

## Home-based Catechetical Model for Individual Families

Department of Catechetical Services, Diocese of Dallas

Last updated: 6/8/2015

The home-based catechetical model is an alternative for those families who cannot participate in the primary parish formation program or who choose to provide catechesis for their children at home. It is the parents' responsibility to notify the pastor or his designee (e.g., parish catechetical leader) in a timely manner of their intent to provide home study in catechesis for their children. Canons 773, 774 §1 and §2 state that the faith formation of children is the responsibility of the parents, pastors, and the parish community. These guidelines are based on the *National Directory for Catechesis* (USCCB 2005, with the subsequent *recognitio* of the Holy See, n. 61.A.3 Home-based catechesis).

- A. Parents, faith formation staff and pastors will work collaboratively to plan for an effective program for the children.
- Faith formation programming for children and youth is the responsibility of the parish catechetical leadership; if parents choose to home school their children, it is understood that their efforts do not take place independently of the parish.
  - Parents who choose the home-based catechetical model are referred to as home-based catechists. "They are part of the parish's total catechetical effort and should be welcomed in all parish catechetical program activities. Pastors in collaboration with parish catechetical leaders should provide the support, encouragement, and direction that parents need in order to ensure that they teach their children what the Church intends to be taught" (NDC 2005, n. 61.A.3). The parish will inform parents of any guidelines set by the pastor and the parish faith formation staff, including the catechetical formation requirements for parents who act as catechists (Canon Law Society of America 1998, c. 780).
  - Parents will register their child(ren) for home study through the parish's faith formation office.
  - Parents who participate in this catechetical model should be commissioned as catechists during the parish's commissioning rite of catechists.
  - Under no circumstances should a catechist teach children other than their own children in a home setting, unless in a parish-approved formation program (e.g., family clusters catechetical model approved by the parish), nor should priests be recruited from other countries to celebrate the sacraments without first obtaining approval by the Bishop's Office. Parishes should periodically have notices in the bulletin advising parents

that the parish has faith formation, and parents should work with the parish on faith formation or catechetical options for their family.

- B. Home-based catechists will follow approved diocesan curriculum standards and the parish catechetical texts or series which the Subcommittee of the Catechism of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has judged to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>1</sup> Sacramental preparation materials are not to be used in isolation but in conjunction with the catechetical texts used by the parish for systematic age-appropriate catechesis.
- C. The home-based catechetical model is not an isolated form of faith formation and requires full participation in the life of the local parish “since the children are being initiated into the life of the church which is fundamentally realized in the local parish” (USCCB 2005, no. 61.A.3). The parish community serves as the living curriculum for engaging our children and youth—sacramentally, developmentally, liturgically, spiritually—and reinforces Catholic values, creating living witnesses to the Gospel.
- Home-based catechists are encouraged to participate in Sunday Eucharist and other experiences of prayer, learning and service that build community and Christian life.
  - Parents and children in home-based catechetical programs are expected to be a part of the total sacramental preparation experience in the parish, which includes retreats, days of reflection, parent or family gatherings, and other communal activities. Additionally, children will celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation on days designated by the parish.
- D. The parish will provide the home-based catechists with all the resources necessary to present a comprehensive, systematic, and age-appropriate process of faith formation. This includes a program facilitator who will provide written expectations, periodically dialogue with the home-based catechists and serve as a resource; children’s textbooks; a catechist manual or comparable material; and the orientation and training needed to be an effective catechist.
- Home-based catechists should be encouraged to engage in adult faith formation opportunities such as catechetical courses, retreats or days of reflection offered by the parish, other parishes, the Diocese, the University of Dallas or the University of Dayton Virtual Learning Program.
  - Home-based catechists should be aware of Safe Environment policies and abide by them. They should also impart the *Virtus* training, the anti-victimization program for

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>

children, or an alternate program being offered by the parish in compliance with the Safe Environment policies.

- The parish will provide home-based catechists with parish expectations for sacrament reception including, but not limited to: readiness, rehearsals, submission of required baptismal records, retreats, and rites. Children in the home-based catechetical model will abide by the designated policies for celebration of sacrament as expressed and approved by the bishop. It is recommended that clear policies and procedures by the parish be given to parents in writing.

The Department of Catechetical Services recommends that the pastor and catechetical leaders at each parish establish local policies concerning choice of materials to be used, required catechist training, fees and any other required expectations for those families opting to use this catechetical model.