ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

Guidelines
for
Parish Catechetical
Leaders

**Prepared by the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation
and the Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors**

**Approved by Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmone
Bishop of Charleston
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1. Catechetical Leaders

The Bishop as Catechetical Leader

The teaching of the Catholic faith in the Diocese of Charleston is, as is true in any diocese throughout the world, the "first task" of the Bishop, who is called to preach the Gospel and to assure that the faithful receive authentic instruction in the truths of the faith (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 888; see *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4; see Mk 16:15). Thus, it is the Bishop who approves guidelines and curricula for religious education and recommends policies for implementation throughout the diocese. Additional details about how the Bishop delegates teaching authority to pastors and parish administrators and, through them, to catechetical leaders and catechists may be found in the introductory material to the "Elementary Religion Curriculum: Diocese of Charleston" (2010).

The Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation

This diocesan office oversees the comprehensive process of religious education throughout the diocese, including parish programs, Catholic school religion curricula, and the RCIA process. Through the Secretary of Education and Faith Formation, the office staff and its director work with the Catholic Schools Office, the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and the Office of Campus Ministry to see to it that practical and theologically sound materials and resources are used and that catechetical leaders, Catholic school teachers, catechists, and all those involved in faith formation receive opportunities for appropriate training and support.

The office provides workshops on the deanery and the diocesan level, hosts liturgical celebrations for those participating in the RCIA process, reviews and updates programs and materials in consultation with a Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors (see p. 15), and conducts site visits to parishes and schools to assess needs and survey implementation of curriculum guidelines and catechist training and certification programs. At the heart of its ministry is the Church's call to evangelization and to a "new" evangelization amid a changing culture.

The Pastor or Parish Administrator as Catechetical Leader

Catechesis is one of the fundamental priorities in the life of the parish and its mission. The pastor or parish administrator is charged by the bishop to see to it that faith formation is a priority in the parish (*National Directory for Catechesis, 2008 [4th printing],* pp. 100; 220-221). This means that catechetical leaders and catechists are carefully chosen and that the best materials are available. Faith formation is at its best when pastors and parish administrators are actively engaged in the ongoing formation of all of their parishioners and careful to prioritize religious education programs and initiatives when they create their parish budgets. They recognize that leadership in all other ministries is best fostered when there is effective catechetical ministry and lay formation. It is through parish leadership that the parish's mission is more clearly articulated and carried out.

The pastoral ministry and vision of a catechizing parish influences all the parish activity. The parish leader (pastor or parish administrator) serves as the parish catechetical leader and therefore:

- Articulates the truths of our Catholic faith
- Keeps the parish focused on the primacy of catechetical ministry and ongoing faith formation
- Communicates with the DRE, CRE and/or school principal for planning, problem solving and support
- Hires good, qualified people, encourages them to utilize their strengths, allows work time for attendance at deanery and diocesan DRE/CRE meetings, and engages catechetical leaders in yearly evaluations which include goal-setting
- Provides financial support for catechetical programs and includes catechists' and leaders' formation in annual budgets
- Ensures participation of DRE's/CRE's and catechists in diocesan certification programs
- Insists on catechist formation by the DRE/CRE or provides funds for out-of-parish programs

Parents and Parishioners as Catechists

The Catholic Church has consistently taught that "parents are the primary educators in the faith" (*General Directory of Catechesis* 255, see also *National Directory of Catechesis* pp. 234-235) and that the family is called to be "the domestic Church" (*Lumen Gentium* 11), that place where parents and children encounter Christ in prayer, Sacred Scripture, participation in liturgy, instruction in the faith, and introduction to Catholic customs, religious art, and the lives of the saints.

All members of the Church are called to grow in faith and proclaim the Good News throughout their lives. Parish leaders nurture the spiritual growth of the parishioners and help them to respond to their baptismal call to holiness and to activate their roles in the evangelization and transformation of the world by encouraging:

- Catechetical formation and spiritual development of persons in catechetical ministry
- Offering a variety of workshops, audio-visual presentations, parish missions, and opportunities for faith development within the parish and in cooperation with other parishes or mission churches
- Alerting parishioners to workshops, retreats, devotional activities, and other formative events on the deanery and diocesan level and actively encouraging and enabling their participation

Parishioners themselves are called to be proactive in finding groups, activities, workshops, and events which will nurture their spiritual, intellectual, and affective growth in faith. All parishioners must recall that they teach the faith by example and by their personal commitments to Christ, the Church, and the world, expressed in their worship, prayer, and service.

The Ministry of Designated Catechetical Leaders
This revised set of Guidelines for Parish Catechetical Leaders is based on the premise that every DRE, CRE, Youth Minister, and Catholic school principal in the Diocese of Charleston is a catechetical leader. By virtue of baptism, the leader is called to holiness and to mission. By virtue of his or her invitation to lead in the formation of children, youth, and adults, the DRE, CRE, or principal of a Catholic school serves as a delegate of the bishop and the pastor or parish administrator in drawing others to a fuller understanding of faith and Christian living. This call to leadership in religious education is a vitally important Church vocation.

The Director of Religious Education, the Coordinator of Religious Education, the Youth Minister, or the Catholic school principal has responded to God's call to participate in a specialized ministry and has accepted the responsibility to prepare for this work through faithful, regular participation in the full life of the Church, personal spiritual development, and theological formation. The Catholic school principal is the academic and spiritual leader of the school community—students, faculty, staff, and parents. The Director or Coordinator of Religious Education has a role of service which affects the whole of the parish, including the Catholic school community where a school is present. Thus, the catechetical leader must intentionally seek to sustain and develop his or her own spiritual life in order to serve and energize the faith community. He/she should also understand the need for lifelong faith formation and education in order to grow personally and professionally (see GDC 69).

The basic task of every catechetical leader is to equip all the people of God with the skills to fulfill their religious mission received at baptism. Whether in parish or school, the catechetical leader is charged with the responsibility of:

- Proclaiming the MESSAGE of Jesus and the teaching of the Catholic Church
- Creating an environment and opportunities for building COMMUNITY
- Promoting knowledge and experience of LITURGY and other COMMUNAL PRAYER

- Teaching and promoting PERSONAL PRAYER
- Proclaiming the Church's MORAL and SOCIAL TEACHING in all areas of catechesis
- Providing opportunities to give SERVICE - linking faith with action (see GDC 85-86; NDC pp. 225)

Parish and School Catechists

Parish catechists are volunteers who, as persons of faith and good will, have responded to God's invitation to share the Gospel. They must be active, registered members of their particular parish. They must participate in background screening and safe environment training, read required diocesan policies, and commit to codes of conduct and confidentiality which protect the children, youth, and adults they serve. Parish catechists are urged to participate in programs leading to catechist certification (see GDC, p.233) and, ideally, to achieve basic certification within five (5) years.

Teachers in the Catholic schools of the diocese are similarly required to meet diocesan requirements for employment and to work toward basic certification within five (5) years of their hiring. While parish catechists are practicing Catholics who serve in a volunteer capacity, Catholic school teachers are paid professionals for whom catechetical training is an expectation for continued employment. Even those teachers who may not practice the Catholic faith are expected to complete the required thirty (30) hours of instruction for basic certification. The rationale for this requirement is the fact that they represent both Church and school in the public forum and need to be articulate about those matters of faith and morals which Catholics hold to be true (see NDC p. 233)
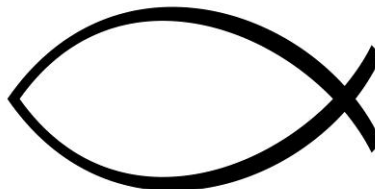
2. *The Parish Catechetical Leader*

(A Note about Principals: It is clear throughout this document that the Principal of the Catholic school is a catechetical leader. Principals are subject to professional guidelines presented through the Catholic Schools Office and its Administrative Handbook for Pastors and Principals and other requirements communicated through the Catholic Schools Office and AdvancEd accreditation standards on Catholic Identity. The material set forth below is directed to the Parish Catechetical Leader—the DRE or CRE)

Ministerial Relationships

A capable Director or Coordinator of Religious Education has the responsibility for developing and administering the parish's catechetical programs. He or she is expected to interact and collaborate with the following individuals and groups:

A. Pastor or Parish Administrator
- Is accountable to the pastor or parish administrator and is subject to directives of the Bishop
- Shares catechetical responsibilities with pastor or parish administrator and leads as indicated by position profile or common agreement
- Communicates and meets regularly with pastor or parish administrator; informs of diocesan policies or guidelines related to catechesis
- Recommends shaping of parish practices affecting catechesis
- Serves as liaison with parents who are, with the pastor or parish administrator's guidance and consent, homeschooling children in religion
- Attempts to provide referrals to persons or programs for children or adults with disabilities who are in need of services for faith formation or sacramental preparation

B. Parish Staff
- Where the DRE/CRE is a paid employee, serves as an active member of the parish staff and participates in regular meetings
- Where a volunteer, establishes means of communication with parish staff about programming, facility use, equipment needs, parish sacramental celebrations, etc.
- Provides information and resources to staff as requested, seeks appropriate input in catechetical planning
- Provides or alerts parish staff to opportunities for spiritual, theological, and pastoral formation

C. Parish or Regional Catholic School
- Cooperates with and assists principal in carrying out goals for catechesis in school and catechetical formation for teachers and staff

- Serves as consultant and resource person as needed
- Coordinates program planning, facility use, and calendar with principal
- Provides resources for school children who may be out of sequence in religious education and sacramental preparation
- Carefully supervises activities when religious education uses school facilities and sees to it that space used is left in condition as good as or better than it was found—orderly, clean, etc.

D. Families and Households
- Informs, supports and resources parents or care-givers in the religious formation of their children
- Maintains open and ongoing communication
- Offers alternatives for children in shared custody situations who face challenges in attendance
- Seeks resources for children and adults with special needs, particularly for sacramental preparation
- Provides opportunities for families to worship together and engage in devotional activities
- Provides adult faith formation programs where possible and invites adult participation in family formation

E. Other Parish Ministries
- Promotes a unity of ministry which flows from the parish mission
- Builds faith community by linking catechetical programs with other ministerial events
- Serves as consultant on catechetical issues

F. Pastoral Council
- Cooperates and collaborates with pastoral council in developing comprehensive catechetical plan for parish
- Serves as resource person

G. Diocesan Office
- Promotes and implements diocesan policies, curricula, and guidelines and informs others as new ones develop
- Responds to requests for reports, surveys, and program evaluation
- Attends appropriate meetings and in-services
- Utilizes resources and personnel as needed
- Responds to invitations to serve on committees to develop curriculum, evaluate effectiveness of religious education programs, plan diocesan initiatives and conferences, and so on

H. Peers
- Interacts regularly with peers in neighboring parishes and attends deanery DRE/CRE meetings as possible
- Participates in professional organizations of religious educators

DRE or CRE?

For the sake of consistency across the diocese, it is recommended that the Position Profile posted on the diocesan website, www.sccatholic.org, under the Human Resources Office, be used as the format for hiring and delineating responsibilities.

The DRE

In general the DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION in the Diocese of Charleston is a qualified catechetical leader with more extensive education, experience and responsibility. In most cases, the Director of Religious Education is a paid member of the parish staff.

Educational Background
Ideally, the DRE has a college degree in theology, religious studies, pastoral ministry, or education. At the discretion of the hiring pastor, years of experience in catechetical leadership (including parish catechetical programs, RCIA, youth ministry, and the like) may substitute for academic credentials; however, the DRE should be encouraged and offered incentives to pursue a degree or to attend national workshops and conferences regularly.

Catechetical Background
Ideally, the DRE will have, by the time of his or her hiring, a minimum of five (5) years of experience as a catechist, will have achieved basic certification, and will be in the process of working toward intermediate or advanced certification, according to diocesan standards,   If the person has already held the position of DRE in another parish or another diocese, that person should exhibit evidence of involvement in deanery level DRE groups, participation in diocesan catechetical conferences, and other ongoing spiritual and ministerial formation.

Responsibilities
The Director of Religious Education typically:
- Oversees the parish program of religious education, from early childhood through adult faith formation (he or she may also oversee RCIA programs and parish youth ministry)
- Is responsible for establishing sacramental preparation programs which supplement regular parish religious education
- Invites parents to active participation in the religious education program and seeks opportunities to provide faith formation events which include families
- Under the direction of the pastor, selects and supervises parish catechists, carefully assessing their special gifts, credentials, personal strengths, organizational skills, and ability to handle routine discipline
- Works cooperatively with parish groups and schools to share space and maintain orderly facilities
- Manages classroom materials, orders textbooks and workbooks, maintains audio-visual resources, assures that those who use technological equipment or audio-visual resources are appropriately trained in their use

- Networks with deanery DRE's and nearby parishes in order to share knowledge, skills, and resources as possible
- Looks for ways to find alternatives for families with special situations to assure that religious education needs are addressed
- Works amicably with those in need of resources in other languages or those providing catechesis in other languages so as to assure unity within the parish
- Supervises additional paid religious education staff (assistants, site coordinators, clerical staff, etc.)
- Supervises volunteer staff in the conduct of religious education programs
- Is responsible to confer with the pastor concerning matters requiring adherence to diocesan standards and policies, particularly where safe environment, contract, insurance, and human resources matters are concerned
- Is vigilant in matters of loyalty to the Catholic Church and its magisterial teachings

The CRE

In general, the <u>COORDINATOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</u> in the Diocese of Charleston is one who oversees a parish religious education program, has less extensive experience in catechetical leadership, and is ordinarily a part-time parish employee or a volunteer.

