

GENERAL

200 Parishes shall provide for the catechetical formation of adults, young people and children (see Code of Canon Law, Canons 773, 776, 777), through systematic formal catechesis of sufficient length and intensity to ensure effective faith and sacramental formation at each level. Parish catechetical programs should include the formation of persons of particular ethnic or cultural groups and persons with disabilities.

Guidelines for Implementation:

- *The catechetical instruction for elementary students should follow the Diocesan Guidelines for Catechetical Curriculum, Grades One through Eight, provided by the Office for Catechetical Ministry.*

201 Since the pastor has the obligation to know of the parents' intention to home school their children, parents must notify the pastor early in the process. Parents are required to follow the guidelines set by the pastor and must register their child/young person with the parish Director of Catechetical Ministry or Coordinator.

Guidelines for Implementation

- *The religious education of children and youth is the responsibility of parents, pastors and the local parish community. Canon Law (773, 774 §1 and 2) supports this direction. Therefore it is the obligation of parish leadership to provide religious education programming for children/young people. In situations where some families choose to "home school" their children, it must be understood that these efforts cannot be done independently of the parish.*
- *The primary responsibility of parents for the education and formation of their children in the Faith cannot be interpreted in an isolated way, since the family is an integral part of the larger ecclesial community. All religious education must be carried out in a way that builds unity within the Church. No home schooling can be tolerated which does not promote the understanding that being a Christian is not a private matter of individual choice but rather of a personal vocation within the context of the Church lived out in the experience of the parish community.*
- *Home schooling parents are responsible for the participation of their children/young person in the immediate sacramental preparation as required or approved by the parish, through interviews for sacramental readiness, practice for sacramental celebrations, appropriate initiation rites and retreats.*

- *Home schooling parents must participate in parish parent meetings and parent preparation programs for the sacraments.*
- *Parents have the responsibility to participate in catechetical formation so that they will be able to prepare their child/young person for the sacraments, in collaboration with the parish community. This is supported by Canon Law (780).*
- *With regard to the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation parents must ensure that their children/young people are correctly prepared and connected to the local parish.*
- *The pastor and DCM will require a periodic progress report to be made by home school parents. A form should be developed by the parish to assist in this reporting. Children/young people must be interviewed by the Pastor, DCM or designated representative to determine their understanding of and readiness for the reception of the Sacraments.*
- *Since the passing on of the faith tradition is the responsibility of the whole parish community; pastors, parents and DCM's must collaborate to insure that the children/young people are appropriately catechized and prepared for the reception of the sacraments. As parishioners, families are expected to participate in the parish Sunday liturgy.*
- *The rights of children and young people to catechetical formation can best be served when pastors, parents and catechists offer formation appropriate to the level, development and disposition of the young person.*
- *The parish DCM should serve as a resource to parents. Recommended textbooks and other appropriate materials must be used in all sessions. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the General Directory for Catechesis are excellent resources for parents and catechists.*

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION: FIRST PENANCE AND EUCHARIST

210 Children who have reached the age of reason have the right to receive First Penance/Reconciliation and First Communion as stated in Canon 913.1:

"For the administration of the Most Holy Eucharist to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity, and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion."

Preparation programs for the reception of the sacraments of First Penance and First Eucharist shall be two years in length.

Guidelines for Implementation:

- *Those responsible for parish sacramental preparation programs should arrange for parents to be involved in the preparation of children.*

211 Catechesis for the Sacrament of Penance is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation. This is to be done so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent and so that, before receiving First Communion, the child will be familiar with the revised Rite of Reconciliation and will be at ease with its celebration. The Sacrament of Penance normally should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Communion.

Canon 914 clearly expresses that First Penance/Reconciliation, in a normative way, is to precede First Communion:

"It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents as well as of the pastor to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession; it is also for the pastor to be vigilant lest any children come to the Holy Banquet who have not reached the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed."

212 Catechesis of children for Reconciliation must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of individuals. (see *NCD #126*) It should seek:

1. to make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life;
2. to help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong doing and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church;
3. to encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving;
4. to encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

Guidelines for Implementation:

- *There are additional diocesan guidelines for implementation of First Penance and First Eucharist Policies.*

[See Attachment 212a.]

213 No age or grade is set for reception of the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation by persons who are developmentally disabled.

