



POST BAPTISMAL/EARLY CHILDHOOD CATECHESIS

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

“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).

“This age group, traditionally divided into early infancy or preschool age and childhood, possess, in the light of faith and reason, the grace of the beginnings of life” characterized by the simplicity and gratuitousness of welcome” (Directory for Catechesis, #236).

“*Early childhood*, or preschool age, is a definitive time for the discovery of religious reality, during which children learn from their parents and from the environment of life an attitude of openness and acceptance or of aversion and exclusion toward God. They also learn their first bits of knowledge about the faith: an initial discovery of the Father who is in heaven, good and provident, how to turn to him with the heart and with a gesture of affection and veneration; The names of Jesus and Mary and some of the accounts of the main moments in the life of the Lord Jesus; religious signs, symbols and gestures” (Directory of Catechesis, #239).

Catechetical programs for children “should always be suited to the age, circumstances, and learning capacity of young children and be designed to reinforce the primary human and Christian values present in the family. They should provide opportunities to participate in simple celebrations that deepen the child’s sense of wonder. These opportunities provide a natural human foundation for the supernatural life of faith where children can develop a sense of trust, freedom, selflessness, and joyful participation. Catechetical programs can be employed to predispose young children to experiences of spontaneous and formal prayer, prayerful silence, and simple acts of worship” (National Directory for Catechesis, p. 204)

THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY 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 faith formation or regional based inter parish faith formation for early childhood catechesis may be developed after catechists have been formed in early childhood development, methodology and catechesis.
4. The Office of Faith Formation and Lay Ecclesial Ministry 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 Faith Formation and Lay Ecclesial Ministry 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, processes 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 processes and activities related to Early Childhood Catechesis.
- Parishes encourage parents to participate in at least two parent or family sessions per year that are provided by the parish or regionally.

CATECHISTS

- Adult faith formation includes processes related to parent faith formation and their role in early childhood catechesis.
- Catechists attend appropriate faith formation 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 FAITH FORMATION AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY SUPPORT SERVICES

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