Educational Background
The CRE is an individual who has demonstrated a concern for parish life and the willingness to take responsibility for effective catechesis in a parish or mission church. He or she will have been involved in faith formation programs and other parish activities and will have demonstrated organizational skills and leadership. In some cases, the CRE may hold another role on the parish staff, be a teacher of another subject or other subjects in a local school, or have another professional position. The CRE is encouraged to attend workshops and conferences in catechesis, theology, classroom management, and so on and to participate in a plan of ongoing formation.

Catechetical Background
The CRE will have attained a minimum of basic catechist certification and will have had at least three (3) years of experience in leading some type of catechetical or ministerial program.

Responsibilities
The responsibilities of the CRE mirror those of the DRE, except that the enrollment in the program and the extent of parish catechetical programs will be more limited. The CRE supervises a smaller cadre of volunteers and does not supervise paid staff and enjoys a colleague relationship with others working in the parish.

Code of Ethics for Parish Catechetical Leaders

The National Conference for Catechetical Leadership affirms the following Code of Ethics for all Professional Catechetical Leaders at the parish, diocesan, and national levels. A text with signature line can be found on the organizational website: www.nccl.org. It is recommended for use by directors and coordinators of religious education and, where possible, by catechists in the Diocese of Charleston.

The content of the Code follows:

A Parish Catechetical Leader continually deepens a *relationship with God* through passion for the Gospel and participation in prayer and the sacraments.

A Parish Catechetical Leader values and promotes *the dignity of all persons*.

A Parish Catechetical Leader *practices stewardship*, respecting all creation.

A Parish Catechetical Leader models *lifelong professional learning* in areas required for catechetical ministry.

A Parish Catechetical Leader maintains *right relationships* by respecting appropriate boundaries with colleagues and parishioners of all ages.

A Parish Catechetical Leader maintains *confidentiality* when requested and as required by circumstances.

A Parish Catechetical Leader employs *justice and charity* in actions and decisions.

A Parish Catechetical Leader works *collaboratively* with other parish and Church ministries.

A Parish Catechetical Leader avoids accepting remuneration for work that presents a *conflict of interest* with parish responsibilities.

A Parish Catechetical Leader *facilitates the faith formation of the parishioners* in accord with the vision of current Church documents.

A Parish Catechetical Leader follows *diocesan policies and appropriate legal statutes* to protect the rights of individuals from abuse.

A Parish Catechetical Leader appreciates the talents of others and *empowers* them to use them.

A Parish Catechetical Leader is *inclusive and respectful* of the diversity of the Church.

[*The concluding line states: I have read and understand the above code of ethics and commit to uphold this code in my ministry.*]

DRE/CRE Self-evaluation

The Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation advises that pastors, DRE's, and CRE's engage in annual evaluations and goal-setting, The Office of Human Resources provides a form for standard use which is available through the Human Resources Office.

Director of Religious Education Certification

Directors of Religious Education in the diocese are encouraged to work with their pastors, deanery representatives on the Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors, and the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation toward national certification. Standards and procedures can be found at http://www.lemcertification.org/. In October 2011, these standards were ratified by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Certification Alliance Partners who developed standards for Lay Ecclesial Minister certification included:

- **NCCL   National Conference for Catechetical Leaders**
- **NALM   National Association for Lay Ministry**
- **NFCYM National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry**
- **NPM   National Association for Pastoral Musicians**
- **FDLC   Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions**

Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors
(DBCA)

The Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors is led by the Diocesan Director of Catechesis and Christian Initiation, and joined by the Assistant Director of Catechesis and Christian Initiation, the Director of Youth Ministry, and the Associate Director of Young Adult Ministry. The Board is a representative body consisting of 1 or 2 Directors of Religious Education from each deanery.

The Director of Catechesis and Christian Initiation extends the invitation to membership after consulting with selected members of the prospective board member's deanery. Once the invitation is made, the prospective board member must consult with her or his pastor to assure that time will be granted for attendance at DBCA meetings.

The Board meets on a regular basis, usually nine or ten times per year, to assist in planning, implementing, and evaluating faith formation throughout the diocese. Each deanery is expected to have at least one member in attendance at each meeting. The Board serves as a primary means of communication with DRE's and CRE's on the deanery and the local level.

While there are no term limits for board membership, deanery groups may recommend the appointment of new representatives. Renewal of membership is at the discretion of the Director of Catechesis and Christian Initiation.

Role and Responsibilities of the Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors

The role of the deanery representative to the DBCA is critical for the implementation and success of religious education throughout the diocese.

The representative's role is one of **leadership and communication**. This person will serve as the liaison between the diocesan office and all constituencies in their deanery.

The representative will take a leadership role within the deanery, in the Catechist Formation Program, and in alerting members of the deanery to diocesan sponsored conferences, new resources available, and policies or guidelines being developed.

The representative is responsible for seeing that formation programs are implemented and available for all catechists and that individual DRE and CRE's are keeping accurate records of all training in their individual parishes.

The representative is also responsible to help communicate and update deanery DRE's and CRE's, and sometimes deanery clergy, concerning upcoming programs, celebrations (Rite of Election, DRE honors, etc.), and DRE/CRE retreat opportunities,

The representative reminds deanery members of timelines and due dates for materials and data requested by the diocese and registrations for diocesan events.

Members of the DBCA also advise diocesan officials about new programs, about areas in need of further education and dialogue, and recommend ways to reach underserved populations (different language groups, children with special needs, and so on).

Responsibilities of the Diocese

In order to facilitate attendance and participation by members of the DBCA, the Director of Catechesis will: communicate regularly with members; appoint a secretary to record minutes and send reminders about upcoming meetings and/or responsibilities; provide refreshments and meals as necessary at board meetings; provide adequately in the office budget for gas mileage reimbursement for DBCA member travel and reimbursement for special services provided; engage board members in evaluating, advising, and approving materials to be forwarded to the Bishop for his approval.

3. *Administrative Guidelines for Parish Programs*

Attendance Policies

Program Calendar
Exact program dates and times are to be published and made known to students and their families. Special events such as parent meetings, etc., should also be published well in advance.

Attendance
Clear directives about arrival time, dismissal time, and what to do if a child will be absent are to be included. Normally, it is requested that a call be made within 24 hours of the day of absence. It is advisable to state the expectation regarding contacting the catechist to discuss material which was covered on the day of absence. Attendance records should be retained by the DRE/CRE.

Early Dismissal
Requests for early dismissal are to be made by a parent/guardian. An early dismissal log is maintained and kept in parish files for a minimum of 3 years. The person designated by the parent/guardian signs the log adjacent to the name of the student and date and time of dismissal. Students may be released only to parents or a substitute authorized by the parents/guardians. Proof of identity, such as a valid driver's license, must be obtained from the substitute before the releasing of the student.

Background Check, Safe Environment Training, and Code of Conduct Form

All persons in this diocese who volunteer to work with children or youth under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults are required complete a background check, complete the diocesan safe environment training program, renew this training as directed by the Office of Child Protection Services, and read and sign the Sexual Misconduct Policy and the Volunteer Code of Conduct and confidentiality form.

Documents showing the fulfillment of these requirements must be kept on file in the designated parish office. It is recommended that the volunteer also keep copies of appropriate records, as recommended by the DRE, CRE, or diocesan officials.

Bullying

The Diocese of Charleston seeks to provide a supportive, caring environment in its parish religious education programs. This means that students, volunteers, catechists, and parish staff should feel safe from intimidation in any form.

The diocese's *Administrative Handbook for Pastors and Principals* defines bullying as "repeated behavior involving a deliberate, conscious intent to hurt, threaten, frighten, or humiliate someone. It may include physical and/or verbal intimidation or assault; extortion or taking belongings; oral or written threats as well as cyber-bullying, on the internet and/or text messages; hazing; outrageous teasing, mocking, taunting, putdowns, or name-calling; threatening looks, gestures, or actions; cruel rumors; suggestive comments; false accusations, and/or social isolation."

Bullying behavior shall not be tolerated in any religious education program. It is the responsibility of the parish catechetical leader and the pastor to determine policies and enforce anti-bullying procedures.

Certification Record Keeping for DRE's, CRE's and Catechists

It is the responsibility of the DRE or CRE to keep updated records of all classes, programs, workshops, etc. attended by all catechetical staff. The individual catechists should keep an accurate record of their professional development as well. DRE's and CRE's should forward copies of all records to the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation when the individual has fulfilled all requirements for the pertinent level of certification.

A certificate will then be issued by the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation when requirements for basic, intermediate, or advanced have been met. Copies of these certificates should be kept on file in the parish and in the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation.

Class Hours

Adequate time is needed for quality education. Suggested time frames are the minimum seen as adequate for the catechesis of those under the age of 18.

Thirty hours of catechesis per year is the minimum requirement for children and youth. This would be fulfilled in 30 sessions of one hour's duration, but it may be adapted to fewer sessions of greater length, according to parish need. Where the 30 session model is used, it is recommended that they be allotted one hour and a quarter to one hour and a half to allow additional time for prayer and other activities.

Adult catechetical sessions are adapted to local needs and the nature of programs. RCIA sessions may be held year-round, with individuals joining at various points, or on a catechetical year model. Pastors and RCIA coordinators are urged to see to it that adequate time is given to catechumens and to candidates for them to worship with the parish faith community, pray with the RCIA group, receive Biblical and doctrinal

formation, engage in selected social events and service activities with the parish, and experience appropriate rites and rituals. These are outlined in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Lessons and methodology should be age appropriate and considerate of persons' individual circumstances.

Copyright Laws

All DRE's/CRE's must be aware of the copyright laws which deal with "fair use" of copied material.

Curricula and Guidelines

The following curricula and directives are essential in formulating a comprehensive religious education program. These resources are available in every parish office and on the diocesan website: www.sccatholic.org
- Catechists and Certification
- El curriculo religioso para los niños
- Elementary Religion Curriculum (Pre-K through Grade 8)
- High School Curriculum
- Otros recursos relativos a RICA, formación de catequistas y educación religiosa
- The RCIA in the Diocese of Charleston

Also available on www.usccb.org are materials on evangelization and catechesis, including information on the "new evangelization," resources concerning catechesis and the celebration of sacraments with persons with disabilities, and materials on discipleship and intercultural understanding. In addition, the following can be printed from the website and have been adopted (in the case of Catholic high school curriculum) or recommended (in the case of youth ministry):
- Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age
- Adaptation of [the above] for Parish and Youth Ministry Programs

Aside from finding these on the web pages mentioned above, individual copies of these, or a looseleaf bound collection of resource materials, can be obtained from the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation.

Liturgical and Sacramental Celebrations

Since worship is a central component of catechesis, well-planned Eucharistic celebrations, as well as varied prayer experiences, are essential throughout the entire program. Preparation for liturgy is a necessary part of catechesis and participants are encouraged to be involved in this planning according to their capabilities.
- Consult the Roman Missal and any current directives for Masses with children issued by the Congregation of Divine Worship. The Eucharistic celebration is not a substitute for education sessions or vice versa.
- Emphasize to parents that celebrating Sunday Eucharist with the parish community is integral to fostering the faith of both students and their families. It makes little sense for children to attend religious education sessions if they are not also participating regularly in parish worship.

- Ongoing catechesis for and celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is essential for the intermediate, junior high and high school levels.

Multi-media Resources

A variety of film, DVD, video, Smart Board, Promethean Board, iPad, and other resources have been developed in religious education. These are to be used as teaching tools to enhance a lesson, rather than as a substitute for a lesson. The use of technology should always serve the content of the lesson. These should be previewed by the catechist and are best utilized with the catechist's own introduction, specific questions, and conclusions. AV listings are available from the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation. These are continuously being revised and updated. Aside from diocesan holdings, many parishes have DVD collections for use with children and also for use with adult faith formation and Bible study. Many of these can also be used for catechist certification hours. In addition, the diocese possesses home-made DVD's of 45 minute segments done with the Cardinal Newman High School faculty on topics covered in basic catechist certification. These are available upon request.

