

# CATECHETICAL SERVICES POLICIES

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## ***CATECHETICAL POLICIES OVERVIEW***

It is the responsibility of all parishioners – parish priests, parish leadership, parents, and catechists – to ensure the lifelong, systematic, and comprehensive faith formation of adults, young adults, youth and children of the parish. Parish faith formation programs should be inclusive of diverse cultural and language groups and persons with disabilities. No person who seeks catechesis is to be denied it based on finances.

To achieve the goal of providing lifelong faith formation for all parishioners, “every parish needs to develop a coherent catechetical plan that integrates the various components of the overall program and provides opportunities for all parishioners to hear the Gospel message, celebrate it in prayer and Liturgy, and live it in their daily lives” (USCCB 2005, no 60.A). A catechetical commission or committee can be established to assist the pastor with implementing and maintaining the catechetical plan. Parishes are encouraged to document policies, the catechetical program mission statement, and other relevant catechetical material in a catechetical handbook. If the parish staff needs guidance in creating a handbook, they can contact the Director of Catechetical Services for suggestions on books and/or courses on how to write a handbook.

The term “faith formation” is used in this manual to cover a broad array of activities that are sometimes referred to as faith formation, religious education, catechesis, or CCD<sup>1</sup>.

As a visible sign to all parish community members of the importance of faith formation, the US Bishops designate one Sunday each year as Catechetical Sunday<sup>2</sup>. Catechists for all faith formation programs (adult programs as well as children programs) are commissioned during the Sunday Liturgy, and all members of the community are asked to reflect on their own role, by virtue of their Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. During the rite, parishes should emphasize that parents and guardians are the primary catechists of their children.

To ensure all members of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dallas have access to diocesan policies related to faith formation, this manual was created by the Diocese of Dallas Catechetical Policies Development Task Force and approved by the Diocesan Catechetical Staff and the Director of Ministry. It will be maintained on an ongoing basis and made accessible to all in the diocese.<sup>3</sup>

The focus groups for this manual are 1) children in pre-school through the time they join the parish comprehensive youth ministry program<sup>4</sup>, 2) children in middle school and high school whose parish does not offer a comprehensive youth ministry, and 3) adults.

This manual is based on Church teaching, including universal, national, and diocesan level resources. In some cases, Church documents have been quoted or are cited as a reference. Section 100 is a list of selected Church documents relating to catechesis that can be referenced for more study on faith formation.

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<sup>1</sup> CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) – an official association for the catechetical instruction of the laity that was first proposed in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and eventually became somewhat synonymous with religious education; since the CCD office was closed in 1974, the current appropriate term is either religious education or faith formation.

<sup>2</sup> Normally, the third Sunday in September.

<sup>3</sup> Most recently updated on August 17, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> In the Diocese of Dallas, comprehensive youth ministry programs typically start in either sixth or seventh grade.

## SECTION 100 – ABBREVIATIONS OF CATECHETICAL RESOURCES

AG	<i>Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes Divinitus)</i> ( <a href="http://www.evtn.com/library/councils/v2miss.htm">http://www.evtn.com/library/councils/v2miss.htm</a> )
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> ( <a href="http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/">http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/</a> )
CCF Plan	<i>Continuing Catechetical Formation Plan Handbook</i> , Dallas diocesan handbook for parish catechetical leaders, catechists and instructors <a href="https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing_Catechetical_Formation_-_Guide_for_the_Catechist_(2)[1].pdf">https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing_Catechetical_Formation_-_Guide_for_the_Catechist_(2)[1].pdf</a>
CIC	<i>Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition, New English Translation</i> ( <a href="http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/INDEX.HTM">http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/INDEX.HTM</a> )
CT	<i>On Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae)</i> ( <a href="http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html">http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html</a> )
EN	<i>On Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)</i> ( <a href="http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_it.html">http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_it.html</a> )
GDC	<i>General Directory for Catechesis</i> ( <a href="http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17_041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html">http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17_041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html</a> )
GCSPD	<i>Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities</i> ( <a href="http://www.ncpd.org/views-news-policy/policy/church/bishops/sacraments">http://www.ncpd.org/views-news-policy/policy/church/bishops/sacraments</a> )
GIRM	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i> <a href="http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal/">http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal/</a>
LG	<i>Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)</i> ( <a href="http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html">http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html</a> )
NCPD	<i>National Catholic Partnership on Disability</i> ( <a href="http://www.ncpd.org">http://www.ncpd.org</a> )
NDC	<i>National Directory for Catechesis</i> ( <a href="http://www.usccb.org/education/ndc/index.shtml">http://www.usccb.org/education/ndc/index.shtml</a> )
OHWB	<i>Our Hearts were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States</i> <a href="http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/adult-faith-formation/our-hearts.cfm">http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/adult-faith-formation/our-hearts.cfm</a>

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PCL *Parish Catechetical Leader*

RCIA *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*

SC *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)*  
([http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html))

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## ***SECTION 200 – CATECHETICAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN***

### **Policy 201 – Comprehensive Systematic Catechetical Programs**

#### **I. Overview**

Catechesis of children and youth should be of sufficient length to allow for a close relationship with the person of Christ to develop through age appropriate instruction in the knowledge of the faith, developing the spirituality and prayer life of those who follow him and realizing and participating in the lived mission of a disciple of Christ. Since faith formation is life-long, children are to be in some form of faith formation every year and not just those years in which they are preparing to receive a sacrament.

