

CATECHETICAL PROGRAMS IN PARISHES

POLICY

Each parish is to organize catechetical programming to address the faith needs of the total parish community (Canon 773). Catechesis is understood to be lifelong, ongoing and developmentally appropriate (Canon 777; NDC 19 & 48).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The parish, either directly or in cooperation with another parish or parishes, offers appropriate catechesis to families, children, adolescents, young adults, adults, including persons with disabilities.
2. The parish affirms and reflects within the catechetical process the cultural, ethnic and familial diversity present within the faith community.
3. The parish seeks out and invites families, adults, adolescents, and children lacking catechetical formation and sacramental catechesis to attend parish programs.
4. Each parish develops a budget which provides adequate financial support, use of parish facilities and proportionate resources in order to conduct catechetical programming that addresses the faith needs of the total parish community.
5. The parish does not deny participation in catechetical programming, including sacramental catechesis, to anyone unable to pay the fee or tuition requested by the parish. The pastor makes the final determination on matters of financial support.
6. Parish leadership conducts an evaluation process as part of the annual assessment of every catechetical program.

PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

POLICY

The Pastor in providing catechetical programs for families, adults, young adults, adolescents and children ordinarily appoints a person or persons to share the responsibility for catechetical ministry (Canon 776).

All parish-level ministry leaders are to obtain, as a minimum, Diocesan Catechetical Certification (50 hours of formation) within two years of their employment/appointment in that position. It is recommended that all applicants for these positions have this level of certification prior to formally applying for the position.

Within five years of their employment, all parish-level ministry leaders in the diocese are to have Advanced Catechetical Certification

It is the expectation that professional (i.e., non-volunteer) Parish Catechetical Leaders and RCIA team leaders are working toward Master Catechist status.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The person or persons named by the Pastor as Parish Catechetical Leader, (e.g., Coordinator of Religious Education) shall be Catholic and in full membership/communion with the Church.
2. It is recommended that the person appointed by the Pastor as the Parish Catechetical Leader has attained, at a minimum, a Diocesan Catechetical Certification prior to appointment. The person appointed by the Pastor as the Parish Catechetical Leader who has not attained a Diocesan level Certification, must agree to work toward full certification.
3. Certification is to be renewed every three years (Master Catechist, every five years). (See "Echoing the Gospel: Catechist Formation and Certification" Diocese of Grand Rapids).
4. The person or persons appointed by the Pastor to be responsible for catechetical programs are to maintain a file containing their current level of certification and credentials.
5. The person or persons appointed by the Pastor to be responsible for catechetical programs are to: recruit and select catechists, who are Catholic and in full membership/communion with the Church, subject to the approval of the pastor. Catechists are to be certified or working toward certification. Certification records are to be maintained for each catechist. In-service opportunities and educational enrichment are to be provided for all catechists.
6. Other responsibilities of the Parish Catechetical Leader include: the development of the catechetical curriculum; catechesis for the celebrations of First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation; selection of the catechetical texts approved by the USCCB; preparation and administration of the Religious Education section of the parish budget with the approval of the Pastor; and the evaluation of the parish catechetical programming.

7. In parishes where a Catholic school exists, the Parish Catechetical Leader and the Principal, under the guidance of the Pastor, shall collaborate regarding: the catechetical curriculum; religion textbook selection; sacramental catechesis; ongoing catechetical formation and catechist certification of the faculty. While the catechetical program is a collaborative effort, the Principal has the educational and administrative responsibility for the catechetical and religious education program in the school.

**PARISH YOUTH MINISTRY LEADERSHIP
CERTIFICATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES
IN RELATION TO THE PARISH CATECHETICAL MINISTRY**

POLICY

The Pastor in providing formation for middle and high school age youth ordinarily appoints a person or persons to share the responsibility for youth ministry in the parish. Youth ministry is understood as a pastoral ministry of the parish, comprehensive in scope, executed in a variety of program components which includes specific catechetical programming for adolescents. "Within their comprehensive responsibilities, parish youth ministry leaders have specific catechetical responsibilities to be fulfilled in collaboration with pastors and parish catechetical leaders" (NDC 54).

All parish-level ministry leaders are to obtain, as a minimum, Diocesan Catechetical Certification (50 hours of formation) within two years of their employment/appointment in that position. It is recommended that all applicants for these positions have this level of certification prior to formally applying for the position.