Registration Forms

Registration forms include custody information aside from the usual information (name, parents' name, address, phone number, sacramental information, school, parish, where the student is registered, etc.). A registration form includes information that asks for a designated person who may be called in the event a child needs to go home and the parent cannot be reached. Room for any pertinent medical conditions (e.g., allergies to food that might be served at a party, bee stings, etc.) and/or special educational needs parents wish to reveal, are so noted. Since these forms may contain sensitive information, they should be stored in a locked file.

A new form must be completed every time there is a change of information. Registration forms should be kept in the parish files for a minimum of 3 years.

Retreats

Retreats are important components of the adolescent catechetical experience. Evenings of reflection as well as day-long and overnight retreats offer opportunities to explore Christian values as an integral part of their everyday experience. Diocesan guidelines set forth in administrative manuals for school principals and for youth ministers also apply to parish religious education programs.   These manuals are available at www.sccatholic.org.

For children preparing for First Penance and First Communion, many mini-retreat options have proved successful and catechetically effective. Day-long and overnight retreats are commonplace for those preparing for Confirmation. While the retreat is not absolutely necessary for aspiring *confirmandi,* it is highly recommended and expected by many pastors.

Service

In order to convey the message that service to others is essential to the Catholic Christian lifestyle, an age-appropriate service project should be planned at each level. If a service project is arranged offsite, a Parent/Guardian Permission and Liability Waiver, along with a detailed description of the event, must be

furnished to all parents of guardians of students 18 years of age or younger and returned with appropriate signature(s) before the event.

Textbooks

Textbooks are approved by the Pastor, in consultation with the Director or Coordinator of Religious Education. Approved biblical texts are listed on the USCCB site. Any textbook with an imprimatur and/or USCCB approval may be chosen and is considered approved by the diocese. The approved list is updated regularly throughout the year. It may be readily found under www.usccb.org, Evangelization and Catechesis, drop-down on Subcommittee on the Catechism, Conformity List. While no series exactly coincides with the diocesan elementary curriculum, all approved religion texts are adaptable to it.

It is recommended that one series of textbooks be used through grade 6. Sacramental preparation programs may be chosen from a series other than those used in the regular religious education program.

A resource collection of samples of current student and teacher texts is housed at the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation. Copies are often given on loan or as an outright gift to those seeking resources, particularly for small religious education programs. Selections of texts for evaluation are available for anyone's perusal, with an appointment helping to assure that appropriate works are immediately available. Every catechist is to follow the teacher's manual and adapt its format and activities appropriately, after being instructed in methodology and the effective use of texts.

4. Supervision and Safety of Students

Accident/Incident Report

Whenever a young person is injured on or off-site, an Accident Report should be completed immediately. A copy should be retained in the parish file for a minimum of 3 years. (Forms should be reviewed by the pastor prior to filing.) A second copy should be given to the guardians/parents of the injured youth. Copies should be sent to the diocesan insurance office and the diocesan Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation via e-mail or fax as soon as possible—preferably within 24-48 hours of the injury.

The pastor or catechetical leader should make a follow-up phone call to the parent(s)/guardian(s) within 24-72 hours after the injury to see how the injured party is feeling. The follow-up phone call shows compassion and may help to reduce or diminish a claim.

Allergies

It should be recognized that life threatening food allergies are an important condition affecting many children, and attempts should be made to provide a healthy and safe learning environment for all students.

Catechetical leaders and catechists should make every attempt to provide for the safety and well-being of all students. However, it is important to stress that this is not a guarantee that any facility is peanut-free or allergy free.   Catechetical leaders should request written notification regarding a child's specific allergy concerns. Catechetical leaders should attempt to make reasonable accommodations for the needs of all students.

In cases in which students have potentially life-threatening allergies or other medical conditions, catechists should be instructed in the proper use of appropriate medications such as, but not limited to, epi-pens, rescue inhalers, glucose tablets or glucagon.

Automobile Drivers

Drivers for religious education sponsored or other parish activities should be at least 21 years of age or older (24 years of age for rental vehicles), have a valid, non-probationary driver license and no physical disability that could in any way impair his/her ability to drive a vehicle safely.

All drivers must complete the diocesan driver information form and background check. This form, along with a photocopy of his/her proof of insurance and driver's license, should remain on file at the church. The volunteer must hold the level of insurance stipulated by diocesan policy. The car used must have a valid and current registration and current license plate.

Catechetical leaders and other parish leaders must follow current diocesan policy regarding limitations on the use of passenger vans (as distinct from family vans), whether parish owned or individually owned. Current diocesan policy must be followed if buses are being rented, with contracts and insurance policies subject to review by Catholic Mutual Insurance and the Diocesan Finance Office.

The "two adult rule" must be used when youth are being transported to and from church-related events.

Each driver should carry a copy of the parental release forms for each youth in their vehicle in case they become separated from the group. (Special care should be taken to instruct the drivers on the confidentiality of information contained on the parental release forms.)

Cell Phones

Neither catechists nor students are to use cellphones for personal calls or texting during religious education sessions or activities. Catechists and other adult volunteers may have cellphones available for emergency use. Students should have cellphones turned off during religious education sessions and activities and should reserve their use for contact with parents or other persons designated to pick them up at the conclusion of sessions.

Child Protection

The norms set forth by the Office of Child Protection Services regarding paid and volunteer personnel and student training must be followed. These can be found at www.sccatholic.org.

Classroom Rules Governing Behavior

Guidelines governing behavior are to be clearly written and have a legitimate purpose. Classroom rules are most effective when they are posted in plain view and followed consistently.

Confidentiality Issues

Volunteers are bound by confidentiality norms and are instructed to sign the current diocesan Confidentiality Agreement. In the course of their ministry, they may learn confidential information about children or other volunteer personnel. They are expected to keep this information confidential in any setting inside or outside the program. Information which would save someone from harm must be shared. Student lists are to be treated as confidential. All information with child's name, address, telephone, etc. should be shredded before discarding. No pictures of children should be published on the parish web site unless parents have given their permission in writing on a standard photo release form. Even with such permission, names of children should not be used in any publicity or religious news reporting which pictures them. Photo release forms can be found at www.sccatholic.org.

CPR

If a situation arises when CPR is administered, the Good Samaritan law applies (see *South Carolina Code of Law* Section 15-1-310). Documentation is necessary. All DRE's/CRE's should be CPR-certified. If AED equipment is available, it should be used only by instructed personnel.

Custody Situations

In a custody situation, it is the parents' responsibility to inform the DRE/CRE of any court-ordered decision regarding the release of a child to an unauthorized person. Catechists should be apprised of such information on a need-to-know basis. A child may not be dismissed to the custody of anyone other than a custodial parent/guardian unless specifically stated by that custodial parent/guardian in writing. Written documentation should be kept in parish files for a minimum of 3 years.

Discipline

Maintaining discipline is to be considered an aspect of fostering Christian development and not a form of punishment. Catechists are urged to exercise vigilance and good classroom management techniques in order to avoid disciplinary problems. If problems occur, the DRE/CRE is encouraged to work with the catechists and the parents/guardian of the children involved.

In keeping with common policy throughout the diocese, parishes ought to have a statement defining and forbidding corporal punishment. Corporal punishment includes hitting, pushing, shoving, and slapping.

Parishes should develop consequences for inappropriate behavior and consequences should be explicitly spelled out before events take place. When disciplining, the "two-deep approach" should be used, meaning two adults should always be present.

Evacuation Procedures

Catechists must be thoroughly familiar with evacuation procedures, exit doors from their classrooms, etc. Students are to become acquainted with these procedures on the first day of class. Each room has on display an evacuation plan showing proper exit rules. The evacuation plan should be clearly visible at the door which is the entrance to the classroom or meeting room space. If an evacuation plan is not posted, the catechetical leader must notify the parish office and request an evacuation copy for the room.

Field Trips

As always, written parent permission slips and also the payment of appropriate student insurance is required for off-site activities. When sponsoring an activity with children or young people away from parish premises, there must be one adult leader per eight older adolescents (ages 14 – 19) and two adults per six early adolescents (ages 10 – 14). If both female and male youth will be present at the event, there must be both female and male leaders. On overnight events, there must be a minimum of two adult leaders of the same gender sleeping in a dorm-style room with the young people (six or more youth), but at no time should an adult be left alone with a youth.

In hotel settings, youth should be housed with youth and adults (including priests and seminarians of any age) are to be housed with adults. Single bed or bunk bed accommodations are preferred. Each youth is required to bring a sleeping bag in cases in which youth may be staying in a hotel where they will share a bed with another youth.

If younger children are involved, it is recommended that parents accompany them on a field trip, pilgrimage, retreat, or similar activity. Parents or guardians accompanying children for such events are to complete an Adult Hold Harmless Indemnity Agreement. Attendance at overnight events cannot be mandatory and should never be considered a condition for reception of a sacrament. The accompanying parents or guardians must each complete an *Adult Hold Harmless Indemnity Agreement* form. This form can be found at www.sccatholic.org.

An emergency action plan should be developed for overnight events to cover the following emergencies: fire, lost participants, physical injury, sudden illness, drowning, hurricanes, and tornadoes. The emergency action plan should be in written form and posted where it is readily accessible to adults.

A doctor, registered nurse or someone certified in basic first aid and CPR should be present during all parish-sponsored overnight events. When sponsoring a swimming event at either a camp facility, beach, or public or private pool, there must be a certified lifeguard present. Before such an event, the catechetical leader or the pastor should consult with Catholic Mutual Insurance concerning the current guidelines for events which include swimming.

A travel plan for overnight trips, containing important phone numbers, site location, travel route, etc., should be left with the person serving as the main contact at the parish in the event of an emergency.

Fire Doors

The DRE/CRE or other designated person should inspect all exit facilities before children enter the building. All usable doors must be unlocked from the inside allowing easy exit of the building. Exits must remain unblocked—free and clear at all times for means of emergency egress.

Because of the short duration of religious education sessions, fire drills or other emergency drills are not normally expected. However, the DRE/CRE and catechists should be aware of fire emergency procedures, the location of fire extinguishers, and they are to keep accurate accounts of students and adults present during sessions.

Medical Emergencies

In some cases, children attending parish religious education may be subject to potentially life-threatening episodes (due, for example, to allergies, epilepsy, diabetes, etc.) which would require immediate attention and action. In such cases, parents are expected to inform the DRE/CRE concerning emergency procedures to be followed. The DRE/CRE is to instruct the catechist and, if applicable, the classroom assistant as to how to respond to an emergency situation (allergic reaction, seizure, hypoglycemia, etc.) and how to administer the care needed.

In other cases of accident or injury, the catechist and/or the DRE/CRE should dial 911, notify the parent or parents, administer appropriate first aid as needed, and complete the Accident Report form for Non-employees.

Medication

Because of the short duration of each session, medication should generally not be dispensed by anyone associated with the Religious Education Program except in cases such as those mentioned above. Catechists may need to be instructed in the proper use of appropriate medications such as, but not limited to, epi-pens, rescue inhalers, glucose tablets or glucagon.

Parental Notification

When sensitive or controversial issues will be discussed, catechists are to inform the DRE/CRE, who will assist in parental notification.

Permission Slips

A signed parent/guardian consent form and liability waiver must be submitted by each participant for each off-site or overnight event. A new form must be completed for each event. Young people cannot and will not be allowed to participate without this form. Use only authorized permission slips.

Always give the parents advance notice and full information—including brochures, flyers, itinerary, agendas—regarding the events in which their children/youth will be participating. Parents must give written permission each time a youth will be leaving church property. These permission forms must be kept in parish files for a minimum of 3 years.

Recommendations

All DRE's/CRE's should strictly follow diocesan policy regarding job recommendations and referrals.

Referrals

Catechetical leaders as well as volunteers may be held responsible for advice given to adults or children. It is advisable to listen to the problems being shared. If there is any concern that help or assistance is required, direct parents to seek help from professionals equipped to offer advice and counseling. A list of available professionals with phone numbers is obtainable through the local Catholic Charities Office.

Reporting of Child Abuse

All parish personnel, compensated and volunteer, must be thoroughly in-serviced on their duties pertaining to the diocesan sexual abuse policy, as well as the State of South Carolina laws regarding child and sexual abuse.

If abuse is suspected, the following steps should be taken:
   i.   Follow the guidelines as outlined in the Diocesan Abuse policy
   ii. Contact your pastor or parish life administrator and the parish safe environment coordinator
   iii. Contact and report information to the Vicar General's office.

While not everyone involved in catechetical ministry is regarded by law as a mandatory reporter, the Diocese of Charleston expects volunteers working with children and adolescents to be reporters.

Search and Seizure

Parishes will have a search and seizure policy in the event it is suspected that a young person is in possession of illegal drugs, alcohol or weapons. The police will be summoned. This policy must be communicated to all participants and parents.
Volunteers never conduct a search.

