of Christian life and a ‘school for human enrichment.’ Here one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life” (*CCC 1657*).

Parents are called to impart Christian values and to educate their children at home. “Parents receive in the sacrament of Matrimony ‘the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children,’ to whom they transmit and bear witness to human and religious values. This educational activity which is both human and religious is a ‘true ministry’” (*GDC*, 227).

Many Catholic families are responding to this call of renewal by teaching their children at home.

Catechesis in the Home

The Church recognizes that “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues” (CCC, 2223). In his 1994 *Letter to Families*, St. Pope John Paul II wrote: “Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators because they are parents” (16).

“The family catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.” This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council. “Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis; ‘the Church of the home’ remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis” (CT, 68).

The religious education of children by means of home schooling is a method of catechetical instruction and, while equal in content and goals, is different in structure from both Parish Religious Education and Catholic Parochial School Education. Parents who home school their children are able to gauge their lessons to each child’s strengths and weaknesses and are able to incorporate them throughout the day and “Take to heart these words, which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up” (*Deuteronomy 6:6-7*) (NABRE).

Among the variety of circumstances which might lead a family to choose home schooling in religious education are: parental separation and divorce; families with two parents who work; rural situations and transportation difficulties.

Two Specific Distinctions of Homeschooling with respect to Religious Education

When one speaks of homeschooling within a parish-level religious education context, it typically refers to one of two models:

One: The first model refers to a traditional homeschool family setting that involves the child/children receiving direct academic and religious instruction (catechetical formation) by their parents at home or through the assistance of an approved Catholic home school association. The parents in this situation choose to continue their child/children’s religious education formation at home, instead of participating in their parish’s religious education program.

Parents under this model need to communicate with their Pastor and their parish's Director or Coordinator of Religious Education about their desire to continue to teach the Catholic faith to their child(ren) at home. In light of the religious education program offered by the parish, it is required in good faith for them to provide a sample of their religious education curriculum to ensure it aligns with current Diocesan catechetical standards.

Generally, in collaboration with their home parish, the parents should [and may be mandated at their pastor's discretion] utilize the same catechetical instruction study book(s) and related materials that correspond to that concurrently being used in the parish's RE classroom for their child's equivalent grade level. This will help to ensure that the homeschooled child(ren) and those in the parish's equivalent RE classrooms are studying the same material – especially as they move forward toward later sacramental preparation classes.

Two: The second model refers to a homeschool family, who typically sends their child/children to a public school and chooses to homeschool their child in religious education. Instead of participating in their parish's religious education program.

Again, parents under this model need to communicate with their Pastor and the parish Director or Coordinator of Religious Education about their desire to continue to teach the Catholic faith to their children at home. Considering the religious education program offered by the parish, it is required in good faith, they provide a sample of their religious education curriculum to ensure it aligns with current Diocesan catechetical standards.

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Role of the Domestic Church

The [Roman Catholic Church] 1983 Code of Canon law echoes the Catechism of the Catholic Church in its assertion that parents have the primary responsibility to ensure the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teachings of the Church (Canon 226.2) and that parents have the most serious obligation and the primary right to do all in their power to ensure their child(ren) receive religious education (Canon 1136).

The first of these canons is found in the section of the Code addressing the duties and rights of the laity, and notes that the education of children is a grave obligation. The second is found in the section on the sacrament of Matrimony, in which are found the duties and rights that result from the matrimonial bond.

In other words, this phrase is intended to be an exhortation to parents not to evade or disregard their important duty as parents. Nowhere in either the catechism or the Code is it suggested that because parents are the primary educators of their children, this means that they must have absolute authority over every facet of the catechesis of their child(ren), to the exclusion of anyone else. Keep in mind that saying that parents are the *primary* educators implies indirectly that they are not the only educators!

Collaborative Efforts of Parents, the Church and the Parish

The Pastor of one's parish has a critical role in the catechesis of children in that jurisdiction. He has a duty to see to it that the children of his parish are properly prepared in both religious education and preparation for the reception of the sacraments (Canon 776).

Therefore, the roles of parents, pastors and the Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education should be viewed as complementary and collaborative. After all, they all should share the same concern for the spiritual formation and welfare of the parish's children (Canon 914).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in its "To Teach as Jesus Did" (52) states; "While it was relatively easy in more stable times for parents to educate their children and transmit their values to them, the immense complexity of today's society makes this a truly awesome task. Without forgetting, then, that parents are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them, the Christian community must make a generous effort today to help them fulfill their duty."

This point is made in light of the principle of subsidiarity, according to which "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good" (*CCC, 1883*).

The Church is obliged to support and assist parents in their responsibility to provide faith formation for their children, which traditionally has taken place in Parish Schools of Religious Education or the Catholic Parochial Schools.