- A. Parishes will provide formal, systematic, continuous lifelong faith formation. A comprehensive program involves direct formation of the children as well as formation of their parents who are the primary catechists of their children (Canon Law Society of America 1998, cc 774 and 776). When meeting with parents, the importance of families celebrating Sunday liturgy together should be reinforced. By observing their parents during the Mass, children “experience the Eucharistic mystery in an initial way and gradually learn to join with the liturgical assembly in prayer” (USCCB 2005, no. 36.A.3a).
- B. Programs will employ the baptismal catechumenate as the inspiration for all faith formation (USCCB 2005, no. 35.D).
- C. All faith formation programs will promote the six fundamental tasks of catechesis:
  - Knowledge of the faith
  - Knowledge of and active participation in liturgy and sacraments
  - Moral formation which imitates the life of Christ
  - Praying with Christ
  - Living in community and participating actively in the life and mission of the Church
  - Having a missionary spirit that helps disciples of Christ to bear witness to their faith in words and deeds (USCCB 2005, no. 20)
- D. The parish assesses the needs of its community and determines the model(s) and mode or manner of formation that best suits its particular circumstances. As an example, some formation might need to be available in a specific language or in multiple languages (e.g., English, Spanish, or Vietnamese).
- E. It is recommended that a parish contact the Director of Catechetical Services prior to implementing any program other than those specified in this manual.
- F. Regardless of the model(s) used, Diocesan Safe Environment policies must be followed. At least at the start of each program, parishes should provide parents with guidelines on all relevant policies, including how children are to be brought to class and picked up from class (e.g., guidelines regarding “drop-offs”).

- G. Although weekly hours and yearly sessions may vary, depending upon the model(s) used, all programs should have no fewer than twenty-six contact hours with students each year.
- H. Any catechetical textbook used by the parish or parents electing to use home-based catechesis must be on the USCCB's Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Traditional School Model

- A. In this model, children are typically grouped in classes according to their grade level.
- B. Two cleared adults over the age of twenty-one are assigned to each classroom. This may be two catechists or a catechist and an assistant. In addition to the two cleared adults, teens and young adults<sup>6</sup> may assist in the classroom after they have completed the Safe Environment Training.
- C. This model allows for the exploration of faith between peers under the guidance of the adult catechist.
- D. Variations on this model may include special sacrament classes, family-centered activities, cultural or liturgical experiences or special experiential activities outside the normal classroom setting.
- E. Parishes may coordinate faith formation programs such that parents attend sessions in a separate room at the same time as the children are meeting. In this manner, all members of the family participate in age-appropriate faith formation at the same time.

## III. Family Clusters Model

- A. In this model, small, caring, and supporting faith communities composed of several families, including parents/guardians and children of various ages, come together in designated family homes to create a faith formation community. The PCL or faith formation leader should provide all material, including lesson plans and objectives, to parents.
- B. Parents who have completed their Sacraments of Initiation may rotate as instructors for the children of these faith formation communities. All parents are considered catechists and must be cleared per the Safe Environment guidelines.<sup>7</sup> There must be at least two cleared adults in each room of the home where children are present during a Family Clusters session.
- C. Ideally, parents would follow catechist formation as specified in the Continuing Catechetical Formation Plan (CCF Plan).<sup>8</sup> Realizing the challenges associated with this level of catechesis, each parish should develop and host appropriate formation for parents that addresses both adult faith formation and methods in catechesis.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Teens and young adults are those who have been confirmed and are between fourteen and twenty-one years of age

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Safe\\_Environment\\_Program.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Safe_Environment_Program.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing\\_Catechetical\\_Formation\\_-\\_Guide\\_for\\_the\\_Catechist\\_\(2\)\[1\].pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing_Catechetical_Formation_-_Guide_for_the_Catechist_(2)[1].pdf)

- D. The Family Cluster model is flexible and may be modified to fit today's busy family schedule. It can also be crafted to meet the needs of individuals or families with special needs.
- E. This model would typically meet once a week, according to the school district calendar.
- F. Variations on this model may include special sacrament classes, family-centered activities, cultural or liturgical experiences or special experiential activities.

#### **IV. Whole Community Catechesis Model (Primary Version)**

Whole Community Catechesis is a model which answers the United States Bishops' call for adult faith formation to be the principal form of catechesis (USCCB 2005, no. 48.A). There are a number of resources available with detailed descriptions of this model. This model includes the entire parish, all ages and stages of parishioners, in one program of faith formation. Characteristics of this model include:

- A. Each month, there is an intergenerational group gathering at the parish. The interactive catechesis may be preceded or followed by a meal.
- B. After the initial common gathering, families and other attendees engage in in-depth catechesis, either divided into age-specific groups or in one large group.
- C. A variety of teaching approaches may be used, depending on the make-up of the group, each led by a catechist. Examples include a classroom approach for teaching children and learning centers for various age groups.
- D. Themes are chosen by the pastor and faith formation leaders and are meant to provide systematic and comprehensive catechesis for the whole community. Themes may be based on commercially-developed material.
  - Taken from faith formation textbooks
  - Based on the liturgical year
  - Chosen by the parish as an emphasis for the year
- E. Typically, a take-home project or symbol of the lesson is sent home with the families or individuals in the group to allow for continued conversation at home.

