

MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR HIGH CATECHESIS

THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RECOMMENDS:

1. Parishes, having as a priority the catechesis of all their children, will recognize, support and challenge the junior high youth in their growth as persons and believers.
2. Parishes will provide developmentally appropriate, comprehensive catechetical programs for junior high youth consisting of message, worship, community building, and service.
3. Parishes will provide catechetical activities to foster Catholic and parish identity.
4. Catechetical leaders, in collaboration with the parents and guardians of the youth, will provide for religious education through age-appropriate instruction and activities.
5. Parishes will provide catechetical in-service opportunities for all of middle school/junior high catechists (including those families who home school), considering their specific needs and employing principles of adult faith formation.

GUIDELINES

STRUCTURE

- Middle School/Junior High catechesis and ministry is designed to meet the specific needs of early adolescents in grades seven and eight. Although it is similar in some ways to elementary catechesis and in some ways to high school catechesis, it is a unique age, requiring a distinct approach.
- Since junior high is ordinarily structured within the elementary catechetical program, most teachings and guidelines for elementary catechesis will be appropriate for junior high.
- Parents and guardians of junior high age youth are responsible for choosing the catechetical program most appropriate for their family situation. Models of catechetical programs are available through the Office of Religious Education.
- Parishes will offer at least 36 hours of instructional catechesis and 14 additional hours for service, community building, and prayer. Catholic Schools will offer 150 to 225 minutes per week of catechetical instruction and other time for community building, service, and prayer.
- Parishes and schools will have a defined two-year plan of instruction based on the objectives of the diocesan Curriculum for Catechesis. They will use texts and resources approved by the Office of Religious Education. When appropriate, junior high youth may participate in planning the curriculum and activities.

- In parishes and Catholic Schools, the catechetical sessions for middle school/junior high will be of an appropriate size so that faith sharing and community building can be effectively communicated through constructive interaction and personal involvement.
- Parishes that have families who are home schooling need to communicate to the parents and guardians the need for faith sharing and community building as integral parts of the home schooling program. Parishes may suggest ways that are possible within their parish structure.
- Parishes will provide for the catechetical instruction of children with disabilities.

CATECHISTS AND ADULT ADVISORS

- All middle school/junior high catechists in Catholic schools, Parish processes, and home schooling will meet the qualifications of catechists as stated in this directory (see E1).
- Middle School/Junior high catechists are encouraged to be certified or to be working toward religious education certification.
- In addition to catechists, parishes may call forth and enable other adults to serve as advisors to middle school/junior high ministry, assisting with community building, service, and prayer and worship.
- Catechists and advisors to middle school/junior high catechists and advisors will be informed about family systems, community resources, referral and intervention procedures and early adolescent development.

ADMINISTRATION

- The administrators of the religious education programs are the pastor and/or designated representative(s).
- Parents and guardians will register their middle school/junior high children in the religious education program of their choice.
- Permanent records and parish sacramental records are to be maintained by the parish administrator for each junior high age child. Certification and fingerprint records will be maintained for all catechists.
- A yearly program will be formulated to include a calendar of instruction, activities, and parish events for the junior high youth and their families. Youth should be involved in program/calendar development when appropriate. The plan should include opportunities for service, community building, and prayer.
- Administrators will communicate with the parents and guardians regarding their rights and responsibilities in the faith development of their children.
- Administrators will provide parents and guardians opportunities to become involved with junior high ministry planning and its implementation.
- Dialogue and collaboration are encouraged among all programs providing catechesis and ministry to junior high youth of the parish.
- Reports regarding junior high catechesis and ministry will be submitted to the Office of Religious Education or the Office of Catholic Schools.

FINANCE

- Parishes will budget and allocate sufficient funds to maintain quality junior high catechetical programs. Funds should be available for:
 - Textbooks and materials for youth
 - Manuals and materials for catechists and advisors
 - Catechist, advisor and parent formation and certification fee
 - Community building activities for youth, parents, catechists, and advisors
 - Background check fees of catechists and adult advisors
- An annual financial report of income and expenses will be prepared for catechetical programs. A financial report form is available from the Office of Religious Education.

EVALUATION

- Parishes will annually evaluate their program for junior high youth. The process should include opportunities for evaluation by the youth, parents and guardians, catechists, advisors, and administrators. An evaluation procedure is available from the Office of Religious Education.
- Evaluations will be useful in designing programs and calendars for catechesis of middle school/junior high youth.
- The annual evaluation and financial report will be made available to the pastor and the parish pastoral council.