The Church (at both the Diocesan and parish levels) should do everything possible to assist parents in this regard. The local church should assist parents in their responsibility to ensure faith formation for their children. Recognizing that the home is a worthy and viable place for the ministry of Catholic religious education, the Diocese and local church must affirm and support Catholic home schooling families.

“Encouragement must also be given to the individuals or institutions that, through person-to-person contacts, through meetings, and through all kinds of pedagogical means, help parents to perform their task. The service they are doing to catechesis is beyond price” (*CT*, 68).

The Role of the Teaching Church

While parents are the primary educators of their children, they are not the sole educators. The Church retains its authority and responsibility as Mother and Teacher. The Bishop is the chief catechist in a Diocese and “it is the responsibility of the diocesan Bishop to issue norms concerning catechesis and to make provision that suitable instruments for catechesis are available” (*Canon 775, 1*). The Code of Canon Law continues on to say that Pastors have the responsibility for sacramental preparation and all catechesis, so that the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living (*Summation, Canons 843 2, 773; 777*).

The Church places a high priority on the formal certification, instruction and formation of catechists for the service of catechesis. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states: “diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the formation of lay catechists” (234). Catechists need to be prepared and participate in continuing [religious] education (*Canon 780*). For these reasons, dioceses invite parents to avail themselves of various programs and courses offered through the diocese, which addresses formation in Catechesis, Sacred Scripture, doctrine, liturgy, methods, content and curriculum, the Catechumenate etc.

General Diocesan Guidelines

The Diocese of Colorado Springs and the Our Lady of the Visitation Catholic Church encourage and promote a partnership with families who choose to home school.

1. The Diocese of Colorado Springs considers Home Schooling in religious education as a viable option, along with Catholic parochial schools and the parish-level religious education program.
2. Home school families must be registered members of their local parish church and make the Pastor aware of their intent to home school.

3. The full name, address, date of birth and current grade level of each child being home schooled is to be submitted to the parish's Director or Coordinator of Religious Education in order to maintain appropriate and accurate records. (* The completion and submission of the parish's child/youth RE registration form satisfies this requirement.)
4. Each child from kindergarten through twelfth grade is to receive appropriate religious instruction of at least one hour per week, if not more.
5. Parents may use the parish's age/grade equivalent Catechetical textbook(s) or any other textbook on the USCCB's published list of approved resources (also known as the "Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series"). Parents are highly encouraged to use the educational series utilized by their parish's Religious Education Program, if/when possible. (* Any catechetical textbook(s) used for religious education home schooling (not including those used within the parish's RE classrooms or issued by the parent's/child's Catholic parish) shall be reviewed and approved, in advance of their usage for homeschooling, by the Pastor and the Director or Coordinator of Religious Education.
6. Parents may use supplemental texts and ancillary materials, if they have been reviewed and approved for studies by the Pastor and the Director or Coordinator of Religious Education to ensure they comply with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
7. Parents home schooling their children are encouraged to attend parish-level Catechists Religious Education In-Service programs when possible.
8. Parents home schooling their children are encouraged to seek assistance from the Pastor and the parish's Director or Coordinator of Religious Education when questions or needs arise.
9. Children, along with their parents, are expected to participate in their parish's scheduled Sabbath Masses and those on Holy Days of Obligation.
10. Each parish should provide home school families with a list of all catechetical, liturgical and pastoral activities available to them and their children.
11. A Catechetical assessment will be required of all and any child who is being homeschooled in religious education in order to gauge the students' catechetical development in preparation of/for the following catechetical year. This assessment typically involves use of Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the current religious education text and material used within the parish corresponding catechetical process. This assessment is to be conducted by the Pastor or the parish Director or Coordinator of Religious Education on a recurring basis (i.e., at least once a month) and the results documented for retention in their student file.

Sacramental Preparation Guidelines

One of the most important duties of the Pastor is to ensure that children are properly prepared for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation by means of catechetical formation given over an appropriate period of time (*Canon, 777*). The Pastor, Pastoral Administrator or and the Director or Coordinator of Religious Education of a parish shall have the responsibility of ensuring that the sacramental preparation of children is both adequate and in conformity with the teachings of the Catholic Church (Magisterium).

Per the long-standing practice and policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, child candidates for sacraments (First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation) must:

1. Have completed a full-year of child religious education program the prior year to receiving the desired sacrament;
2. Be currently enrolled and actively participating in the current child religious education program (for the second year); and
3. Be enrolled and participate in the desired sacrament's prescribed parish-level, instructional preparation classes and related activities (i.e., retreats, etc.).

Additionally, promulgated diocesan guidelines for the sacramental preparation and conferral of sacraments (published separate from this document) are to be followed.

Is it important to have a Catholic curriculum?

