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SCOPE OF CATECHESIS WITHIN THE PARISH

"Conducted in a variety of circumstances and directed to widely diverse audiences, catechetical activity takes many forms."

(NCD 39)

The scope of catechesis is diverse. Catechesis as a lifelong process is addressed to children, young people and adults. It must consider the needs of all people: the active Catholic, those who are less active, and those who intend to enter the Catholic faith as adults or children.

Diversity in catechesis includes adaptations based on age, culture, abilities, life circumstances and life experience. The language and culture of the people need to be considered. The Springfield Diocese is diverse in its ethnic make-up. While we have ethnic parishes of long standing, primarily European based, newer ethnic groups such as Hispanics and Asians comprise a growing segment of the population. Urban and rural, large and small parishes each require different approaches. Likewise, people's work situations vary from agricultural to manufacturing to business and professional. This diversity calls for creativity and adaptability in planning and implementing catechetical programs in the parish.

In this section we will address catechesis for various groups. Particular focus will be placed on:

- **Adult Formation**
- **Catechesis of Children and Youth**
- **Family Catechesis**
- **Catechesis for People with Special Needs**
- **Immediate Sacramental Preparation**

All of these need to be approached in a systematic and structured way.

Also, contained within this section of the text is information pertaining to the following:

- **Legal Concerns in the Catechetical Setting**
- **Program Evaluation**

A. Adult Formation

“Adult catechesis concerns persons who have a right and a duty to bring to maturity the seed of faith sown in them by God. It is addressed to individuals who are charged to fulfill social responsibilities of various types and to those who are also prey to all kinds of changes and crises, sometimes profound. The faith of adults, therefore, must be continually enlightened, developed and protected, so that it may acquire that Christian wisdom which gives sense, unity, and hope to the many experiences of personal, social, and spiritual life.”
(GDC 173)

Introduction: Principal Form of Catechesis

Parish life is enhanced when adult parishioners are informed and articulate about their faith and the life of the Church. A recent study found that the presence of ongoing adult education is a common factor in parishes having effective religious education programs for their children and young people.¹

Every major catechetical document of the last twenty years, both from the Vatican and from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, emphasizes that the education of adults is at the center of the Church's educational ministry. Pope John Paul II has clearly stated that adult education is "the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibility and capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form" (CT 43). (See also TJD 430, NCD 32 and 188)

A recent Vatican document explicitly calls for ongoing, systematic catechesis of adults: "It is not only legitimate, but necessary to acknowledge that a full Christian community can exist only when a systematic catechesis of all its members takes place and when an effective and well-developed catechesis of adults is regarded as *the central* task in the catechetical enterprise" (ACCC 25). It must have its own distinctive place within the overall pastoral plan of a parish, since it aims at making adults constructive participants in the life and mission of the community (ACCC 29).

Success in adult education does not necessarily depend on large numbers. Rather it is determined by the effect that it has on the lives of those who do participate. Further, those who are connected to a gospel way of life through effective adult education also affect those around them in their homes, their

communities and work places. One well-formed adult Catholic may influence many others simply by his/her lifestyle. Numbers, then, are not the measure of successful adult religious education.

¹ "Toward Effective Parish Religious Education for Children and Young People: A National Study", National Catholic Educational Association, 1986.

In fact, adult education seems to be most effective when it is carried out in small groups and when it is practical and helpful for people's real lives. One program does not fit all. A variety of programs, techniques and settings with the expectation of smaller numbers at each will, in the long run, attract more participants and have a larger impact.

The tasks of adult catechesis as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (175) are:

- To promote formation and development of life in the risen Christ
- To educate toward a correct evaluation of the socio-cultural changes of our societies in the light of faith
- To clarify current religious and moral questions
- To clarify the relationship between temporal actions and ecclesial action, making social doctrine an integral part of adult catechesis
- To develop the rational foundations of the faith, i.e. to promote effectively the pastoral aim of Christian thought and culture
- To encourage adults to assume responsibility for the Church's mission and to be able to give Christian witness in society

Adult catechesis in the parish must take a variety of forms to meet the needs of the people to whom it is directed. Sound principles of adult education, as well as the real needs of the adults must be considered in order for adult catechesis to be effective. This section will state adult education principles, consider the variety of groups to whom the catechesis is addressed, and offer a sampling of formats and learning methods, and resources.

Adult Education Principles

Adults learn best . . .

1. when they are treated with respect, as self-directing persons
2. when the learning situation is related to their past experience

3. when they have participated in the planning of the learning activity and set their own goals
4. when they are physically comfortable and can socialize with those in the learning group
5. when they are with their peers, freely learning in groups
6. when there are opportunities for a variety of learning activities
7. in a problem-centered situation, when a question needs resolving or a task needs doing
8. when they can see progress, immediate results, and some rewards for the time they put into learning
9. when they evaluate themselves

These principles are more fully developed in James DeBoy's book, *Getting Started In Adult Religious Education*.

Consideration When Forming Specific Programs

- Age groups - e.g., young adults, middle-aged and older adults
- Life-styles - e.g., single, married, divorced, widowed, parent, etc.
- Groups dealing with special challenges - e.g., unemployment, caring for elderly parents, families dealing with drug or alcohol abuse, etc.
- Vocational, professional, or ministerial groups
- Ethnicity/language needs

A variety of programs needs to be offered in order to meet a variety of needs. Even though some adult programs may be appropriate for and attract all parishioners, programs are most effective when they are directed toward a particular group. These groups may vary from parish to parish.

The above listings are just some of the groups to which programs may be directed. Each parish needs to become aware of the people who make up their parish and what would be most helpful to them.

Examples of Various Types of Programming and Learning Models

- Small faith sharing groups
- Parenting programs/marriage enrichment
- Ministerial training and enrichment
- Video/discussion programs
- Speaker/lecture programs combined with discussion
- Pot-luck supper with a speaker
- Panel discussions or small forums on particular issues

- Coffee klatches and prayer breakfasts
- Parish retreats
- Independent study/learning

The possibilities are endless. **Be creative.**

Types of Resources

A variety of resources can be used. Many are available from the Office of Religious Education Resource Center to borrow or preview. Here are some possibilities:

- Video programs
- Faith sharing programs
- Bible study programs (multimedia)
- Reflections for groups based on the Sunday readings
- Structured programs of learning
- Speakers (A listing of speakers is available from the Office of Religious Education)

The Parish Library

In addition to planned programs, a small parish library of books, magazines, audio and video tapes would be a helpful means of reaching those adults who wish to do some independent learning. Self help audio tapes, family video programs, and spiritual readings are popular items.

The library needs to be easily accessible to use at convenient times, and placed in a well-trafficked area. One person who coordinates the overall use, maintenance and updating of the collection is essential for a successful library.

Implementing Adult Education in the Parish

Adult education programs are most successful when planned by a team of people. The team should consist of 5-8 adults representing all ages, genders, lifestyles and segments of the parish. The team works under the auspices of the education commission of the parish pastoral council in conjunction with the pastor. Others can be recruited as needed to work on specific tasks, e.g. publicity or hospitality.

A planning process for the team is outlined below.

Step1: Determine the needs of the parish.

Identify what adult education is already taking place e.g., parent meetings for sacramental preparation, RCIA, Bible study groups, etc. Who are the adults that are not being reached by any of these programs?

Survey the parish to determine needs and interests by interviewing various parish groups or making a questionnaire available at weekend Masses or through the mail. A sample is provided at the end of this section. Adapt it to your circumstances. Be creative in designing the survey. Take into account that adult religious education can include Christian parenting, dealing with aging parents, business and medical ethics, scripture study, faith sharing, Catholic beliefs and teachings, and much more!

Step 2: Set goals.

Goals are based on the expressed needs of the parishioners and of the parish as a whole. Goals are statements of what we want to accomplish. Both short and long range goals give direction to the planning process.

Step 3: Research needs and plan programs that will fulfill them.

Be creative. Develop a variety of programs to meet diverse needs and lifestyles. Include a variety of time frames, i.e. day and evening programs, one "shot"-one hour programs or a mini series. Coffee hours that include a video or directed discussion are attractive to many people.

Designing effective adult religious education programs requires planning, creativity and flexibility. Consider adult education principles, the people to whom it is addressed and various types of programs and resources. The planning team also needs to consider the real lives of people when scheduling. Use single session programs, mini-series, as well as longer term programs

particularly for those who wish to build small faith sharing groups.

Vary the times. Have programs on different days of the week, as well as some morning and some evening sessions. Many parishes find it helpful to offer the same program twice, either on different nights or a morning and an evening session to accommodate people's schedules.

Step 4: Publicize the programs.

Bulletin notices are a good starting point, but not enough. Brochures with a professional appearance can be a more effective approach. They may be mailed or inserted in the parish bulletin. Take advantage of the local media, i.e. newspapers and radio announcements. Extend your publicity to neighboring parishes. Personal

contact with individuals and groups is most effective. The more creative your approach in promoting your program, the greater the response.

Step 5: Implement the program with style!

Be organized, yet flexible. Make prayer and hospitality a part of every program. Arrange your space in a way that is comfortable and conducive to learning for adults. Avoid a classroom setting. It can be detrimental to adult learning.

Step 6: Evaluate.

Ask the participants for input. Did the program meet their expectations? Were their goals accomplished? What was positive? What could have been done differently? The ultimate question is: How did the program help the participants to live out the gospel in their daily lives?

* * * * *

Although the above planning guide is aimed at single parishes, it may be effective for two or more parishes to combine either single programs or all programs. This is certainly appropriate when parishes are already linked in other ways. In these instances, it is essential that the planning team include members from all participating parishes. Further, parishes can coordinate with others by making their parishioners aware of pertinent programs in other parishes and even within the community.

There may be certain situations when it is also appropriate to plan programs ecumenically. Common goals and needs, as well as responding to events in a particular community, would determine the kinds of programs. Social concerns and Christian parenting are examples of topics for this kind of collaboration.

Good adult education requires teamwork, planning, flexibility and creativity. The parish needs to recognize that it exists in a community. Sometimes events of the local or broader world community call for a response from adult Catholics. Good adult education will help Catholics, not only learn how to be better Catholics, but also how to translate their faith into action in the social, political and economic areas of their lives.

Learning Needs and Interests Survey

If you are eighteen years or older, please answer this questionnaire. It will help our Parish Adult Education Team plan programs to meet the specific needs and interests of our adult parishioners. The results of the questionnaire and plans for meeting parishioner needs will be published in the Sunday bulletin. Feel free not to answer any questions you consider too personal.

General Information. Please check the appropriate item.

Sex: Female Male

Age: 18-35 36-49 50-65 over 65

Marital Status: Single Married Separated Divorced Widowed

Topics. Please rate your level of interest by indicating to what degree you would participate in a program focusing on that topic. Circle the appropriate number, using this key as a guide: 1 - No interest; 2 - Some interest, might attend; 3 - Interest, probably would attend; 4 - High interest, definitely would attend.

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Scripture Study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Church History | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. The Sacraments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Prayer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Changes in the Church | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Christian Parenting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Values in the Media | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Bereavement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Separation, Divorce, and Remarriage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. The Aging Process | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Making a Career Change | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. Business Ethics | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. Medical Ethics | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Euthanasia | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Marital Enrichment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. Finding the Right Partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. Mid-life Crisis | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. Conscience Formation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. Coping with Illness in the Family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Family Communication | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

What other issues or topics would you like to see addressed by your parish?

Learning Methods. Which ways of learning do you prefer? (Please check one or more.)

- Lecture, with question and answer period
- Lecture, with time for small-group discussion
- Small-group discussion format
- Small-group discussion format, with a study guide
- Video or film presentation, with small-group discussion
- Independent study program
- Faith sharing group format

Day and Time. Check the two most convenient times for you to attend a program.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____

Session Length. What is your preferred session length? Check one.

One hour Two hours One and a half hours Three hours

Location. In what location do you prefer to attend programs?

Parish premises Restaurant Home setting
 Other, please specify:

Please check if you need the following: transportation child care

Comments. What other suggestions can you offer to help the Adult Religious Education Team plan quality programs?

Thank you for answering this questionnaire. If you would like to be included on our mailing list, Please write your name and address below.²

² Copied with permission from "Priming the Pump", Tabor Publishing, 1989
Diocese of Springfield, 2000

B. Catechesis of Children and Youth

Catechesis understood as the "totality of the church's efforts to make disciples" (CCC 4) is more than teaching about our faith. It is both a ministerial and pastoral activity of the church. Through the ministry of catechesis children and youth should experience the love of God. They need to feel welcomed, appreciated and loved. The catechetical program is the place in which children and youth most come in contact with the church. In the catechetical setting children and youth interact with each other and the adults of the community on an interpersonal level. A positive experience will lay the foundation for them to grow in knowledge and love of Christ and his Church.

Introduction: Systematic and Formal

Catechesis takes place within the overall pastoral activity of the Church. It is not isolated from other aspects of parish life. Through catechesis, children and youth are prepared to participate more fully in the communal, liturgical and apostolic life of the Church. Inviting children and youth to actively participate in social and recreational activities helps them become more a part of the community. Liturgies with children, whether in the context of the catechetical program or Sunday worship, can help them further develop an appreciation of the liturgy. The catechetical program should provide children and youth with opportunities to participate in service within the parish as well as the broader community. It need not create new avenues of service, but rather tie in with those already in place. While catechesis prepares children and youth for the entire pastoral mission of the Church, those activities, in turn, enrich their experience and knowledge of God and the Church.

Quality catechesis for young people, pre-school through high school, requires an overall plan and structure. The needs of each age level differ in terms of curriculum, resources and even scheduling based on student ability and maturity. Also consideration needs to be given to children and youth with special needs to assure integration into the program. A well-organized and systematic program brings unity, cohesiveness and a sense of purpose to the catechetical endeavor. This requires a curriculum that encompasses the whole program.

What do we mean by curriculum? In its strictest sense, it refers simply to the content to be learned, i.e. the course of study to be followed in each class as well as the entire course of study from pre-school through high school. For the purpose of catechesis, the curriculum includes other activities which support that course of study e.g., retreats, service projects, social and community building activities, and prayer and liturgical experiences. The four major and necessary dimensions of any catechetical curriculum are **word** (message),

worship, service and community. Each of these components must be integrated into the entire planning process in order for catechesis to be both formational and educational.

Certain tools and structures need to be put in place to support this curriculum and integrate catechesis with liturgy, service and community activities. Key "tools" for religious educators are textbooks and other supplementary resources such as audio-visuals, workbooks, supplies of paper, pencils, etc. The structures include meeting space, schedules, coordination with liturgical and other activities of the parish, and models such as summer bible schools. The use of texts, resources and structures will be addressed in this section. Personnel resources are addressed in a separate section.

Resources

Texts

The primary resource used in catechetics is the text. The text is not the program itself. It is only a tool to assist the students and the catechists in the learning process. However, the text is a very necessary tool for each class. It provides a systematic foundation for the building of the curriculum.

What to look for in a text

There are a number of texts available for use in religious education programs. How do the parish catechetical leaders determine which to choose? The following characteristics and qualities are key considerations in choosing or evaluating a text:

The Series as a Whole...

- Gradually develops the core teachings of the Church.
- Presents the teachings of the church in proportion to their importance within the total body of teachings.
- Presents the teaching of the church in a logical manner appropriate to the age level and experience of the students.
- Develops all the catechetical dimensions of word, worship service and community.
- Provides additional resources for parent/family involvement.

The Individual Text...

- Presents Jesus Christ as the central mystery of our faith.
- Fosters a sense of community through shared activities, discussion and opportunities for celebration and social interaction.
- Relates the message of faith to the church community.
- Offers opportunities to experience a variety of prayer forms.
- Encourages students to reflect on and participate in service appropriate for their age level.
- Presents a broad cultural representation; e.g. various races and cultures, both genders and various family groupings.
- Is clear and easy to follow.
- Provides a balance between information to be read and learning activities to be experienced.
- Has visual appeal and a variety of graphics.

The Catechists' Manual...

- Provides adequate background material for the catechist to understand doctrinal concepts in each lesson.
- Provides clear, easy-to-follow lesson plans.
- Suggests a variety of learning activities to help students integrate the message into their lives.
- Suggests additional resources, such as stories and audio visuals to supplement the lessons.

The above suggestions are adapted from *How To Choose Catechetical Textbooks: Process and Criteria* published by The National Conference of Catechetical Leadership, 1996.

(See the *Diocesan Policy Relative to Catechetical Texts* in the *Guidelines* section of this handbook for more information on choosing and using texts.)

Supplementary Resources

Supplementary resources enhance catechesis in many ways. They should never be considered luxuries, but rather essentials for learning to take place. First, they provide a variety of learning methods and reinforcement of concepts. Second, they involve the students in such a way as to counteract boredom and discipline problems. Third, those that are meant to be taken home help to extend the limited classroom time into the home. Supplementary resources can be categorized under four types: those specifically connected to the text being used; additional audio-visuals; print resources; and those supplies used in the learning process, such as pencils, papers, craft materials, etc.

Resources corresponding with texts typically include items such as activity booklets, take home materials, black line masters and parent/family resources. Some publishers also make available unit tests, posters, music and/or videos to correspond with specific lessons. Videos that describe the program for catechists and parents/guardians are also common. While many of these materials are provided for elementary programs, junior high and high school programs are very limited in what they offer for supplementary materials. Mentor and/or sponsor materials are often provided, particularly for Confirmation programs.

It is important that resources corresponding with text be made available to catechists and used to the fullest extent possible. These resources help to reinforce a lesson or concept, enable learners to remember it better, and integrate it into their lives. It is crucial that any family/parent materials be used as indicated by the program. These help to bolster communication between the catechist/ coordinator and the parents/guardians, as well as between the parents/guardians and their children. Further, they often serve as a form of adult education for the parents/guardians.

Another resource that nearly all publishers provide is a scope and sequence chart, which outlines the entire curriculum of the program. This provides catechetical leaders and catechists with a visual sense of the whole picture. Catechists are able to see how their content and topic fits into and relates to the rest of the program. It is essential that catechists be aware of this so that they are comfortable with focusing on their own topic and not tempted to spend time teaching that which is being addressed at another grade level.

Note: Textbooks and most workbooks are meant to be consumable, especially at the elementary level. This means that students should be allowed to write in them and take them home at appropriate times. Each student should have his/her own textbook to keep. Further, it is inappropriate and may be illegal to buy one workbook and copy the pages for the students, except where copying is specifically allowed by the publisher. In the long run it is often less expensive to buy the workbooks, rather than copy them. In light of the fact that purchasing textbooks for students to keep is expensive, it is appropriate to charge a minimal registration fee to cover the cost of the books. The parish should provide books for those who

The most frequently used **audio-visual resources** are videotapes and music in the form of cassettes, compact discs, or albums. They can be used for a variety of purposes: to provide additional information or to provide the information in a different form; to stimulate discussion; to provide an experience that helps to relate the lesson to the students' life experience; or to enhance prayer (especially the music).

Here are a few suggestions to maximize the effectiveness of audio-visual resources.

- Choose AV's that relate to the lesson.
- Choose age appropriate AV's.
- Decide where to use them in the lesson.
- Make use of guides that are often provided with them.
- Make connections between the AV and the lesson.
- Never use them just to fill time.
- Avoid overusing or using them too frequently.

Many videotapes and music cassettes are available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library. Each parish should have a copy of our video catalogue. Extra copies are available to purchase from the office (see appendix for more information on the use of our Resource Library). Also, it is worthwhile to purchase some of the more frequently used resources for the parish making them easily accessible to the catechists. Having these readily available also enhances the learning environment.

Other **print resources** can also be used to complement a lesson. Prayer books, story books and activity books are helpful to have on hand for catechists. Many teachers manuals suggest those that might correspond with the text.

There are certain **supplies** that are considered staples and necessary for effective catechesis. Paper and pencils should be readily available for all catechetical sessions. If possible, there should be one central place where

catechists have access to items such as:

- Bibles
- construction paper
- markers, crayons and chalk
- poster paper
- scissors, glue and/or paste
- used magazines and newspapers

- fabric, felt, ice cream sticks and other craft materials

Other items to have on hand are cassette players, videocassette recorders, and televisions. In smaller programs, one of each may be enough. However, in larger programs, more may be needed so catechists do not have to wait to use them. It is important that someone be in charge of use of this equipment to oversee the scheduling and maintenance of it.