Social Media

Social media is a powerful communication tool. However, the use of social media must be carefully exercised. Catechetical leaders and catechists are to avoid personal social media relationships with students and children outside of official parish communication. The norms set forth by the Office of Child Protection Services must be followed at all times. These can be found at www.sccatholic.org.

Student Pregnancy

Pregnancy is not a reason for dismissal from the religious education program. Retaining the student in the program shows support for the student who has chosen to give life.

Supervision

Parishes are responsible for providing adult supervision for young people while they are on parish grounds, both before and after programs. The "two adult rule" must be obeyed at all times, meaning that at least two adults must remain present until the last participant has left. Adults are defined as persons 21 years of age and older. Persons under 21 may assist with youth programs if they are acting in the role of assistants or helpers, but should not have total responsibility for younger children.

Visitor Policy

For the safety of the children and the security of the building, all visitors, including parents, must report to a designated place upon entering the building while the program is in session. Outside doors to buildings should be kept locked and that a doorbell system utilized. Visitors would then be personally admitted to the building.   A list of expected visitors should be given to the designated person(s) in charge of door entry. Each visitor should be asked to identify himself or herself and to name which person or group he or she is visiting. Anyone who has regular access to children is, it must be remembered, required to have background screening and safe environment training.

Weather Events

In the case of inclement weather, suitable provision should be made for excused absences from catechetical sessions. Catechetical leaders also have the discretion to cancel sessions due to weather-related concerns. A means should be developed for contacting parents/guardians in such an event. In events such as tornado warnings, students should be brought to a safe interior space away from any glass. An occasional tornado drill may be advisable.

5. Catechesis for Children and Others with Special Needs

The DRE or CRE has a responsibility to provide catechesis for children with special needs. After identifying these children and their needs, an individual plan for each student can be developed. In developing individual plans, there must be collaboration with parents, catechists, classroom teachers, if possible, and the guidance of an Individual Education Coordinator.

The Office of Catechesis is also able to provide referrals to resource persons and localized programs which may assist in sacramental preparation for youth and adults with special needs.

Identification of Students

Children with special needs can be identified in the following ways:
- Religious Education Registration forms
- Forms sent to teachers requesting them to identify children who have special needs
- Parish records: check parish records for children of all ages with special needs
- Letters may be sent to all parents of religious education students explaining the program and the search for pupils with educational difficulties

Individual Education Coordinator

Where possible, an Individual Education Coordinator may be selected to help make parish religious education inclusive for persons with special needs. If it is possible, a person with a special education background, or someone who is willing to receive appropriate training, is the best choice for this position. An important consideration in the selection of an Individual Coordinator is his/her willingness to treat each child in a loving manner and accept him/her as a gifted person. The Individual Education Coordinator should have the following programs or options available for students:

Children with moderate needs
Placement (mainstreaming or inclusion) in a regular classroom may be appropriate with the addition of a tutor (parent or other) who works in the classroom or at home with the student to give supplementary assistance. For instance, the deaf child may need signing; a learning disabled child may need more verbal clues or similar adaptations, and a developmentally disabled child may need a slower pace or audio-visual aids.

Children with more severe disabilities
Placement in a small group or one-on-one placement or in-home catechesis with parent may be necessary for the child. The selection of a program will stem from awareness of the child's ability, learning style, development, disability, and maturity.

Sacramental Textbooks

Sacramental preparation texts for children with special needs, as well as methods of individualizing lesson plans for children with development disabilities are available at the USCCB Department of Education at www.usccb.org.

Regional/Deanery Planning for Small Parishes

Small parishes in a geographical area may pool resources in order to provide religious education for children with disabilities. Parishes could share expenses.

Diocesan Resources

Aside from referrals to those with expertise in special religious education (several of whom reside in the diocese), the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation on an occasional basis is able to help in funding an interpreter with skills in American Sign Language for catechetical matters.   It also has encouraged and given oversight to LAMBS Ministry in the Piedmont deanery, a program which began as an outreach to autistic children but has expanded its services to adults and to persons with other special needs in a family based catechetical ministry.

South Carolina Department of Education Definitions of Handicapping Conditions

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act ADA of 1990, a "person with a disability" means any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

For more information, go to www.scddc.state.sc.us.

Catholic Resources

Both the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (www.ncpd.org) and SPRED (Special Religious Development), based in the Archdiocese of Chicago and able to be contacted through info@spred.org, promote awareness and provide information for religious education for those with special needs.

6. *Catechetical Textbook Evaluation*

A catechetical textbook series is an important tool for faith formation. Its theological dimensions are best summed up in the six components of catechesis:

- Proclaiming the MESSAGE of Jesus and the teaching of the Catholic Church
- Creating an environment and opportunities for building COMMUNITY
- Promoting knowledge and experience of LITURGY and COMMUNAL PRAYER
- Teaching and promoting PERSONAL PRAYER
- Proclaiming the Church's MORAL and SOCIAL TEACHING in all areas of catechesis
- Providing opportunities to give SERVICE, linking faith with action (see GDC 85-86)

In choosing a textbook series, it is wise to first form a committee composed of priests, parish leaders, and catechists.

Committee members should each describe in writing and then discuss what his/her reasons are for being both satisfied/dissatisfied with the current textbook series. This will help focus on total parish needs as they evaluate various series. Once all evaluations are completed and collected, they are collated and developed into a committee recommendation.

For more detailed evaluation, see Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines.

Textbook Review Worksheet

Name of Series:_____

Publisher:_____

Reviewer:_____

 Copyright Date:_____

Evaluation Code

3 – Outstanding   *2 - Satisfactory*   *1 - Minimally Adequate*   *0 – Unacceptable*

The Series as a Whole

<u>Circle One</u>

1.   Scope and Sequence charts clearly explain basic themes and their   3 2 1 0
     progression in depth from year to year.

2.   As a whole the series develops the six catechetical dimensions of   3 2 1 0
     message, community, liturgy and other communal prayer, personal prayer,
     moral and social teaching, and service.

3.   The series suggests a wide variety of media.   3 2 1 0

4.   The series utilizes a wide variety of teaching techniques related to   3 2 1 0
     students' various learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic.)

Individual Textbooks

Grade Level Reviewed:_____

Title of Textbook:_____

Publisher:_____

Format   <u>Circle One</u>

1.   The text honestly and fairly represents:
     Various races and cultures   3 2 1 0
     Both genders   3 2 1 0
     Other religious beliefs   3 2 1 0
     Various family groupings (two parents, single parent, intergenerational, extended) 3 2 1 0

2.   The text layout is easy to follow.   3 2 1 0

3.	The text is balanced between information to be read, relevant discussion, questions, and other suggested learning activities.	3 2 1 0
4.	The vocabulary with which ideas are expressed, as well as the sentence structure, are age-appropriate.	3 2 1 0
5.	The graphics in this text are balanced between contemporary photos, Christian art, charts, and graphs.	3 2 1 0
6.	The graphics in this text are representative of various races, genders, cultures ages, and family groupings.	3 2 1 0

Content Circle One

7.	The creedal content is presented in an age-appropriate manner.	3 2 1 0
8.	Factual information intended for memorization is introduced gradually and is age-appropriate.	3 2 1 0

Community Circle One

9. The text fosters a sense of community by:
Suggesting ways in which students can live the Gospel message in their own lives 3 2 1 0
Offering discussion questions reflecting life experiences common to this age group 3 2 1 0
Offering activities or projects that require cooperation 3 2 1 0
Guiding understanding, at their level, of the history of both the local and the wider Church communities 3 2 1 0

Worship Circle One

10. The text offers a variety of suggestions for group prayer, including:
Formal prayer (e.g. the Lord's Prayer) 3 2 1 0
Scriptural prayer services 3 2 1 0
Shared, spontaneous prayer 3 2 1 0
Liturgical/sacramental celebrations 3 2 1 0
Rosary, Benediction, Stations of the Cross, etc. 3 2 1 0

11.. Suggestions are given for student-planned prayer services 3 2 1 0

12. Students are taught various forms of personal prayer (meditation, imaginative prayer, journaling, mantras). 3 2 1 0

Christian Living and Service Circle One

13. In the texts:
Students are encouraged to discover the Christian response to life 3 2 1 0

situations

Students are assisted in forming their consciences according to Gospel values	3 2 1 0
Students are challenged to live out the Gospel message in service to families, friends, parish, local community, world community.	3 2 1 0

Assistance for the Catechist   Circle One

14.   The catechist's manual includes adequate historical and doctrinal material presented at an adult level for the catechist's enrichment.   3 2 1 0

15.   The manual contains:

Advice about the student's developmental level (psychological, biological, spiritual)	3 2 1 0
Easily understandable scope and sequence charts	3 2 1 0
Suggestions for using various methodologies	3 2 1 0
Well-developed guides for lesson planning	3 2 1 0
Testing instruments which are thorough and age-appropriate	3 2 1 0
Good references to additional resources: AV materials, bibliographies	3 2 1 0
Easy correlation with the student text	3 2 1 0

Resources for Parent, Family, and Parish Development   Circle One

16.   The student text includes notes/pages for parent/family involvement:

That creatively summarize the unit/lesson's faith message	3 2 1 0
That suggest reinforcing home activities	3 2 1 0
That provide adult faith enrichment for the parent	3 2 1 0

17   There are materials available for parents that focus on particular topics (e.g. sacraments).   3 2 1 0

18.   There are materials available for the catechist to use in communicating with parents or other community leaders.   3 2 1 0

Additional Resources   Circle One

19.   Support materials such as tapes, videos, songbooks, catechist formation resources, storybooks, etc., either come with the textbooks or can be purchased to accompany them.   3 2 1 0

20.   Support services in catechist formation will be provided by the publishers and include:

Instruction in the use of all text materials	3 2 1 0
Suggestions for "active learning," such as group dynamics, field trips, and service opportunities	3 2 1 0

21.   The publisher offers suggestions for the spiritual development of catechists.   3 2 1 0

7. Sacramental Preparation

Sacraments, as Described by the Bishops of the United States

"We recognize that the Sacraments have a visible and invisible reality, a reality open to all the human senses but grasped in its God-given depths with the eyes of faith. When parents hug their children, for example, the visible reality we see is the hug. The invisible reality the hug conveys is love. We cannot 'see' the love the hug expresses, though sometimes we can see its nurturing effect in the child.

"The visible reality we see in the Sacraments is their outward expression, the form they take, and the way in which they are administered and received. The invisible reality we cannot 'see' is God's grace, his gracious initiative in redeeming us through the death and Resurrection of his Son. His initiative is called *grace* because it is the free and loving gift by which he offers people a share in his life, and shows us his favor and will for our salvation. Our response to the grace of God's initiative is itself a grace or gift from God by which we can imitate Christ in our daily lives." (http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments/)

Rights and Responsibilities of the Faithful

The Diocese of Charleston, with the universal Church, recognizes the right of its baptized members to celebrate a full sacramental life. The diocese also recognizes that pastors, on behalf of the Bishop, have the responsibility to assure that sacraments are celebrated with due reverence and understanding. Thus the diocese asks, unless there are compelling reasons for pastoral exceptions, that children, youth, and adults spend a fitting amount of time being catechized about the meaning of the sacraments they wish to celebrate and the dispositions which the Church expects of them as they receive them. Pastors, DRE's, and CRE's are encouraged to make accommodations for those whose family circumstances, illness, or special need makes it difficult for them to fulfill all aspects of the sacramental preparation program.

A Note on Sacramental Records

As a way of supporting the faithful in their future lives and vocations, it is important that parishes keep accurate and complete sacramental records. The Diocese of Charleston has created a *Sacramental Records Handbook* which details the manner in which these are to be kept.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Preparation for First Penance
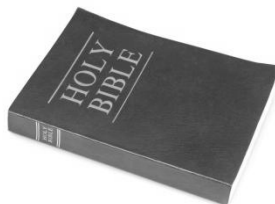
Theology of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is grounded in the very essence of Christ's mission. Christ was sent by God to establish a new covenant: a relationship of everlasting mercy and love (NDC p. 124). The introduction to each rite contains catechetical norms and guidelines appropriate to each sacrament (NDC pp. 114-115).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be understood as a way to help us deal with the reality of sin in our lives. Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of our relationship with God. At the same time, it damages our relationship with one another in the Church.

The rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation emphasizes the Church as a community of repentance and mutual forgiveness and stresses the responsibility of its members to extend Christ's love to all.

The purpose of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to help us celebrate and deepen our efforts to be persons of reconciliation in our world. Participation in the sacrament helps us to understand that just as our God freely forgives us our transgressions, we too should be willing to give and receive forgiveness freely.