Yes, it is *extremely important* to have a Catholic curriculum in order to provide our children with a truly Catholic education, which will prepare them not only for this life but for eternal life as well. Only Catholic catechisms and religion texts will teach our children the Catholic faith properly. Catholic readers and literature provide inspiration while a child is acquiring reading skills.

Only Catholic history texts incorporate the lives of the saints and give the unique Catholic perspective on such events as the life of Christ, the Protestant Revolution, contributions of Catholics in America, etc. Even when a Catholic text is not available for a subject in a particular grade, one should always strive to incorporate Catholic materials and ideas. For example, one should incorporate the teachings of the Church on evolution when studying high school biology.

With home school education, you also now have the flexibility to attend daily Mass and attend Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, as it fits your schedule. Also, each day you can learn from the "lives of the saints". Remember heaven is our ultimate goal and desired destiny.

What about the study of Christian programs that are not Catholic?

Non-Catholic Christian programs are generally designed to instruct according to Protestant traditions and teachings. Some programs are at times decidedly anti-Catholic and openly attack Catholic doctrine. Additionally, Protestant programs often omit, intentionally distort or have a different understanding of many Catholic beliefs such as: the sacraments, the role of Mary and the Saints, salvation or justification, sacred scripture, the authority of the Pope and bishops, etc.

While reading such material(s) as an adult, may help one to become better educated about other faith denominations and improve our appreciation of our faith practices, the Catholic Church and its rich history and traditions, etc., reading such materials at a much earlier age of spiritual development may cause undue or unnecessary confusion, etc.

What about secular texts?

Modern secular texts, either as a result of omission or by direct indoctrination, generally promote materialism and humanism. Catholic education should integrate a clear Catholic perspective throughout the curriculum. Just as we would never knowingly teach incorrect math or science facts, so why would we knowingly distort reality for our children by omitting God and His Church from life? Or, teach incorrect information regarding the Church and our Catholic faith?

Conversely, using Catholic materials helps our children to see the faith as part of our daily life. Most importantly, Catholic texts and programs help parents and older students learn to evaluate the classical, secular works of literature, history etc. in the light of Catholic teaching. All of the content of our curriculum and our daily life should be evaluated from a Catholic perspective.

ATTACHMENTS

1. List of Important Catechetical Documents
2. Diocese of Colorado Springs Policies for Home School Religious Education
3. Diocese of Colorado Springs Essential Curriculum Expectations for Religious Education.
4. List of Approved Children’s Religious Education Textbooks/Resources (by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Diocese of Colorado Springs)

REFERENCES

[Roman Catholic Church] Code of Canon Law, Vatican City, January 25, 1983.

Diocese of Colorado Springs, Policies for Home School Religious Education, undated.

Diocese of Colorado Springs, Essential Curriculum Expectations for Religion Education (listed by individual class grades), undated.

Diocese of Ft Worth, TX, Homeschool Catechetical Guidelines for Parish Religious Education, undated.

ATTACHMENT #1

List of Important Catechetical Documents (Key Catechetical documents of the Catholic Church appropriate for the ministry of Catechesis)

BT	Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1973.
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church Libreria Vaticana Editrice, 2000. (2nd Ed.)
CE	Declaration of Christian Education Vatican II, 1965.
CT	Catechesi Tradendae Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, 1979.
DV	Dei Verbum (On Sacred Scripture) Vatican II, 1965
EN	On Evangelization in the Modern World Pope Paul VI, 1975.
EV	The Gospel of Life Pope John Paul II, 1995.
GCD	The General Catechetical Directory Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, 1971
GDC	The General Directory for Catechesis Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, 1997
GDCM	Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials USCC, Publication 419-8, November 21, 1990.
GMD	Go and Make Disciples: National Catechetical Directory National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1979
NABRE	New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), March 2011.
NDC	National Directory for Catechesis: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006
RCIA	Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults USCC, 1988
ST	The Splendor of Truth (Veritatis Splendor) Pope John Paul II, August 5, 1993
TJD	To Teach As Jesus Did National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCC, 1972.
TCCC	The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, Morgan, Willey, Coinet, Ignatius Press, 2008

ATTACHMENT #2

Diocese of Colorado Springs
Policies for Home School Religious Education

(PUBLISHED AS A SEPARATE DOCUMENT;
AVAILABLE FROM THE PASTOR)

ATTACHMENT #3

Diocese of Colorado Springs
Essential Curriculum Expectations for Religious Education
(listed by R.E. class grade)

(PUBLISHED AS A SEPARATE DOCUMENT;
AVAILABLE FROM THE PASTOR)

ATTACHMENT #4

List of Approved Children's Religious Education Textbooks/Resources

(by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
and the Diocese of Colorado Springs)

(PUBLISHED AS A SEPARATE DOCUMENT;
AVAILABLE FROM THE PASTOR)