#### **V. Whole Community Catechesis Model (Blended Version)**

A variation on the Whole Community Catechesis Model, the blended version could be used by a parish that elects to have a Traditional School Model three weeks out of the month for children and teens and to have a whole community gathering for the entire parish once a month. In a blended format, the student texts could be used as a basis for the topics addressed.

#### **VI. Single Family Home-based Catechesis Model**

The home-based catechesis model will be 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 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.

- 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.
  - 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.
  - During the parish's commissioning rite of catechists, parents who participate in this catechesis model should be commissioned as 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 model that is 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 not seek outside venues for this formation.
  - Parents who choose the home-based catechetical model are referred to as home-based catechists.
- B. Home-based catechists will follow approved diocesan curriculum standards and the scope and sequence of USCCB approved, doctrinally based texts recommended for use in the parish.<sup>9</sup>
- C. The home-based catechesis option, which is not an isolated form of faith formation, 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), participating in Sunday Liturgy and other liturgical events that promote community building.
- D. Home-based catechists are encouraged to participate in any and all parish seasonal events and meetings including, during sacramental preparation years, sacramental preparation orientations.
- E. Home-based catechists should be informed of required training such as diocesan courses and University of Dallas Programs.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/document/Currentlist.pdf>

- F. The parish will provide the home-based catechists with all resources necessary to present a comprehensive, systematic, and age-appropriate process of faith formation. This includes a program facilitator, children's textbooks, catechist manual or comparable materials and the orientation and training needed to be an effective catechist to their child(ren). This also includes Virtus Training,<sup>10</sup> the anti-victimization program for children.
- G. 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 home-based catechesis 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.
- H. The parish will provide a contact who will serve as a resource for home-based catechists. This contact will provide all written expectations that a child must satisfy before sacrament reception.
- I. Children in home-based programs will celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation on days designated by the parish.

## VII. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Methodology is an approach to faith formation utilizing the Montessori educational principles.

- A. The purpose of this methodology is to involve adults and children in a common religious experience in which the religious values of childhood predominate.
- B. The methodology's mission is to support catechists, parents, and others in the Church as they grow in their understanding of the faith potential of children.
- C. The methodology involves prayer and celebration in the style of the atrium, which is a special room arranged for the program.
- D. Rather than a curriculum, this is a methodology that can be used with any text as the basis for systematic catechesis. Additionally, it can be adapted for use with children who have special needs.
- E. This methodology is to be used only when catechists have achieved certification that demonstrates that they have the appropriate level of formation. The formation involves a series of courses for adults that include discussion of biblical, liturgical, and salvation history themes. Material is presented as it would be given to children. Each training course is approximately 90 hours<sup>11</sup> and can be used as alternative catechist skills and methodology training if PCL confirms the catechist completed the certification process.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.virtus.org>

<sup>11</sup> Courses, at a cost, are offered by certified Montessori instructors who have been trained for this type of catechesis.

## Policy 202 – Supplementary Resources for Evangelization

### I. Overview

In addition to comprehensive, systematic faith formation programs, a parish may offer other resources that help the parish community grow in their faith. The following list includes examples of material or programs that a parish may provide. A number of these resources are available online, so a family could access the material directly from the internet. This list is not exhaustive; if a parish decides to offer a program that is not listed, it should consult with the Director of Catechetical Services.

#### A. Question of the Week

Various organizations publish a brief commentary on the Sunday readings that includes a few questions to generate reflection and small group sharing. The questions are intended to make the Sunday readings relevant in the lives of people today. Discussion around the questions are meant to be part of every parish meeting and at least one family gathering during the week. An example is found on Our Sunday Visitor's Question of the Week web site.<sup>12</sup>

#### B. Children's Bulletins

To help young children understand the Liturgy and the Sunday readings, various companies issue short magazines or bulletins with colorful pages and age-appropriate articles. Examples include MagnifiKid<sup>13</sup> and Amigos de Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

#### C. Family-Centered Bulletin Inserts

Parishes could insert materials in the Sunday bulletin that have suggestions for family activities, focusing on discussing the faith and praying together. An example of a bilingual weekly flyer is the Activity of the Week on Our Sunday Visitor's web site.<sup>15</sup>

#### D. Family Service and Mission Opportunities

Putting one's faith into action is a great form of catechesis; however, it is important that the activity is guided by a group leader who connects the process of doing service with the principals of social justice. Examples of activities are on the following web sites: Education for Justice,<sup>16</sup> the USCCB's Catholic Campaign for Human Development,<sup>17</sup> and Catholic Relief Services.<sup>18</sup>