Within five years of their employment, all parish-level ministry leaders in the diocese are to have Advanced Catechetical Certification.

It is the expectation that professional (i.e., non-volunteer) Parish Youth Ministry Leaders are working toward Master Catechist status.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The person or persons named by the Pastor as Parish Youth Ministry Leader, (e.g., Youth Ministry Coordinator) shall be Catholic and in full membership/communion with the Church.
2. It is recommended that the person appointed by the Pastor as the Parish Youth Ministry Leader has attained, at a minimum, a Diocesan Catechetical Certification prior to appointment. The person appointed by the Pastor to be responsible for the parish youth ministry who has not attained a Diocesan Catechetical Certification, must agree to work toward full certification within two years of their appointment.
3. Certification is to be renewed every three years (Master Catechist, every five years). (See "Echoing the Gospel: Catechist Formation and Certification" Diocese of Grand Rapids).
4. Completion of the Youth Ministry Seminar Series offered by the diocese is recognized as equivalent to Advanced Catechetical Certification.
5. The person or persons appointed by the Pastor to be responsible for the parish youth ministry are to maintain a file containing their current level of certification and credentials.
6. The person or persons appointed by the Pastor to be responsible for youth ministry are to: recruit and select adult program leaders, who are Catholic and in full membership/communion with the Church, subject to the approval of the pastor. Those adult program

leaders responsible for the faith formation of young people are to be certified or working toward certification. Certification records are to be maintained for each. In-service opportunities and educational enrichment are to be provided.

7. If in the scope of their responsibilities the Parish Youth Ministry Leader coordinates specific catechetical programming (i.e., Confirmation or Middle School Religious Education), the Parish Youth Ministry Leader collaborates with the Parish Catechetical Leader under the guidance of the Pastor in the development of catechetical programming for middle and high school age youth.

CATECHETICAL AND YOUTH MINISTRY PERSONNEL IN PARISHES JOB DESCRIPTION

POLICY

The Pastor, who is the hiring agent, must provide a written job description to the person or persons responsible for the catechetical ministry and/or youth ministry in a parish, full or part-time.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The job description shall be reviewed and discussed annually by the Pastor and the person or persons appointed for the catechetical ministry and/or youth ministry. The job description is to be kept on file by the Pastor or his designate.
2. It is recommended that the Pastor conduct an annual performance appraisal based on the job description of the person or persons employed as responsible for the catechetical ministry and/or youth ministry.
3. The annual review of salary compensation for those employed as responsible for the catechetical ministry and/or youth ministry includes consideration of the suggested Scales for Compensation approved by the Diocese of Grand Rapids and the parish budget.
4. While a Pastor may seek advice from persons who serve on appropriate parish consultative structures, as well as the diocesan Office of Faith Formation/Family, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, the hiring, renewal and termination of parish catechetical ministry and/or youth ministry personnel is the responsibility of the Pastor.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLTEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION

POLICY

Every principal and teacher in a Catholic school will be certified or in the process of obtaining certification by the Office of Faith Formation of the Diocese of Grand Rapids (Canons 804, 805).

All teachers teaching in a Catholic School in the diocese are to obtain Diocesan Certification within 2 years of their employment with Catholic Schools. They are expected to renew their certification every three years as well as work toward Advanced Certification (80 formation hours). Catholic high school religion teachers are required to have a Master Catechist level of certification.

All principals of Catholic Schools in the diocese are to obtain Advanced Catechetical Certification within five years of their employment.

IMPLEMENTATION

TEACHERS IN CATHOLIC GRADE SCHOOLS

1. Every teacher, employed in a Catholic school, will be certified, at a minimum, having Diocesan Certification. This must be renewed in three years with 5 hours of formation needed for each of three years.
2. It is the responsibility of each teacher to keep updated in their certification.
3. It is recommended that teachers work toward Advanced Certification as well as Master Catechist.

RELIGION TEACHERS IN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

1. Catholic high school religion teachers are required to have a Master Catechist level of certification. This must be renewed in five years with 5 hours of formation needed for each of five years.
2. It is the responsibility of each teacher to keep updated in their certification.

PRINCIPALS IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1. All principals of Catholic Schools in the diocese will have, at minimum, an Advanced Catechetical Certification. Advanced Certification must be renewed in three years, with five hours of formation needed for each of the three years.
2. It is the responsibility of each principal to keep updated in their certification.

CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ALLOTMENT IN PARISHES AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

POLICY

Parishes and Catholic schools integrate into catechetical programs the proclamation of Christ's message, the nurturing of community, opportunities for participation in worship and prayer, and the motivation for service - all of which includes a certain minimum amount of time allotted to a systematic study of the Catholic Faith.

Parish Catechetical Programs, K-8

Parish Catechetical programs for children and youth in grades K-8 are based on a minimum of 30 weeks per year and/or a minimum of 30 clock hours of instruction per year.

Parish Catechetical Programs, 9-12

Parish Catechetical programs for high school youth are based on a minimum of 30 clock hours of instruction per year.

While the same instructional time allotted for a systematic study of the Catholic Faith, in terms of clock hours applies to elementary, middle school, and high school catechetical programs in the parish setting, this may vary in programming for high school age youth due to the *format* of some programs which integrate the catechetical component into youth ministry and, therefore, meet less frequently or for longer periods of time.

Catholic Schools, K-8

Catechetical instruction in Catholic Schools is based on a minimum of

Grades 1-3: 150 minutes per week

Grades 4-8: 200 minutes per week

Catholic Schools, 9-12

A student is required to take a Religion course each semester while attending a Catholic High school. Catechetical instruction in Catholic Secondary Schools is based on a minimum of 250 minutes per week.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Part of the time allotted for catechetical instruction may include liturgical celebrations, prayer services, and field trip experiences.
2. Bible study programs are encouraged as an additional means of bringing catechetical instruction to participants in the parish or Catholic school program.
3. The person or persons responsible for the catechetical instruction and/or youth ministry are to prepare an annual calendar containing the schedule of the program and related activities.
4. Michigan State Law provides up to 120 minutes per week of released-time for religious instruction. The use of released-time is encouraged in those circumstances where it is feasible.

CATECHETICAL TEXTBOOKS IN PARISHES AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

POLICY

Textbooks for catechetical programs for elementary age students, middle school and high school age youth in parishes and Catholic schools will be selected from the “Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series” approved by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The selection of catechetical textbooks for use in the parish and Catholic school is the collaborative responsibility of the Parish Catechetical Leader and the Principal under the guidance of the Pastor.
2. In regional or private Catholic elementary schools the responsibility for the selection of catechetical textbooks is the responsibility of the Principal in consultation with the Pastor(s).
3. In regional, private, inter-parish, or parish Catholic high schools, the selection of catechetical textbooks is the responsibility of the Religion Department Chairperson with the approval of the Principal.
4. Resources and textbooks not listed on the “Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series” may be used as a supplement to the approved textbook in use for catechetical programming in effort to fully learn and put into practice the object of a lesson. Textbooks that are being used as a supplement to the primary approved textbook, but are not listed on the “Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series” must have an imprimatur.
5. The staff of the Diocesan Office for Faith Formation, including the Office for Family, Youth and Young Adults, are available to assist parishes and Catholic schools in the selection of approved catechetical textbooks.

CATECHESIS FOR THE FIRST CELEBRATION AND RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

POLICY

Children are to be properly catechized for the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to First Eucharist (Canon 777.2). The Sacrament of Reconciliation is received prior to the celebration and first reception of Eucharist (Canon 914). Any variation of this norm occurs on an individual basis and after deliberate consultation between the Pastor and individual parent(s).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Catechesis for the celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation includes instruction in the symbols and parts of the sacrament that lead the children to an active participation in the celebration that respects the integrity of the Sacrament.
2. The parish offers catechesis to parents who have children preparing for the celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parental catechesis assists parents in fulfilling their primary role for nurturing the faith of their children.
3. The Pastor determines whether a child is sufficiently prepared and has the right intention for the celebration and reception of First Reconciliation. The first celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not to be denied to any child because of the lack of parental involvement.
4. A parent(s) who requests a catechetical preparation for his or her child for the first celebration and reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation that is different from the parish program is to seek consultation from the appropriate personnel and at the approval of the Pastor.
5. The parish provides ongoing catechetical formation after the first celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
6. Regular opportunities for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and penitential services are provided for children and youth.
7. Parents who are engaged in home schooling their children are to work together with the pastor or his delegate in developing an appropriate program of catechesis for their children using the approved texts from the "Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series" of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).
8. The parents and children enrolled in home schooling will participate in the immediate preparation program in the parish (including all parent meetings). The readiness of the child(ren) for the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be mutually determined by the home catechist and pastor or his designee (Canon 843.2).