214 No age or grade is set for first reception of the Eucharist by persons who are developmentally disabled. Any person with developmental disabilities may be admitted to the Eucharist if, after sufficient preparation, he or she:

1. has some understanding of the person of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection;
2. is able to distinguish between the Eucharist and ordinary bread;
3. shows some desire to receive the Eucharist.

Such a person may need the help of others to demonstrate the above.

If, following catechesis, there is a question whether the above conditions are met, the person with developmental disabilities may be admitted to the Eucharist with the consent of the pastor, parent and catechist.

Guidelines for Implementation:

- *Judgment of readiness should balance reverence for the sacraments with each person's need and right to the benefits of the sacraments.*
- *In case of doubt whether the conditions for reception are met, the presumption of readiness should be in favor of the recipient of the sacraments in question, with pastor, parents and catechist consenting.*
- *Persons with disabilities should be provided the necessary adaptations and supports from others regarding preparation for the sacraments of Penance/ Eucharist, and so that they may actively and meaningfully participate in sacramental celebrations.*

CATECHETICAL MINISTRY PERSONNEL

220 Each parish shall engage sufficiently trained ministers (hired and/or volunteer) to ensure that parish catechetical needs are met.

Guidelines for Implementation:

- *Parishes with less than 300 supporting families should hire or appoint a competent coordinator, responsible, under supervision of the pastor, for organizing and implementing parish catechetical programs.*

- *Parishes of 300 or more supporting families should hire a qualified Director of Catechetical Ministry and, in parishes of 500 or more families, this person should be full time.*
- *The parish Director of Catechetical Ministry should ordinarily be the professional staff person responsible for the coordination and administration of the total religious education program of the parish under the supervision of the pastor. This person may be assisted by other staff persons responsible for one or more specific areas of parish catechesis.*

FORMATION, CERTIFICATION AND RENEWAL OF CATECHETICAL MINISTRY PERSONNEL

230 All active catechists and teachers of religion shall be certified or in the process of certification through the California Catechist Certification programs offered by the diocese. All certification is issued for three years, renewable.

1. Parish catechists and parochial school catechists, including all catechists of adolescents and catechists for Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age, shall obtain California Catechist Certification by completing one of the following:
 - a) the Basic Catechist Formation Course offered through the diocese;
 - b) the certification courses (totalling 45 hours) offered through the San Diego Diocesan Institute for Adult Education and Ministry Formation; or
 - c) those specific courses or workshops, identified by means of an individual catechist profile evaluation which remain necessary for certification.
2. Parochial school teachers shall have two years from the commencement of their service as religion teachers to complete catechist certification.

[See *Schools Administrative Handbook*.]

3. Catechists for preschool, special religious education and infant baptism programs shall be certified by completing the appropriate diocesan specialization course.

231 All catechists and teachers of religion shall renew their certification every three years. They must obtain the required number of clock hours or units of credit before the expiration date of their certification.

1. Renewal of certification for parochial school teachers of religion is earned by completing one of the following:
 - a) an approved 45 hour (3 units) course in Scripture or Theology;

- b) an approved 30 hours (2 units) course in Scripture or Theology and 15 hours (1 unit) of diocesan sponsored workshops, seminars or courses explicitly designated for certification renewal credit; or
 - c) two approved 15 hour (1 unit each) courses in Scripture or Theology and 15 hours (1 unit) of diocesan sponsored or approved Theology, Scripture or catechetical institutes, workshops, seminars or courses explicitly designated for certification renewal credit.
2. Renewal of certification for parish catechists is earned by completing 30 clock hours of diocesan designated or approved courses.

Note: In-service conducted at the local parish level, though valued for enriching catechists, does not ordinarily qualify for renewal credit. A description of in-service courses at the local level may be submitted to the Office for Catechetical Ministry in order to be approved for certification renewal credit for parish catechists.

232 Master Catechist candidates shall obtain California Master Catechist Certification by completing the diocesan Master Catechist Certification Course. Master Catechist Certification is granted for three years and is renewed on the basis of the following components of ongoing formation:

- 1. participation in group opportunities for spiritual formation and community experience;
- 2. completion of 45 clock hours of course work and/or workshops in accord with individual need and approved by the Diocesan Office for Catechetical Ministry;
- 3. evaluation by the Diocesan Office for Catechetical Ministry of their performance in teaching the Basic Catechist Formation Course.

MISCELLANEOUS

240 Permanent records of staffing and attendance for parish catechetical programs are to be maintained. They are the property of the parish.