Web sites and CD roms are common resources for catechists. Access to computers with these capabilities, are a valuable asset to a parish catechetical program.

It is the responsibility of the parish to provide these resources. However, parishes that do not have the financial resources to purchase all of them can take advantage of creative approaches to acquire them without cost. Parish organizations may be able to fund a particular item. Local businesses may also be asked occasionally to donate supplies. Finally, parents and other parishioners are often very willing to donate a few items.

Used wisely, supplementary resources can make a big difference in the effectiveness of catechetical programs. They help to bring life to the catechetical process. Children and young people are more likely to feel a sense of excitement and enjoyment while learning their faith. Catechists can take advantage of the creative teaching activities suggested in their manuals. Parents/guardians will also benefit from them, particularly those designed for their needs. Investment in supplementary resources pays off with a vibrant catechetical program.

Structuring for Effective Catechesis

Catechesis is most effective when it is well planned, includes several components, and is done in the spirit of evangelization. In fact as the *General Directory for Catechesis* points out, "Many who present themselves for catechesis truly require genuine conversion..." therefore, by making allowances for the interior disposition of "whoever believes" can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task of education in the faith (GDC 62). A welcoming atmosphere leads to a sense of belonging and incorporation into the community. Catechesis carried out in the context of evangelization prompts us to ask the questions: What are the most effective ways to draw people into the mystery of Christ? How do we create a welcoming atmosphere? What structures and settings will best support this evangelizing catechesis?

Considerable planning and effort need to go into structuring catechetical programs that form our children and youth in faith. Catechesis is most effective when a variety of ways are provided to engage them in the formation process. The primary component of any catechetical program is the instructional period. However, our most impressive and meaningful learning experiences often occur in other settings, such as liturgies, retreat or prayer times, service projects, family activities and other supportive programs. Vacation bible schools and special seasonal programs are examples of supportive programs that enhance faith formation. Catechetical structures which go beyond the instructional setting are more likely to succeed in developing a "living, conscious, active" faith (NCD 32) in our young people. It is essential when planning catechetical programs that all these components be included in the overall structure.

Given that parents/guardians are the primary catechists, it is essential that opportunities be built into the program to help them become involved in their children's faith formation. Parents/guardians are both recipients of catechesis and catechists in their own right. Parent/guardian programs form another important component of the overall structure.

This section offers guidelines and practical suggestions for:

- Scheduling
- Supportive Programs and Activities
- Environment
- Alternate Models
- Home Study Option

Scheduling

When scheduling catechetical programs, all components must be built into the schedule so that parents/guardians, children and youth, and the entire parish understand that each part is essential to the entire catechetical process. Most published programs, particularly on the elementary level, offer 20-30 one-hour lessons over the course of a year, inclusive of special lessons for liturgical seasons and saints as well as review lessons. This by itself is not enough.

The Office of Religious Education recommends that the parish offer a minimum 52 contact hours per year for catechetical formation. At least 25-30 hours of that time would focus on the instructional component. Additional opportunities need to be provided to help children and youth develop a faith relationship with Christ in the context of the church community. Ways to do this are outlined in the next section. This invites a challenge to re-think religious education. Faith is "caught" as well as

taught. Therefore, those opportunities that provide the context in which faith can be caught, such as retreats, liturgies, family activities, and service projects are not additions to the catechetical calendar. They are as much a part of the calendar as the instructional components.

Scheduling of catechetical programs is challenging and must be creative. Many factors need to be considered for effective catechesis. Schedules must be family friendly. Consideration should be given to how they will accommodate families in relationship to other parish and community events. This may mean that parish leadership needs to look beyond their own schedules and convenience in deciding when classes and other catechetical activities will take place.

There is no one way of scheduling programs that is right for all parishes. What works in one parish may not work in another. The busy lives of parishioners make creativity a necessity. Include catechist meetings, training sessions and opportunities for interesting activities.

Here are some helpful criteria for scheduling...

Do long range planning. Create a yearly calendar that includes all components of the catechetical program, such as liturgical experiences, service projects, retreats, etc. Long range planning gives a sense of importance and priority to catechesis, as well as helps the parish and families to avoid conflicts in other schedules and frequent schedule changes.

Communicate your schedule. Parents/guardians, catechists, youth and other parish organizations should have a copy of the schedule for an entire year. Avoid surprises e.g., telling parents/guardians one week ahead of time that all third graders are to attend the 10 o'clock Mass next Sunday will create stress and anxiety. In communicating the schedule, particularly with parents/

guardians and youth, be explicit in terms of expectations. In which activities are children and youth expected to participate? Which may be optional? (Example: Sunday Liturgy of the Word or Summer Bible School may be offered as further opportunities for growth into the faith, while not all are expected to attend.) On the other hand, if all confirmation students are expected to attend the fall retreat, be clear about that. Families will particularly appreciate having a schedule and are more likely to commit to the program if they do.

Involve parents/guardians, catechists and the entire parish staff when scheduling. Doing this will help to facilitate effective planning. It may be helpful to have a planning group that includes students, particularly when planning the junior high and high school programs. The more people and groups that are involved in the planning, the better the commitment of all involved.

Know your families. What are their lifestyles? Are there any cultural or ethnic traditions that may affect their own schedules? Are there a large number of single parents/guardians or combined families? Are there special needs? Scheduling classes on weekends when children may be spending time on a regular basis with a parent/guardian out of town or unwilling to participate may be problematic. Expecting such children to attend every class would add an extra burden of stress

to these families. Offering other options should be considered for those who cannot attend on these days. Surveys and parent/guardian meetings may be helpful in getting input concerning scheduling that will accommodate families. Parents/guardians will more willingly cooperate and participate when they know their family needs have been considered. Consequently, there will be fewer attendance problems.

Be particularly sensitive to the lives of adolescents. Their life situation is very different from that of elementary children. "The most successful catechesis is that which is given in the context of the wider pastoral care of young people, especially when it addresses the problems affecting their lives" (GDC 184). Their sessions should be held separately from those of the children. "The varied learning needs, expanding freedom, and social/cultural situations of adolescents suggest that catechetical planners offer a variety of learning formats, schedules and techniques"(CAC p.9). Flexibility and creative scheduling are especially important for them. Consider scheduling options, such as biweekly, full day, monthly, overnight, weekend and weeklong sessions.

Know your community. When are school-related activities most likely to be scheduled, such as music, sports and theater? What other events occur on a regular basis in the community? Get a copy of the school calendar before planning for the coming year. Try to work with the school and sporting schedules, not against them. This will also help to bolster regular attendance.

Know your parish. What are the other organizations and committees in your parish? What are their schedules? What major events, liturgical or social, take place in your parish? When are parish facilities reserved for special groups?

Work with other groups in the parish in order to avoid conflicting schedules. A master calendar for recording all parish events is a good way to accomplish this. It must be accessible and kept current. It is especially important to consider the liturgical calendar of the parish so that the religious education calendar supports it, rather than conflicts with it. The parish religious education calendar needs to be integrated into the life of the parish.

Know your Diocese and Region. Often times there are programs in your region of the diocese that will benefit your children or catechists. In order to take full advantage of these opportunities, schedule them right into your yearly calendar. It is recommended that no catechetical activities be held on the Diocesan Day of Enrichment so that all personnel will be free to attend.

Be flexible. While making every effort to fulfill the schedule, be willing to make adaptations when necessary for the common good. For instance, if some unforeseen event arises in the community or parish after the schedule has been published causing a conflict, try to revise the schedule accordingly, particularly if it would affect a large number of people involved in your program. Communicate any changes immediately. Also, it is unrealistic to expect all children and youth to participate in every event scheduled for them. Where possible, provide alternative ways to make-up important sessions that are missed. Be particularly sensitive to situations involving illness or family crisis.

Be creative. Finding creative and alternative ways of scheduling may help to alleviate some of the difficulties in meeting the above need. No schedule will satisfy all the parties involved. There may be some very legitimate reasons that some children and youth cannot fully participate in the program as scheduled. Provide some options from which participants can choose. For example, some parishes could offer a choice of weekend or after school sessions for children. Older youth may appreciate a choice of a Sunday evening or Monday evening session. Another option is to work with neighboring parishes in an exchange program. In this way, if a student cannot participate in his/her home parish program, he/she would be welcome in another's program. Flexible and creative solutions can be found for meeting most scheduling needs. Another consideration in scheduling is the volunteers. Creative and flexible scheduling provides a greater range of opportunities for catechetical volunteers, as well as the families involved. It is often necessary to schedule a program based on the availability of the volunteers.

Scheduling can be a very complex task. However, good planning with attention to people's needs gets a more positive response from participants. Moreover, it will save time in the long run. Planning and scheduling that takes place in the spring and summer months will result in a program that runs more smoothly during the year. Finally, the effort that is put into good scheduling gives a sense of importance and seriousness to the catechetical endeavor.

SCHEDULE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Have you ...

◆ Involved

- parents/guardians
- catechists
- the parish staff

◆ Coordinated with other schedules of

- your families
- your community
- your parish
- your diocese and region

◆ Provided for recommended 52 contact hours

- at least 25-30 hours of the formal instructional component

- 22-27 hours of other components
- ◆ Included all components and supportive programs
 - retreat/prayer opportunities
 - liturgical opportunities
 - service components
 - family/parent/guardian activities
 - seasonal activities
 - other supportive programs
 - catechist training/meetings

Supportive Programs and Activities

To be effective, the formation of children in their faith needs to extend beyond the instructional component. New and different ways to touch the lives of the children and their families must be explored. Creativity is essential. Opportunities which provide for community building, liturgical and other prayer experiences, service and alternative learning experiences assist children in integrating their faith into their lives as well as building a more committed and meaningful relationship with God and the worshipping community.

Suggestions for Supportive Programs and Activities:

Retreat/Prayer Opportunities - Children of all ages can benefit from days/afternoons/evenings of reflection. Overnight retreats may be provided for older children. These help children to grow in their prayer life and their relationship with God. They also provide time for longer periods of sharing and in-depth experiences with the children.

Liturgies - Help children and youth to understand and make connections to liturgy by actively involving them in liturgies and providing liturgical services aimed at their age level. Also, taking children to liturgical functions provides teachable moments.

There are a variety of practical ways to help children understand and make connections to the liturgy.

Involve them in regular parish liturgies as lectors, ushers/greeters, choir members, altar servers and banner makers. Those liturgical functions are to be assigned according to their giftedness and with appropriate training. Keep in mind that these are liturgical ministries not to be done for show.

Take them to special liturgies and devotional services; e.g., Baptisms, Confirmations, Ordinations, Weddings, the Easter Triduum, parish celebrations of Anointing of the Sick, Stations of the Cross, public recitation of the rosary, etc. They are teachable moments. Preparation and follow up catechesis will help them to integrate these experiences.

Provide special Masses aimed at their age level. Some could be done apart from Sunday liturgies to celebrate special events; e.g., the opening of the school year or graduations. Others could be liturgies with children on occasional Sundays.

Celebrate a catechetical Mass separate from the regular parish Masses in which the parts of the Mass are explained.

Provide occasional Children's Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Masses.

Before the proclamation of the Word begins, the children are dismissed with their ministers to another place where they celebrate their own liturgy of the Word including a homily and intercessions. "Then, before the eucharistic liturgy begins, the children are led to the place where the adults have meanwhile been celebrating their own liturgy of the Word" (DMC 17). It is important that any lay ministers of children's liturgy of the Word be appropriately trained to keep this a liturgical experience as opposed to a classroom one.

When planning liturgies with children or Liturgy of the Word with children, refer to the *Directory For Masses With Children*.

Penance Services - Offer penance services for children and youth on an annual or biennial basis. These are most effective when planned for age grouping such as elementary, junior high, and high school. They will also benefit from participation in parish and regional penance services.

Intergenerational Programs - Any programs in which families or other intergenerational groups interact for formational, service or social purposes.

Family Retreats - These could be provided in a day or weekend format either on or off parish premises. This is a wonderful opportunity for families to learn to pray and share their faith together.

Family Nights/Days - These can be social/educational events built around a theme or a project, such as making advent wreaths together. Children and parents may be separated for part of the program, but come together for specific activities or prayer.

Senior Citizen Projects - Have families visit nursing homes, bringing gifts during Advent or Christmas. Senior citizens make wonderful prayer partners with children.

Big Brother/Sister Type Activities - These involve older children or adults working with younger children on specific projects or service activities or in mentoring. Those activities can take place in small groups or one on one.

Service Projects - Service projects should be integrated into the program at all age levels as they flow from the curriculum. Although some service projects may be designed specifically for the children or youth, it is advisable at times to connect with those already in place in the parish. Service projects may be carried out by families and other intergenerational groupings. This will help children to understand service as integral to the Christian life rather than as special projects.

Vacation Activities - Vacation Bible School or other programs provide opportunities to combine learning, recreation, crafts and other activities in a less structured and more relaxed atmosphere from the instructional mode. Consider the many published programs available, inter-parish programs or even an ecumenical approach. These also create opportunities for volunteers

to serve at a time other than the school year or to use their talents in non-instructional ways.

These are just some possible ways to supplement and support the instructional components of your programs. Special liturgical seasons are opportunities for many of these. Sample resources are available at the Office of Religious Education to assist in planning these and other programs. Be creative! Staff consultants can help develop and assist with designing supplemental programs.

Environment

The setting for catechesis affects its outcomes. A setting that is physically comfortable, aesthetically appealing and allows for flexibility of arrangement of furniture creates an environment that is most conducive to learning. It is important that meeting spaces have proper lighting, comfortable seating and temperature, and are safe. Keeping in mind that catechesis needs to be evangelizing, the setting in which it takes place must present a sense of caring and welcome. A crowded, poorly lit or cold room does not create a welcoming atmosphere. A place that can be decorated appropriately with posters and children's artwork contributes to an evangelizing atmosphere. Places such as stairwells or hallways are inappropriate.

Since catechesis concerns itself with forming people in their faith, not just information, meeting spaces should be such as to avoid giving the impression that this is just another subject to learn. Places that allow for movement, interaction and prayer experiences lend themselves to formational catechesis. Preferred settings are those where children can sit in a circle, work at tables or even sit on a carpeted floor at times of prayer. It is ideal to have a special place in each meeting space for prayer which can be arranged with a Bible, candle, crucifix and other symbols that might be used.

Worship space is not an appropriate setting for instruction. Although it is certainly appropriate to use the worship space for liturgies and prayer services, they do not lend themselves to good catechetical methodology. The fact that the church is the place of worship and needs to be respected as such limits its use for good catechesis. Finding the right setting for catechetical activities can often present a challenge for parishes. Be creative. If there are not appropriate facilities on the parish premises, other possibilities exist, such as meeting in homes or using other facilities in the community.

Scheduling may need to be adapted according to availability of spaces. For instance, a parish may have to spread its catechetical programs over a period of days in order to avoid excessively large groupings. Although it may be appropriate to bring large groups together, generally the learning groups should be no larger than twelve.

In parishes where there is a Catholic school, it is important that the school be perceived by all as parish property and therefore available for use in the religious education program. Catechists need to be given some freedom in arranging furniture appropriately, and using the chalkboard and audio-visual equipment. On the other hand, the catechists and others involved must be sensitive to the fact that the building is used primarily as a school. Furniture and all items used should be

appropriately re-set after catechetical activities.

Children in the parish religious education programs should be treated as being just as important as those in the Catholic schools. It is inappropriate to compromise their environment or resources in favor of Catholic school children. Open communication between school and catechetical personnel is the key to avoiding conflicts.

Alternate Models

A number of models have been developed and are emerging which differ from the traditional instructional mode based on age grouping. These focus on a developing curriculum. Some examples are: intergenerational programs; lectionary based programs; in-home programs in which parents/guardians, under the supervision of a coordinator or director of religious education, teach their children at home. Other models can be found.

While all of these models have some merit, they are often lacking some essential component of effective catechesis or require a great amount of organization and expertise to implement effectively. On the other hand, these models are sometimes appropriate for some segments of your parish. The Office of Religious Education requests that parishes work with their consultants when considering new models or any major changes to their programs.

Home Study Option

Home Study Option refers to religious education that takes place in individual families apart from the formal catechetical program. Parents/ guardians take the responsibility of teaching their children at home. While recognizing the rights and duties of parents/guardians to educate their children in the faith according to the teaching handed on by the Church (cf.

Can. 226), parishes are to discourage this model as the exclusive one for a child. Home study lacks the communal aspect of catechesis called for in catechetical documents. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (158) points out that for catechesis to be effective, the community is to be the concrete reference point and locus for one's faith journey. Home study often deprives the child of interaction with other children in the parish and of opportunities to take part in prayer experiences designed for their age.

However, for certain family and individual reasons, some parents/guardians do choose home study for their children. Oftentimes, they also home school their children for their academic formation. Those who do home school their children and/or use the home study option for their religious formation are to abide by the Diocesan Policy Relative to Home Study Option for Catechesis. (See *Guidelines* section.) This is not to be considered a long-term situation, but a temporary one, giving permission for the home study option for one year at a time.

* * * * *

Planning for and implementing effective catechesis for children and youth require commitment, creativity, cooperation and courage on the part of the parish staff. A well-trained catechetical leader provides the vision, structure and coordination of catechesis in the parish. Catechists are key persons in the process, the ones who work directly with the children and youth. They need training and ongoing support. Finally, parents/guardians play a crucial role in the formation of their children. It is important that the parish staff not only cooperate and work with them, but that they offer parents/guardians the support and catechesis that they need to fulfill their role as the primary educators of their children.

The section on catechetical leadership and personnel further outlines the various roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the catechetical enterprise.

C. Family Catechesis

“The family has a unique identity and mission that permeates its tasks and responsibilities” (FPCS, p. 8). Its mission is to become a believing and evangelizing community (Cf. FC 4). In this sense it is often referred to as the “domestic church”, a household of faith, hope, and love. As a believing community, the family lives in relationship to God and is guided by Christian values. As an evangelizing community, the family witnesses to the Good News in its relationships with others.

Fulfillment of the mission of the family calls for responsibilities on the part of both the family and the parish. The family has a responsibility to foster catechetical and spiritual development of its members so that it can accomplish its mission. The parish has a responsibility to provide opportunities and resources for this catechetical and spiritual development.

Family involvement in catechesis is referenced in this document in several places:

- Adult Formation
- Supplementary Resources
- Structuring for Effective Catechesis
- Scheduling
- Supportive Programs and Activities
- Home Study Options
- Immediate Sacramental preparation:
 - Confirmation
 - Reconciliation
 - First Eucharist

Family involvement in immediate sacramental preparation is integral to these programs, particularly in the form of parent sessions and family activities. See the individual sections in this handbook for specific suggestions.

Everybody is part of a family. Attending to the catechetical needs of families goes beyond the traditional understanding of family as parents/guardians and children. It includes single parent/guardian and blended families.

Many adults live in households without children, but are still connected to families. They include groups such as single adults, “empty nesters”, the elderly, grandparents, widows and widowers, the divorced and separated. Each of these groups has specific catechetical and spiritual needs in context of their families.

It is important to collaborate with other parish ministries when addressing

family catechesis, such as family life commissions, adult education committees, and RCIA teams. Pastoral ministers are often the people who are connected with families in time of transitions and/or crises. Often they are in a unique position to identify needs of families.

Keeping in mind the broad context of family catechesis and the mission of the domestic church, the following are some suggested programs:

- Intergenerational catechetical programs and activities
- Parenting programs
- Family communications and relationships
- Family spirituality
- Support groups for the separated and divorced, and the widowed
- Support programs such as “Rainbows for All God’s Children” for children of divorced parents or who have lost a parent to death
- Special programs for single adults
- Programs for grandparents
- Programs for the elderly
- Preparing parents for the “empty nest” stage
- Marriage preparation
- Family or couples retreats
- Marriage enrichment
- Family and intergenerational service projects

The possibilities are endless. Both the Diocesan Office of Religious Education and the Family Life Office can offer assistance to parishes in planning family programs.