CATECHESIS FOR THE FIRST CELEBRATION AND RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

POLICY

Children who have reached the age of the use of reason are to be properly prepared for the celebration and first reception of Eucharist, having already received the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Canon 777.2). Preparation shall include developmental instruction according to age level in order to lead children to an understanding of the Church's teachings about the mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. In this way children will be able to receive the Lord in the Eucharist with faith and devotion and actively participate in the Eucharist celebration

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Catechesis for the celebration and reception for First Eucharist includes instruction in the symbols and parts of the Mass that lead the children to an active participation in the Eucharist celebration.
2. The Parish offers catechesis to parents who have children preparing for the celebration and reception of First Eucharist. Parental catechesis assists parents in fulfilling their primary role for nurturing the faith of their children.
3. The Pastor and/or delegate determine whether a child has been sufficiently prepared and has the right intention for the celebration and reception of First Eucharist. A child who has been properly catechized is not to be denied the reception of First Eucharist solely because of the lack of parental involvement.
4. Catechesis for the celebration and reception of First Eucharist is to be distinct from the catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
5. At the parish celebration of the First Eucharist there is no distinction made between those who attend the catechetical program in the parish and those who attend the catechetical program in the Catholic school.
6. A parent(s) who requests catechetical preparation for his or her child for First Eucharist that is different from the Parish program is to seek consultation from the appropriate personnel and approval of the Pastor.
7. Parishes which have children of catechetical age who are preparing for the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist follow the norms outlined in The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Children) (Pt. 11.1), Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, 1988 (Canon 852).
8. Since the Sacrament of the Eucharist is an integral part of the initiation process, verification of the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism is to be obtained and a record of First Eucharist is to be kept in the parish of reception.

9. Parents who are engaged in home schooling their children are to work together with the pastor or his delegate in developing an appropriate program of catechesis for their children using one of the approved texts from the “Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series” of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).
10. The parents and children enrolled in home schooling will participate in the immediate reparation program in the parish (including all parent meetings and rehearsals). The readiness of the child(ren) for the reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist will be mutually determined by the home catechist and pastor or his designee (Canon 843.2).

CATECHESIS FOR THE CELEBRATION AND RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

POLICY

Individuals who have already received the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are to be properly prepared for the celebration of Confirmation (Canon 777.2). After completing a program of catechetical preparation and with the approval of the pastor, candidates may celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Sacrament will be received while in the eighth grade and no later than the fall of the ninth grade (between the ages of 13 and 15).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. The age for Confirmation in the Diocese of Grand Rapids is based on a faith development model of catechesis (NDC, 48, 48d). It is incumbent on each parish to provide developmentally appropriate catechesis in preparation for the reception of this sacrament.
2. Normally the Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated annually (fall and spring) in the Cathedral of Saint Andrew according to the procedures established by the Office of the Bishop.
3. High School age students who have not celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation and have been properly prepared are to be included in the celebration of this sacrament at the Cathedral of St. Andrew. When this is not possible, he or she, after appropriate catechesis, is to be invited to participate in the rite during the Easter Vigil Mass at the parish.
4. Non-baptized persons of catechetical age who are preparing for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, for reception into full communion with the Catholic Church, or who were baptized Catholics as infants but received no catechetical formation and lack preparation for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist, are to follow the norms as stated in The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, (Pt. 11.1 "Rites for Particular Circumstances"), Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, USCCB, 1988.
5. The Parish offers catechesis to parents who have children preparing for the celebration and reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Parental catechesis shall assist parents in fulfilling their primary role for nurturing the faith of their children. The catechesis for Confirmation preparation includes sponsor involvement when feasible.
6. The Pastor and/or his delegate determine whether the candidate is sufficiently prepared and has the right intention for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Sacrament of Confirmation is not to be denied to any properly catechized young person solely because of the lack of parental involvement.
7. A parent(s) who requests catechetical preparation for his or her child for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation that is different from the parish program is to seek consultation and the approval of the Pastor.

