



Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

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The Changing Face of Catechesis

Approved Formats for Parish Programs of Religious Education

Parish Religious Education Program Overview

The policy of the Diocese of Brooklyn is that every parish provides a program of quality Catholic religious education for people of all ages. The parish program of religious education is an essential means by which people encounter the risen Christ and become well-formed missionary disciples.

Organization

The parish program of religious education is to be:

- led by the pastor/administrator in collaboration with the parish catechetical leader
- supported by the Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis of the Diocese of Brooklyn and other diocesan offices and agencies
- organized to meet the needs of the parishioners while adhering to currently approved universal, national, and diocesan catechetical norms

Ten Essential Components of Religious Education Programs

In order to maintain a high level of excellence, the following parameters strongly encouraged for all parish programs of religious education:

- Safe Environment mandates (including Virtus Training and Child Lures Program, etc.)
- Graded religious education programs (kindergarten through grade eight and eventually through grade twelve) with parent involvement as a priority
- At least forty-five hours of religious education per year for every grade (at least 30 classes of 90 minutes each; at least two reserved for the Family Life Program)
- A diocesan calendar that can be adapted for local use (this helps to avoid having people shop around for a parish with fewer required days, shorter hours, etc.)
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved religious education textbooks
- Religious Education Assessment Program (assessing groups for program improvement) for all students in grades 3, 5, and 7

- RCL-Benziger Family Life Program for students in grades 5,6,7,and 8 (separate Parents' Booklet for Human Sexuality issues)
- Special Needs Religious Education Initiative (parish and diocesan programs)
- *Living and Leading by Faith Formation Program for Catechists and Catechetical Leaders*
- (At least 10 hours per year is required for each catechist and catechetical leader.)
- Sacramental Proximate Preparation Program (4-6 sessions for Penance and Holy Eucharist and 4-6 sessions for Confirmation) and Confirmation Enhancement Program

Suggested and Approved Models for Parish Programs of Religious Education

Pastors/administrators in collaboration with their catechetical leader and parish catechetical team may choose from a variety of program options for religious education, so that the greatest number of people may learn about the Faith.

While many options are currently being explored, viable models for religious education, especially relating to working with children in kindergarten through grade eight may be grouped in the following categories:

- **REGULAR WEEKLY PROGRAM:** Regular weekly classes throughout the academic year led by trained catechist (this has been the norm for approximately 50 years or more)
- **MONTHLY FAMILY PROGRAM:** Monthly classes held following a Sunday Mass that include parents and family members, usually consisting of Sunday Mass, a lunch or dinner, catechetical sessions for various age groups or grade levels, a family activity, and time for sharing
- **SUMMER INTENSIVE PROGRAM:** Ten days of formal religious education with time for family activity and community building, held during the summer school vacation; usually includes a monthly family gathering requirement and some special sacramental preparation sessions; diocesan guidelines are developed for this program
- **INTEGRATED ONLINE AND CLASSROOM PROGRAM:** Parents and/or family members guide the student weekly through online approved coursework; families gather at least once a month at the parish for a session of faith sharing and assessment; diocesan guidelines will be developed for this type of integrated program

Parish leadership is encouraged to provide various programs that meet the many varied needs of parish families. The Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis continues to work with parishes by providing resources and support.

Parents (and extended family members) are the primary educators and formators of their children in the Faith. In his weekly audience of August 26, 2015, Pope Francis said, "There are children who have not learned how to make the sign of the cross!" He continued, "You, mother, father! Teach your children how to pray, how to make the sign of the cross!" The parish and academy/parish school is called to cooperate with the family to teach the Faith; the Church is a

privileged teacher, however, it is not the primary teacher. Parents and family members are urged to participate in our many events that are offered throughout the year; go to www.meetmein.church for event details and registration information.

A Parish Catechetical Plan for Programs of Religious Education

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, wrote,

Effective organization of catechetical programs for children should also include enthusiastic evangelization and recruitment efforts in order to reach families whose children do not participate in parish catechetical programs. Those responsible for parish catechetical programs should use every means available to remind parents of the importance of providing catechesis for their children and to invite them to place their children in in parish programs that are designed to assist them in their responsibility. (*NDC*, 4a.)

Parishes are urged to create or update a parish catechetical plan that addresses the needs of all age groups and academic levels. The Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis has resources that can assist in the development or updating of this plan.