

The Policy for Home Catechesis for the Diocese of Charlotte

In the beginning of the Rite of Baptism for Children, the parents of each child are asked if they understand their responsibility of training their child in the practice of the faith. The appropriate response for the parents is a reply that they do understand what they are undertaking. At the end of the Rite of Baptism, the celebrant blesses the parents while acknowledging that the parents will be “the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.” The blessing concludes with a hopeful prayer that they will also be the “best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It is clear from the Rite of Baptism that children should be properly instructed so that the baptism will bear fruit and that each child will mature in faith to live always as child of God.

The Church, therefore, from the beginning of a life of grace affirms the primary role of the parents in the formation of the faith of their children.[Canons 226, 1136.] The parents, as they live the covenant of the Sacrament of Marriage, have the responsibility to provide a holy home conducive to growth in the spiritual life and the development of Christian virtues. The family is the basic unit and is referred to as the domestic church, while the universal Church is actually a family of families. Parishes are the local communities where the Christian faithful live and worship. The foundation of parish life is the celebration of the Eucharist. In parishes, Christ’s saving doctrine is taught and the charity of the Lord is practiced [Catechism of the Catholic Church 2179]. All families are members of a particular parish of which a pastor has the role as the shepherd of souls.

There is a shared responsibility in catechesis. The bishop is the chief catechist for the diocese and the pastor by virtue of his office as the bishop’s representative is the chief catechist for the parish. The pastor works with his delegated catechetical leader and catechists to provide for the formal catechesis of the faithful through parish programs, classes and liturgies. The pastor is to promote and foster the role of parents in catechesis for they are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life [Rite of Baptism; Canons 774, 776.]

In the Diocese of Charlotte, there are parents who choose to provide catechesis for their child/children in their home apart from the formal parish programs. The following policy applies in such cases:

The parents shall communicate their intention to provide home catechesis to the pastor/PCL. After such communication, the parents will enter into a dialog with the pastor or PCL. In such a dialog the parents will have the opportunity to share their catechetical experience and express their vision for home catechesis. They may also explain their plan for home catechesis and the means by which they intend to achieve it. The pastor/PCL will provide the parents with the applicable diocesan/parish expectations for catechesis and sacramental preparation.[Canons 777, 843.] The responsibilities of both the parish and the home will be clearly addressed.

In the context of this dialog, the pastor/PCL may make recommendations to the parents so that their plan will fulfill the applicable diocesan/parish expectations. The parents will have the opportunity to accept the responsibility for catechesis or to enroll their children for participation in the formal parish program. To symbolize the mutual bond and an understanding of the expectations and responsibilities, a covenant will be signed among the pastor, the parents, and the child(ren). The parents who choose home catechesis will be assisted in the registration process by the pastor or PCL. Texts and materials for home catechesis will be approved by the pastor or PCL based on the requirements of applicable catechetical documents. The pastor/PCL will assist in the procurement of catechetical texts, if needed, and provide guidance and information that will affirm and support the home catechesis endeavor. While the parents may provide the majority of the catechesis, the pastor may require the participation of the children in some parish programs or events such as retreats, liturgies or service projects that emphasize the communal dimension of catechesis and the unity of the Body of Christ. Such expectations will be discussed at the time of the initial registration.

The parents involved in home catechesis will be invited and welcomed to participate in parent meetings and catechist formation sessions on the parish or diocesan level. With regard to the readiness of children for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation, the pastor or his delegate will determine the readiness in accord with the applicable catechetical documents, the Code of Canon Law and existing diocesan policies.[Canons 890, 914.] The expectations will be the same whether a child has been in a parish catechetical program or a home catechetical program.

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