The Catholic rite includes three liturgies which reflect this change of emphasis:

- A communal celebration with opportunity for individual confessions
- A rite for the reconciliation of the individual penitent in which the priest ministers to the person as a representative of the Church and the bishop
- A communal reconciliation without individual confession (Used only in extreme circumstances and following the directives of the Holy See)

Diocese of Charleston Policy Statement

Readiness for Reception of the First Reconciliation

- Readiness – not chronological age or school grade – will determine a person's preparedness to encounter Christ in a sacramental celebration.
- The person is to be considered ready to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation when the parents, catechist, and pastor, through dialogue, find the awareness and ability appropriate to age and maturity (See *Code of Canon Law* 913 § 1).

- The person will complete the defined First Reconciliation curriculum and understand the prescribed concepts commensurate with the level of development and experience, age/maturity to assist in readiness.
- Individuals with disabilities are to be given special consideration (See U.S. Bishops' *Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments With Persons With Disabilities* Section II 22-25).
- Ordinarily, a baptized Catholic child should be in a Religious Education Program the year before the year of preparation.

Pastoral Considerations

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be kept distinct from catechesis for the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated for the first time prior to the reception of First Eucharist (NDC p. 135).

Additionally, the options for celebration of the sacrament should be understood.

It is the responsibility of the pastor to ensure that quality catechesis takes place in the parish preparation program:
- Our children belong to various communities which educate and initiate them, including their family or household, school, and parish. While the family is the primary teacher, and the Catholic school religious education or parish religious education program may offer additional religious instruction, it is the parish worshipping community which is the appropriate setting for sacramental initiation and celebration (*Code of Canon Law* 914).
- The preparation for the sacrament should be broader than mere classroom instruction and should include elements which link the students to the parish community.

Parish Role

A parish sacramental program **should bring together Catholic, private, and public school children, and those being home schooled**. There should also be an opportunity for **catechesis with their parents/guardians**.

Considerations:
- The parish-based sacramental preparation program involves liturgical celebrations, parent meetings, days of prayer, acts of service and other appropriate experiences.
- Great care should be taken to ensure that these sessions do not conflict with the regular Catholic school religious education program or the parish religious education program. This calls for collaboration on the part of the pastor, principal, director of religious education, and catechetical leaders.
- The parish preparation program for the reception of a sacrament should be clearly communicated by the parish to families, the schools, and the religious education program.

Preparation and reception of First Penance is to take place in the child's home parish except in cases where pastors or parish administrators have agreed to joint preparation programs and plan the sacramental celebration at a single site.

Considerations:
- Sacraments celebrate the life of the parish and its members.
- Later celebrations of Reconciliation may take place within the Catholic school religious education program or the parish religious education program.
- A pastor should never deny a person's request to confess to a priest of his or her own choosing, but he should know where a child goes if the child chooses another confessor.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Christian Initiation

Although not a sacrament of initiation, there are often questions about celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in conjunction with the process of initiation. These policies are provided here for the sake of completeness.

Catechumens' Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Catechumens preparing for baptism (both children and adults) do not celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to baptism. They are to be invited to participate in non-sacramental penitential rites as found in the RCIA #291-303 so that they may come to understand the reality of sin and appreciate the comforting message of God's pardon.

Children's Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Non-Catholic children who are baptized in infancy but preparing for reception into the full communion of the Roman Catholic Church should be adequately prepared and encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation sometime prior to their formal reception into the Catholic Church. (RCIA 482; National Statutes 27)

Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.
The Code of Canon Law. Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983.
General Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998.
Liturgy Documentary Series 7: Penance and Reconciliation in the Church. Washington, DC: Office of Publishing and Promotion, 1986.
The Rite of Penance. New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1975.
National Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005.

Other helpful resources for catechists' reading

Forte, Bruno. *Why Go to Confession?* Boston: Pauline, 2007.
Rupnik, Marko Ivan, S.J. *Human Fraility, Divine Redemption*. Boston: Pauline, 2011.

The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist and Preparation for First Communion

Theology of the Sacrament of Eucharist

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (LG 11). All other sacraments are connected and oriented toward the Eucharist (CCC 1324). "The Eucharist is the ritual, sacramental action of giving thanks and praise to the Father. It is the sacrificial memorial of Christ and his body, the Church, and is the continuing presence of Christ in his Word and his Spirit" (NDC p. 123).

Catholic theology has always seen a link between the Eucharist as a memorial, a celebration of the death of the Lord, and a sacrifice offered both by the community of believers and by Christ.

The real presence of Jesus is fundamental to the understanding of the Eucharist in the Catholic tradition. Christ is present in the faithful gathered in His name, in the Word as the Scriptures are read and explained, in the person of the minister and in a unique way under the species of the Eucharist (SC 7).

Eucharist is also the sacrament of the Church's unity. In Eucharist, the Church becomes most fully itself. It is visible in the assembly which listens to God's word, breaks bread, and shares the cup until He comes. In Eucharist we celebrate our life together as a community, the presence of Christ in our midst, the Word that is proclaimed and explained, and the paschal mystery of life, death and resurrection. We celebrate our unity with Christ in communion and service.

Eucharist is not an isolated event in the individual's life. It is a step in the process of growth in life. The active presence of Christ demands change and conversion in graced stages where God touches us in special ways. Eucharist is the heart of Christian life.

In addition to the sacrificial and atonement aspects of the Eucharist, Vatican II reminded us of the biblical notion of the Eucharist as a meal (GS 38). The Mass is the community's celebration of unity. It is a sacrament of initiation into the community a well as a symbol of the worshipping community. The most frequent theme found in conciliar documents concerning the Eucharist is unity. The Church is the Body of Christ and in the Eucharist, the Church is called to live out this reality.

Diocese of Charleston Policy Statement

Readiness for the Reception of First Eucharist

Readiness – not chronological age or school grade – will determine a child's preparedness to encounter Christ in a sacramental celebration. The child must exhibit:
- Knowledge of the mysteries of faith according to his/her ability

- Desire to participate in the community's liturgy and receive Eucharist with some degree of regularity
- Willingness to participate in the process of immediate preparation
- Capacity to hear and respond to the Gospel stories of Jesus who loves and cares for us and who invites our friendship
- Capacity to be aware of one's affiliation with the community through baptism
- Ability to participate in Eucharistic celebration (e.g. simple responses, reverence, attention, etc.)
- Ability to distinguish between ordinary bread and Eucharist
- Ability to express some desire to receive Jesus
- Readiness through the completion of a defined First Eucharist curriculum and understanding of the prescribed concepts commensurate with the child's level of development and experience, age/maturity
- Individuals with disabilities are to be given special consideration (See U.S. Bishops' Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments With Persons With Disabilities Section II #19-21)

Pastoral Considerations

Catechesis for children must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of individuals. It seeks first to make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life.
- Adequate and meaningful catechesis and experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation must precede the first reception of Eucharist
- Catechesis must include instruction on the Mass as well as on the various concepts implied in celebration of the Eucharist
- Catechesis for First Eucharist is conducted separately from introductory catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, since each sacrament deserves its own concentrated preparation
- Parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing their children for First Eucharist. Catechesis aims to help parents grow in understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and participate readily in catechizing their children
- The decision as to when a child is ready to celebrate the Sacrament of Eucharist for the first time is a decision which rests primarily with parents in consultation with the catechist and priest who will administer the sacrament (Canon 914, NDC p. 127)

Parish Role

A parish sacramental program **should bring together Catholic, private, and public school children, and those being home schooled**. There should also be an opportunity for **catechesis with their parents/guardians**.

Considerations:
- The parish-based sacramental preparation program involves liturgical celebrations, parent meetings, days of prayer, acts of service and other appropriate experiences.
- Great care should be taken to ensure that these sessions do not conflict with the regular Catholic school religious education program or the parish religious education program. This calls for collaboration on the part of the pastor, principal, director of religious education, and catechetical leaders.

- The parish preparation program for the reception of a sacrament should be clearly communicated by the parish to families, school, and the religious education program

The children's **first reception of Holy Eucharist is to take place in their parish unless special permission is granted by the pastor of the home parish,** as may occur when catechesis is shared with another parish or other parishes, a Catholic school, etc.

Considerations:
- The actual celebration of the sacrament should be a parish event, as much as possible, and not just an event for school or religious education students and their parents.
- Later celebrations of Eucharist may take place within the Catholic school religious education program or the parish religious education program.
- Children in the RCIA process will be prepared for the sacrament within their catechumenate sessions.

The Sacrament of Eucharist and Christian Initiation

Since children who have reached the use of reason are considered, for purposes of Christian initiation, to be adults (Canon 852.1), formation of those who have not yet been baptized should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual. They should receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, together with the older catechumens.

Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.
The Code of Canon Law. Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983.
General Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998.
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Study Edition). Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.
National Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005.
Pope John Paul II. *Ecclesia in Eucharistia*. New York: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Pauline edition, 2003*.*

Other helpful resources for catechists' reading

Barron, Rev. Robert. *Eucharist*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008.
Dajczer, Fr. Tadeusz. *Amazing Nearness: Meditations on the Eucharist*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2012.
Dajczer, Fr. Tadeusz. *The Mystery of Faith: Medications on the Eucharist*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2009.
Rolheiser, Ronald, OMI. *Our One Great Act of Fidelity*. New York: Doubleday, 2011.

The Sacrament of Confirmation and Preparation for its Reception

History

During the third and fourth centuries, concern for the integrity of the gospel in the time of persecution led to the development of a lengthy catechumenal process culminating in the celebration of the sacred mysteries during the Easter Vigil. During the vigil, the catechumens professed their faith and were baptized. Clothed in new white garments, they were presented to the bishop who confirmed them. They took their place in the assembly and completed their initiation by sharing in the Eucharist.

The rigors of the Catechumenate tested the sincerity of the candidates and, along with the prayers and support of the community, strengthened them in their faith. With the end of persecution and the growth of the church, the Catechumenate fell into disuse. In the East, the unity of the sacraments was preserved. Priests baptized, confirmed, and admitted infants to Eucharist. In the West, priests baptized infants, but bishops retained their prerogative to confirm. Distance and growing administrative concerns prevented the bishop from getting around his diocese to confirm. The completion of initiation – Confirmation and Eucharist – was delayed.

Later, it became the norm to delay Confirmation and Eucharist until the age of discretion when children could ratify the profession of faith made for them at baptism. The age of discretion was variously interpreted and this, along with the problem of availability of the bishop, led to the practice of Confirmation at different ages over time.

In 1910, Pope Pius X lowered the age for the reception of First Eucharist. This changed the order of the sacraments of initiation. The Second Vatican Council called for the restoration of the catechemunate for adults. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, introduced in the United States in 1974 and mandated in 1988, restores the order and the unity of the sacraments of initiation for adults. The RCIA also provides an adaptation for use in the Christian initiation of unbaptized children who have reached catechetical age and restores the order and unity of the sacraments of initiation for them. Vatican II also calls for the revision of the Rite of Confirmation. Both the introduction to the 1971 Rite of Confirmation and Canon 891 postpone Confirmation to the age of discretion or even later.

Thus, we have two distinct orders for the initiation of children. For those baptized in infancy, completion of initiation is postponed to at least the age of discretion. For those who have reached the age of reason and were not baptized in infancy, what is prescribed for an adult is applicable; i.e. full initiation (Canon 852).

If RCIA envisions a process of years for the preparation of adults for initiation, then a lengthy process for children is certainly in order. Vatican II and later catechetical congresses encouraged pastors to draw on the human sciences and read the signs of the times. These sciences have demonstrated the distinctiveness of both childhood and adolescence. Confirmation in adolescent years permits the recipients to place themselves more consciously in God's loving care as they pronounce their yes to God, with all the insecurity that characterizes the human condition. It also permits them to express their belonging to a larger community, and it permits the community to express its encouragement to them in its own act of faith.

Canon law allows much latitude and suggests that the question of proper age for Confirmation is not yet closed. The Code of Canon Law requires that the candidates for Confirmation be "suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew one's baptismal promises" (Canon 889.2).

Growth in faith is a life-long process. It is essential that opportunities which foster formation and growth be continually offered for all persons in our faith communities. It is within the context of this on-going growth in faith of the community and the candidate that Confirmation and the preparation for the sacrament should be understood.

Role of the Community

"It is the responsibility of the people of God to prepare the baptized for Confirmation." (Introduction to Rite of Confirmation 3)

Although there is a core of sponsoring persons directly involved in the preparation process for Confirmation, the sacrament is part of an initiation into the whole community. When the community actively participates in the initiation process of welcoming, preparing, and supporting the candidate, it results in enormous benefit not only for those initiated, but also for the entire community. Initiation of new members is inseparable from on-going conversion and renewal of the adult members of the local church.