#### E. Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLW)

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<sup>12</sup> <http://lifelongcatechesis.osv.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.magnificat.net/magnifikid/index.asp>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.claretiansusa.org/publishing/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://lifelongcatechesis.osv.com/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.educationforjustice.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.crs.org/>

The Church has always used scripture as a teaching tool. Because of their age, many children do not benefit fully from the readings or the homily during the Mass, which are the primary ways of catechizing adults in the community. Thus, some parishes have a Children's Liturgy of the Word program on Sundays, where children are dismissed following the Introductory Rites. In a separate space, the Word is proclaimed to these children and they participate in an age-appropriate discussion of the readings. They return to the Assembly for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

## F. Vacation Bible School (VBS)

To make good use of summer holidays, parish faith formation offices and parents sometimes join together to coordinate a one-week or longer program that takes a scriptural theme and develops it and through song, crafts, stories, and activities. The faith formation office will choose the program that is used by the parish.

## G. Quinceañeras

The Quinceañera is a traditional celebration of life and gratitude to God on the occasion of the fifteenth birthday of a young Hispanic man/woman. In light of the desire to reach Hispanic faith communities, "to embrace the rich cultural pluralism of all the faithful, and to encourage the distinctive identity of each cultural group" (USCCB 2005, no. 11.C.1), the celebration of the Quinceañera is promoted. The ritual emphasizes the passage from childhood to early adulthood, and it is an opportunity to renew the commitment of the young person to Christian values and to recommit to a relationship with Christ within a faith community. It represents a valuable catechetical moment for the young person, his/her family, and his/her friends. Parishes are encouraged to attend the Quinceañera Formation Workshop and to provide formation to the celebrants in preparation for this momentous celebration.

All Quinceañera celebrations are to use the *Bendición al Cumplir Quince Años / Order for the Blessing on the Fifteenth Birthday*<sup>19</sup>.

Guidelines for Quinceañeras in the Diocese of Dallas are:

- The girls/boys with her/his parents and sponsors present could simply renew her/his Baptismal promises and receive a blessing. This could take place after the homily.
- In the larger Hispanic parishes, there could be one mass monthly or quarterly at which all the girls/boys reaching their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday could renew their Baptismal promises and receive a blessing to mark the special occasion.
- Parents are encouraged to consult with their particular parishes to see what procedures must be followed in order to celebrate this memorable occasion.

## H. Non-Parish Based Activities

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/quinceanera/index.cfm>

Sometimes, families are drawn to the energetic faith communities on college campuses. These communities may or may not offer faith formation for the children of students or families attending Mass. Activities offered at these communities are considered supplemental to a parish-based sacramental program and should not be deemed a substitute for what is offered through the parish.

## **Policy 203 – Special Needs Catechesis**

All members of a parish community should have access to faith formation appropriate to their situation. “Persons with disabilities...are integral members of the parish community... and should be integrated into ordinary catechetical programs as much as possible” (USCCB 2005, no. 49). The term “persons with disabilities” involves a variety of conditions, including intellectual, developmental and sensory disabilities.

Parish staff should make an attempt to identify those individuals who live in their parish boundaries and have some form of disability; with this identification, the parish can make a specific pastoral outreach to determine the needs of those with a disability and to warmly welcome them to the parish’s ministries (USCCB 1995, no. 4). Where possible, “parishes should encourage those with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry (e.g., care ministers, catechists, etc.)” (USCCB 1995, no. 5).

Parish faith formation staff and parents of children with disabilities should meet and coordinate on the best form of catechesis for their children.

The form of catechesis that is selected could be from a wide range of models, including mainstreaming in a Traditional School Model or creating a program specific to an individual child. Within the mainstream option, variations exist, including special assistance, supplemental instruction, and special guidance to help students comprehend the material. In addition, there could be situations where the best option is to split time between a Traditional School Model and individual instruction in another room or in the student’s home. Refer to the Diocesan Office of Pastoral Services and the National Catholic Partnership on Disability<sup>20</sup> for resources that assist in determining the best catechetical options for children with disabilities.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.ncpd.org/>

## **SECTION 300 – ADULT FAITH FORMATION**

### **I. Background of Adult Faith Formation**

It was through Jesus that the disciples were able to know God’s heart and their lives were transformed because of it. Following his Resurrection, he appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and opened the Scriptures for them. After their eyes were opened, they realized that their hearts were burning while he spoke with them.

In the conclusion of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus gave His disciples the command to: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt. 28:18-20).

The disciples followed his command and “very soon the name of catechesis was given 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” (John Paul II 1979, no. 1). Through this catechesis, referred to in this policy section as adult faith formation, the US Bishops want “to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith” (USCCB Catechism 2000, no. 1229). Parishes can help adults develop their faith by providing a variety of faith formation activities and resources in a welcoming parish climate (USCCB OHWB 2000, no. 17).

For adults to develop a full understanding of their faith and live a faith-filled life, they need parishes that are vitally alive in faith and provide a variety of faith formation activities and resources. The US bishops emphasize the importance of parishes making a commitment to adult faith formation and placing it at the heart of the parish catechetical vision and practice, without weakening commitment to other essential educational ministries (USCCB OHWB 2000, no. 6).