D. Catechesis for People with Special Needs

The parish has the same responsibility to provide for the religious education of those with special needs as for all its members. All persons with a disability, regardless of age, have a right to be integrated into the Church and to be accepted as contributing members. The value, worth and dignity of those with special needs are to be recognized. Their basic human needs, rights, and desires are the same as for all people. Therefore, they are invited to full participation in religious education and sacramental programs.

For people with special needs, “education in the faith, which involves the family above all else, calls for personalized and adequate programs... It is most effectively carried out in the context of the integral education of the person. On the other hand, the risk must be avoided of separating this specialized catechesis from the general pastoral care of the community. It is necessary that the community be aware of such catechesis and be involved in it. The particular demands of this catechesis require a special competence from catechists...” (GDC 189).

Inclusion of people with special needs in the program benefits all involved. As participating members of the community, the parish is enriched by them. The following ideas are offered to help parishes with this inclusion process:

- Inquire of the individual what adaptations or supports would be helpful.
- Discuss with parents/guardians or caregivers the person’s abilities, communication skills, learning style, mobility, behavioral problems, medical information, etc. This will help to determine what type of special supports will be needed.
- Prepare the catechetical space so that it is accessible and lends itself to necessary adaptation.
- Solicit the help of the individual(s) in setting up the space in a way that would be comfortable for all.
- Request the parent’s permission to contact a student’s public or private school teacher to help plan classroom strategies.
- Form a team consisting of the DRE, catechist, parents or caregivers, aides, and volunteers to insure that responsibility is shared by all involved.
- Provide training for the catechist or aide who will serve the special needs student.

- Plan to have the necessary supports available before the student is welcomed into the class.
- Offer assistance to the catechist to prepare other students to accept the special needs student as one of their own and to appreciate the unique gifts he or she brings to the group. This is a valuable opportunity for young people to learn to respect people with disabilities.

The Bureau For Exceptional Children and Adults of the Diocese of Springfield (Jericho) offers assistance to parishes in creating the inclusion process. Other catechetical leaders who have worked with people with disabilities may also provide valuable insights.

E. Immediate Sacramental Preparation

"It is of the greatest importance that the faithful should easily understand the sacramental signs, and should eagerly frequent those sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian life."

(CSL 59)

This section addresses those segments of catechesis that are designed for immediate preparation for the sacraments that fall under the auspices of the Office of Religious Education: First Penance; First Eucharist; and Confirmation. Immediate sacramental preparation provides introductory catechesis on the meaning of the sacraments, signs, symbols, rituals, and graces conferred. It also spiritually prepares one to celebrate the sacrament with faith and the commitment that the sacrament calls forth.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and its adaptation for children are addressed in a separate document included with this Handbook.

While it is not the purpose of this document to address immediate preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony, Holy Orders or Anointing of the Sick, there are times within the parish catechetical mission when extensive catechesis on these sacraments is appropriate. Criteria and information on infant Baptism and marriage preparation is available from the Office of Family Life. Assistance with catechesis for the Sacrament of Holy Orders is available from the Office of Vocations, and the Office of Pastoral Ministry can assist parishes with catechesis on Anointing of the Sick. Sacramental catechesis should be integrated into the parish religious education curriculum at all levels. It is part of the curriculum in most series of catechetical texts. Supplementary resources on the Sacraments are also available from the Office of Religious Education resource libraries in Springfield and Pittsfield.

General Principles for Sacramental Preparation

The following principles are essential to sacramental preparation. Although

suggestions will be offered for each of the sacraments, there are central elements of sacramental preparation and celebration that apply to all.

The parish is responsible for providing preparation for the sacraments.

Preparation and celebration of the sacraments should take place in the parish in which the candidate worships, except when the celebration of Confirmation is combined at the request of the Bishop. While Catholic schools' curriculum may teach the content of the sacrament, the spiritual, communal and liturgical formation is the concern of the parish. Therefore, children in Catholic schools are to be incorporated into the religious education program of their parish for at least some parts if not all of the immediate sacramental preparation. This includes special liturgies, retreat/prayer experiences, special communal activities, service projects, and parent/family sessions. Also, while combined parishes or combined parish programs may prepare children together, the sacraments are to be celebrated in one's home parish. In the event that one does go outside one's parish of worship, the parish in which the sacrament will be celebrated should notify and consult with the home parish.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults provides the model for all sacramental catechesis, particularly for the initiation sacraments. As a model, the RCIA places catechesis in the context of the faith community and the liturgy. The primary modes of catechesis are reflection on the Scriptures from the Liturgy of the Word and on the liturgical rites, with our Catholic Tradition being presented in light of the Word and the liturgy. Borrowing from this model, catechesis in all sacramental preparation has liturgical elements and is grounded in Scripture. As the community is responsible for the catechesis of catechumens, the community takes responsibility for all sacramental preparation particularly the initiation sacraments.

Texts and resources specifically designed for sacramental preparation are to be used. Texts for immediate preparation will give guidance in developing overall preparation for reception, not simply catechesis about the sacrament. For example, the second grade text of any basal series provides information about the Eucharist. However, it is not sufficient for preparation for First Eucharist. Supplementary materials are needed for the catechist to prepare children adequately for this sacrament. A variety of texts and resources are available for each of the sacraments. Contact the Office of Religious Education for recommended texts that are best suited for your parish.

Preparation includes more than imparting knowledge and more than rehearsals or practice. It should integrate the four dimensions of catechesis: word, worship, service and community. It should assist the candidate to be disposed spiritually to receive the sacrament.

Catechesis for immediate sacramental preparation is basic, introductory and age appropriate. One does not have to acquire a full knowledge of the faith in order to celebrate a sacrament. Rather the candidate must have a fundamental understanding of the sacrament and the meaning of its celebration at a level

appropriate for his/her age. Yet it must be received in faith. Catechesis on each of the sacraments continues throughout life. Incorporation into the life of the parish and the church is ongoing.

Depending on the sacrament, initial preparation may extend anywhere from a few weeks to several months. The measure of the preparation's value is not in its length, but in how well and thoroughly it attends to the principles named in this handbook.

The following sections will offer specific suggestions for sacramental catechesis in light of these principles.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

This section is a companion piece to the *Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation*. The intent is to help parishes implement the guidelines.

opportunity for children to focus on God's mercy and forgiveness and their own experience of forgiving and being forgiven. Because forgiveness always takes place in relationship with others, especially within the family, it is also a prime opportunity for families to reflect on how forgiveness and reconciliation are experienced and celebrated in the home.

Preparation for First Reconciliation involves both children and their parents/guardians and extends to their entire family. It provides an opportunity for community building and adult catechesis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This can be an evangelizing time that may lead some parents/guardians to their own celebration of reconciliation with the Church.

Timing

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation generally takes place in the fall for second grade students who will also be preparing for First Eucharist. The Diocese of Springfield recommends that the celebration of First Reconciliation take place before or during the season of Advent.

Other options for preparation and celebration are possible, such as summer or family programs. Parishes wanting to design other models should consider the following:

- Distinct and separate preparation for each sacrament
- The importance of coming together as a community
- The needs of the families
- The readiness of the child
- Appropriate catechesis

For various reasons, preparation for this sacrament needs to be offered at other times. Occasionally older children need to be prepared for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Some have received First Eucharist but missed out on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The preparation of these older children should take place separately from the second grade students. However, parents/guardians of these children may benefit from being included with the preparation of parents/guardians of the second graders. Planners and facilitators of meetings need to be attentive to their special circumstances. If their preparation is completed, it may be appropriate to include older children in the same communal celebration of the Sacrament with the younger children.

Other children who need preparation for First Penance are those who were baptized into another Christian tradition and are now preparing for reception into full communion of the Catholic Church, and those who have been fully initiated into the Catholic Church through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* adapted for children. These would follow the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 252 – 330. (See also the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Springfield*, 55-61, and 66).

Catechesis

The primary content of catechesis for children preparing for their first celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is outlined in #5 of the *Guidelines for Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation*. Most major texts designed for preparation for this sacrament include these topics. It is important that such catechesis be presented in a way that the children can understand at their level. The catechesis of forgiveness must also be connected with their daily lives.

Activities and concepts which support effective catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, may include:

- God's call to us to be the best persons we can be
- An understanding of reconciliation as an opportunity for all of us to grow in our relationship with ourselves, others and God
- Understanding sin as attitudes and ways of acting as well as individual acts that hurt others and diminish our relationship with God
- Stories from Scripture such as The Good Shepherd or the Prodigal Son
- Opportunities to reflect upon times in which the children have been forgiven by others at home, school, and play
- Identifying situations in their, home, school, or recreation where they need to forgive someone else
- Suggesting rituals to celebrate forgiveness, such as sharing a toy or doing something special for someone they have hurt
- The ritual of reconciliation
- Role-playing and video tapes which show examples of the sacrament
- A simple prayer of contrition

The Act of Contrition can be either a simple formal prayer or their own words. The important point is that the prayer express their sorrow for wrongdoing and an intention to change. Whether the prayer is a formal or informal one, it should be simple, short and in language that reflects the child's age and experience. Praying an act of contrition in the context of catechetical sessions will give them confidence and familiarity with these prayers. During the Rite of Reconciliation, the child may use a printed form of the prayer.

While children should be encouraged to confess individual sins, they should also be encouraged to confess ongoing attitudes and actions that separate them from loving relationships with others and God. An examination of conscience provided for their age level will be helpful preparation for the actual celebration of the sacrament. Most sacramental preparation texts include an examination of conscience as well as prayers of contrition appropriate for the children's age.

Sacramental catechesis is different from other catechetical endeavors; its focus is to prepare one to celebrate the sacrament, as well as to teach about the sacrament. Children attending Catholic schools should be incorporated in the religious education program of their home parish for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and for at least part, if not all, of the preparation. Catholic schools' curriculum may be concerned with teaching about the Sacrament but should not include immediate preparation for reception. Any communal or liturgical activities at the parish that prepare families and children to celebrate the sacrament should be

inclusive of parish religious education children and those children in Catholic schools, and all parents/guardians.

Parent /Family Involvement

Parent/guardian and family involvement in First Reconciliation is an integral part of the preparation process. Parents/guardians need to be informed of the particulars of the preparation process: the time and place of catechetical sessions for the children, time and place of parent sessions, date and time of the First Reconciliation celebration, as well as how and what the children are being taught. It is important to communicate with parents/guardians through a variety of ways: mailings, bulletin notices, take home materials, and group or one-to-one meetings with them.

It is highly suggested that there be a minimum of two parent meetings. An initial meeting would focus on the details of the program and the role of the parents and the family. One or more meetings should be held to assist parents in their own growth and understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and offer practical suggestions to help the parents work with their children in preparing them for the Sacrament. It may be necessary to offer options in order to accommodate their schedules. These meetings create prime opportunities to invite parents into deeper participation in the parish community, in their own faith lives, and in the faith lives of their children.

In addition to providing information, effective parent/guardian meetings will include the following:

- Prayer - especially focused on their role as Christian parents/guardians or on God's mercy
- Time for socializing and getting to know each other - for families new to the parish, this is a wonderful opportunity for the parents/guardians to meet other families.
- Reflection on their own experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation - keep in mind that this needs to be done sensitively,

since some may not have celebrated the Sacrament for some time or have had negative experiences. A private reflection process and/or small group discussion may be appropriate.

- Reflection on their own experience of forgiveness or the lack of it in their lives
- Presentation on the Sacrament of Reconciliation which may include:
 - God's loving mercy
 - An understanding of sin
 - A brief history of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - The Church's teaching on the Sacrament
 - A brief review of how the Sacrament is celebrated
 - Ways in which they can practice and celebrate forgiveness in their homes
 - Specific suggestions for helping their children prepare for

the Sacrament

It is important that parent/guardian meetings provide a positive experience of Church by providing meaningful prayer experiences, holding them in a comfortable space and creating opportunities for socializing and refreshments. Such an experience will heighten their relationship with God and may encourage those who have been away from the church to return. (See the “Adult Education Principles” in the *Adult Education* section of this document.)

Celebration of the Sacrament

It is important that the children’s first experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation be a positive one. While recognizing sorrow for sin, they can experience God’s love and mercy. A positive celebration of the sacrament will help the children to see its value and encourage them to celebrate it often. The parish has the responsibility to prepare children for First Reconciliation. However, the parish does not have a right to insist that they receive the Sacrament.

- A communal penance service with individual confession is recommended for the first celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This format best reflects the vision of the Sacrament. The effect of sin on the entire community is realized in this form of celebration. It is also the most comfortable for children. Surrounded by their peers and their families, they experience the strength and encouragement of each other.
- It is important that the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for children include their families, extending even to grandparents, aunts, and uncles. All present should be invited to celebrate the Sacrament. This is a powerful sign to the children of the importance of the Sacrament and that we all need to seek God’s forgiveness and mercy.

Sacramental Records

Reconciliation is not a Sacrament of Initiation. Therefore, while it is not necessary to record each child’s participation in the celebration, the parish office of religious education may keep its own records.

Ongoing Catechesis and Celebration of the Sacrament

Catechesis on and celebration of Reconciliation continue as lifelong endeavors. Catechesis is to be reinforced and developed at all age levels so that the Sacrament is understood and celebrated in a manner congruent with one’s life. Regular celebration of Reconciliation can be encouraged through Reconciliation services connected with the catechetical program and the penitential season of Lent.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist

This section is a companion piece to the *Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist*. The intent is to help parishes implement the guidelines.

The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Christian. Participation in the Eucharist unites us more closely to Christ and his Church and nourishes us to live as his disciples. Preparation for First Eucharist provides a special opportunity for growth in one's relationship to Christ and the community and for understanding the centrality of the Mass for our lives as disciples of Christ.

Timing

Catechesis for First Eucharist generally takes place during the second grade. When it does, catechesis for First Reconciliation should precede it, allowing for sufficient time for each Sacrament. A common practice is First Reconciliation preparation in the fall and First Eucharist preparation in the winter/spring. The diocese recommends that the celebration of First Eucharist take place during the Easter Season.

Other options for preparation and celebration are possible, such as summer or family programs. Parishes wanting to design other models should consider the following:

- Distinct and separate preparation for each Sacrament

- The importance of coming together as a community
- The needs of the families
- The readiness of the child
- Appropriate catechesis

Older children who have been baptized Catholic may also need preparation for First Eucharist. Their preparation takes place through a separate process appropriate to their age level. However, the same principles and elements would apply. Parents/guardians of these children may benefit from participating in some of the parent/guardian sessions of the second grade children. Planners and facilitators of meetings need to be attentive to their special circumstances. It may be more appropriate to celebrate their First Eucharist at a separate liturgy, such as Easter Sunday, any Sunday during the Easter Season or the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Children who have been validly baptized in a Protestant tradition would prepare through an adaptation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Baptized Catholic adults are to be prepared for First Eucharist according to Part II, section 4 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. (See also the *Guidelines and Recommendations for implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Springfield, 55-61 and 62-69.*)

Catechesis

The primary content of catechesis for children preparing for First Eucharist is outlined in #5 of the *Guidelines for the Preparation for the Sacrament of the Eucharist*. Most major texts designed for preparation for this sacrament include these topics. It is important that such catechesis be presented in a way that the children can understand at their level. Further, catechesis is formational and multi-dimensional, involving word, worship, service and community.

Concepts which support comprehensive catechesis for First Eucharist, may include:

- The meaning of the Mass and the importance of their active participation in it
- The various parts of the Mass and their significance.
- Congregational responses of the Mass incorporated into their prayer times
- The relationship between the Eucharist and the call to social justice
 - Biblical stories such as that of the Last Supper and Jesus eating with his disciples and friends
- The children's experience of special meals and family traditions

Activities which support this comprehensive catechesis, may include:

- Sharing a meal
- Special liturgies with their families and/or the entire community focusing on concepts such as sharing, listening, eating, conversing, giving, thanking and celebrating

- Family gatherings around a meal
- Bread making, banner making and other activities with families
- Retreats/days of prayer

Sacramental catechesis is different from other catechetical endeavors; its focus is to prepare one to celebrate the Sacrament, as well as teach about the Sacrament. Catechesis for First Eucharist prepares one for continuing initiation into the community and the Church. In light of this, children attending Catholic schools should be incorporated in the religious education program of their home parish for the celebration of First Eucharist and for at least part, if not all, of the preparation. Catholic schools' curriculum may be concerned with teaching about the Sacrament, but should not include immediate preparation for its reception. This means that all children participate together in the above named activities and that the parent/family involvement described below combines all parents and families.

Parent/Family Involvement

The celebration of First Communion brings many people to parish programs who may no longer participate fully in the life of the Church. This offers a prime opportunity for evangelization. Parents/guardians should be welcomed with the utmost sensitivity to their circumstances and allowed the space to re-examine their personal relationship with God and the Church.

Parent/guardian and family involvement in the children's preparation for First Eucharist is integral to the process. Parents/guardians need to be informed of the particulars of the preparation process: time and place of catechetical sessions for the children, time and place of parent/guardian sessions and any family programs, date and time of the First Eucharist celebration, how and what the children are being taught, parents'/guardians' responsibilities.

It is important to communicate with parents/guardians through a variety of ways: mailings, bulletin notices, take home materials, and group or one-on-one meetings with them. It is highly suggested that there be a minimum of two parent/guardian gatherings. An initial meeting could focus on the details of the program. One or more sessions should be held to further develop the parents'/guardians' understanding and appreciation of the Sacrament and their role in preparing their children.

Parent/guardian and family gatherings can take on a variety of formats:

- Sharing a meal
- Social interaction and community building
- Prayer/retreat
- Liturgical celebrations
- Baking bread together
- Providing information
- Service projects

Many of the informal activities will provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere especially for those families that are finding their way back to the Church.

In addition to the above, effective parent/guardian meetings will include the following:

- Prayer – especially focused on their role as Christian parents/guardians and Eucharistic themes
- Time for socializing and building community
- Presentation and reflection on the Eucharist which may include:
Historical development of the Eucharist
Scriptural reflections on the Eucharist
Eucharist as the Lord's Supper, the gathering of the community, etc.
The presence of Christ in the community, the word, the eucharistic species, and the presiding minister
Ways to incorporate the concepts of the Eucharist in the home

It is important that parent/guardian meetings take place with pastoral sensitivity, especially to those who do not regularly participate in the Eucharist and to parents/guardians of another faith. Care should be taken to make this an evangelizing moment and avoid alienating individuals. This is an opportune

time to encourage and invite them into deeper participation in the Eucharist. All meetings should incorporate the principles of good adult education. (See the "Adult Education Principles" in the *Adult Education* section of this document.)

Celebration of The Sacrament

Since Eucharist is an initiation sacrament, ideally it should be celebrated on Sunday with the parish community to which the child belongs. This can be accomplished by:

- A First Eucharist celebration at a Lord's Day Mass for all the children receiving the sacrament for the first time
- A First Eucharist weekend in which this celebration takes place at more than one or all of the Masses
- Individual First Eucharist at any Mass determined by the family in consultation with the program director and/or pastor

Individual parishes will need to discover which option is best for them. Larger parishes might find it difficult to accommodate the numbers for the first suggestion. They may do better to use the second, which does require more planning on the part of the staff. The third option allows the parents/guardians greater responsibility in determining the right time for a child's First Eucharist, but creates more administrative work for those responsible for record keeping.

In the case of combined parish programs, catechesis for First Eucharist may take place in the larger program, but the actual celebration of First Eucharist should take place in the home parish. It is also appropriate that it take place during the Easter Season or on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. The readings and prayers for these Masses lend themselves to the occasion .

If First Eucharist is celebrated at a Lord's Day Mass, the Sunday readings are to be used. The Children's Lectionary may be used.

musicians should be considered in light of their gifts and talents. It is important that these be viewed as ministerial roles and that appropriate training and preparation be provided. Participation by the parents/guardians in these roles is also encouraged. Music should be chosen that reflects the occasion and in which the entire congregation participates. Consult the *Directory for Masses with Children* for guidance in planning and celebrating the liturgy.