The Role of Supporting Persons

"Supporting persons" are those who have particular roles in the sacramental preparation process. They are:
- Families
- Sponsors
- Catechists
- Clergy

The Family

The participation of the candidate's family is an important factor in understanding when the sacramental process can best be begun and celebrated. The family encourages the candidate to dialogue with the parish priests and catechetical ministers regarding his/her readiness to seek Confirmation. By becoming more aware of the meaning of the initiation process, and by sharing this with the candidate, the family can

fulfill its appropriate role. Interested participation in parish-sponsored sessions for family members is an essential and important element.

The Sponsor

What is a Sponsor?
>   The sponsor:
- Teaches faith by personal example
- Leads by being a model
- Lends support in difficulties
- Is prepared to vouch for the sincerity of the candidate
- Is actively affiliated with the parish sacramental process

Qualifications of the Sponsor
>   The Sponsor:
- Understands and takes seriously his/her own baptismal promises
- Is expected to show his/her continued acceptance of the Gospel challenge
- Lives a life of faith in and through a parish affiliation
- Needs to have completed the initiation process (received Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation)
- Must be at least sixteen (16) years of age
- Must receive a letter of recommendation from his/her pastor
- May not be the parent of the candidate
- May be the baptismal sponsor of the candidate

Preparation of the Sponsor
>   The sponsor is called to:
- Actively support and encourage the candidate
- Pray with and for the candidate
- Act as a faith mentor or guide to the candidate
- Be involved in the sacramental preparation process of the candidate

The sponsor must realize that **this ministry is ongoing**. It is the sponsor who is called to continue to nurture the faith of the fully initiated person beyond the sacramental celebration.

The Catechist

The catechist, as witness and role model, actively participates in the parish public worship and ministerial life.

Responsibilities of the Catechist
>   The catechist is responsible for:
- Fostering a deeper understanding and knowledge of faith
- An awareness of ministerial possibilities
- Communicating an understanding of Church as a sacramental and pilgrim people

Qualifications of the Catechist

The catechist is a person who:

- Seeks to be continually updated in current theology
- Understands faith development
- Is attuned to the appropriate methods of faith formation
- Is comfortable with different learning styles
- Interacts effectively with other sponsoring persons to insure a balanced process of initiation for candidates

Clergy

As a liturgical and pastoral leader, the priest or deacon brings his own special presence to the Confirmation preparation process. He knows and experiences the diverse life and activities of the parish, and is acquainted with the candidates, their families, sponsors, and the catechists. He recognizes and appreciates his role in relation to the various other ministers of initiation, all of who contribute to the common sacramental task.

Responsibilities of the Clergy

The priest and the deacon:

- Help the members of the parish community to understand their role toward the candidates
- Become familiar with the Confirmation preparation process by participating in its planning and ongoing evaluation
- Are available to the candidates, sponsors, and catechists for spiritual counseling; priests are available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharistic celebrations
- Join the other ministers of initiation in introducing the candidate to various parish ministries which they might enter

The Role of the Candidate

Preparation

Parish-centered Confirmation preparation is to be a special process **distinct from and in addition to** the ongoing adult and youth catechesis, which the parish provides.

Readiness and Willingness

Readiness cannot be determined by the calendar alone. The process for determining readiness is one in which the individual who is seeking to enter a Confirmation preparation process is encouraged to dialogue with family, sponsors, parish priests, and catechetical ministers.

Indications of readiness include:

- Weekly participation in the Eucharist and the prayer life of their faith community
- The ability to freely request the Sacrament of Confirmation and to give the reasons for doing so
- An adequate grasp of the basic content of the Catholic faith
- An openness to growth in faith and opportunities for Christian service
- A recognition by the candidate that he/she is a unique individual with gifts to offer and a willingness to share these gifts with the faith community

Participation

Elements of the preparation process should include:

Catechetical Sessions
- ❖ Regular attendance at catechetical sessions is vitally important
- ❖ Special sessions, which may include parents and/or sponsors, are also critical to good preparation for the sacrament.

Retreat
- ❖ At least one day in length, possibly overnight
- ❖ Distinct from other retreat experiences

Service
- ❖ Integral to all religious education, emphasis placed on opportunities afforded rather than accumulation of hours
- ❖ Varied opportunities both within the parish community and the community at large are encouraged

Pre-Requisites Before Direct Preparation
- ❖ Readiness
- ❖ Participation in religious education classes in a parish setting or a Catholic school

Direct Preparation
- ❖ Well-planned sessions, which include opportunities for prayer and time to reflect on the meaning of ministerial and apostolic service experience, should be provided.
- ❖ Main areas of reflection include:
  - ➢ Relationship with Jesus and the body of Christ (a Pilgrim People)
  - ➢ Meaning of the Sacraments of Initiation
  - ➢ Mission of the Church and the Call to Ministry (Christian Lifestyle)
  - ➢ Personal prayer and community worship
  - ➢ Individual gifts and talents and the Gifts of the Spirit

- ❖ Opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the celebration of Confirmation should be provided at convenient times.

Summary

Confirmation is a ratification and renewal of Baptism, freely and deliberately done. It is a continuation of the Christian's baptismal commitment. The process of preparing for and celebrating Confirmation should stress the unity of Christian Initiation.

Confirmation is a celebration of the Church, not merely a personal moment in the life of the individual. The local Church witnesses and accepts the commitment of the newly confirmed while the community affirms its own baptismal faith. It is important that the local community realize that it cannot ask more of the confirmation candidate than it is willing to do itself.

Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.
The Code of Canon Law. Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983.
Confirmation: Strengthened by the Spirit, Called to Action. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013.
General Directory for Catechesis.   Washington, DC: USCCB, 1998.
National Directory for Catechesis. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005.
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Study Edition). Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.
United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007.
YOUCAT: Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church. trans. Michael J. Miller, intro. Pope Benedict XVI.
      San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011.
Kavanagh, Aiden, OSB. *Confirmation: Its Origins and Reform*. New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1988.
McBride, Alfred, O. Praem. *Teen Catechism*.   Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1995.
Rabbitt, John. *More Like Christ*. Outskirts Press, 2011.
Roberto, John, *Confirmation in the American Catholic Church.* Washington, DC: National Conference
      of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education, 1986.

Children and Full Christian Initiation

The place to begin to understand the implementation of the initiation process with children is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults itself.

It is necessary that the celebration of baptism be properly administered. Thus: "an adult who intends to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and be led through the several stages to sacramental initiation, in accord with the order of initiation adapted by the conference of bishops and the special norms published by it" (Canon 851).

What is prescribed in the Canons on the baptism of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the use of reason (Canon 852).

The following are a few of the pastoral guidelines to keep in mind when reviewing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* for insight into the initiation of children:

- Chapter one of part II of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* deals with the adaptation of the initiation process for children of catechetical age. For purposes of initiation, Canon 852 of the Code of Canon Law mandates that **we use the same directives** for children who have attained the use of reason (completed seven years of age, cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 11) as we do with adults.
- The initiation of children of catechetical age follows the same pattern as the initiation of adults, including full sacramental initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.
- The celebration of the rites best occurs within the Sunday assembly.
- Avoid celebrations for "children only." A parish community celebrates the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens with all the inquirers who are ready --- adults and children together, as an intergenerational community. Separating people for these celebrations sends the wrong message.
- The process adapted for children takes seriously the social world of the child – family and peers – and incorporates them into the initiation process. "The children's progress…*depends* on the help and example of their companions and on the influence of their parents" (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, No. 254).
- These peer companions should accompany the catechumens throughout the initiation process.
- The peer companions who have accompanied the catechumens throughout this process "may be completing their Christian initiation in the sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist at this same celebration" (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Nos. 308, 323).

Read all of part I of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* to get the larger context for understanding the implementation with children.

Christian Initiation With Children: Recommended Resources

Primary Sources:

    Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Study Edition). Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.

Secondary Resources:

    Coffey, Kathy. *Children and Christian Initiation: A Practical Guide to the Catechumenate.* Denver: Living the Good News, Inc., 1995.
    Coffey, Kathy. *Children and Christian Initiation: A Practical Guide to Mystagogy*. Denver: Living the Good News, Inc., 1995.
    Coffey, Kathy. *Children and Christian Initiation: A Practical Guide to the Precatechumenate*. Denver: Living the Good News, Inc., 1995.
    Coffey, Kathy. *Children and Christian Initiative: A Practical Guide to Purification and Enlightenment*. Denver: Living the Good News, Inc., 1995.
    Duggan, Robert and Maureen Kelly. *The Christian Initiation of Children: Hope for the Future*. New York: Paulist Press, 1991.

8. U.S. Bishops' Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

The following guidelines refer to preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation.

The following guidelines offering "a set of general principles to provide access to the sacraments for persons with disabilities" were approved by the U.S. Bishops during their June 15-17, 1995 meeting in Chicago, Illinois.

General Principles:
- By reason of their baptism, all Catholics are equal in dignity in the sight of God and have the same divine calling
- Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community (Canon 213).   Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed, and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them (Canon 843.1).

- In accordance with Canon 777.4, pastors are to be as inclusive as possible in providing evangelization, catechetical formation, and sacramental preparation for parishioners with disabilities. Persons with disabilities, their advocates, and their families, as well as those knowledgeable in serving disabled persons can make a most valuable contribution to these programs. Parish catechetical and sacramental preparation programs may need to be adapted for some parishioners with disabilities. Further, parishes should encourage persons with disabilities to participate in all levels of pastoral ministry according to their abilities.

Every Christian community considers those who suffer handicaps, physical or mental, as well as other forms of disability – especially children – as persons particularly beloved of the Lord. A growth in social and ecclesial consciousness, together with undeniable progress in specialized pedagogy, makes it possible for the family and other formative centers to provide adequate catechesis for these people, who as, baptized, have this right and, if non-baptized, because they are called to salvation. The love of the Father for the weakest of his children and the continuous presence of Jesus and His Spirit give assurance that every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness (*General Directory for Catechesis* #189).

9. Alternative Models of Catechesis

Family-Centered Catechesis
Family-centered programs provide the opportunity for families to be actively involved and play a major role in the continuing spiritual formation and religious education of their children. Family-centered models have developed in the Diocese of Charleston in small parishes linked to smaller mission churches, among families with children who have special needs, and also among native speakers of languages other than English, particularly the Hispanic community.

Intergenerational Catechesis
A variation on family-based catechesis is one which brings members of the parish of various ages together for regular or occasional catechetical sessions. This model is often used during special liturgical seasons or for the celebration of special feasts. It will ordinarily include components of liturgy, instruction, social interaction, and, at times, involvement in service projects. As with other forms of catechesis, sessions need to be well planned, and instructional components led by qualified catechists or catechetical leaders or by clergy.

Lectionary-Based Catechesis

Lectionary-based Catechesis makes the Sunday Gospels the table of contents of the religious education program. This approach organizes instruction in the mystery of God-with-us around the mystery of Jesus' life, proclaimed in the gospels.

Lectionary-based catechesis calls youth and adults to knowledge about Jesus, about God, and about our Christian traditions. It also calls them beyond comprehension to conversion – a change of heart, an openness to Jesus' speaking to them. The purpose of this approach lies in awakening young people to awareness that their life stories are evolving within God's story of creation and salvation. In the liturgy, the Church lavishes on us stories, images, symbols, rites, blessings, touches, tastes, smells, melodies – which can fall like seeds into our lives, take root, and transform our gift of life into an everlasting gift to God and for God's people.

When religious education follows the lectionary, it takes place within the rhythms and seasons of the liturgical year. Lectionary-based catechesis synchronizes the school year calendar and Church year calendar, integrating the classroom seasons for learning Jesus' story and the doctrines of faith with the Church's seasons of remembering and celebrating Jesus' life. DRE's, CRE's, or individual catechists should prepare flow charts or spread sheets which will guide how the doctrinal and moral teachings found in the Diocesan Curriculum are integrated into the Scriptural readings for the week. This will assure that Scripture and Tradition are linked in an intelligible, comprehensive way.

When using this approach, the rich teaching of the Catholic faith is revealed in the context of the Sunday readings in order to:
- Orient religious education toward participation in worship
- Integrate catechesis into the life of the parish community
- Encourage young people to participate more fully in liturgy
- Help family faith sharing
- Teach doctrine, sacraments, commandments, and prayer the way the Church does – through liturgy and scripture

Home-Based Catechesis

The Diocese of Charleston, with the universal Church, acknowledges that the primary catechists of children are the parents. It also is well aware of a growing trend toward the home-schooling of children in all academic areas. Home-based catechesis is a viable option for faith formation in certain circumstances. At the same time, Bishop and pastors are concerned that children and youth also perceive that they belong to a parish, a community of faith, and to a diocese, which is properly the "local Church" whereby they are linked to the universal Church and the Holy Father. Good planning for home-based catechesis is very important and can be carefully planned in a way that makes this option beneficial for a family and parish partnership.

For the purposes of this document, home-based catechesis is defined as catechesis conducted *exclusively* in the home setting by a parent or family member. This is distinct from family-based parish programs that have *both* home and parish components.

