

Parish-centered Home Schooling in Religion

General Norms and Requirements

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

1. The religious education of children and youth is the responsibility of parents, pastors and the local parish community. Canon Law [773, 774.1 and 2) supports this direction. Therefore it is the obligation of the parish leadership to provide education programming for children and young people. In situations where some families choose to "home school" their children, it must be understood that these efforts cannot be done independently of the parish.
2. The primary responsibility of parents for the education and formation of their children in the Faith [Canon Law, 226, 796, 1136] cannot be interpreted in an isolated way, since the family is an integral part of the larger ecclesial community. All religious education must be carried out in a way that builds unity within the Church. No home schooling can be tolerated which does not promote the understanding that being a Christian is not a private matter of individual choice but rather of a personal vocation within the context of the Church lived out in the experience of the parish community (*General Directory for Catechesis*, #257).
3. Home schooling parents are responsible for the participation of their children/young person in the immediate sacramental preparation as required or approved by the parish, through interviews for sacramental readiness, practice for sacramental celebrations, appropriate initiation rites and retreats.
4. Home schooling parents must participate in parish parent meetings, especially parental preparation programs for the sacraments.
5. Parents have the responsibility to participate in catechetical formation so that they will be able to prepare their child/young person for the sacraments, in collaboration with the parish community. This is supported by Canon Law (780, 776, 777) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2226).
6. With regard to the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation, parents must ensure that their children/young people are correctly prepared and connected to the local parish.
7. The Pastor and the Director of Religious Education will require a periodic progress report to be made by home school parents. A form should be developed by the parish to assist in this reporting. Children/young people must be interviewed by the Pastor, Director of Religious Education or a designated representative to determine their understanding of and readiness for the reception of the Sacraments.
8. Since the passing on of the faith tradition is the responsibility of the whole parish community, pastors, parents and Directors of Religious Education must collaborate to insure that the children/young people are appropriately catechized and prepared for the reception of the Sacraments. As parishioners, families are expected to participate in the parish Sunday liturgy.
9. The rights of children and young people to catechetical formation can best be served when pastors, parents and catechists offer formation appropriate to the level, development and disposition of the young person.
10. The parish Director of Religious Education should serve as a resource to home school parents by:
 - a. providing recommended textbooks and other appropriate teaching materials, as well as provide essential Church catechetical documents for the personal formation of the home catechist, i.e. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *The General Directory for Catechesis*.

b. encouraging the active participation of the children/youth in parish life by keeping parents aware of the activities and ministries available to them, so that all may feel invited, welcomed, wanted, and included in all pastoral and sacramental activities and ministries of the parish. They should be on the parish catechetical mailing list, receiving the same information and notices which the larger parish catechetical community receives.

3. periodically reviewing the plans and progress of children/youth by scheduling meetings and/or sessions with the home schooling catechists as a tangible sign of parish support and care.

The diocesan Office of Religious Education supports the efforts of pastors and parents in their catechetical home schooling responsibilities by offering

1. recommendation of materials which promote a sense of discipleship and nurtures an awareness of belonging to and being connected with the larger Church community;

2. introduction of Diocesan policies and guidelines (especially regarding preparation and reception of the sacraments), curriculum guidelines, listing of texts and instructional resources that are determined sound in methodology [a systematic approach to catechesis], age-appropriate and in conformity with the published standards and teaching of the Catholic Church and its magisterium, both locally and nationally.

3. opportunities to join others in the catechetical ministry for training and diocesan certification, in order to foster their faith/spiritual growth, as well as to gain additional competency in art of catechesis.

4. professional availability to both parish directors and the community of home school catechists.