The central focus of this celebration is the participation in and reception of the Eucharist within the worshipping community. Therefore, excessive concern for dress codes, seating plans, and other activities and devotions may distract from the integrity of the Eucharistic celebration. Local traditions may be respected, but should not detract from the focus.

Sacramental Records

It is important that someone take responsibility for obtaining baptismal records and seeing that the celebration of First Eucharist is noted in the parish First Eucharist register. These tasks usually fall to the secretarial staff under the supervision of the pastor or the catechetical leader.

Ongoing Catechesis and Celebration of the Sacrament

Catechesis on the Eucharist and celebration of this Sacrament continue as lifelong endeavors. Catechesis is to be reinforced and developed at all age levels so that the Sacrament is understood and celebrated in a manner congruent with one's life. Participation in the Eucharist can be encouraged through special liturgies connected with the catechetical program and involving young people in the liturgy of the community.

The Sacrament of Confirmation

This section is a companion piece to the *Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation*. The intent is to help parishes implement the guidelines.

Preparation for Confirmation aims at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of the Christian life. To this end, catechesis should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the parish community, as well as the universal Church (Cf. CCC 1309).

Timing

Since the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be celebrated no sooner than the end of the junior year of high school or when the candidate has reached the age of 16, preparation should be provided during the junior year. Adult Confirmation will be treated separately at the end of this section.

Catechesis

Catechesis of youth preparing for Confirmation provides opportunities to minister to them in a variety of ways that encompass the catechetical elements of community, word, worship and service. It is a component of comprehensive youth ministry. Scheduling may best be done on a different time frame than that of the regular religious education program, highlighting the special nature of this time.

The outline for catechesis presented here is for those who have participated regularly in religious education. Many times young people present themselves for Confirmation preparation after an extended absence from a catechetical program. A period of evangelization and catechesis is often necessary before these young people participate in the Confirmation preparation program.

Community

A sense of belonging to the local parish community should be encouraged through interaction with the community and involvement of the parish in the preparation process. The following are some suggestions.

- Stress participation in the regular worship of the community.

- Team up Confirmation candidates with other members of the parish on service projects.
 - Actively involve Confirmation candidates in social and fundraising activities.
 - Involve young people as representatives on parish boards, particularly the parish council and education boards.
 - Arrange for informal visits or dinners with the parish priest, DRE/CRE/ARE, youth ministers or other pastoral leaders.
-
- Invite members of various ministries, committees and organizations to share with the candidates their experiences of parish involvement.
 - Foster ways for the parish to be aware of and involved in the preparation of the candidates through bulletin notices, special liturgies, commitment Masses, presentations, parish receptions and prayer partners.

Word

The message of our Catholic Tradition forms and nourishes the lives of the candidates. The following comprise the key elements or content of catechesis:

- The gifts of the Spirit
- What it means to be a disciple of Christ
- The relationship of Confirmation to Baptism and Eucharist
- Its character as an initiation sacrament
- The signs, symbols and effects of the Sacrament
- A deeper understanding and appreciation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Worship

Active involvement in the worship of the community, especially the Sunday Eucharist as the source and summit of the Catholic life, should be encouraged.

The worship component of Confirmation preparation may include the following:

- Special worship events of the community
- Lent and Holy Week liturgies
- The Diocesan Chrism Mass /Transfer of Oils
- Reconciliation services.
- Attention to private prayer
- Retreat or prayer experiences such as days/evenings of reflection

Service

The concept of service as integral to Christian life is to be promoted. It must be clear that apostolic works are not a requirement for Confirmation, but a mandate for Christian living. Fostering this concept of service can be accomplished through:

- Well planned group projects, followed by group reflection
- Teaming up candidates with other parishioners on service projects

- Participation in regular ongoing service in the parish in liturgical or social settings (e.g., as musicians, ushers, youth leaders, etc.)
 - Service to the poor and needy
 - Ministry with younger children or with the elderly
-
- Participation in fund raising for special causes
 - Involvement in service with the larger Christian community

Sacramental catechesis is different from other catechetical endeavors; its focus is to prepare one to celebrate the sacrament, as well as teach about the sacrament. Catechesis for Confirmation prepares one to celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of the Christian life. In light of this, it takes place in one's home parish. Youth attending Catholic schools should be incorporated in the religious education program of their home parish for the preparation and celebration of Confirmation. Catholic schools' curriculum may be concerned with teaching about the sacrament, but does not include immediate preparation for it. This means that all youth participate together in the above catechetical process and that the parent/family involvement described below combines all parents/guardians and families.

Parent/Family Involvement

Activities need to be provided that promote and encourage the involvement of parents/guardians and families of the candidates for Confirmation. Parents/guardians should be made aware of all aspects of the program as well as their children's responsibilities. Providing information and ideas for supporting their children may be beneficial. Most importantly this is a prime moment to deepen their understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Leaders of the Confirmation program should seek a variety of ways to communicate with parents/guardians. Mailings, bulletin announcements and parent/guardian meetings provide the most effective means of communication. An orientation meeting at the beginning of the preparation process would be in order to focus on the details of the program. Catechesis for the parents/guardians on the Sacrament of Confirmation could be included in this meeting or an additional one. Parent/guardian meetings may include:

- Prayer
- An explanation and calendar of the program with clear expectations for their children's participation
- Ways to support their children in the process
 - Praying for them
 - Talking with them about their Baptism
 - Helping them choose a sponsor
 - Participating in service projects and special liturgies with them
 - Acting as witnesses to Christ by regular participation in the liturgical and communal life of the parish and living the gifts of the Spirit
- Catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation:

Reflection on their own experience of the Sacrament
A brief history of Confirmation
Theology of Confirmation and its relationship to Baptism

As with all adult meetings, adult education principles as outlined in the *Adult Education* section of this document should guide these sessions.

Sponsors

Sponsors have a unique opportunity for assisting the faith development of the confirmation candidates. Since the candidate usually chooses them, they are often the most appropriate people to act as spiritual guides. Their active involvement can be a great asset to the candidate and the program. While some parishes involve sponsors in every aspect of preparation, this may be impractical for others. The sponsor's role is most effective when he/she is involved in activities such as those suggested for parents/guardians, and spends private time with the candidate. As with the parents/guardians they also would benefit from a meeting in which they receive resources to explain their role and suggestions for fulfilling it. Although the ideal is to have a separate meeting for them, they may be included in the parent/guardian meeting.

In addition to the requirements for sponsors listed in the *Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation*, other criteria to be encouraged in choosing a sponsor are that the person:

- Live in harmony with Catholic values and practice
- Feel comfortable sharing faith with the candidate
- Be readily available and willing to take on this responsibility

Discernment for Readiness

A discernment process takes place prior to the reception of Confirmation to determine the candidate's readiness for this sacrament. Readiness is based on the canonical norms as listed in #4 of the guidelines for this sacrament. Participation in the liturgical and communal life of the church and adherence to its values are to be considered. This process indicates one's disposition to receive the sacrament and ability to renew his or her baptismal promises.

This discernment may lead to a decision to delay the celebration of the sacrament. Such a decision should not be taken lightly. While the parish has the right and responsibility to make expectations of candidates, pastoral sensitivity is required.

Furthermore, the decision to delay Confirmation involves two parties: the candidate and the community. The decision should be made in consultation with the candidate, the parents/guardians, the sponsor, and the parish leadership. No one person should assume the right to make that decision alone.

In the event that an adolescent has already been confirmed at an earlier age or that Confirmation is delayed, formation into the Christian life continues, and efforts are to be made to incorporate the young person into the life of the community. This can be accomplished through involvement in youth ministry, ministerial programs and other educational opportunities.

Celebration of the Sacrament

The celebration of the Rite of Confirmation should be a joyful occasion that takes place in the context of the community. When it is celebrated outside a regular Sunday liturgy, the members of the parish should be encouraged to participate. The candidates may participate in the planning of the celebration, for example in making banners and choosing music that is appropriate to the event. They may also participate by proclaiming the readings, bringing forth the gifts and participating in the choir, if that is already a part of their ministry. Readers should be those who are gifted for this ministry.

Further directives for celebrating the Rite are mailed annually to each parish from the Office of Worship.

Sacramental Records

It is important that someone take responsibility for obtaining baptismal records prior to the celebration of Confirmation.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be noted in the parish baptismal register, as well as in the confirmation register. Also, information on Confirmation should be forwarded to the parish of one's Baptism. These tasks usually fall to the secretarial staff under the supervision of the pastor or the catechetical leader.

Adult Confirmation

Adults seeking Confirmation fall into two general categories: those who will be prepared through an adaptation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and those who will prepare through an adult Confirmation process. These are determined by the candidate's background. For the first category, refer to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Part II, section 5: "Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist". Those who had no subsequent catechesis or involvement in the church following First Eucharist may also follow this route. (See also the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Springfield*, 62-69)

Those who have been baptized and received First Eucharist and continued catechesis are to be given appropriate catechesis and be confirmed by the bishop. The amount of time given to their catechesis depends on the extent to which they are already catechized. Those who have had little catechesis since their First Communion will require more extensive catechesis and even evangelization. They may benefit from participating with others in the precatechumenate of the RCIA. However, they do not continue with the catechumenate. They may also take advantage of other adult education programs in the parish. The following recommendations are for those who have been catechized for most of their youth as well as those who had little catechesis but have participated in the precatechumenate or other catechesis designed for them.

Immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation for these adults corresponds to that of high school students preparing for the Sacrament. Although it may not be as lengthy, it should include the four dimensions of word, worship, service and community. The content is the same as that of the adolescents. Participation in a retreat or focused prayer experience is also encouraged. Catechesis for these adults uses adult methodology and principles. (See the *Adult Education* section.)

The parish takes responsibility for providing this catechesis. The preparation for adult Confirmation could be offered during the winter and spring months in anticipation of Confirmation during the Easter Season. Every effort is to be made to keep the Confirmation preparation and celebration parish based. If it is impossible for the parish to provide this catechesis, they may be combined with other adult Confirmation candidates in another parish.

Adults may be confirmed with the young people at the parish celebration. Other options are for them to be confirmed at Saint Michael's Cathedral on Pentecost or to participate in another Confirmation celebration in the diocese. Although these latter options separate them from the parish community, they may be appropriate for those who are concerned about being confirmed before their marriage or serving as godparents or sponsors for someone else.

Special Notes:

Names

There has been a tradition of taking a new name for Confirmation. This is not called for in the Rite nor in Canon Law. Candidates may use their baptismal name or choose another appropriate name (Can. 855). Having the candidate investigate the chosen name can be a catechetical moment.

Confirmation and Marriage

The relationship of Confirmation to marriage often arises. For your convenience, we are quoting the relevant Canon here: "If they can do so without serious inconvenience, Catholics who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it before being admitted to marriage" (Can.1065.1).

The Sacrament of Baptism for Children (Infants and Children below Catechetical Age)

This section is a companion piece to the *Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism for Children*. The intent is to help parishes implement the guidelines.

"Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word." (CCC 1213)

Baptism begins the ongoing process of faith, of God's call and our response to God's call in love. This response involves God, the individual, the parents, the godparents and the faith community together.

The liturgical Rite of Baptism for Children offers the opportunity for children below the catechetical age of 7 years to begin their initiation into the Roman Catholic community of faith. Parents make this choice for their child. Thus, the faith of the parents is a vital concern for the Church as they accept the responsibility of forming their child in the practice of faith. Older children are to be led through the stages of Christian initiation leading to their celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. (See Section 3: *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the Diocese of Springfield, 55.*)

Timing

The timing of the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism depends on a variety of factors, including time allotted for adequate preparation of parents and godparents. Since the Church encourages parents to have their children baptized as soon as possible, baptismal preparation classes should be made available periodically to address the needs and circumstances of the particular community. It is recommended that parents attend sessions before the birth of their children to give themselves adequate time to prepare.

Because the primary responsibility for the nurturing of the faith devolves upon the parents, it is important that there be a founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion. Therefore, time should be given for a process of discernment for parents in this regard. Parents who seem to lack maturity of faith are to be invited, encouraged and supported to strive for a deeper faith and involvement in the worshipping community. The parents' lack of attendance at Mass is not a sufficient reason for the delay of Baptism. Reasons should be explored and addressed with pastoral concern. An invalid marital status is not an impediment for the Baptism of a child. These circumstances afford an opportunity for evangelization. Parents should never be treated with rejection or condemnation.

If the discernment process indicates that the hope of a child to be brought up in the Catholic faith is altogether lacking, it may be necessary to delay the Baptism. Parents are to be informed of the reason (Can. 868 #2).

It is important that every effort be made to time the Baptism to ensure the

participation of the parents and extended family in the celebration. Baptism may be temporarily delayed due to the health of a parent.

If parents are not registered in the parish, registration could be taken at this time. True Christian hospitality and welcome are to be graciously extended.

Catechesis

Context: This time of preparation is a moment of grace. For the parents it affords an opportunity to reflect upon their faith, deepen their understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism, develop their hopes of passing on the faith to their child, and consider their readiness to request baptism for their child. For the godparents it can be a time to grow in faith and understanding as they prepare to take on this gift and responsibility. For the parish it can be a time for those individuals involved in the Baptism team and the parish as a whole to put into practice the faith they profess. God's grace is poured out in a sacramental way on the day of the child's Baptism. It is ever flowing as we prepare for that moment.

Process: "It is the responsibility of the pastor and the parish community to provide adequate preparation for the celebration of the sacrament. The pastor should make it his duty to visit them [parents] or see that they are visited; he should try to gather a group of families together and prepare them for the coming celebration by pastoral counsel and common prayer." (*RBC Intro. II, 5, #1*)

The process of preparation for the celebration should fit the needs of each parish, while striving to live up to the dignity of the sacrament and the high ideals of the church. Good preparation for Baptism begins by developing a multi-dimensional approach to Baptism in a parish.

This may include:

- Initial contact
- Leaflet; *Baptism Preparation: A Guide for Parents* (See Appendix A)
- One-on-one meetings
- Catechetical sessions
- Involvement of the whole parish
- Ongoing catechesis and follow up.

The following may be helpful in developing a parish program:

- A clear process in place for the preparation of Baptism based on the principles of good adult education (See *Section 1A: Adult Formation, Adult Education Principles*)
- A well trained baptismal preparation team
- Clear roles of parish secretary, director of religious education, lay team members (especially married couples with children), deacons, parochial vicars and pastor
- A parish calendar of preparation sessions, baptismal dates/times and other events related to the program

A monthly blessing for expectant families may be given after a Sunday liturgy. *The Book of Blessings* is a beautiful resource presenting many opportunities for

blessings of families as they await the birth of their children, including the sad

experience of a miscarriage, and the adoption of a child (*Book of Blessings*, Chapter 1, Number VII-X). The *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, (NCCB, USCC 1989,1997) provides family rituals to be used in the home.

The formal process for baptismal preparation usually starts with the parish secretary. His/her role should be clearly outlined. Many parishes have an information form that can be filled out, fully or partially, at the initial contact. *Examples of Information Forms* are found in Appendix B, Samples 1,2,3. This formal contact sets a tone for and initiates the process.

An interview with the pastor (or deacon/parochial vicar/baptismal team leader) may be part of the process. This contact is an opportunity to further the family's connection to the parish. For some this means simple pastoral encouragement while for others it may require an evangelizing approach. The goal is to effect a deeper relationship with God and more solid membership in the parish. Discernment and sensitivity are two gifts needed in the person conducting the interview. An interview sample is included in Appendix D, Model 1, *Baptism Team Interview Guide*.

The number and content of the preparation sessions should be determined on the basis of the needs of the parents involved and the resources available. Preparation sessions fulfill two aspects of getting ready for Baptism: first, the beginning of ongoing catechesis about the sacrament and the life of faith, and second, an explanation of the Rite of Baptism. Sound Baptism preparation materials support the preparation process by combining both the practical and catechetical aspects covered in these sessions. It would be a disservice to everyone if these sessions become simply a practice for the ceremony of Baptism. The involvement of lay couples that practice their faith enriches the preparation process. Peer ministry is a powerful witness offering the opportunity to reflect anew on one's faith and commitment.

For those who are participating for the first time it can be a powerful moment of evangelization or renewal of their baptismal commitment. Those parents who have participated in the recent past should be offered the option of not attending. However, they may be encouraged to come and share their valuable experiences. Every group session offers new insights. Other members of the team could provide childcare.

Throughout the process, parents and godparents are to be encouraged to participate in community worship. While Baptism is a sacrament of grace, the source and summit of Catholic Christian life is the Eucharist.

Ongoing contacts following the Baptism are as important as a good preparation process. This follow-up could take the form of:

- Letters or phone calls from the lay members of the team
- Invitations to ongoing family events of the parish
- Subscriptions to Catholic family magazines
- Simple contacts at church or in the community
- Post baptismal materials sent periodically

Parish involvement throughout the process can take many forms. Upon knowing of the pregnancy the couple's name can be passed on to the parish prayer team with

ongoing updates as the couple goes through the preparation process. Good publicity (bulletin announcements of the actual Baptism, pictures on the bulletin board, catechetical material on Baptism, etc.) can keep the whole community informed. Scheduling Baptisms during Mass is a concrete way to emphasize the communal nature of the sacrament and continually renew the whole parish's baptismal commitment. Involvement of the religious education program or parish's parochial school is another way to develop relations within the parish family.

Special pastoral sensitivity should be shown to a parent of another faith and parents who do not regularly participate in the life of the Church. This is an opportune time to encourage and invite individuals into a relationship with God and the Church. The faith tradition of others is to be respected.

Precisely because Baptism is a welcome into the Christian community, it should take place in the parish church proper to their parents unless, a just cause suggests otherwise. (Can.857) Out of courtesy, the parents are to communicate with the parishes involved. In cases where there is little affiliation with the church, hopefully a deeper relationship with their home church will be fostered. Parents should be treated with pastoral sensitivity.

Content: Catechesis for Baptism addresses the critical issues of faith formation. An enriched grasp of the meaning of Baptism will provide an opportunity to appreciate the sacrament and realize the significance of a life lived in Christ. Throughout the process each person involved, parish staff and team members, parents, godparents, extended family and the parish community, is encouraged to understand the sacrament and its effects more fully.

Effective catechesis for Baptism includes:

- The Church's understanding of the sacrament, its symbols, ritual and the life of faith it begins within the church
- Pastoral counsel and support to parents in their discernment for readiness to take on the responsibility for their child's faith development
- Opportunities to share their own faith, supporting each other in the recognition of God's presence in their own journey
- Invitation to parents to articulate their hopes for their children and reasons for requesting Baptism
- Encouragement of godparents to grow in their understanding of the gift and responsibilities they take upon themselves in accepting this role

A bibliography of helpful resources is found in *Appendix E* of the Handbook. Samples of these materials and additional resources are available at the Office of Religious Education.

Persons Involved in the Process

Pastors / Pastoral Administrators / Lay Team

The responsibility for baptismal preparation rests upon the pastor and/or pastoral administrator. They are urged to form lay teams to assist in this ministry. Parents (e.g. married couples, single parents, adoptive parents) who give witness to a lived faith would be ideal team members. This team and/or others may also serve in follow-up ministry especially for marginal Catholics. It is most important that those

serving be adequately prepared. The diocesan Office of Religious Education offers resources in developing programs and training for lay ministers.

Parents

The sacraments are celebrations of lived experiences that reach beyond the ritual. Parents are the first evangelizers of their children, introducing them to God and witnessing through their lives the practice of the faith. Establishing family traditions and faith values leads children to accept for themselves the faith into which they were baptized.

A few suggestions for helping parents are:

- Expressing love and forgiveness, modeling for their children a loving, forgiving God
- Signing children with a cross when putting them to bed
- Encouraging a spirit of giving and thankfulness
- Reading age appropriate stories from a children's Bible
- Inviting them to join in prayer before meals, at bed time and other occasions
- Celebrating Sundays, Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter and other feast days in a meaningful way in the family

Godparents

Godparents share the responsibility of assisting parents in their role. They are not to take the place of the parent but are to become a companion and friend in the faith journey of their godchild.