These guidelines deal specifically with the issue of home-based catechesis for parishes and are not specifically intended to respond to the issue of home-schooling for Catholic schools.

The family has the primary responsibility for faith formation, while the parish supports the family in its responsibility. Normally, the parish support takes the form of a parish-based catechetical program or Catholic school. However, in some circumstances, families have difficulty fitting into the schedule of the parish catechetical program. In such instances, parishes should make every effort to provide alternative support to parents. Home-based catechesis is one option. It is most often used when all others have been exhausted, or when the numbers/space ration in the parish program have reached full capacity.

In this option, parents take on the role of the catechist in the formal sense. By virtue of their parental role, parents certainly have the right to teach their children at home. At the same time, the parish has the right to direct and moderate the process. Even though catechesis is happening within the home setting, it is part of a larger parish catechetical program, which must conform to diocesan guidelines.

Home-based catechesis is a difficult option, because it involves a time commitment on the part of the parent in preparation and in structuring the time for formal catechesis. It also involves an additional time commitment on the part of the parish catechetical leader in preparing the parent(s) and monitoring the family's progress.

Guidelines for Home-Based Catechesis

1. **Materials to be used for home-based catechesis should be selected with the approval of the pastor or parish administrator, or through the DRE or CRE as his delegate. Parents should follow diocesan curriculum guidelines to assure that basics of the faith are adequately covered.**

2. **Home-based catechesis should be normally be used as a temporary option** unless it is also planned in such a way that a group of home-schooling parents within the parish also have regularly scheduled catechetical meetings which involve family members. One advantage of this model is that it enables a family to intentionally talk about faith and religion, and to foster a greater level of spiritual intimacy. However, one disadvantage is that it can isolate the family from the life of the community, particularly the child/youth from his/her peer community. One of the tasks of catechesis is to draw people into fuller participation in the life of the Catholic Christian community.

3. **Home-based catechesis is NOT an appropriate solution to a disagreement or conflict between the parish and the family over the content of the catechesis**. If the parish catechetical program is in compliance with diocesan guidelines, which have been approved by the Bishop, then the parish maintains the right to specify the content of catechesis appropriate to the child's level. Every attempt must be made to resolve this disagreement on the parish level. Since our Baptism links us all to the wider Church, neither the parish nor the family has the right to be "in isolation" without connecting to the wider Church.

4. **Plans for regular meetings and accountability to the pastor should be made when a family begins home-schooling in religious education.** At an initial meeting between the family and the catechetical leader, all the expectations are clarified and questions and concerns about content and materials are discussed:

- The goals for the catechetical program and expected learning outcomes are clearly stated
- Suggestions are given on how those learning outcomes can be achieved through family and parish experiences (many textbooks have family supplements to accompany each level)
- Suitable resources are reviewed and the family is shown how to best use them in the family setting
- An agreed-upon timeline for the process is set up, with check-in times with the catechetical leader
- The best method for evaluation of the learning outcomes for the particular young person is discussed
- Expectations regarding a registration fee or fees for materials other than those provided by the parish is discussed
- *A calendar of events or other gatherings is offered to all families in the faith formation program*

5. **Obligations of those involved in catechesis should be set forth. While a number of home-schooling parents have studied Catholic theology in college and university settings, others will need active encouragement to participate in programs and workshops leading to basic certification in catechesis. This is the case because:**

- Catechetical instruction is a serious duty and especially for pastors of souls. (Canon 773)
- Ecclesiastical authorities have supervisory capacity for catechesis (Canon 774).
- Parents are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example (Cannon 774).
- Catechists (parents) need to be prepared and participate in continuing education (Canon 780).

6. **Two-way communication is essential.** Although the family is doing home-based catechesis they are still a part of the parish faith formation program. The catechetical leader is expected to maintain contact with the family in the spirit of pastoral care, offering them help with the process. It is important to keep them on the mailing list and provide them with schedules of the other gathered and non-gathered faith formation opportunities in which they can participate with the rest of the community.

7. With regard to the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist, parents are to see that their children are correctly prepared. The pastor is to be vigilant to see that the children are prepared (Canon 914).

8. *The Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation recommends, by directive of the Bishop, that a Parish sacramental program bring together Catholic, private, and public school children and those being home-schooled. There should also be an opportunity for catechesis with their parents and guardians.*

Bilingual Catechesis

There are two forms of bilingual catechesis which are used in the Diocese of Charleston.

The first form is one in which textbooks and materials are used which have English and Spanish on facing pages, and all materials sent to parents are translated as needed. Liturgical celebrations in the parish may also be in two or more separate languages or at Masses which include another language in readings and hymns. Religious instruction is done in English, but efforts are made to accommodate speakers of other languages. The rationale for this type is instruction is based on the reality that students are required to speak English in schools, but parents may need to have materials in their native languages in order to participate more fully in the religious education of their children.

The second form is one in which catechesis is routinely done with two separate language groups. Some parents strongly desire this, with a sense that the language of faith and prayer is one's first language, one's "heart" language, and they are concerned that their native religious culture be preserved for their children.

Each pastor or parish administrator, with the DRE or CRE, makes a judgment about which type of bilingual religious education will best meet the needs of the members of the parish.

10. Recruiting Catechetical Volunteers

Religious education must be perceived as a **top priority** in **every parish and mission church** in the diocese.

Christ quoted the prophet Isaiah in describing his ministry:

> "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*" (Luke 4:18-19).

Who recruits?

It is the responsibility of the DRE/CRE, parish staff members, catechists, and volunteers in the religious education program and most especially the pastor, to encourage and recruit competent persons to minister in the parish religious education program.

> There is a proper and serious duty, especially on the part of pastors of souls, to provide for the catechesis of the Christian people so that the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living (Canon 773).

> By virtue of his office, the pastor is bound to provide for the catechetical formation of adults, young people and children, to which end he is to employ the services of the clerics attached to the parish, members of institutes of consecrated life and of societies of apostolic life, with due regard for the character of each institute, and lay members of the Christian faithful, above all catechists; all of these are not to refuse to furnish their services willingly unless they are legitimately impeded. The pastor is to promote and foster the role of parents in the family catechesis mentioned in Canon 774 (Canon 776).

When do we recruit?

Simply always! Some times are better than others, but it is important to be alert to opportunities throughout the year to plant the seed in the mind and heart of an individual who would be a possible volunteer. Whenever you meet people, you can recruit.

Contact for new parishioners. If a "new parishioner packet" is given to those joining the parish, include a list of the opportunities that are available for them to enjoy. It is very important that you immediately contact anyone who shows an interest in working in the religious education program.

Where do you recruit?

Simply everywhere! Follow the biblical example and call each possible volunteer individually. People can more easily say "no" to an open invitation than they can to a special call. Be ready to explain to them exactly what the commitment entails. Be sure they are aware of the time commitment expected for preparing lessons, in-services and continuing catechist formation.

Organize a recruitment day or days.

Try the following procedures:
- Cooperate with parish stewardship activities, ministry fairs, and the like as means of inviting parishioners to participate in catechetical ministries.
- Advertise through the bulletin, bulletin inserts, posters and pulpit announcements so that people become conscious that sign-up time is approaching.
- Post eye-catching lists of positions that need to be filled in the vestibule of the church.
- Have a sign-up table run by volunteers and set particular dates when catechetical recruitment will be highlighted. When possible, ask the parish priests to make religious education and its importance the subject of a homily. Decorate sign-up areas with slogans and eye-catching posters.

Make your appeal on behalf of the people who need catechesis and maximize use of weekend announcement time at parish Masses. Sometimes there are parishioners who wish to be involved in the parish and do not know there is a need for volunteers.
It might be noted that teaching is often considered a gift. Some people seem to be born teachers. At the very least, some have more potential than others. Between those who are gifted in teaching, and those who have no potential for teaching, are the vast majority who have potential that must be carefully trained and nurtured. These people may have to work hard to learn the skills of good teaching, yet can become effective volunteers with the right training.

If it becomes apparent that a catechist is not effective in the classroom, he/she should be encouraged to choose another volunteer ministry within the catechetical program, i.e. teacher's aide, clerical secretary, activities coordinator, etc.
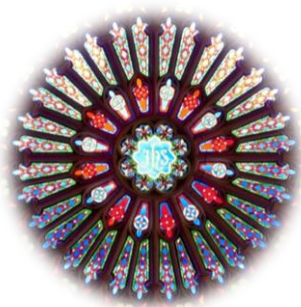
Catechist Screening Interview

The transmission of our faith is one of the most important responsibilities given to us at our baptism. So that this ministry of catechesis is carried out efficiently, all volunteer catechists must be practicing Catholics in good standing with the Catholic Church.

It is the responsibility of the parish catechetical leader to interview all potential volunteers before they begin to teach or serve in any capacity in the religious education program. Even though volunteers are full of enthusiasm and good will, they must have knowledge of the truths of our faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Those who do not possess these competencies should be directed to a non-instructional volunteer position until sufficient catechist formation is completed. All catechists and classroom aides must participate in the Diocesan Plan for protecting God's children, including VIRTUS and required background checks.

During this interview, it is the responsibility of the DRE/CRE conducting the interview to explain in detail the job description of a catechist: lesson planning, record keeping, developing quizzes and tests, keeping accurate attendance register, completing progress reports, attending catechist meetings, and special events. It is important to be clear about the time commitment and responsibilities involved in being a catechist. They should also be informed of the necessity to complete the catechist certification program.

The following are suggestions for an initial interview with potential catechists. This interview should be conversational in tone and perhaps surface issues that should be addressed by the catechetical leader or the pastor before the new catechist begins their ministry.

- ✓ Are you participating actively in the life of the Church?

- ✓ Are you committed to the safe environment plan and principles of our diocesan Child Protection Services?

- ✓ Why do you want to volunteer to be a catechist?

- ✓ What do you hope to accomplish by becoming a catechist?

- ✓ What is your educational background? What field? Related field?

- ✓ Are you willing to participate in catechist formation sessions and catechists meetings in addition to scheduled classes?

- ✓ Have you participated in any adult religious education sessions? When, where, what?

- ✓ Do you belong to parish organizations? Which ones?

- ✓ With which age/grade level do you like to work?

- ✓ What are the special gifts or skills which would contribute to our catechetical program?

11. Catechist Formation Program

Current Diocesan Formation Program

The Diocese of Charleston currently offers 3 levels of certification: Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Basic Certification Requires 30 hours of preparation on 20 topics under the headings of Theology, Sacred Scripture, Catechesis and Ecclesial Ministry, and Methodology. Basic Certification is required of all Catholic school teachers within 5 years of their hire. It is highly recommended for all parish catechists. The requirements for certification can be fulfilled by attending courses, seminars, and workshops that cover both theology and methodology.

Intermediate Certification requires an additional 30 hours selected from the 11 topic areas covered in national certification standards.

Advanced Certification requires further study for 30 hours selected from the 11 topics mentioned above. Advanced Certification is immediately granted for those who have attained a college degree in theology, Biblical studies, religious studies and related areas OR graduate degrees in the same areas. Those who have completed studies in a Catholic diaconate formation program or a Catholic seminary program are also, de facto, granted Advanced Certification.

For more information on the program see *Catechist Certification* at www.sccatholic.org on the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation site.

Additional Resources on DVD

The Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation holds a number of contemporary DVD resources dealing with Church history, Sacred Scripture, sacraments, and saints. These can be accessed through contact with the diocesan office. In addition, many catechists and parishes have found the following DVD resources very helpful for adult faith formation and catechist formation:

Barron, Father Robert. *Catholicism.* Word on Fire, 2011.
Barron, Father Robert. *Catholicism: The New Evangelization*. Word on Fire, 2013.
Echoes of Faith Plus. RCL Benziger, 2009-2010.

Catechist Formation Implementation Guidelines

When people respond to the call to be catechists, they may require assistance. Adequate preparation and formation are indispensable for every catechist.

Catechist Certification Policy

The Diocese of Charleston requires every teacher in its Catholic schools to attain basic certification within 5 years of employment, as noted above. All parish catechetical leaders and catechists are strongly encouraged to seek certification. Original documentation of the workshops, courses, etc. attended should be retained by the individual catechist. Copies should be kept in the catechist personnel file by the DRE/CRE.

DRE/CRE Role in Catechist Formation

The Director/Coordinator of Religious Education is primarily a leader of catechesis. He/She has the lead responsibility in coordinating and implementing the various aspects of the formation process.

Catechist Files

Complete and consistent records need to be kept for each catechist. Copies of each form, certificate, etc. should also be kept in the catechist's file.

Granting Exemptions

It is expected that all new catechists and those not previous certified will take advantage of the formation offered by the parish or diocese. Exemptions to sections of the program will be granted only after an interview with the catechist is conducted by the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation.