### **II. Participants in Programs**

Every adult (those who have completed the eighteenth year of age) should have, through evangelization and catechesis, the opportunity to continued formation. Parishes in the Diocese of Dallas shall offer programs whose purpose is to fulfill this commitment to adult faith formation. “Most adults are capable of a free and informed response of faith to God’s initiative of love. They ‘have a right and a duty to bring to maturity the seed of faith sown in them by God.’ They have experienced the joys and challenges of life and have the capacity to question the truth and meaning of life. ‘The catechesis of adults...is the principal form of catechesis because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form’ ” (USCCB 2005, no. 48.A). When preparing for these programs, parishes are to keep in mind the different stages of adulthood (e.g., young adults, the middle aged, and the elderly), the family systems (e.g., single parent), and diversity of their parishioners.

### **III.Length of Formation**

Faith formation has no end date; it is a lifelong, continuous process. It is “that particular form of ministry of the word which matures initial conversion to make it into a living, explicit, and fruitful confession of faith” (USCCB 1997, no. 82).

## IV. Adult Faith Formation Team

It is recommended that, whenever possible, each parish have an adult faith formation team that is committed to implementing a plan for adult formation according to the parish's vision and mission statement.

In the document, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, the US bishops emphasized the importance of certain roles in forming and sustaining a parish adult faith formation program. These roles include:

- The pastor and other pastoral leaders – individuals who should “demonstrate a clear commitment to the vision and practice of lifelong growth in Christian Faith” (USCCB OHWB 2000, no. 127).
- An adult faith formation leader – a leader who is authorized by the pastor and personally involved in ongoing formation and who “assume[s] primary responsibility for implementing the ministry of adult faith formation” (USCCB OHWB 2000, no. 135).
- A core team of parishioners who comprise the adult faith formation team – parishioners who are “committed to and responsible for implementing the parish vision and plan for adult faith formation” (USCCB OHWB 2000, no. 142).
- Trained catechists – parishioners who “serve the diverse adult faith formation efforts of the parish” (USCCB OHWB 2000, no. 149).

Catechists are people of faith with an evangelizing spirit who can journey with others, witness in their own lives the truth of the faith they are communicating, are committed to lifelong formation, have sound grasp of Catholic doctrine and theology, have access to sources of the word of God and know how to communicate it effectively, and are a person of prayer (USCCB OHWB 2000, nos. 150 and 151).

To promote proper training and formation of catechists and to provide enrichment opportunities for all parishioners, the Diocese of Dallas created and maintains the Continuing Catechetical Formation Plan (CCF Plan).<sup>21</sup>

## V. Catechesis Structure and Material

Adult faith formation is to be offered in a way that the content relates to the life experience of parishioners, enabling them to read the signs of the times in light of the Gospel. Parishes shall identify the needs of parishioners and develop and implement a plan that will fit those needs (USCCB 2005, no. 48.A.4).

To be effective, adult faith formation cannot simply be classroom style lectures; instead, it “requires a comprehensive, multifaceted, and coordinated approach and a variety of learning activities, such as participation in liturgical experiences, Scripture reading and study, retreats, and experiences of prayer, family or home-centered activities, ecumenical dialogue, small-group experiences, large-group experiences and individual activities” (USCCB 2005, no. 48.A.4).

Catechesis for adult formation must include six dimensions: “knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, belonging to community, and missionary spirit. When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development” (USCCB 1997, no. 87).

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing\\_Catechetical\\_Formation\\_-\\_Guide\\_for\\_the\\_Catechist\\_\(2\)\[1\].pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing_Catechetical_Formation_-_Guide_for_the_Catechist_(2)[1].pdf)

Leaders of any adult formation program must get explicit approval from the PCL or pastor on the chosen program material, which must be from a Catholic publisher.

Adult catechesis should cover many elements, including:

- “Sacred Scripture and Tradition, the Creeds and doctrines of the faith, the hierarchy of truths, and the history of the Church
- The Mass, the sacraments, the daily prayer life of the Church
- The Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and Jesus’ commandment to love one another as he has loved us
- The Church’s teachings on the dignity of the human person, sin, grace, the virtues, and conscience formation
- The Church’s social teachings and the implications for social sin
- Prayer and the various traditions of spirituality within Catholicism
- The Church, her structure and authority, and the rights and responsibilities of the baptized
- Marriage and family life; single life
- The ecumenical movement and interreligious dialogue
- The Church’s mission in the world and for the world, and the nature of the lay apostolate” (USCCB 2005, no. 48.A.3)

Some forms of special catechesis complement a parish’s on-going adult faith formation offerings, including the RCIA process, formation of catechists and Catholic school teachers, and programs for parents whose children are in faith formation (USCCB 2005, no. 48.A.4).