Some suggested ways to encourage godparents to fulfill their role may be:

- Celebrate the anniversary of Baptism each year with a visit or card
- Offer spiritual gifts (books, religious articles, etc.) to celebrate special events
- Be present for the child's reception of other sacraments especially Confirmation and serve as sponsor on this occasion if at all possible.
- Model for them the Christian way of life.

Qualifications of godparents are found in the *Guidelines, Section 4* of the Handbook

The Parish Community

It is the right of the child to receive the love and help of the community (*RBC Intro.II, 4*). The parish community offers a supportive role in welcoming the newly baptized as well as providing programs of preparation for the celebration of the sacrament and ongoing formation.

The congregation is to actively participate in the celebration. Specific parts of the rite that invite fuller participation are:

- Greeting the family
- Signing of the child
- Intercessions and litany of saints
- Acclamations at blessing of water
- Baptismal promises
- Lord's Prayer
- Final blessing (all might be invited to extend their hands in blessing while the presider prays the blessing over the mother and father)

- Offering congratulations to the family at the end of Mass
- Offering the parish hall for a reception

Celebration of the Sacrament

Although Baptisms may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that they be celebrated on Sundays and if possible at the Easter Vigil / Easter Sunday when the Church commemorates the resurrection of the Lord. (Can. 856)

Baptism is an initiation into a community life of faith, not merely the beginning of a faith journey for an individual. Therefore, the presence of the community carries great significance. In light of this, celebrating Baptism during a Sunday liturgy is most appropriate. The *Rite* offers adaptations for the celebration of Baptism at a Sunday liturgy.

Parish practices have addressed scheduling in various ways, designating specific Sundays that liturgically lend themselves to the celebration, such as, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Easter Season, etc. Some parishes have alternated the celebration throughout the month, at various Sunday liturgies allowing also for the celebrating outside of Mass.

The shift from viewing Baptism as a private family event is a challenge for many. It is through faithful practice of celebrating Baptism in a community setting that a deeper understanding of the communal aspect of the sacrament will be realized.

Baptism, as a liturgical celebration, should make full use of the symbols to speak clearly of the reality of the sacrament.

- **Water** - and the invocation of the Trinity are the essential symbols. To demonstrate the Paschal character of Baptism, entering into the death and resurrection of Christ, immersion is more significant. Pouring of water may also be used.
- **Anointing** - in the first anointing with the oil of catechumens the power of the Lord is called upon to strengthen and protect this new life. The fragrant oil of chrism signifies the responsibility to further the mission of Christ, the Anointed One. The vessels for the oils should reflect their worth and significance. The oils are to be used profusely.
- **White Garment** - speaks of the dignity and purity of the new Christian clothed in Christ. Whether bought or hand-made, parishes might provide this as a remembrance of the way of life to which a Christian is called.
- **Baptismal Candle** - lit from the paschal candle, symbolic of the Risen Christ, the Light of the World. The light is entrusted to the parents and godparents as a sign of keeping the flame of faith alive for their child.

If symbols are used fully and effectively, additional lengthy explanations are unnecessary and detract from the rite.

In regard to the *Rite* and directives for its implementation, parishes need to assess their individual situations and address their needs with pastoral practices that comply with the richness of the Church's renewal. Baptism should be a joyful celebration of the new birth of the child into the family of faith. On occasion there may be a family who has a child baptized under a difficult or emergency situation.

The completion of the ceremony may take place when circumstances permit. The *Rite for Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church* is provided in *RBC 1*, Chapter VI.

Sacramental Records

The pastor/pastoral administrator is to see that Baptisms are recorded accurately and without delay. This is to include the name of the baptized, the minister of Baptism, parents, sponsors, witnesses if any and the place and date of the Baptism, together with the date and place of birth. (Can. 877) (See *Guidelines, Section 4* of the Handbook.) There are specific guidelines for recording Baptisms of adopted children. (See *Guidelines, Section 4* and *Appendix* of the Handbook, *NCCB Decree: Baptism Records for Adopted Children.*)

Ongoing Catechesis

The experience of a child's awakening to a lived faith in the family is very significant. Catechesis in the home is more a witnessing than a teaching. A child's faith development is influenced by prayer within the family, the practice of charity and fidelity to Christian traditions. It is in this early period of growth that the foundations of love, trust, forgiveness, freedom, self-giving and participation in life are laid. Central to faith formation of young children is prayer and the introduction to the Scriptures.

Recognizing the reality of the demands on family life and the culture of the day, there also is a vital need for the religious support from the faith community. Many children lack adequate support in the practice of the faith within the family. The parish faith community has the responsibility to provide competent and realistic help for these children and their parents. Meaningful forms of catechetical formation are essential to foster faith and family values.

Some practical ways in which parishes might assist parents in their responsibilities are:

- Offer opportunities to develop and strengthen parenting skills which include the faith formation of their children
- Form a mothers' club to provide a community of support
- Provide baby sitting during parent meetings
- Provide home visitation to dialogue with families during this time of development
- Provide nursery service during a designated Sunday Mass or Masses
- Offer early childhood programs during the Sunday Masses presenting an introduction to the Scriptures
- Offer Liturgy of the Word for children
- Provide a parish library with resources for adults and children
- Encourage families to commemorate the anniversary of their child's baptism by lighting the baptismal candle and reciting the creed

- Promote a sense of belonging and welcome by:

- Celebrating an annual gathering for all those baptized during a given year
- Announcing through the bulletin the Baptisms of children
- Including in the intercessory prayer those to be baptized
- Displaying pictures of newly baptized members on a parish family tree
- Providing a children's chapel (cry room) where parents can initiate their children in the participation of liturgy

Realizing the impact of these foundational years upon the child in relation to basic human values and their capacity for relating to God, it is essential that the Church provide adequate assistance to families. Baptismal preparation and its counterpart, ongoing formation, present evangelizing opportunities in which parents can be drawn into a deeper relationship with God and the Church.

APPENDIX A	Leaflet: <i>Baptism Preparation: A Guide for Parents</i> (English / Spanish)
APPENDIX B	Information Forms for Baptism for Children Sample 1 Data for Baptismal Record Sample 2 Data for Baptismal Record Sample 3 Data for Baptismal Record
APPENDIX C	Letter of Confirmation
APPENDIX D	Baptism Preparation
Model 1	Baptism Program Procedures Information Sheet Letter to Parents Explanation of Program Baptism Team Interview Guide Baptism Group Session Guide Closing Prayer
Model 2	Preparation Sessions (3 One Hour Sessions)
APPENDIX E	Resources

APPENDIX A

PLANNING THE CELEBRATION

Since the sacramental life of the Church is central in our lived faith experience, the Church places great emphasis upon proper instruction before the event and offers special directives regarding their celebration.

- The celebration of baptism should not be unduly delayed but take place as soon as possible, preferably *within the first weeks after birth*. (Can. 867)
- Precisely because baptism is a welcome into the Christian Community, it should take place *in the parish church proper to their parents unless a just cause suggests otherwise*. (Can. 857)
- *Although baptisms may be celebrated any day, it is recommended that they be celebrated on a Sunday or if possible at the Easter Vigil* to recognize the Paschal character of baptism, the dying and rising of Jesus. (Can. 856) Baptisms may be celebrated during Mass so the entire community may be present to welcome and accept the responsibility for the new life of the child. Baptisms are often celebrated on Sunday afternoons.
- The rite for baptizing recommends that *immersion* be used *which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ*. (RBC 22) Pouring of the water may also be used.
- Since there are various ways and times for celebrating baptism, each parish community addresses

their needs and situation in a special way. You need to be informed of your parish's practices in planning your celebration.

Baptism can happen only once in a lifetime. The baptism of your child is a tremendously graced event for your child, you and the entire community. It is an opportunity for each of us to renew our commitment as we proclaim our baptismal vows once again. It is an occasion to celebrate the amazing gift of life that our God shares with us. May this day be a beginning of many wonderful days to come on this privileged journey of faith.

*Abbreviations

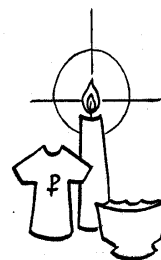
Can. Code of Canon Law
RBC Rite of Baptism for Children



Parish Schedule

Baptism Preparation

A Guide for Parents



Diocese of Springfield

*Leaflets available at the Office of Religious Education

CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME

Congratulations on the new life that has been welcomed into your home!

What a wondrous event is the birth of a child! You are truly co-creators with the Lord the giver of all life. Adopted children are no less a miracle of grace. Those who have accepted the awesome task of nurturing these children, taking them into their homes and sharing their life, mirror the loving act of God who through this sacrament of baptism embraces all of us as adopted children.

BAPTISM SOURCE OF NEW LIFE

We read in the account of the Ascension that Jesus commissioned his disciples to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*” (Matt.28:19-20) The sacrament of baptism initiates us into a journey of faith as disciples of Jesus. It is a call to live His way of life in the Spirit. In the waters of baptism, we die to the ways of sin, we are buried and rise again to new life as children of God. We become a new creation, a holy people, a royal priesthood, sharing in God's own life. Baptism is a sacrament of faith and commitment by which we respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ and enter into a holy covenant with Jesus through His Church. We are formed into God's people and are incorporated into the Body of Christ.

CHOOSING BAPTISM FOR MY CHILD

One of the questions the minister will ask at the celebration of Baptism is –*What do you ask of God's Church for your child?* Your response is *Baptism.* (RBC 37) In choosing Baptism for your child it is vitally important that you understand what Baptism is about. It is well for you to ask yourself why it is that you are asking for this sacrament. Motivation, at times can be falsely based on fear, (what will happen if my baby dies without baptism), superstition (God will punish us in some way if we do not baptize our child), or cultural heritage (it's the thing to do – have a party in their honor). And so it is important to take the time to reflect on your own baptism.

- What has it meant for you to be a member of the Body of Christ?
- Are you committed to a way of life influenced by the Lord Jesus, a way of life that values prayer and service to others?

Baptism unites us with the community of faith, the Church, where we are invited to live fully as disciples of Christ. As parents you are making that choice for your child. The celebrant continues reminding you of the responsibility toward your children of training them in the practice of the faith asking the question “*Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?*” (RBC 39) He then will ask the godparents if they are ready to help you in your Christian duty as mothers and fathers. With an affirmative answer, your child is welcomed with great joy by the Christian community and claimed for Christ by the sign of the cross. And so the journey begins, through your witness of Christian living, your child will grow in justice and love and come to know the Lord Jesus.

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

Parents, you do not stand alone in this tremendous task. In the introduction to the Rite of Baptism we read, *Before and after the celebration of the sacrament the child has the right to the love and help of the community.* (RBC Intro. II 4) Parish communities strive in their catechetical programs to provide support through an on-going faith development of all its members. There are many opportunities available to you to assist you in nurturing the faith of your child.

CHOOSING GODPARENTS

A godparent serves a very special role for the one to be baptized. They represent the Christian Catholic community, the Church. They are to witness to the faith of God alive in their hearts and be willing to support the parents in raising their child in the Catholic faith. For this reason the Church requires that a godparent be a *fully initiated Catholic*, that is, (one having received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.) *They must have completed their 16th year and lead a life in harmony with the Church. Parents may not serve as godparents.* Traditionally, parents have chosen a godmother and godfather for their child, however *only one godparent is required. Another person of a Christian tradition may serve as a witness at the child's baptism.* (Can. 872-874) To be a godparent is not simply an honor. It is truly a ministry in the church of helping the newly baptized on the road of Christian life. You are advised to choose prayerfully and with concern.

PLANEIO DE LA CELEBRACION

Debido a que la vida sacramental en la iglesia es central en nuestras propias expresiones de fe, la iglesia misma enfatiza en la instrucción propia de los eventos a celebrarse ofreciendo dirección específica.

- Que la celebración del bautismo no sea indebidamente retrasada más bien celebrarse tan pronto sea posible, preferiblemente en las primeras semanas después del nacimiento.
- Porque precisamente el bautismo es la bienvenida a la comunidad cristiana, debe celebrarse en la iglesia propia de los padres, de no ser así, razones justas deben existir cuando no es posible. (CAN. 857)
- Aunque el bautismo puede celebrarse en días de semanas, se recomienda los domingos o en la vigilia pascual para reconocer la característica pascual del bautismo, la muerte y resurrección de Jesús. (CAN. 856), y durante la celebración de la misa para que la comunidad completa dé la bienvenida y acepte la responsabilidad de la nueva vida.
- El rito del bautismo recomienda la inmersión de la criatura siempre que sea posible y como símbolo en la participación de la muerte y resurrección de Jesucristo. (RBC 22) Hechar agua en la cabeza es lo más frecuente usado en las ceremonias.
- Existen varias maneras y tiempos específicos para las celebraciones bautismales, cada parroquia atiende a sus propias necesidades y situaciones. Por lo tanto es necesario que los padres se informen de las formas y/o maneras

de la parroquia a que pertenecen y planear de acuerdo a lo mencionado.

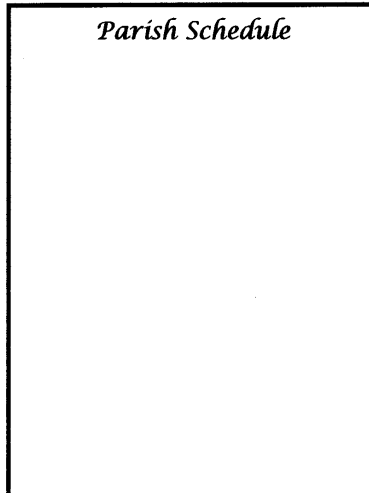
El sacramento del bautismo sucede una sola vez en la vida. El bautismo de su niño o niña es un evento tremendamente lleno de gracia para ellos, para los padres, los padrinos y toda la comunidad. Es además una oportunidad para cada uno renovar nuestro compromiso de los votos bautismales. Es la ocasión de celebrar el maravilloso regalo de vida que Dios comparte con todos. Hoy puede ser el comienzo a una vida maravillosa y el privilegio de caminar por el sendero de la fe.

*Abreviaciones

CAN. Código de Ley Canónica
RBC Rito de Bautismo para Niños

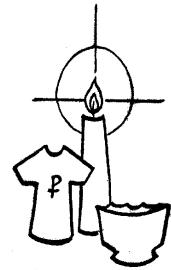


Parish Schedule



PREPARACION DE BAUTISMOS

UNA GUIA PARA LOS PADRES



Diocese of Springfield

* Las hojillas pueden ser obtenidas en la Oficina de Educación Religiosa

FELICITACION Y BIENVENIDA

Felicidades por la nueva vida que ha llegado a su hogar. Que maravilloso es el evento del nacimiento de un nuevo miembro en la familia. Ustedes son co-creadores con Dios, dador de la vida. Siendo adoptados por Dios, no dejámos de ser milagro y gracia de Él. Cuando aceptamos la tremenda responsabilidad de procrear y nutrir hijos, hacemos extensión de la misma vida de Dios, espejo de acto de amor. Por el sacramento del bautismo somos llamados hijos adoptivos de Dios Padre.

BAUTISMO FUENTE DE NUEVA VIDA

De acuerdo a lo escrito en el evangelio sobre La Asunción de Jesús al Cielo, Él comisiona a los discípulos ordenándoles, "vayan y hagan que todos sean discípulos míos, bautícenlos en el nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo y enséñeles a cumplir todo lo que les he encomendado." (Mateo 28, 19-20). El sacramento del bautismo nos inicia en un camino de fe como discípulos de Jesús. Es además una llamada a vivir la vida nueva en el espíritu. En las aguas bautismales morimos al pecado, somos enterrados y luego resucitamos a la nueva vida como hijos de Dios. Así somos una nueva creación, un pueblo santo, sacerdote real, compartiendo la misma vida de Dios. El bautismo es un sacramento de fe y compromiso santo con Jesús y la iglesia. Así formamos el cuerpo de Cristo.

ELECCION DEL BAUTISMO

Una de las preguntas que el celebrante hace en la celebración bautismal a los padres es, ¿Que piden ustedes a la iglesia para sus niños(as)?, ellos responderán, El Bautismo. (RBC 37). Al pedir que sus niños (as), sean bautizados es de vital importancia que los padres entiendan qué es el bautismo y lo que implica. Por qué pido el sacramento? Cuál sería mi respuesta? Si es por una simple motivación o tal vez por miedo, o porque Dios me castigará si mi niño muere antes de ser bautizado, por supersticiones, porque es la cultura, o por celebrar una fiesta. No son éstas las razones para pedir el bautismo, más bien es,

- Qué significa para mí ser miembro del cuerpo de Cristo?
- Me considero responsable y comprometido(a) al estilo de vida que Jesús me ofrece con los valores de oración y servicio a los demás?

El bautismo nos une a la comunidad de fe y a la iglesia. Es allí donde somos invitados a vivir completamente como seguidores de Cristo. Como padres ustedes deciden por sus niños(as). Así el celebrante continua recordándoles a los padres la responsabilidad de educar y enseñar a los niños en la práctica de la fe con la siguiente pregunta, ¿Entienden verdaderamente lo que piden? (RBC 39). Después le pregunta a los padrinos si están dispuestos en ayudar a los padres con la misma responsabilidad. Con una respuesta afirmativa los niños(as), son recibidos con mucha alegría a la comunidad cristiana y marcados para Cristo con La Señal de la Cruz. De esta manera la jornada comienza como miembros de la comunidad cristiana. Los niños(as), crecerán en paz, amor, y justicia a través del conocimiento de Jesús.

LA FUNCION DE LA COMUNIDAD

Los padres no están sólo en la tremenda labor de educar a sus niños en la fe. En la introducción del rito del bautismo antes y después de la celebración del sacramento el celebrante indica que los niños(as), tienen el derecho al amor y la ayuda de la comunidad. (RBC Into. II-4) Por tal razón las comunidades parroquiales se esforzarán en sus programas catequéticos ofrecer ayuda y apoyo para un continuo desarrollo de fe a los participantes. Existen varias fuentes de oportunidades que asistirán a los padres para nutrir la vida de fe de ellos y de sus niños.

ELECCION DE LOS PADRINOS

Los padrinos son personas especiales para los que van a ser bautizados. Ellos representan a toda la comunidad católica, o sea la iglesia. Son testigos de la fe y de que Dios vive en sus corazones. Dispuestos a apoyar a los padres en el crecimiento de vida en la fe para con los niños. Por tal motivo la iglesia requiere que los padrinos sean católicos practicantes, esto es, que estén bautizados, confirmados, y haber hecho la 1ra. Comunión. Haber cumplido 16 años de edad y viviendo en armonía con la iglesia. Los padres no pueden ser padrinos de sus propios niños. Por lo general son dos personas, sin embargo solamente uno es necesario. Una persona con conocimiento cristiano puede servir como testigo de un bautismo. (CAN. 872-874). Ser padrinos no es un honor, mas bien es ser ministros de la iglesia para ayudar a los bautizados en el camino de la vida cristiana. Por esto se les aconseja a los padres escoger a los padrinos en oración y con responsabilidad.

APPENDIX B
Information Forms for Baptism of Children

SAMPLE 1 DATA FOR BAPTISMAL RECORD

Before Baptism, please fill out this form.

Is family registered in the parish? ____

Name of child _____
First Middle Last

Residence _____

Phone Numbers Home _____ Work _____

Child's Date of Birth _____ City/Town of Birth _____

Father's Name _____ Religion _____
First Middle Last

Mother's Name _____ Religion _____
First Middle Last

In what Church were parents married? _____

Godfather's Name _____ Religion _____
First Middle Last

Godmother's Name _____ Religion _____
First Middle Last

Is either Godparent represented by Proxy? _____

Full name of Proxies _____

Remarks:

Name of Minister Baptizing _____

For office use only: Notify Team Coordinator _____

Prep: Session Date Elected _____ Letter of Confirmation to Parents _____

Date of Session Completed _____

Add child to census record as new family member (note date of baptism) _____

Follow-up program _____

SAMPLE 2 DATA FOR BAPTISMAL RECORD

Name of Child _____

Phone _____ Address _____

Father's Name _____

Religion of Father _____

Mother's Name (including maiden Name) _____

Religion of Mother _____

Registered Parishioners? _____

Have parents completed their sacraments?
(If not, please give name, address, phone #
to catechetical leader or begin a marriage folder.)