8. Since the Sacrament of Confirmation is an integral part of the initiation process, verification of the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism is obtained and a record of the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is kept in both the parish of reception and the parish of Baptism.
9. Parents who are engaged in home schooling their children are to work together with the pastor or his delegate in developing an appropriate program of catechesis for their children, especially those designed for the preparation for the reception of the sacraments. They will use one of the texts approved by the USCCB.
10. The parents and children enrolled in home schooling will participate in the immediate preparation program in the parish (including all parent meetings). The readiness of the child(ren) for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be mutually determined by the home catechist and pastor or his designee. (Canons 843.2, 890)

CATECHESIS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

POLICY

Each parish will provide catechetical formation for persons who have disabilities. Catechetical formation is experienced in as inclusive an environment as possible (Canon 777).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Catechesis for persons with disabilities follows the recommendation that “Great care should be taken to avoid further isolation of people with disabilities through these programs (special religious education) which, as far as possible, should be integrated with the normal catechetical activities of the parish.” Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities, USCCB, Revised.
2. The Parish Catechetical Leader, in cooperation with the parents and appropriate consultants, is to assess the child’s/youths’ strengths and needs in order to establish the appropriate catechetical experiences.
3. Catechists working with persons who have disabilities will acquire, during their catechist formation, the understanding and skills necessary for their ministry.
4. Children/Youth with disabilities are to be included in the same program as their same age peers, after careful preparation of catechists, students and parents.
5. Catechetical formation is to include the following adaptations:
 - a. The site is physically accessible
 - b. Text and other resources allow persons the greatest degree of participation
 - c. Catechetical content and methods are adapted to the individual’s learning style.

CATECHESIS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

POLICY

In accord with the norms established by the diocesan bishop, the Pastor is to make particular provision: “catechetical formation also be given to those handicapped in body or mind insofar as their condition permits” (Canon 777.4).

Regarding reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation by individuals whose disabilities interfere with the learning process (such as autism, learning disabilities, cognitive impairment, etc.):

- a. The presence of such a disability does not automatically call for exceptions to policies on catechesis for the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- b. Discernment on the disposition of an individual to receive these sacraments should involve: consideration of this person as an individual by taking into account strengths as well as disabilities; consultation between parents, catechist, Parish Catechetical leader and Pastor; and demonstration of some expressed desire and faith.
- c. Ordinarily, persons with disabilities celebrate the first reception of the sacraments with their same age peers at the parish celebration. If the candidate’s age makes it inappropriate to participate with the same cohort receiving a particular sacrament, first reception of the sacraments would than take place with other adults or privately.

IMPLEMENTATION

Reconciliation

A person whose disability interferes with the learning process is ordinarily capable of sorrow, confession and amendment, which can be expressed in a variety of ways. The priest celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation may find these guidelines helpful:

1. Get to know the person on a first-name basis prior to the reception of the sacrament. If the person is non-verbal, find out how he/she communicates and become familiar with that mode of communication. If necessary, an interpreter can assist in communication during the preparation time as well as during the actual celebration and reception of the sacrament (Canons 990, 983.2.).ⁱ
2. Be patient with the fact that the person may require time to get adjusted to the Reconciliation Room and the situation, and may need time to think through what is to be said. Just as with all persons celebrating a Sacrament for the first time, the person with special needs may exhibit nervousness and become fidgety. Sometimes a gentle prompting or simple question will be needed to help the person begin.

3. If, even after a time of waiting and encouragement, the person says nothing, it may be necessary to move to another setting more comfortable for the person.

Eucharist

1. As with all persons preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist for the first time, the person whose disability interferes with the learning process should be able to:
 - a. Demonstrate an understanding that the presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist is different from ordinary bread and wine.
 - b. Manifest a sense of the sacred.
 - c. Express a desire to receive the Eucharist.
2. It must be noted that sometimes a person's demonstration, manifestation, or expression of understanding will not be verbal, but his/her body language will tell their parents, catechists and Pastor that the person is ready for the Eucharist. After first reception of the Eucharist, ongoing catechesis will serve to reinforce and deepen the person's appreciation of the sacrament.

Confirmation

1. Depending on the nature and degree of the person's disability, catechetical preparation of the Sacrament of Confirmation may extend for a longer period of time than with other persons. If the person to be confirmed is of high school age, it may be appropriate that he/she be confirmed with the candidates at the parish celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. If that is not possible he/she shall be invited to participate in the Confirmation ceremony privately.

ⁱ Canon 990: No one is prohibited from confessing through an interpreter, avoiding abuses and scandals; the prescription of Canon 983.2 is to be observed.

Canon 983.2: An interpreter, if there is one present, is also obligated to preserve the secret, and also all others to whom knowledge of sins from confession shall come in any way.