

POST BAPTISMAL/EARLY CHILDHOOD CATECHESIS

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

“This age group, traditionally divided into early infancy or pre-school age and childhood, possesses, in the light of faith and reason, the grace of the beginnings of life, from which ‘valuable possibilities exist, both for the building up of the Church and for the making of a more humane society.’ As a child of God, in virtue of the gift of Baptism, the child is proclaimed by Christ to be a privileged member of the Kingdom of God. For various reasons today, rather more than in the past, the child demands full respect and help in its spiritual and human growth. This is also true in catechesis which must always be made available to Christian children. Those who have given life to children and have enriched them with the gift of Baptism have the duty continually to nourish it” (General Directory for Catechesis, #177).

“You have asked to have your children baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” (Rite of Baptism, #39).

“The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect. Children thus perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and of Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that this first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout life. This childhood religious awakening which takes place in the family is irreplaceable” (General Directory for Catechesis, #226).

THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RECOMMENDS:

1. In planning for the catechesis of children in their care, parishes recognize the spiritual capacity of young children.
2. Through adult faith formation opportunities and age appropriate catechesis, parishes support parents and guardians, as well as teachers, and other caregivers of young children.
3. Parish based programs or regional based inter parish programs for early childhood catechesis may be developed after catechists have been formed in early childhood development, methodology and catechesis.
4. The Office of Religious Education Library will provide resources to assist parents and catechists in early childhood catechesis and in the implementation of the Curriculum for Catechesis.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CATECHESIS

COMPONENTS

The Office of Religious Education recognizes Parish Baptism preparation as a stepping stone for continuous outreach to parents. It is recommended that:

- Parishes provide opportunities for parents, guardians, and caregivers to share, discuss, and explore faith based topics related to witnessing Christian life to their children.
- Parishes provide opportunities for families to gather and participate in child-adult activities related to building faith.
- Parishes encourage families to invite their young children to participate in activities related to the social mission of the church according to their age and ability.
- Parishes provide formal programs in early childhood catechesis for children three years and older.
- Programs meet the learning objectives in the Curriculum for Catechesis for the Pre-K child.
- Programs in early childhood will encourage the child's weekly attendance in Mass and be scheduled so as not to conflict with the child's attendance at Mass.

WORSHIP

The families of small children must be made to feel welcome by the assembly and presider. Their attitude can encourage the catechetical development of small children.

- While in the assembly small children can best participate when they are recognized as essential members of the church. They should be prayed for and blessed by all the assembly.
- Catechetical programs will be scheduled so as not to conflict with Mass attendance.

PARISH RESPONSIBILITIES

The Pastor and/or his delegates will include, in their yearly planning, programs related to early childhood catechesis and parent faith formation offered at times conducive to parishioners needs.

- Parishes develop and maintain a current list of families that may benefit from early childhood catechesis.
- Parishes provide regular communication about opportunities in the parish, diocese and community to parents.
- Parishes allocate funds for personnel, and developmentally appropriate space and materials for the young child.
- Parishes provide faith formation resources for parents and families in parish bulletins and newsletters.
- Parishes evaluate the effectiveness of early childhood programs and activities.

PARENTS

- Parishes encourage parents to take an active role in parish or diocesan programs and activities related to Early Childhood Catechesis.
- Parishes encourage parents to participate in at least two parent or family programs per year that are provided by the parish or diocese.

CATECHISTS

- Adult faith formation includes programs related to parent faith formation and their role in early childhood catechesis.
- Catechists attend appropriate religious education courses leading to certification which will enable them to work with the young child.
- Catechists use developmentally appropriate catechesis and methodologies in working with the young child. These methodologies and catechesis will coincide with developmental stages and current theories of child development.

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

- The Office of Religious Education provides resources appropriate for use with young children and for those who are responsible for their catechesis.
- The Office of Religious Education will provide inservice opportunities to assist those involved in early childhood ministry in the areas of child development, appropriate catechetical methodology, and spiritual nourishment.