Confirmation _____
Marriage _____
RCIA _____

Was the child baptized before? _____

Godfather's Name _____

Godmother's Name _____

Full names of Proxies (If Applicable) _____

Date of Baptism _____ Time _____

Minister of Baptism _____

Initial or write n/a next to the following when completed:

Met with deacon/priest _____

Marriage folder begun _____

Reminded of session _____

Recorded in Baptismal Reg. _____

Attended session _____

Printed in Bulletin _____

Info for RCIA _____

Returned to minister _____

Info for Adult Confirmation. _____

Other comments:

SAMPLE 3 DATA FOR BAPTISMAL RECORD





Welcome to (Name of Parish)

Help us better help **you** and your **family** prepare to receive this holy sacrament by kindly filling in the information below. Know that we wish to support your family, and this new member of our Catholic faith, in any way we can. We offer (name programs) for your children to grow in knowledge and understanding his/her faith. Our prayers are with you as you begin this new faith journey!

Name of Child to be Baptized _____

Date of Birth ____/____/____

Mother's Full Name: _____ Religion: _____

Address _____ Zip: _____

City _____ Phone: _____

Father's Full Name _____ Religion: _____

Name of Catholic Godparent (over age 16) #1: _____

Name of Catholic Godparent (over age 16) #2: _____

Are you currently a member of this Church? _____

Mother and Father live in same home? _____

Are Mother and Father married? _____

If so, married: ____ civilly ____ in the Catholic Church

Either Godparent represented by proxy? ____ Name of Proxy: _____

Emergency baptism performed due to a life-threatening situation? _____

Child Adopted? _____

Date you seek for the baptismal ceremony: ____/____/____

Priest Signature: _____

(Turn to back page.)

In your own words, briefly explain **why** you seek the **Sacrament of Baptism** for this child in the Catholic Church?

Beautiful Beginnings Start Here!

Welcome !



For Office Use Only

Year _____ Book _____ Page _____ # _____

Attendance of Baptismal Preparation: _____ Session I _____ Session II _____

APPENDIX C

Letter of Confirmation

Date

Name
Address
City, State

Dear (Parents and Child's Name),

This is to confirm your (son/daughter, child's name) baptism scheduled for (date) at (time) in (parish church). You have also elected to attend the Baptism preparation session/s on (date) at (time) in (place). If you have any questions regarding the preparation session/s please contact (name) at (office) at (phone number).

If you have any concerns or anticipate any changes please feel free to contact the rectory office (days and hours)

Sincerely,

Baptism Program

Procedures

Initial Contacts

1. Initially parents will call the church requesting baptism. The secretary receives the following information, name, address, phone and checks to see if they are registered parishioners. Registration may be taken by the secretary at this time or during the interview by team members. This information is given to the director of the program.
2. The director sends a **Letter to the Parents** (See page 41.) informing them that a team member will be contacting them for a visit. The **Explanation of the Program** with schedule of sessions (See page 42.) and the diocesan leaflet, **Baptism Preparation: A Guide for Parents** (See page 30/31,32/33.) will accompany the letter.
3. The director gives the lay team members the information on the parents to be contacted after the letter has been sent out. The lay team members set a date for the interview, which may take place after a weekend liturgy or in the home.

Interview by Lay Team Members

1. Team Members follow the **Baptism Interview Guide**. (See page 43.)
2. The booklet, *Baptism: Your Child and You* Franciscan Communications is given to the parents.
3. Parents decide which session they will attend.
4. After their visit team members notify the director to up-date the **Information Sheet**. See page 40.)

Preparation Session

1. The director may lead the session following the **Baptism Group Session Guide**. (See page 44.)
2. Lay team members help with set-up, refreshments, greet parents, help facilitate conversation, assist with handouts and lead the **Closing Prayer**. (See page 45/46.)
3. Registration for the celebration of Baptism may be taken at the meeting or later.

Celebration of the Sacrament

Lay team members may assist by:

1. Setting up for the celebration of Baptism, reserving pews, setting table with oils, white garments, candles, etc.
2. Greeting families and godparents
3. Assisting the minister during the service

Ongoing Formation

1. Pastoral care is given through parish programs.
2. Address special needs particularly for marginal Catholics.

Model 1 Continued

Information Sheet

Month _____ Baptism Team Member _____

Parents' Name Address	Letter Sent	Interview	Session Attended	Child's Name Date of Birth	Date / Time Of Baptism

Model 1 Continued

Letter to Parents

Date

Name

Address

City, State

Dear _____,

We rejoice with you in the birth (adoption) of your child and welcome you to the process of Baptism preparation. This process is meant to encourage you in your own faith commitment as we welcome your child into our faith community.

Your names have been forwarded to members of the baptismal team. Your baptism team contact is _____, who will call you to set an appointment to meet with you prior to the group session. At this meeting they will offer you the opportunity to address your particular concerns or questions, present a few insights on the sacrament of Baptism and share their personal experiences.

At the appointment you will be given a booklet on the sacrament of Baptism. We ask that both parents and godparents, if possible, read the booklet before attending the group session.

We have enclosed information on the Baptism preparation program currently in use at (parish name). Please note the upcoming group sessions and the schedule for the celebration of Baptism. We ask you to invite your godparents to accompany you to this meeting.

We hope and pray that your faith will be deepened and you will continue the process of ongoing Christian formation for yourselves as well as your child.

Sincerely in Christ,

Director of the Baptism Program

Model 1 Continued

Explanation of the Program

To prepare for the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism, (parish name) has initiated a Baptism preparation program which includes the following:

- a visit with a member of the baptismal preparation team to initiate the process and address any personal concerns
- a group session which enables parents and godparents to understand more fully the meaning of Baptism and the baptismal ritual. It presents some reflections and experiences of living out the baptismal commitment and the task of handing on that faith to your child.

Group Session Schedule

We hope you will find this evening helpful as you prepare for this special event.

+++++

The Celebration of Baptism

The Church in recent years has made efforts in renewing the understanding of the sacraments. Through time, emphasis on certain aspects have influenced our perceptions and changed the rituals of celebration. The Rite of Baptism is no exception.

In our Baptism preparation program, we emphasize the basic concept that we are brought into the community of faith in this special graced moment. Therefore, it is most appropriate for the faith community to be present. Our preference, here at (parish name) is that Baptism be celebrated during the Mass.

Celebration of Baptism Schedule

In Baptism we enter into the Paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To baptize means to dunk or be submerged into the waters of death and to rise in the new life of Christ. Therefore, we strongly urge parents to consider immersion of their child as a more significant symbol of the mystery rather than the pouring of water. We promise a warm bath!

*The Baptism itself is a ceremony, an event; it begins and it ends.
Baptismal life is a continuous growth which you, the parent must foster.*

Baptism Team Interview Guide

Getting Acquainted:

Introduce yourself, background, reason for visit, why you have taken on this ministry.

Invite couples to speak about themselves:

Length of time in the community

Are they registered in the parish

(registration may be taken at the time of the visit)

Anticipation of having a child or experience of new life in the home

New responsibilities

Entering the Faith Community:

Responsibility of nurturing faith – share personal experiences

Who was most influential in your life?

How do you see yourself in the role of Christian parent?

You Are Not Alone:

Godparents Role:

Choose strong Christian role models

Church requirements for godparents

Persons of another Christian tradition may be a witness to the Baptism

Invite them to the session

Church Community

Supports family – Christian education programs

Sunday Nursery

Toddler Church (3-5year olds)

Liturgy of the Word for children

Understanding Baptism

Present booklet *Baptism: Your Child and You*, Franciscan Publications

Review major points:

What This Baptism Means to You

What This Baptism Means to Your Child

What Your Child's Baptism Means to Others

Group Session Overview:

Expectations

Questions

Choosing group session to attend

Closing Conversation

Thank you

For giving you their time

Openness in sharing

Model 1 Continued

Baptism Group Session Guide

Welcome:

The leader of the session and team members greet parents and godparents as they arrive. Be aware of persons of another faith tradition and make all participants feel welcome.

Introductions:

Invite participants when introducing themselves to relate a good experience of God in their lives; when were they aware of God's presence. Let participants respond when they are ready. The leader might begin or a team member to get conversation flowing. Some may be hesitant at first. Summarize with words of appreciation for their sharing. We seldom share faith in such a way. It is this faith that you are bringing your child into at baptism. As parents and godparents you will be called upon to nurture that faith life for your child.

As You Plan For Baptism – A Look at God's Plan for Us

Creation – Co-creators, partners with God as givers of life

Fall of Adam and Eve – original sin / human weakness, tendency to sin,
broken relationship with God

Promise of Redemption

Salvation Story Jesus' Incarnation / Redemption

Ministry of healing and preaching

Formation of community of disciples

(Baptism a call to discipleship – to carry on the ministry and mission of Jesus)

Eucharist - Central to worship – Sustaining life

Human need for food – Serious effects if neglected

Death / Resurrection - Meaning of Water-Immersion

Video: *Baptism: Celebrating Life*, Twenty-third Publications

Conversation – Highlights of video

What do you recall (images, thoughts that linger)?

What message does the video carry for you?

Review symbols and their meaning using the prayers for the rite.

Handout: *Coping with the Stress of a New Baby*, Care Notes, Abbey Press

Model 1 Continued

Closing Prayer

The Blessing of Families

(The lay baptism team members lead the prayer)

Leader 1: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader 1: My dear friends, from the sacrament of marriage the family has received newness of life and the grace of Christ. The family is especially important to the Church and to society, for it is the primary life-giving community. This evening we call down the Lord's blessing upon you, so that you may continually be instruments of God's grace to one another and witnesses to faith in all circumstances of life. With God as your help you will fulfill your mission by conforming your entire life to the Gospel and so witness to Christ before the world.

Reader: Eph. 4:1-6 The words of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians.

I, Then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call: one Lord, one faith, one baptism: one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader 2: Christ the Lord, the Word co-eternal with the Father, lived among us and chose to be part of a family and to enrich it with his blessings. Let us humbly ask for his favor and protection on these families.

(Our response will be: Lord, hear our prayer.)

Through your own obedience to Mary and Joseph you consecrated family life; make these families holy by your presence. For this we pray...

Your heart was set on the concerns of your Father, make every home a place where God is worshiped and revered. For this we pray...

You made your family a model of prayer, of love, and of obedience to your Father's will: by your grace make these families holy and make them rich in your gifts. For this we pray...

You loved those who were close to you and they returned their love; bind all families together in the bonds of peace and love for each other. For this we pray...

At Cana in Galilee, when a new family was beginning, you gladdened it with your first miracle, changing water into wine; alleviate the sorrows and worries of these families and change them into joy. For this we pray...

Model 1 Continued

Leader 1: Shower your blessings on these families gathered here in your name. Enable those who are joined by one love to support one another by their fervor of spirit and devotion to prayer. Make them responsive to the needs of others and witnesses to the faith in all they say and do. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader 2: As children of the Father, let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven...

Leaders 1 and 2: May the Lord Jesus, who lived with his holy family in Nazareth, dwell always with each of your families, keep you from evil, and make all of you one in mind and heart.

All: Amen.

APPENDIX D

Model 2 Preparation Sessions

(3 One Hour Sessions)

Session 1: (4 weeks before Baptism)

- a) Checking information, dates etc.
- b) Outline times for baptism, i.e. Sunday morning during Mass
or Sunday afternoon outside of Mass
- c) Questions from families
- d) Catechesis: Why Baptism? What is your reason for requesting
it? What is Church? Cross as sign of individual
relationship to God and community life.

Videos: *What Catholics Believe About Baptism*, Liguori Publications
What Makes Us Catholic, St. Anthony Messenger Press
Infant Baptism, Gift to the Community, St. Anthony Messenger Press
(One or two used, depending on issues raised.)

Session 2: (2 weeks before Baptism)

- a) What time/s have you decided for your baby's Baptism?
- b) Any questions or observations?
- c) Catechesis: Original sin: what's that all about? We are God's
children now.

Videos: *Baptism Celebrating Life*, XXIII Publications
Called by Name, Franciscan Communications
Your Baby's Baptism, Liguori Publications
New Life: a Parish Celebrates Infant Baptism, Liturgical Training Publications
(One or two used, depending on issues raised.)

Session 3: (Evening before the Baptism)

- a) Finalize all information, census forms, if needed, etc.
- b) Videos: (One of the following is used.)
Family Spirituality XXIII Publications
Parable Mass Media
Raising a Child in a Violent World XXIII Publications
Raising a Child in Faith XXIII Publications
- c) Talk/walk through the ceremony in church.

Refreshments may be offered.

APPENDIX E

Resources for the Sacrament of Baptism for Children

Books:

Baptism Teams:

* *Baptism Is a Beginning* Edited by Rebeckah Rojcewicz
Liturgical Training Publications

This is an excellent resource for parish staff. It contains wonderful essays on choosing godparents, a message to godparents, adoptive parents, the rite, and also sections on moral formation, religious capacity and praying with young children.

* *Catechesis for Infant Baptism* Ellen Marie Collins
Sheed & Ward 1996

This resource will help parishes design a catechetical process for the formation of a baptismal ministry team. Ellen Marie Collins employs primary symbols, the Lectionary and prayer texts for infant baptism to offer a process for deepening the catechists' understanding of the Rite of Infant Baptism and to help them as they share their faith as a baptism team.

* *Catechesis and Mystagogia: Infant Baptism*
Liturgy Training Publications 1996

A panel of twelve scholars describe how a parish could prepare for the baptism of infants. This book sets out pastoral practices for parish life.

* *Infant Baptism: A Parish Celebration* Timothy Fitzgerald
Liturgical Training Publications 1994

This book challenges everyone who prepares the liturgy of infant baptism to understand it as the action of the community.

* *The Journey Home: How to Be Church* Phyllis Calvey
Sheed & Ward 1994

This is a personal account of how one pastoral associate, alone with the parish staff, developed a baptism program that includes a baptism team, and program that grew out of the needs of this family-centered parish.

Programs:

Baptism and Beyond : Sessions for Parents (Leader Guide) Kathy Coffey
Living the Good News (The Morehouse Group) 2000

Contains everything a catechist needs for leading two parent sessions.

1. Prepares parents for the celebration of Baptism
2. A follow – up session looks back on baptism and forward to first Eucharist.

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

Baptism and Beyond: Preparing for Baptism and Nurturing Your Child's Spirituality (Parent Guide)

Part I covers the symbols and scriptures of Baptism, and

complements session 1 in the Leader Guide.

Part II Parents are encouraged to use the guide as an interactive journal and memory book during the initial, formative years of their child's life.

Blest Be the Child

Benzigner Pub. Co. 1985

Four Sessions

1. Building Foundations (Journey of Faith)
2. Establishing Tradition (Family Practices)
3. Becoming a New Creation (Theology of Baptism)
4. Belonging to Community (Rite of Baptism / Community Involvement)

Celebrating Baptism: a Journal for Families

William H. Sadlier, Inc. 1990

This program invites parents and godparents to discover the meaning and importance of Baptism in the child's life and in their own. The text illustrates the richness and significance of the sacrament. The easy-to-use Leader's Annotated Guide provides scheduling options and instruction. Certificates provide a keepsake for the children and their families.

God's Own Child: A Book for Parents Welcoming Their Child Into The Christian Community Bill / Patty Coleman

Twenty-third Publications 2000

The leader's guide contains four parts

1. God and the Church
2. God and Sin
3. Becoming a Christian Parent
4. Preparing for the Ceremony

A book for parents includes reflection pages for mothers and fathers to share together.

The Most Precious Gift Complete Manual for Parent Preparation

Beth Branigan McNamara Our Sunday Visitor 1996

Contains leadership training and 3 baptismal sessions

1. Meaning / history of Baptism
2. Rite of Baptism / Role of Godparents
3. Christian Family Life / Catholic Community Support

Master copies for sessions / supplemental materials

We Celebrate Baptism Joan Brady – Rev. William Koplik

Silver Burdett Co. 1982

Program Director's Manual helps the director to implement the easy-to-run program. The Parent's Package includes three separate books which give background and support to parent's. Memory Book – a keepsake for all the Sacraments of Initiation.

Welcome New Life S. M. Bernard Potter SP Nigel Baviige
Brown – Roa (Harcourt Brace & Co.) 1996

The leaders guide presents four sessions to have with small groups of parents who are preparing for the sacrament of Baptism. The parent guide serves as both a workbook and a scrapbook in which parents can keep a record of their child's Baptism.

What Do You Ask of God's Church? (A Parent Enrichment Program for Infant Baptism) Charles Balsam M.A.

Liguori Publications 2001

A four session program that may be structured for two session use. Provides a leader's guide, single parent packet and married couples packet. This program expands the perspective by presenting infant baptism as ritual, as initiation into the Christian Community, and as entry into the "domestic church" – the home. It helps couples to strengthen their marital relationship at a critical time in their family's life as well as offering the single parent support in their role.

Parents and Godparents

About Christian Parenting 1984

About Faith and Your Child 1988

Channing Bete Co.

These booklets show parents how to live their faith in a way that offers children an encouraging, loving role model.

At Home with the Sacraments: Baptism Peg Bowman

Twenty-Third Publications 1991

This handbook for parents shows how the future of the child's life depends upon the example of faith that parents give their children. It also is a practical guide to help parents extend the preparation and the liturgical celebration of the sacraments into the home, through family activities and prayer.

Baby's Baptism: Sacrament of Welcome

St. Anthony Messenger Press and Franciscan Communications 1990

An excellent resource for parents with special emphasis on belonging to a community, looking at historical highlights, understanding a discernment process, godparent guidelines, Christian parenting skills and theological aspects of infant baptism. There is also a certificate of baptism and remembrance card for godparents that can be purchased.

Baptism, Your Child and You

St Anthony Messenger Press and Franciscan Communications 1988

Through the Rite of Baptism this booklet answers the questions, What Baptism means to you – What Baptism means to your child – What Baptism means to others. It also contains a brief history.

Birth and Baptism Talk Trips Inc. 1998

This unique spiral booklet offers identical reflective work pages to be shared by parents, godparents and grandparents in preparation for Baptism.

Catholic Etiquette for Children at Mass Kay Lynn Isca

Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division

The Gift of Baptism: A Handbook for Parents Tom Sheridan

ACTA Publications 1996 64 pages

This practical, easy to read book explains the sacrament, its history and symbols. It answers often asked questions, lists scripture readings, and presents prayers and reflections to help parents prepare for the sacraments. It also suggests ways that parents can nourish their own faith and that of their growing child.

The Gift of Godparents Tom Sheridan

ACTA Publications 1995 87 pages

This practical book explains the current practice of godparenting in the Catholic Church and gives practical advice to godparents trying to do their job appropriately, consistently, creatively and for a lifetime.

My Baptism Memory Book

Our Sunday Visitor Books

This baby book provides for recordings of treasured memories of a child's beginnings and young life together with the parents' thoughts, faith and dreams. Also contain prayers, a family tree, areas for photographs, and special emphasis on preparing for celebrating baptism.

Your Baby's Baptism

Liguori Publications 1984 16 pages

This booklet provides parents and godparents a practical and informative guide for preparation for the sacrament of Baptism; areas of concern, questions people ask, the celebration of Baptism and Christian family life.

When You Are a Godparent Elizabeth Bookser Barkley

St. Anthony Messenger Press 2001

The author reflects on the responsibility and significance of being chosen to share your faith and personal experience with a child. She examines briefly the ritual celebration of Baptism, offers suggestions for preparing for this life-long role and for supporting the parents as the child grows in faith. This booklet is an excellent gift for godparents who are not able to attend preparation session due to distance or other reasons or to supplement what is offered in a parish program.

A. V. Resources:

Baptism Preparation:

589 *Baptism* Franciscan Communications (30 min.)

Life is a long journey from loneliness to having a home. This modern parable tells the story of Alfredo, a poor Mexican boy, scarred by fire and homeless, who is drawn by a child's laughter to an orphanage. He is accepted by the children and welcomed into the community. Symbols of Baptism and its meaning are discovered through this parable.