Catechist Certificates

When a catechist has completed the required hours for one of the levels of certification, the DRE/CRE submits the checklist of topics and hours with indication of when and where the hours were taken. Official certificates will be sent to the appropriate catechist or his or her DRE/CRE once documentation has been reviewed by the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation. The catechist should retain the original certificate, while the DRE/CRE keeps a copy in personnel files. The Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation also retains an alphabetical list of those who have been certified.

Ongoing Formation

No matter what level of certification a catechist may have received, he or she should be aware that ongoing formation is important. It is beneficial both ministerially and spiritually to **keep current** with developments in Scripture scholarship, theology, magisterial teaching, and catechetical methods.

Ways to "Observe" a Catechist

It is the responsibility of the DRE/CRE to supervise the instruction given in the parish religious education program. Each catechist should be observed in a classroom setting in an informal and formal way each year. This gives the DRE/CRE an opportunity to provide affirmation as well as constructive criticism.

1. Manage to unobtrusively walk past the classroom and look in.
   a. Is there good order? Do the students seem to be participating?
   b. What is the tone of the catechist's voice?

2. Talk to the catechist informally before and/or after class. Is he/she enthusiastic or apathetic? Is he/she looking for new ideas and new ways to present material? Does he/she talk about students who are disrupting the classroom?

3. Set a mutually acceptable date with the catechist for a formal observation. Be present for at least half the class. Observe the following, making notes for yourself after leaving the classroom:
   a. Does the catechist rather than a student take attendance?
   b. Does the catechist appear to have prepared a lesson plan in advance? Do you have a copy of it?
   c. Does the catechist appear to have mastery of the lesson's subject material, or is he/she floundering?
   d. Does the catechist "use" the textbook well, as an aide and resource, or is he/she too dependent   on it?
   e. What is the catechist's relationship with the students like? Is there a comfortable rapport? Is the catechist defensive or hostile? Are the students defensive or hostile?
   f. What is the catechist's reaction to students' questions? Helpful or hostile?
   g. Is the time period broken up into various types of learning activities, meeting the needs of students' various learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic?
   h. Does the catechist maintain consistent discipline?
   i. Is there a regular time for classroom prayer? What type of prayer style(s) is utilized?

4. After the observation, meet privately with the catechist and discuss what you've observed. Offer suggestions for change in a friendly, non-threatening matter, perhaps relating your own experiences which reflect what you've noticed during the observation in the classroom. Perhaps set some goals together for the catechist's growth.

End-of-the-Year Thoughts for Catechists

Date:_____

Name:_____

Grade(s) taught:_____

I have been teaching here for _____ years.

I would rate this year's experience as a catechist as:
- ☐ next to heaven
- ☐ a very positive experience
- ☐ all right
- ☐ disheartening
- ☐ terrible

Comments:_____
_____

I found the greatest frustration to be:
- ☐ the physical set-up (time, space)
- ☐ my group of students
- ☐ a somewhat confusing program
- ☐ a personal lack of theological knowledge
- ☐ a general lack of enthusiasm on my part
- ☐ lack of guidance by staff
- ☐ other (please specify)_____

My most meaningful experience was:_____
_____

As a catechist, I feel that the students responded to this year's program:

_____
- ☐ very favorably

_____
- ☐ favorably

_____
- ☐ somewhat favorably
- ☐ unsatisfactory
- ☐ not at all

Why?_____
_____

The amount of time I spent in preparation for each session, other than the time spent in our planning meetings, would be close to:

- ☐ 15 minutes
- ☐ one hour
- ☐ two hours
- ☐ three hours
- ☐ other (please specify)

I found the catechist planning sessions to be:
- ☐ very helpful
- ☐ helpful
- ☐ somewhat helpful
- ☐ unsatisfactory
- ☐ unnecessary

For future planning sessions I would suggest:

As a catechist, I would rate parish/school religious education program:
- ☐ very well organized
- ☐ organized
- ☐ poorly organized
- ☐ terrible

As a catechist, I would like to suggest that next year,the religious education staff make the following administrative adjustments:

I feel that I cooperated with this year's program:
- ☐ excellently
- ☐ OK
- ☐ poorly
- ☐ not at all

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As a catechist, I responded to this year's program:
- ☐ very favorably
- ☐ favorably
- ☐ somewhat favorably
- ☐ unsatisfactory
- ☐ not at all

Why?_____
_____
_____

How do you view the students who come to you (check only one)?:
- ☐ as a captive audience
- ☐ as already Christian
- ☐ as already Catholic
- ☐ as searching persons
- ☐ as Catholic Christians who must be given the moral way of acting
- ☐ as students in the Catholic Christian tradition to be exposed to the best the tradition has to offer

How would you rate the behavior of young people in general?
- ☐ excellent
- ☐ very good
- ☐ fair
- ☐ poor
- ☐ other (please specify)_____

I feel that less-than-desirable behavior was due to:
- ☐ the age of the children
- ☐ my inexperience as a teacher
- ☐ my being unprepared for class
- ☐ lack of parental involvement
- ☐ other (please specify)_____

Regarding my plans for next year:
- ☐ I will teach
- ☐ I could be talked into it
- ☐ maybe
- ☐ I really don't think so
- ☐ I definitely will not teach

Any comments, observations, recommendations, hopes? (Please indicate below.)

12. Forms and Resources and Where to Find Them

All of these can be found on the diocesan website: www.sccatholic.org.

Office of Archives and Records Management
- Sacramental Records Handbook (under 'Resources")

Office of Catechesis
- Catechist Certification—details, requirements, and tracking forms
- Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors (including names of deanery coordinators
- Elementary Religion Curriculum
- Elementary Religion Curriculum outline in Spanish
- High School Religion Curriculum (USCCB)
- High School Curriculum adapted for Youth Ministry
- RCIA in the Diocese of Charleston
- Materials from Catholic Mutual Insurance, including
  - Accident Report for Non-employess
  - Adult Liability waiver
  - CMG Chaperone Guidelines
  - Epi-pen Guidelines and Current Policy
  - Field Trip Information
  - Field Trip Planning Checklist
  - Field Trip Parent Permission
  - Report of Property Damage
  - Volunteer Claim Form Packet

Office of Human Resources
- Personnel Profile Forms for Exempt and Non-exempt Employees
- Performance Review Form
- Information concerning Benefits

13. Emergencies and Crises: Prevention and Response Plan

Characteristics of a Safe Faith Formation Program

Safe Faith Formation Programs:
- Focus on academic achievement
- Involve families in meaningful ways
- Develop links to the community
- Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff
- Discuss safety issues openly
- Treat students with equal respect
- Create ways for students to share their concerns
- Help students feel safe expressing their feelings
- Have a system in place for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected

Early Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Behavior
- Social withdrawal
- Feelings of isolation or rejection
- Being a victim of violence
- Feelings of being picked on
- Low catechetical classroom interest
- Poor performance
- Expression of violence in writings and drawings
- Uncontrolled anger
- Chronic patterns of impulsive hitting and bullying
- History of discipline problems
- History of violent or aggressive behavior
- Prejudicial attitudes
- Symptoms of Possible Drug/Alcohol use
- Affiliation with gangs
- Possession and use of firearms or other weapons
- Serious threats of violence

Imminent Warning Signs
- Serious physical fighting
- Destruction of property
- Severe rage for minor reasons
- Threats of imminent violence
- Possession of a weapon
- Self injurious behaviors or threats of suicide

Intervention
- Share responsibility by establishing a partnership with the child, program, home and community
- Inform parents when early warning signs are observed
- Maintain confidentiality and parents' right to privacy
- Develop the capacity of staff, students, and families to intervene
- Support students in being responsible for their actions
- Use multiple interventions
- Build and maintain internal program resources
- Safe and drug free faith formation programs
- Pupil Services
  - Peer Mediation
  - Conflict Resolutions

Characteristics of a Safe Physical Environment
- Supervised access to building and grounds, with all exterior doors free and clear. Exit doors should be locked from the outside (to avoid unwanted entry) and unlocked from the inside to allow emergency means of egress
- Manageable classroom size with appropriate supervision
- Traffic flow patterns in hallways should be unblocked and uncluttered to limit potential for conflicts or altercations.
- Adherence to federal, state, and local public safety laws
- Have adults visibly present throughout the school building
- Monitor school or parish facility grounds
- Coordinate with local police to ensure that there are safe routes to and from parish/school buildings

Characteristics of Policies that Support Responsible Behavior
- Develop a school wide disciplinary policy that includes a code of conduct, rules, and consequences
- Ensure that the cultural values and educational goals are reflected in the rules
- Include staff, students, and families in the development and implementation of fair rules
- Combine negative consequences with positive strategies to teach socially appropriate behaviors
- Include a Zero Tolerance statement for bullying as well as for possession of weapons, alcohol, or drugs
- Provide alternative religious education for students who have been suspended or expelled

Fire and Emergency Procedures

Every classroom must have an evacuation plan. In developing a plan, refer to school or parish plans already in place. It is important to have a communications system in place—for immediate communication to the DRE/CRE and to other catechists. For further tips, refer to the crisis steps elaborated on p. 63.

Steps to be taken in case of a fire emergency
1. Sound the fire alarm.
2. Evacuate immediately. Do not use elevators
3. Do not wait for fire patrol members to lead lines or open doors.
4. Do not stop to retrieve personal items.
5. Have catechists ensure that no one is left behind. Attendance rosters should be taken out of the classroom so that all may be accounted for. Shut classroom doors but not windows.
6. Have classes line up at an assigned area a safe distance from the building. Keep students away from fire equipment and hydrants.
7. Have catechist check to see if all are present. If a student is found missing, the catechist should immediately report the missing student to the DRE and a firefighter.

To be effective, fire drills, if scheduled, must be unannounced and unexpected.

Crisis Plan for Religious Education

We recommend that every parish religious education program have a crisis plan in place. There should be a copy of this plan in the religious education office and the parish office.

What to Consider
This plan would be used in the following situations (but not limited to):
- Death of a student
- Serious illness of a student, catechist, pastor, etc.
- Violence or violent death
- Bomb threat
- Bio-hazard threat
- Suicide
- Natural disaster or emergency in the physical environment

Personnel and General Information for Developing and Implementing a Plan
Preparations for this plan should include:
- Selection of the crisis response team
- Identification of personnel and contact information for the Diocesan Office of Media Relations, which serves as the sole communicator with press and other media on behalf of the Bishop of Charleston in case of crisis situations impacting parishes, schools, or the diocese as a whole.
- Identification of family liaison person
- Organization of staff/telephone network
- Identification of crisis consultant
- Identification of community response people

- Designation a security person
- Development of suggestions for classroom discussion
- Identification of crisis center and counseling room
- Plan for parent/community meeting
- Plan for post event evaluation

Development of a Crisis Intervention and Response Plan
- Submit to Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation plan for crisis intervention and other
- emergencies (lock downs, etc.)
- Offer guidance to catechists during annual orientation days on how to respond during crises
- Alert catechists and clerical assistants on how to respond to imminent warning signs and violent behaviors on the part of students, including:
  - Understanding the principles underlying the identification of early warning signs
  - Know how to identify and respond to signs

Crisis Intervention and Response Plan Should Include
- Cues to catechists and staff as to how to intervene during a crisis to ensure safety
- Involvement of community agencies
- Evacuation procedures to protect students and staff from harm
- Practice having students and staff evacuate the premises in an orderly manner
- Pointers on how to prevent bullying or to intervene in behavioral problems before they escalate.

Crisis Aftermath Response Plan
- Follow diocesan protocols which make it clear that the diocesan Director of Media Relations is the sole spokesperson when a crisis occurs
- Assure parents that students' safety is top priority
- Help parents understand children's reactions to an emergency or a violent episode
- Help catechists and staff deal with their reactions to the crisis
- Help students and catechists adjust after the crisis

Crisis Procedural Checklist
- ✓ A Step by Step procedure is to be used when a crisis occurs.
- ✓ Provide first aid if needed.
- ✓ Call 911 and notify police/rescue first. Call pastor second.
- ✓ Evaluate available and needed resources.
- ✓ Alert appropriate parish staff to what constitute crisis situations and importance of procedures and atmosphere of calm.
- ✓ Secure all areas as needed.
- ✓ Evacuate or lock down, according to the situation, to protect students and staff.

RECOMMENDATION FOR REVISIONS TO THESE GUIDELINES

To: Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation
Diocese of Charleston
1662 Ingram Rd.
Charleston, SC   29407
mmartocchio@catholic-doc.org or cathy@catholic-doc.org

From:
Name   _____

Position_____

Parish   _____

Your Phone _____   Your E-mail _____

Your Address
_____

Proposed recommendation regarding Page _____ of this document.

Topic:_____

Comments:
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Citation/Documents:
_____
_____
_____

These recommendations will be reviewed by the Diocesan Board of Catechetical Advisors at the end of each catechetical year.