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## **SECTION 400 – CATECHIST FORMATION**

All active catechists are to be properly prepared for carrying out the catechetical ministry (Canon Law Society of America 1998, c. 780). For catechists to fulfill their ministry, they “need preparation and ongoing formation specific to the conditions of those to whom they proclaim the Gospel message” (USCCB 2005, no. 54.B.8). For this reason, catechists should receive theology and methodology formation by taking prescribed courses offered by the Diocese of Dallas where they will be taught both the theory and the practice used in the teaching disciplines. Catechists will have five years to complete the required course work and receive a certificate in catechesis.

The diocesan Continuing Catechetical Formation Plan (CCF Plan) is available on the diocesan web site.<sup>22</sup> Also available is the new Certificate in Pastoral Ministry plan.<sup>23</sup>

Using the diocesan-designed roster, the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) will provide records of all coursework to the Department of Catechetical Services. See Section “7.2 Record Keeping” of CCF Plan.

### **Policy 401 — Certificate in Catechesis**

- A. Parish catechists, including all catechists of adolescents and catechists for Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of catechetical age, will complete the Diocese of Dallas certificate in catechesis by achieving one of the following:
  - The Basic Certificate in catechesis which requires completion of 90 hours of prescribed coursework in methodology, theology and scripture.
  - The Master Catechist certificate which requires an additional 60 hours of coursework once an individual has obtained his/her Basic Certificate. A Master Catechist, therefore, will have completed a total of 150 hours of diocesan approved courses or workshops.
- B. Catechists in specialized areas such as RCIA, disabilities, adult faith formation, Baptism preparation for children or youth Confirmation will complete appropriate diocesan specialization courses that can be applied to the ten hours of elective Methodology and Skills courses for the Master Catechist certificate. Ideally, catechists will follow the complete catechist formation process as documented in the CCF Plan.

### **Policy 402 — Renewal of Catechist Certification**

All catechists will renew their certificate annually by obtaining ten hours of continuing education. The diocese will maintain the list of approved courses for continuing education. Every ten years, all Master Catechists will take refresher courses in Liturgy and Sacraments, Christian Morality, and Church Documents.

### **Policy 403 – Certificate in Pastoral Ministry**

Catechetical leaders who do not have a degree in theology or related field are asked to complete the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry (CPM)<sup>24</sup> within three years of being hired. The CPM is an adult

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing\\_Catechetical\\_Formation\\_-\\_Guide\\_for\\_the\\_Catechist\\_\(2\)\[1\].pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Continuing_Catechetical_Formation_-_Guide_for_the_Catechist_(2)[1].pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cathdal.org/cpm>

continuing education program designed in cooperation with the University of Dallas to meet the formation needs of a variety of parish level ministers and to enable personal enrichment to adults seeking to enhance their personal faith life. While the program is principally designed for active parishioners and volunteer ministers, it will also be of value to professional ministers who do not have or are unable to pursue an academic degree in ministry.

Catechetical leaders who are new to their jobs, who have professional degrees but need competency in Methodology, or who are experienced but want ongoing theological formational opportunities, are encouraged to take all or part of the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry program (CPM). More information is available on the diocesan web site.

### **Policy 404 – Teen and Young Adult Catechist in Training (CIT) Program**

Teens and young adults under twenty-one years of age, who have received their Sacraments of Initiation, are sometimes used as aides in parish faith formation programs. Teens and young adults must have Safe Environment Training. They cannot, under any circumstance, be used as the second adult in the classroom. Although they can be used in the role of Catechist in Training with two cleared adults in the classroom, they should never be the main catechist or bear the responsibility of leadership in a classroom. It is advised that a CIT work with a mentor catechist and attend catechist training courses appropriate to his/her age level.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://udallas.edu/ministry/academics/continuinged/pastoralministry\\_certificate/course-schedule-english.php](http://udallas.edu/ministry/academics/continuinged/pastoralministry_certificate/course-schedule-english.php)

## ***SECTION 500 – RECORDS RETENTION***

Staffing and attendance records for parish faith formation programs are parish property and are to be maintained by the PCL or pastor's designee. Each October, the PCL or pastor's designee will send names of all catechists to the Department of Catechetical Services. The Department will provide parishes with an annual report on the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry (CPM) or Continuing Catechetical Formation Plan (CCF) progress for catechists identified as ministering in their parish. Parishes can then distribute appropriate updates to catechists.

- A. Catechist records should include:
  - Active catechists – retained as long as the catechist is active:
    - Catechist contact information
    - Catechist certificate completion and certificate renewal
    - Catechist attendance records for service in faith formation programs
  - Inactive catechists – retained for seven years after the catechist exits the program:
    - Catechist certificate completion and certificate renewal
    - Catechist attendance records for service in faith formation programs
- B. It is recommended, unless noted otherwise, that Student Records be retained for five years and should include:
  - Attendance records and history of sacraments received.
  - Child abuse reporting forms should be kept by designated parish person for a period as recommended by the Diocesan Safe Environment Office.
  - The parish business manager will determine how long to keep accident reports.
  - Parish designed end-of-the-year evaluations/examinations.
  - The Custody judgments from divorce proceedings should be retained for those situations where parents are divorced and the custodial parent wants to exclude the non-custodial parent from being able to pick up the child after class; only need to be held for the time period when the child is in a program.
  - To help with the registration process, registration forms could be held for one year and referenced during the subsequent year's registration. When retained, documents must be held in secured area where they are not accessible to anyone other than the leader.
  - Ideally, birth certificates will not be retained by a parish. If, however, it is necessary to keep birth certificates for the baptismal record update process, they should be held in a secured area just like other sacramental records and they should be shredded as soon as possible after the baptismal records are updated.
- C. It is recommended that personnel and staffing rosters for catechetical programs be retained in a secured area for three years after the end of the catechetical program (typically, programs end in May).
- D. It is recommended that the following parish program records be retained for seven years:
  - Parish Handbooks