* Available to borrow at the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

828 *Baptism Celebrating Life* Twenty-Third Publications (17 min.)

This lively presentation gives parents an opportunity to update their understanding of the Catholic faith and also challenges them to walk

the journey of faith with their child everyday. The video covers the theology of Baptism and the importance of its rites and rituals, but it also assures parents that they and their children are called through Baptism to be followers of Christ.

- 674 *Bautismo Agua/Luz (Español)* RCL Tabor (26min.)
Refleja la experiencia Hispana de celebracion y comprension del sacramento. Guia
- 438 *Godparent Gussie* Franciscan Communications (20 min.)
Through whimsical cartoons this video focuses on the themes of Baptism, Confirmation and Christian Commitment. It is a survey on the development of the Church's rites of initiation. Three pauses for shared reflection are built into the program.
- 174 *New Life: A Parish Celebrates Infant Baptism* Tabor Publications (30 min.)
This video illustrates how a parish initiates infants into the church during a Sunday liturgy. Inter-spread with the footage are parishioners who share their reflections on the rite. They talk about the impact of the signs and symbols and especially of the gathered community on their own appreciation of the sacrament.
- 295 *Your Baby's Baptism* Liguori (30 min.)
Fr. Kempf explores the meaning of Baptism, explaining the Rite. It demonstrates the difference between baptism by pouring and immersion, as well as celebrating baptism during Sunday Mass. A parent / godparent booklet accompanies this video.
- 296 *Your Baby's Baptism* Liguori (20 min.)
Fr. Maurice Nutt explains the Symbols and tradition of Baptism in the black culture. A parent / godparent booklet accompanies this video.
- 796 *We Want Our Baby Baptized* RCL Tabor (25 min.)
This tape describes the riches of birth and Baptism, then sketches what the Church expects of those who seek this sacrament for their children. A dramatized vignette demonstrates the kind of problems presented by some parents.

Post Baptism:

- * 268 *The Sacrament of Parenthood* Paulist Press (30 min.)
In this video, God's love is seen in action in the love of parents.
Excellent for follow-up program.

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

General Instruction:

- * 334 *Called By Name* Franciscan Communications (12 min.)
This video interweaves several short stories with images of water and juxtaposes these with scenes from an Easter Vigil ceremony. It

challenges us to reflect on our own Baptism and what it means to live our baptismal commitment.

* 013 - 016 *Our Baptismal Covenant with Christ* DeSales Franciscan Communications (20-25 min.)

This series looks at the historical development of the sacraments of initiation from the first century through the Post-Vatican II Church. Different speakers for each session.

- | | | | |
|-------|-----------|--------|-----------------------------|
| * 013 | Session 1 | Part 1 | Water as a Religious Symbol |
| | | Part 2 | The Good News about Baptism |
| | Session 2 | Part 1 | The Church's Mission |
| | | Part 2 | Constantine and Change |
| * 014 | Session 3 | Part 1 | Impressive Rites |
| | | Part 2 | The Pre-Vatican II Church |
| | Session 4 | Part 1 | A New Perspective |
| | | Part 2 | Most Frequent Questions |
| * 015 | Session 5 | Part 1 | Just What Is RCIA |
| | | Part 2 | An Overview of Rites |
| | Session 6 | Part 1 | Changing Parish Life |
| | | Part 2 | Practical Issues |
| * 016 | Session 7 | Part 1 | Ministry in the Church |
| | | Part 2 | The Challenge of Vatican II |
| | Session 8 | Part 1 | Prayer and Good Works |
| | | Part 2 | New Code of Canon Law |

* 699 *Sacraments of Initiation: How We Become the Church*
Focus on the Sacraments Harcourt Brace (3 segments each 25min.)

1. Understanding Initiation: Made, Not Born
Fr. Gregory Hoppough CSS speaks about the sacraments of initiation as a unified whole in the RCIA, and how the RCIA is normative for understanding the initiation sacraments. Would be good for introducing adults to the RCIA.
2. An Appreciation of Baptism from Scripture:
Baptism is the beginning of a life of dying and rising. Would be good for those teaching about Baptism.
3. Rite of Baptism:
Baptism demonstrates God's care for humanity. Fr. Hoppough speaks of why Baptism is used in the Church.

* 604 *Widow's Mite* Franciscan Communications (26 min.)

An elderly widow seeking baptism reaffirms in a missionary Hong Kong the Christian commitment to mission and ministry. She shows him that even in her great poverty she can attend to the needs of those even poorer than herself.

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

F. Legal Concerns in the Catechetical Setting

Parish religious education programs have many legal obligations and concerns, particularly because parish programs care for people, especially children. This section of the handbook is not designed to provide expert legal advice. Its purpose is to point to potential areas of concern for parishes. It is important that parishes educate themselves in greater depth than is offered here on some of these issues. Also, it may be important to look into particular issues with qualified legal advisors. A good resource for educating about legal issues concerning the catechetical setting is *Religious Education and the Law: A Handbook for Parish Catechetical Leaders* by Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, (NPCD/NCEA: Washington DC, 1996).

Negligence and Liability

Most legal concerns focus around *negligence* and *legal liability*. It is important to recognize that liability suggests a lack of intent – one need not mean to cause harm, but because of some negligence it happened. In order for legal liability for negligence to be found, there must be four factors present: duty; violation of duty; proximate cause; and injury. They can be briefly defined relative to the parish's catechetical setting as follows:

Duty: The person charged with negligence must have some responsibility for the care and safety of the one injured. That means that the parish and its catechists may have a duty to care for the safety of children and youth entrusted to their care on parish property, during certain times.

Violation of Duty: The duty, as defined, was not fulfilled. Here a "reasonableness" factor is in place – what would be reasonably expected of someone in this position at this time?

Proximate Cause: The violation of the duty was the proximate cause of injury.

Injury: In order for a case of legal liability to be found, injury must have happened because of negligence.

Example: A parish may accept the responsibility to care for the safety of children during their arrival and dismissal. This is their *duty*. One way the parish would see to its duty would be by monitoring the lot before and after the scheduled meeting times. The parish would also have drop off and pick up procedures that maintain safety and that everyone knows. However, if the parish does not have a good dismissal policy or the parish fails to administer its policy well, then the parish is not fulfilling its duty, and may be considered in *violation of that duty*. Let us suppose that a child is *injured* during dismissal (e.g., hit by a car). Let us further suppose that the incident is linked with lack of clear procedures or lack of appropriate administration of the procedures during dismissal. Then the *violation of duty* may be seen as the *proximate cause* of the *injury*, and the parish may be found legally liable for negligence.

those in their care, while they are in their care. So parish leaders, both pastoral and catechetical, as well as catechists should create and maintain an environment of safety. This pertains to the catechetical setting (e.g., buildings and grounds) as well as behaviors (e.g., discipline and emergency care).

It would also be recommended that catechetical leaders be aware of their coverage under liability insurance. The Diocese of Springfield carries liability insurance, which is extended to all paid employees of diocesan parishes. However, parish leaders should look into who in particular is covered, to what extent, under what circumstances, for which activities and situations, and what locations.

Summary Recommendations for Catechetical Leaders

These recommendations are grouped for easier reference, but catechetical leaders need to read and be aware of all of them. There is overlap between certain groups.

Professionalism of the Catechetical Leader

1. Create a parish program/catechist handbook that includes parish policies. Ask those who are to read it (parents/guardians or catechists) to sign a statement (e.g., "We have read and agree to be governed by these policies.") prior to their participation in the program.
2. Keep some kind of logbook, so that if your professional competency is ever questioned, you will have a written record of what you did and what you intended to do.
3. Permanent records on all children and youth should be kept accurately. Pertinent information should be collected and updated annually. That information may include, but is not limited to: emergency phone numbers; medical concerns; information concerning non-custodial parents. As a general rule information about a child should only be shared with authorized persons. This may include the child's catechist, and non-custodial parent (unless there is a court order denying access), but it does not allow for free access to anyone interested.
4. Pay attention to situations of non-custodial parents.
5. Keep attendance records for all classes. Attendance records may become legally significant documents.

Catechists and Other Volunteer Staff

6. Interview all volunteers to determine suitability for positions. It is not currently necessary for parishes to do criminal background checks on catechists. Parishes are not required to accept the services of all who apply. Leaders have the right and responsibility to place only volunteers who are best suited for the position. Parish staff may be found liable for placing a volunteer who endangers others.

7. Familiarize catechists with all rules and regulations of the program/parish. This may be done through the catechist meetings and/or use of a parish handbook as mentioned above (#1).
8. As a precautionary measure, it is good practice to have two adults working together with groups of youth, as team catechists or as catechist and aid. This is especially important if a group is meeting in an isolated location. This is valuable for the protection of both the catechists and the children and youth.

Behavior and Discipline

9. Establish rules of behavior and formulate policies for carrying out disciplinary measures.
10. Be sure to make the rules known to those affected. Posting and/or printing rules is a good idea.
11. Be sure young people understand the rules and the consequences for not following them. Enforce program and parish rules consistently.
12. Before disciplining a person explain what was done that merits a penalty and allow the individual some opportunity to explain the behavior.
13. If it is necessary to make a statement about misconduct or performance, be sure comments are specific, behaviorally oriented, and verifiable. Written records of such statements should be kept on file in the parish.
14. Corporal punishment is neither an appropriate nor an effective means of disciplining. It is contrary to a Christian educational philosophy. Also, use of corporal punishment may open the parish to civil or criminal lawsuits. Further, disciplining of children and youth should be done privately so as not to cause embarrassment, but not in an isolated location. This is valuable for the protection of both the parish and the children and youth.

Safety

15. Take reasonable precautions to insure the safety of those in your care. Be aware of any unsafe building or other conditions, and address appropriately.
16. Do not leave young people unattended unless absolutely necessary. If necessary, be sure that they know what procedures they are expected to follow and/or ask another adult to "keep an eye on" your group.
17. Create procedures for dismissal of children and youth, and policies for early dismissal.
18. Create procedures for emergency situations, including evacuation drills. Provide basic supplies and training for first aid.

Mandated Reporting of Abuse

Parish staffs and volunteer catechists are in situations where they may become aware of situations of abuse of children and youth, whether in the home or elsewhere. Certain professionals within parishes, such as paid catechetical leaders, are *mandated reporters*, meaning they are under legal obligation to report such cases to the Massachusetts Department of Social

Services. (See *Mass. General Laws Chapter 119, §51A: Persons Required to Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect.*) Volunteers have at least a moral obligation to report suspected cases to the paid parish staff. In the event that the paid staff refuses to carry out their obligation as a mandated reporter, volunteers may report directly to Mass. DSS.

Permission slips

Both service projects and other field trips may require leaving the parish property. When this occurs it is important to make parents/guardians aware of the plan and seek their permission. Although permission slips do not completely safeguard a parish from liability, they do help inform parents/guardians of the particulars. In that way, the value of the permission slip is that the parish knows that parents/guardians are aware of what is happening, when, where and with whom and have agreed to their child's participation. *On the next page is the model that the Diocese of Springfield recommends for parish use.*

It is important to include, in a cover letter, as many pertinent details as possible (date, time, location, transportation arrangements, etc.). It is also a good opportunity to obtain any emergency information that may be needed that the parish does not already have on record.

The parish should also look to their liability coverage in such situations. This would include considering who is covered (e.g., volunteer chaperones), under what circumstances and activities (e.g., field trips) and where (e.g., off parish). The main concern is to see to the safety of all involved. Parishes need to be mindful of their responsibility in this and plan appropriately.

**CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM
FOR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Child's name

Parent's name

Street Address

Street Address

City/Town, State, Zip Code

City/Town, State, Zip Code

Telephone No.

Telephone No.

We hereby request that the above-named Child be allowed to participate in the following program: _____ and any other activities or events incidental to, associated with, or sponsored by said program, including transportation to and from such program, event or activity. The above-named Parent represents that he/she is the person with legal custody of the above-named Child. Parent and Child each hereby agrees to abide by all rules, regulations and requirements pertaining to the Child's participation.

In consideration of the Child being allowed to participate in this program, the undersigned Parent and Child, for themselves and for their heirs, representatives and assigns, do forever RELEASE, ACQUIT, DISCHARGE and COVENANT TO HOLD HARMLESS the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield, a corporation sole, the school, parish or other organization sponsoring the program, events or activities, _____, their respective agents, servants, employees and representatives, and the advisers, coaches, teachers, assistants, supervisors, helpers, volunteers and any and all others who may be involved in the organization, supervision or conduct of such extracurricular activities, from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, suits and demands, on account of or in any way growing out of, directly or indirectly, all known and unknown bodily injuries, personal injuries and property damage which the Child, Parent or other family members may suffer as a result of or in connection with the Child's participation in said program, events or activities.

THIS IS A RELEASE OF RIGHTS - READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING

Date

Child's signature

Parent's signature

G. Program Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation of our catechetical programs can help to determine their effectiveness in forming Catholics who not only understand their faith, but live it. A parish should identify its weak areas in catechesis and work to improve them, while affirming its strong points. It is appropriate to test the program in order to determine how well it helps its participants in their understanding and practice of the faith. It should be understood that the purpose of evaluation is not to test the participants or grade them.

Concern has arisen over an apparent lack of Catholic identity and religious literacy among our Catholic population. To what extent can the faithful identify with what it means to be Catholic and articulate their beliefs? While these are legitimate concerns, their causes are complex and cannot be fully addressed in this handbook. Yet, the following are some general principles that address the issue of religious literacy and the evaluation of our catechetical programs.

- Catechesis is a life long process. Religious literacy and Catholic identity must be fostered with our adults as well as with our children and youth. Since it is at the adult level that our Catholic faith can be fully understood and lived, adult education must be a priority. (See GDC 171-172.)
- Religious literacy and especially Catholic identity for children and youth are achieved by having the entire parish community working together. It is unrealistic to expect a catechetical program to accomplish this alone. Participation with their families in the liturgical and communal life of the Church provides the primary foundation for Catholic identity for children. Effective means of inviting families into the full life of the Church need to be developed.
- Faith is not an academic subject. The purpose of catechesis is to foster life lived in relationship with Jesus Christ. This is expressed through participation in the Catholic worshiping community and through application of Catholic values to our everyday lives. Religious literacy and Catholic identity support this relationship but are not ends in themselves.
- Following the principles outlined in this document will assist parishes in building religious literacy and Catholic identity in their communities. While these cannot be fully realized with our children and youth, fostering ongoing adult faith formation will impact the development of Catholic identity and religious literacy in our communities.

There are a number of ways to evaluate a parish religious education program¹. Catechists, parents/guardians and participants can be surveyed. Another method to evaluate, would be to use the recommendations and guidelines put forth in this Diocese of Springfield, 2000

handbook (See the *Simple Assessment* in the *Appendix*). Also, standardized evaluation tools are available to help in evaluating all levels of catechesis (See list below.). Using more than one method would give a more comprehensive picture; however, some type of evaluation should be done annually. Perhaps different methods could be alternated every two or three years. The Office of Religious Education can offer assistance to parishes in evaluating their programs.

Standardized Evaluation Tools

- **ACRE (Assessment of Catholic Religious Education)** available from the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). This tool is used on various grade levels to determine how children and youth understand and practice their faith. Each parish/school receives a group report.
- **IFG (Information for Growth)** also from NCEA. This survey tool assists adults in assessing their own level of religious knowledge and spirituality and provides group data to parishes and other organizations for program planning to meet the specific needs of catechists and adults.
- **CFI (Catholic Faith Inventory)** available from Paulist Press. This instrument assists adults in assessing their religious knowledge and spirituality. In conjunction with a program coordinator or spiritual director, individual reports can be used to determine where one needs to grow in her/his faith. A group report assists planners in assessing needs for developing adult programs.
- **Community Profile and Discipleship Profile** from the *Follow Me Program* published by St. Anthony Messenger Press. This parish development program is an education, reflection, and planning process aimed at improving the parish as a community of disciples. The profiles can be used separately. The “Community Profile” is a tool for studying the parish demographics, trends, ministries, and relationship to the local community. The “Discipleship Profile” helps assess their understanding and practice of the faith. Both individual and parish summary reports are provided to help in planning for the educational needs of the parish.

2

The Appropriate Use of Testing

Testing of students in a religious education program can be used as an evaluation tool of the entire program, as mentioned above, or for the catechist to evaluate his/her own effectiveness. It can also be used as a teaching tool. However, the testing of individual students for the purpose of grading them or testing their faith is inappropriate, since one’s relationship with God cannot be measured or graded.

Many text series include unit tests. The primary purpose of these tests is to determine to what extent the content has been understood and integrated into the lives of the students. The catechist can then use the results of this testing to reinforce any concepts that may not have been understood.

Testing also provides a teaching tool. By administering the test and then going over the results with the students, they can see for themselves where they may have misunderstood a concept. While using a process of feedback from the catechist and/or the entire group, individual students can make their own adjustments in their understanding of the concepts.

Testing as an evaluation tool or teaching tool can be done without grading. As an evaluation tool it helps catechetical program coordinators see where concepts need further explanation or development. As a teaching recall tool, it helps people to become aware of what they do or do not know and to appreciate the depth of their understanding.

For parents/guardians, the results of testing or any review work can be a source of communication with their children and/or with the catechist. Any work that is brought home helps parents/guardians to see how their children are learning and understanding their faith. It can lead to family conversation about their faith.

These are the appropriate uses of testing in a catechetical program. Testing for program evaluation or as a teaching tool should be used sparingly and not be the focus of the catechetical sessions.

SECTION 2

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL CATECHESIS

A. The Parish Commitment to Catechesis

B. Leadership and Roles

- Adult Parishioners
- Parents/Guardians
- Catechists
- Education Commissions
- Catechetical Leaders
- Pastors/Administrators
- Diocese
 - Bishop
 - Office of Religious Education

C. Financial Commitment

- Importance of Financial Commitment to Total Catechesis
- Sample Budget

D. Creative Possibilities

- Parish Clustering
- Regional Programs

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL CATECHESIS

In order to attain successful catechesis the parish needs to make a concerted effort to establish it as a high priority. This requires an understanding of catechesis as one of the central tasks of the community. Key elements to successful catechesis include the identification, formation and empowerment of leadership and personnel, as well as financial commitment to the entire catechetical endeavor. Providing these elements often requires some creative approaches.

This section will develop:

- **The Parish Commitment to Catechesis**
- **Leadership and Roles**
- **Financial Commitment**
- **Creative Possibilities**

A. The Parish Commitment to Catechesis

“The Church is bidden by God and by events...to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel.” (CT)

The parish plays a primary role in the formation and expression of our common faith. Apart from simply providing a place of worship, Catholics look to the parish for support and nourishment of their faith. Therefore, the parish has a responsibility to provide for this in a meaningful and comprehensive way to its entire people.

The parish is a catechizing community, forming people through all its activities: liturgical, social, pastoral, and financial. Every program within the parish bears catechetical value and implications as does the way each member lives and expresses his/her faith. Since the entire community and the individuals within it provide models of the Christian faith and life, it is important that they develop a catechetical consciousness, an awareness of the extent to which their activities express the Gospel.

The parish makes catechesis a priority by developing an understanding of itself as a catechizing community and by providing abundant resources for structured catechetical endeavors aimed at the formation of all its members. Effective leadership is essential to this process. Structured catechesis requires the involvement of many people and groups – adult parishioners, parents/guardians, catechists, education commissions of the parish pastoral council, catechetical leaders, pastors/administrators, diocesan personnel and the Bishop. Each of these has a special role in parish catechesis. Also adequate and varied print and audiovisual resources need to be provided.

The parish commits financial resources to provide for both material needs and the formation and support of personnel. A specific budget that encompasses all aspects of catechesis for the entire community supports this commitment. This requires the cooperation of the parish finance council.

B. Leadership and Roles

Adult Parishioners

“Every disciple of the Lord Jesus shares in this mission [to witness and share the word of life about the reign of God faithfully]. To do their part, adult Catholics must be mature in faith and well equipped to share the Gospel, promoting it in every family circle, in every church gathering, in every place of work, and in every public forum. They must be women and men of prayer whose faith is alive and vital, grounded in a deep commitment to the person and message of Jesus.”