- Annual Budget, if not separately retained in business manager's records
  - E. A copy of the most current Diocesan Guidelines, Policies, and Procedures is to be available to parish staff and volunteers.
  - F. The parish Safety Director retains catechist safe environment records, per the Diocesan Safe Environment Program Booklet.
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## ***SECTION 600 – EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL***

Each parish will employ or appoint adequately trained ministers (staff and/or volunteer) to ensure that parish catechetical needs are met. “The single most critical factor in an effective parish [faith formation] program is the leadership of a professionally trained catechetical leader. Depending on the size and scope of the parish catechetical program, parishes should allocate their resources so that they are able to acquire the services of a competent and qualified catechetical leader (or someone in the process of becoming qualified and competent) or to share those services with another parish” (USCCB 2005, no. 54.B.5).

### **Policy 601 – Create Catechetical Plan and Determine Staffing Needs**

Recognizing the importance of well-designed faith formation programs and in light of their responsibility to “take care of the catechesis of the Christian people so that the living faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life, (Canon Law Society of America 1998, c. 773), pastors will coordinate with appropriate church leaders to develop a parish catechetical plan.

The US bishops are explicit in stating that “every parish needs to develop a coherent catechetical plan that integrates the various components of the overall program and provides opportunities for all parishioners to hear the Gospel message, celebrate it in prayer and Liturgy, and live it in their daily lives. That plan should reflect the priority of adult catechesis [and] take into account the needs of everyone in the parish ...It should develop goals and objectives specific to the parish community and include the regular assessment of progress toward the achievement of those goals and objectives” (USCCB 2005, no. 60.A).

To develop its plan, the parish can begin by conducting an assessment of faith formation that is currently in place and the demographic groups targeted by each activity. While doing the assessment, it is important to consider all six of the fundamental tasks of catechesis which are referenced in Policy 201. Once the assessment is complete, the effort continues by identifying which groups and/or tasks of catechesis are under-represented and how best the parish could work with them. From there, priorities are established and a strategy is determined on how to implement a revised plan that meets the parish’s needs. The plan should be refreshed and updated as appropriate to meet the ever-changing needs of the parish community.

As the catechetical plan is being developed, attention is placed on the resources required to implement the plan. “The parish catechetical plan should be adequately financed and staffed by professionally trained catechetical leaders so that the teachings of the Church are readily accessible to all the Christian faithful in the parish” (USCCB 2005, no. 60.A). According to the size and diversity of its community, a parish should hire or appoint an appropriate number of faith formation leaders with the right level of experience and qualifications.

As staffing resources are determined and a new position is created or an existing position becomes vacant, the parish should consult the Director of Catechetical Services, who can work with the parish by providing tips on recruiting, advertising, and salary guidelines, and by advising the parish of qualified individuals who have voiced an interest in such a position.

## **SECTION 700 – SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

The diocese has a Safe Environment Program<sup>25</sup> that implements training, screening, background checks and other procedures designed to reduce the risk of abuse of children and vulnerable adults. Every parish must have the program and each is responsible for program implementation and ongoing maintenance.

### **Policy 701 – Safe Environment Training, Screening, and Reporting**

Each parish will appoint a Safety Director to oversee the parish safe environment program, which will adhere to all Diocesan requirements regarding training, screening, and reporting.

### **Policy 702 – Volunteer Requirements**

All volunteers must comply with Safe Environment training policies and procedures, as specified by the Diocesan program.

### **Policy 703 – Child Safe Environment Training**

The Virtus Program and other anti-victimization training is part of the Charter for the Protection of Youth and Young People issued by the USCCB. Twice annually, catechists in each parish are required to teach this anti-victimization program to the children in the faith formation programs. One of these sessions should be during the first part of October. Please refer to the Safe Environment Office for training and to the Virtus website for more information.<sup>26</sup>

### **Policy 704 – Visiting Priest and Speaker Requirements**

All parishes will adhere to the Diocesan policy on visiting priests and speakers,<sup>27</sup> which includes the requirement to provide a celebret or affidavit of good standing issued within the previous six-weeks.

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<sup>25</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Safe\\_Environment\\_Program.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Safe_Environment_Program.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.virtusonline.com/virtus/>

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Visiting\\_Speaker\\_Requirements.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Visiting_Speaker_Requirements.pdf)

## ***SECTION 800 – RISK MANAGEMENT***

To prevent or minimize either accidental loss of property or harm to any person on the parish grounds or at a parish event, the Diocese of Dallas’ Risk Management office develops and issues policies and guidelines. Contact the Office of Risk Management with any concerns or questions.

### **Policy 801 – Considerations Related to Physical Safety in Group Settings**

Lit candles should be prohibited in all areas of the parish or school, with some specific exceptions such as in the Sanctuary during Mass.

Emergency drills

Contagious Diseases

### **Policy 802 – Copyright Compliance**

“It is illegal and immoral to reproduce copyrighted texts and music by any means without written permission of the copyright owner. The fact that these duplicated materials are not for sale but for private use does not alter the legal or moral situation of copying without permission” (USCCB 1982, no. 78). As well, it is illegal to show copyrighted movies or videos without first gaining permission.

### **Policy 803 – Social Media Policy**

All diocesan and parish employees, as well as volunteers, must comply with the diocesan social media policy.<sup>28</sup>

### **Policy 804 – Travelling Off-Site**

Before taking any child off-site, the faith formation leader must have the appropriate signed consent form from the child’s parent or legal guardian.

Before allowing any child to be driven to a parish-sponsored off-site event by a volunteer driver, the driver must be cleared per the diocesan Safe Environment guidelines<sup>29</sup> and must meet the criteria on both pages of the Volunteer Driver form.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Social\\_Media\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Social_Media_Policy.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Safe\\_Environment\\_Program.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Safe_Environment_Program.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> [https://www.cathdal.org/Vehicle\\_Safety\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.cathdal.org/Vehicle_Safety_Policy.pdf)

## APPENDIX – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Apprenticeship** – a period where a beginner or learner actively seeks how to do a certain role or occupation; in the context of Confirmation, confirmandi are called to learn how to live as followers of Jesus

**Candidate** – an individual who has been baptized either as Roman Catholic or as a member of another Christian community, who has neither been catechized nor received the Sacraments of Confirmation and/or Eucharist, and is seeking full communion in the Roman Catholic Church

**Catechumen** – an individual who has not been baptized as a member of a Christian community and who seeks to become a member of the Roman Catholic Church

**Catechumenate** – the second period in the RCIA process; during this period, an individual who has celebrated the Rite of Acceptance will study the doctrines of the Catholic faith and are introduced to the prayer life and apostolic works of the community (McBrien 1995, 237)

**CCD** (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) – an official association for the catechetical instruction of the laity that was first proposed in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and eventually became somewhat synonymous with religious education (McBrien 1995, 351); since the CCD office was closed in 1974, the more appropriate term is either religious education or faith formation

**CLW** (Children’s Liturgy of the Word) – catechists lead a separate Liturgy of the Word with children, apart from the main assembly, where the readings are adapted to the knowledge and capabilities of young children (Regan 2005, no. 1)

**Companion** – a person who accompanies another on a journey or who assists another through a certain process; in this manual’s material, a companion is someone who accompanies an individual preparing to receive a sacrament (e.g., a sponsor could be considered a companion for a confirmand)

**Discipleship** – the practice of following Jesus by women and men of faith

**Godparent** – an individual who meets certain criteria (see Policy 302) and assists a catechumen or the parents of a child who is being baptized. The godparent’s responsibilities include showing the catechumens how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, bearing witness, and guiding the catechumens’ progress in the baptismal life (International Commission on English in the Liturgy 1988, no. 11).

**Lectio divina** – a meditative reading of Sacred Scripture that leads to prayer

**Mystagogia/Mystagogy** – the RCIA period directly after the Easter Vigil where those who were initiated into the Church are instructed on how to live as a Christian; this period typically concludes at Pentecost

**Neophyte** – the newly baptized



**PCL** (Parish Catechetical Leader) – a person who organizes and directs the program of lifelong faith formation for all parishioners under the direction of the pastor and in collaboration with the parish staff

**Proximal year** – the year closest to an event; when preparing to receive a sacrament, the year of catechesis closest to the celebration of the sacrament may be referred to as the proximal year

**Proxy** – a person authorized to act for another

**Quinceaños** – a traditional celebration of life and gratitude to God on the occasion of the fifteenth birthday of a young Hispanic man/woman

**RCIA** – Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

**Rite** – a repetitive ceremonial activity with fixed rules or a particular ritual ceremony like the Rite of Baptism (McBrien 1995, 1118)

**Rite for the Call to Continuing Conversion** – a rite in the RCIA process celebrated at the beginning of Lent for candidates to declare their intention to complete their Christian initiation

**Rite of Acceptance** – first rite in the RCIA process where individuals declare their intention to join the Catholic Church

**Rite of Election** – a rite in the RCIA process celebrated at the beginning of the Period of Purification and Enlightenment; this rite is celebrated by catechumens

**Rite of Welcoming** – a rite that welcomes those who are preparing to complete their Initiation into the Catholic Church through the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist

**Sponsor** – a person who acts as a witness for an individual who receives the Sacrament of Confirmation

**USCCB** (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) – the episcopal conference of the United States and the US Virgin Islands whose purpose is to address pastoral issues in these geographic areas (McBrien 1995, 473)

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