(OHWB, Intro., p. 1)

In a general way the whole adult community within a parish is the leader in providing quality catechesis. In an effort to live as true disciples of Christ and to form youth and newcomers in the faith, it is essential that the adult community lead the way in the parish’s catechetical ministry. They may do this by:

- Availing themselves of catechetical opportunities
- Requesting a great and varied selection of catechetical opportunities
- Supporting the parish’s efforts for all age groups, financially, prayerfully and through service
- Advocating for qualified leadership in catechesis
- Participating in education boards and planning teams

The adult community, by its own life, models mature faith. It is they as a group who set the standard and expectations for a parish’s catechetical effort.

- As the adults lead, the children and youth shall follow
- As the adults model and witness, the catechumens and candidates will see
- As the adults grow in commitment and understanding, the lay and ordained ministries will develop

“To grow in discipleship throughout life, all believers need and are called to build vibrant parish and diocesan communities of faith and service.”

(OHWB, p. 2)

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are both catechizers and the recipients of catechesis. As catechizers they are the primary educators of their children. Their most powerful means of forming their children in the faith is through their own example of living out the gospel in their daily lives, through prayer and participation in the life of the worshipping community, and through attention to their own formation. In a more specific way, they catechize through their children by praying with them, sharing stories of our faith and Tradition, and conversing with them about issues of faith.

“By means of personal contact, meetings, courses and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility of educating their children in the faith” (GDC 227). There are many ways that the parish can give them this help. Useful information and ideas can be provided at parent meetings. In addition, some published take-home materials that provide assistance are:

- Parent/family pages from text series
- Adult information that correlates with the concepts the children are learning
- Suggestions for seasonal activities for Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter
- Suggestions for family prayers and traditions
- Ideas for service opportunities

Parents/guardians will also benefit from other types of resources for their own growth in faith and parenting such as:

- Parenting skills
- Communication skills
- Theological updates
- Prayer resources, especially intended for parents/guardians
- Video tapes for both personal and family viewing
- Audio tapes

Parishes should make every effort to communicate regularly with parents/guardians. This communication will help keep them informed of the parish program for children and youth, as well as encourage them in their role as educators of their children. Letters, take-home materials, family gatherings and telephone calls are all appropriate means of communication. Should a serious issue develop with a particular child, a telephone call and/or private meeting with the parent/guardian is most appropriate.

As primary religious educators of their children and valued members of the community, parents/guardians should be treated with a spirit of welcome and

hospitality. While many parents/guardians may not be actively involved in parish life, they bring their children to parish programs because their faith still holds value for them. This is an opportune time to reflect the love and hospitality of Jesus, to find ways to include them that are not intimidating. This may mean involving them in activities that will make them feel comfortable, and address questions and concerns that will make it easier for them to return to active participation. Pastoral sensitivity is required at all times.

Catechists

Catechesis is the ministry which seeks to make “a person’s faith become living, conscious, and active” (NCD 32) through prayer, teaching and witness. Catechists are those called to echo God’s word as they promote knowledge of the

faith, provide liturgical education, aid in moral formation and teach others to pray. They encourage and prepare those they teach to join in the communal life of the parish and to evangelize others (Cf. GDC 85). Catechists “facilitate communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects amongst themselves, as well as with the community” (GDC 156). They do this in the context of and with the support of the community.

Catechists minister to adults, youth and children in a variety of parish settings: adult education, RCIA, sacramental preparation, school age catechesis, youth ministry, family programs, and ministerial training programs. For effective catechesis within these settings, catechists must possess certain fundamental qualities. They should be:

- Persons of faith and prayer
- Witnesses to the gospel
- Models of the faith
- Willing sharers of their faith
- Gifted ministers
- Willing participants in formation for catechetical ministry

Recruitment

The vocation of catechist is rooted in one’s baptismal commitment to participate in the “priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ” (LG 31). It is the Holy Spirit who provides the gifts for catechesis and calls one to this ministry. The parish discerns and affirms this call.

While the entire community takes responsibility for recruitment, certain individuals and groups play a more critical role in this process. They include the pastor/administrator, the parish catechetical leader, and the education commission of the parish pastoral council. The following principles should guide this process:

- Recruitment is an ongoing process.
- The call is based on one’s giftedness for catechetical ministry.
- Discernment is necessary in order to determine giftedness, ability to make a commitment, and one’s role in this ministry.

Ideally, there should be an application process that surfaces a pool of catechists. A sample application form is given in Section 5 of this handbook.

As catechesis is the responsibility of the entire parish, the calling forth of potential catechists requires a multi-faceted approach. The parish leadership needs to apprise and educate the community as to its responsibility in providing catechists. Individuals either respond to their own call to this ministry or assist in identifying others who may be gifted for it. The following are some practical suggestions for calling forth potential catechists:

- Annual parish “time, treasure and talent“ drive
- Inviting parents/guardians to consider becoming catechists when they register their children

- Have current catechists publicly share their enthusiasm for the ministry
- Personal contact
- Announcements from the pulpit
- Bulletin notices

A brief job description made available in conjunction with the above recruitment process will help to clarify the expectations of a catechist. It should include the role and responsibility of the catechist, time commitment, and training opportunities offered and required.

A process that includes a written application and personal interview with the catechetical leader and/or pastor or administrator should take place with each potential candidate to discern her/his suitability for catechetical ministry. (See Section 5 *Sample Catechist Application Form*). In addition to identifying the fundamental qualities of catechists already mentioned, the interview may clarify the following:

- Candidate's commitment to the Church and its teachings
- Importance of the Eucharist and participation in the community
- Catechetical or related experience
- Requirements for and commitment to initial and ongoing formation
- Mutual expectations
- Ability of the candidate to make the time commitment
- Roles and responsibilities of the catechist
- Policies or procedures of the specific program

Personal references should be requested, especially if the leadership does not know the candidate.

A handbook for catechists should also be made available for the candidate to review. This handbook could include the role of the catechist, expectations, policies and procedures, legal issues relative to catechesis, and opportunities for training.

It is good practice to encourage the candidate to make a commitment of at least two years to the program. It takes a full year for most inexperienced catechists to be adequately trained and develop the skills for effective catechesis. This first year can be viewed as an apprenticeship. For most catechists, it is in the succeeding years that the fruit of their training and experience is most fully realized. Also, the candidate should be informed that after the first year, an evaluation process would take place to discern the catechist's needs for further training and support and continued participation in the program.

A signed agreement stating the commitment being made by both parties finalizes the application process. On the part of the candidate, this agreement would include placement (e.g., RCIA catechist or grade level), the time commitment, and agreement to uphold the parish catechetical policies. On the part of the parish community, it would include a statement of commitment to provide appropriate resources, training, and support for the catechist.

There is no legal requirement to accept all people who volunteer (See Section 1: *Scope of Catechesis – Legal Concerns*). It is important to affirm the qualities that the candidates have and to thank them for their time whether or not they

actually commit to becoming catechists. If a candidate demonstrates potential as a catechist, but there are concerns about one's ability or comfort level, a team teaching approach may be suggested. The candidate may also be encouraged to participate in the program in another capacity.

If the application process leads to a decision that the candidate is unable to fulfill the responsibilities of a catechist, he or she may be encouraged to participate in an auxiliary or support position such as:

- Office assistant
- Hall or parking lot monitor
- Refreshment provider
- Assistant with arts and crafts, music, and other creative activities

Training and Ongoing Formation and Support

It is the expectation of the diocese that all catechists be trained and certified. The ideal is that all be certified through the Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program in conjunction with the Office of Religious Education. For those who cannot complete certification, they should be encouraged to participate as much as possible in segments of the Formation Program. It is particularly important that catechists participate in basic courses related to the group with which they will be working. These basic courses are:

- RCIA Catechist Training
- Adolescent Catechesis
- Teaching Religion Effectively
- Echoes of Faith Catechist Training

All of these are offered through the Diocesan Office of Religious Education. When there is sufficient interest, these courses are made available on a regional and/or parish level.

Minimal training should be provided to new catechists before they enter into a catechetical setting. The catechetical leader or other appropriate member of the parish staff must take responsibility to see to an initial orientation session and training. Various resources may be used. Video programs are available from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library. As a service to their customers, publishers of texts often provide consultants to give basic training for effective use of their texts at no cost. The staff at the Office of Religious Education is also available to parishes upon request. Minimal training should include:

- The concept of this ministry as a vocation
- An introduction to catechesis and its processes
- Introduction to the curriculum
- Overview of the resources being used
- Age-appropriate lesson planning skills
- Policies and guidelines
- Encouragement for more intensive training, giving information on when and where training is available

Training is to be followed by ongoing formation that may be offered in the parish, region or diocese. Ongoing formation includes all of the above topics, with increasing depth as well as theological topics. These may include:

- Faith development
- Theological subjects (Trinity, Christology, Creed, Church, Sacraments, Scripture, Morality, Mary and the Saints)
- Evangelization
- The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*
- Prayer and ways of praying with others

Support and Recognition

In addition, other opportunities for support and enrichment should be provided in the form of catechist meetings and gatherings on a regular basis. These sessions may include:

- Shared prayer and/or faith sharing
- Opportunities to share common concerns/issues
- Updates in theology or catechetical issues
- Planning for major events
- Opportunities for social interaction and/or recreation
- Inclusion in an annual evaluation process

It is important to affirm and recognize catechists both publicly and privately. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Presenting them with appropriate gifts
 - Holding special events for them, such as an appreciation party or dinner
 - Calling attention to their special efforts in the parish bulletin or newsletter
-
- Sending cards on special events such as birthdays, anniversaries, or crisis times in their lives.

There are also national, regional, and diocesan opportunities for recognition. Nationally, Catechetical Sunday is celebrated annually on the third Sunday of September. This is an excellent opportunity to recognize and commission catechists for their ministry. Resources from the United States Catholic Conference for celebrating this event are made available through the Office of Religious Education. Regionally, Religious Education Week is held annually in November (sponsored by the New England Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education) to focus on the ministry of catechesis.

On the Diocesan level, St. Pius X awards celebrations are held in four regions of the diocese each year. This offers an opportunity to recognize committed and outstanding catechists from each parish. (See Section 3: *Guidelines for the St. Pius X Awards.*)

Careful attention to the recruitment, training and support of catechists is essential to effective catechesis. Catechists who receive the training and support they need are more likely to stay with a program for a longer period of time. A cohesive group of catechists who have a sense of community among themselves will provide a witness beyond words to the children and adults with whom they exercise their special ministry.

Education Commissions

According to the *Parish Pastoral Council Finance Council Guidelines* each parish is to have an Education Commission that operates under the auspices of the Parish Pastoral Council. This is one of the most evident means by which the community takes responsibility for the catechetical needs of the parish. The Education Commission's concern is for the overall educational effort of the parish. This may include, but is not limited to, adult catechesis, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, catechesis for school age children and youth, sacramental preparation, and the parish school. Each of these different ministries may be the immediate concern of another group, (e.g., religious education board, RCIA team). Thus, the Education Commission is an umbrella organization that oversees the work of all of these groups.

Purpose and Role

The Education Commission acts primarily in an advisory capacity to the pastor/administrator, the catechetical leader, and the Parish Pastoral Council in matters related to catechesis. The guidelines state that "the purpose of this commission is to coordinate the educational effort of the whole parish. The education commission carries out its mandate primarily in the coordination of the programs sponsored by the various bodies charged with some aspect of the parish educational effort. It initiates and carries out on its own only those programs not being addressed by organized parish-based educational groups" (p. 13). Those tasks that it initiates or carries out on its own may include:

- Assisting the pastor/administrator in choosing the leadership people for catechetical ministries and/or creating job descriptions

- Seeing that these ministers are properly compensated and/or recognized
- Seeing that catechetical ministers receive proper training and support
- Helping to develop budgets for catechesis
- Acting as an advocate for total parish catechesis
- Mediating any difficulties between educational endeavors and other parish organizations

The Education Commission also acts as a liaison between the parish pastoral council and the various groups charged with specific areas of catechesis. These groups may include:

- *Adult Education Teams* that promote and oversee adult formation programs for the parish and provide inspirational and educational reading materials for parishioners. This team may need to coordinate its planning with that of other commissions, especially Family Life and Spiritual Life. (See Section 1 *Adult Formation*.)
- *Religious Education Executive Boards* that advise the catechetical leader for school age children and youth in establishing policies and

budgets and providing resources for catechists. This board also assists in recruiting catechists and other volunteers and carrying out other aspects of the catechetical efforts. This board should consist of parishioners of various ages, making sure that parents and catechists are represented. This board would have its own set of by-laws specifying its mission, frequency of meetings, and the make-up and terms of its membership.

- *RCIA Teams* that oversee the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, which includes the catechumenate adapted for children, with the RCIA coordinator. This diversified team would see to catechesis, liturgical rites, sponsors, hospitality, etc. (See the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Springfield*, 1-5.)
- *Sacramental Preparation Teams* that oversee baptismal preparation and adult Confirmation. These may work in conjunction with or be part of the RCIA team, adult education team, and the school age religious education boards.
- *Catholic School Boards* in those parishes that have Catholic schools. Connection of the school with the life of the whole parish is important.

The Education Commission and its sub-groups also need to work closely with other commissions, such as Family Life and Spiritual Life. The relationship with the Finance Council is of primary importance in order to realize adequate funding for total parish catechesis.

Membership

Membership on the Education Commission is drawn from Parish Pastoral Council members and non-members. Key people on the commission are the

catechetical leader(s) and the school principal as ex-officio members, and representatives of any groups that have responsibility for any aspect of catechesis. It is essential that all of the above groups be represented on the education commission in order to coordinate all aspects of catechesis in the parish. It is also important that membership include people from the community at large as the recipients of catechesis.

It is advisable that term limits be established for members of the Education Commission and its sub-groups. This promotes greater involvement of the entire community and prevents stagnation of any group. It also encourages people to participate, knowing that their service is limited. An example of appropriate term limits would be that one serve for three years with eligibility for one more three-year term.

Catechetical Leaders

Successful catechesis in a parish requires much time, effort, coordination, and expertise. It would be difficult to implement the vision put forth in this handbook without trained and competent leadership which has the knowledge, skills, ongoing formation and time to devote to the catechetical needs of all the members of the parish. Therefore, **each parish needs a designated leader or leaders whose primary parish responsibility is to coordinate its catechetical endeavors.** Each designated leader should be recognized by the Office of Religious Education in accordance with its current guidelines.

Role

The catechetical leader is first and foremost a *minister*. This ministry “seeks to promote communion with Jesus Christ” (GDC 30) for individuals and the community. As catechesis touches people in their everyday lives, it requires pastoral sensitivity and ministry to their needs. The catechetical leader often comes in contact with individuals and families in very personal ways. He or she is in a unique position to hear about crises in people’s lives, as well as to be present for those unplanned conversations about faith and Church life. Therefore, the catechetical leader should be a person of pastoral sensitivity, attentive to and approachable by the diverse population of the parish. He or she must also honor the practice of confidentiality.

The catechetical leader is an *advocate for catechesis*. He or she constantly reminds the community of its responsibility to provide comprehensive and quality catechesis for life long learning. Advocacy requires familiarity with catechetical documents, understanding of catechetical theory and practice, and knowledge of diocesan and national policies for catechesis. The advocate needs to raise the question constantly of how the parish’s decisions and activities may be catechizing its members about what it means to be Catholic as well as ask how these decisions affect the catechetical ministry.

The catechetical leader serves as a *theological resource person*, particularly for catechists, as well as for individuals within the community. He or she is the one who addresses theological questions from catechists as they arise out of their teaching experience. The catechetical leader is also responsible for shaping curriculum and choosing resources that accurately and adequately reflect our Catholic Tradition. Thus, the leader must be well grounded in that Tradition.

Finally, the catechetical leader is an *administrator*, coordinating all the catechetical programs of the parish. The administrative responsibilities are comprehensive. They include recruitment, training, and support of catechists, record keeping, and budgeting for catechetical needs. A necessary aspect of this administration is communication with those directly involved in catechesis and the various segments of the parish as well as the Diocesan Office of

Religious Education. These tasks require both organizational and interpersonal skills, as well as knowledge of catechetical theory and practice.

Job Description

The ideal is that each parish (or grouping of parishes) have a professional *Director of Religious Education* who has overall responsibility for all catechetical efforts of the parish. This position requires a person who holds a Master's Degree in religious education or a related field, such as pastoral ministry, religious studies, or applied theology. The director of religious education needs an extensive understanding of theology, catechetical theory and methodology, and leadership skills that includes the ability to delegate effectively. If a group of parishes hire a DRE jointly, it may be necessary (given the logistics of the program) also to have an assistant at each site. This assistant, working in concert with the DRE, would be responsible for the proper functioning of the program.

The *Coordinator of Religious Education* normally has responsibility for one or more areas of religious education, such as adult formation or catechesis for children and youth. The coordinator often works with the director or the pastor in implementing his or her area of the catechetical program. There may be more than one coordinator in the parish to facilitate the various catechetical programs. Ideally, this person holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religious Studies and Education, or has achieved its equivalency through regional and diocesan training and continuing education on the college level. For those who have a Bachelor's Degree in another field, the catechetical leadership track of the diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program would also prepare one to serve as a coordinator. The coordinator of religious education requires considerable competencies in theology, catechetical theory and methodology, especially relating to the area of catechesis for which he or she is responsible, as well as leadership skills.

An *Administrator of Religious Education* has limited responsibility for organizing a particular area of catechesis and works in cooperation with the pastoral staff. This role is proportionate to the skills and training of the individual. The administrator of religious education needs an introductory knowledge of theology, catechetical theory and methodology as relates to his or her area of responsibility, and some organizational skills. One can be certified as an administrator of religious education through successful completion of the catechetical leadership

track of the diocesan Lay Ministry Formation program. At the very least, this person should have some experience as a catechist and have completed catechist certification in conjunction with the Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program. The position of administrator of religious education should be considered a temporary measure as a person continues to work toward advanced degrees, or until a qualified director or coordinator can be obtained.

Some parishes take a *team approach* to meeting their catechetical needs. This involves two or more coordinators and/or administrators of religious education. Each has the responsibility for a particular area of catechesis (e.g., adult education, catechesis for children and/or youth, or RCIA). They work closely together with each other and the pastor to see that total parish catechesis is accomplished. For example, there may be several coordinators, one for each area of catechesis. This team approach requires regular meetings of those involved for coordination and planning. Collaboration is key to the effectiveness of this model. It is critical that each of the catechetical leaders has training and competency in his or her area of responsibility, as well as a minimal knowledge of the other areas. This model may be effective in that it makes use of the talents and skills within the parish and takes into account people's time limitations. However, parishes need to be aware of potential pitfalls of this model: lack of one designated leader who calls the team together; lack of a comprehensive and cohesive approach to parish catechesis; the absence of the expertise and direction of a well-trained professional director or coordinator of religious education.

All catechetical leaders should be:

- Persons of faith and prayer
- Witnesses to the gospel
- Models of the faith
- Willing sharers of their faith
- Gifted ministers
- Willing participants in ongoing formation for this ministry

Compensation and Support

Because of their educational background, competency, and time commitment, directors and coordinators of religious education should be adequately and appropriately remunerated for their work, as well as having access to other paid benefits such as health insurance, vacation and continuing education. Many administrators of religious education often put in a considerable amount of time and should also be paid accordingly. At the very least, the administrator is to be reimbursed for all expenses and have training and continuing education paid by the parish.

A *Ministry Analysis Work Sheet* is included in Section 5 as a guide in determining the salary for a catechetical leader based on education, experience and job responsibilities. Also included are job descriptions for each of these forms of catechetical leadership. It is strongly recommended that the parish develop its own job description relative to its situation and to the experience, training, and responsibilities of the particular catechetical leader.

It is important that the parish make a commitment to the well-being of the catechetical leader. This means that the job description and expectations must

be realistic and that adequate support in terms of resources and auxiliary personnel be provided. It is recommended that duplicate parish responsibilities be avoided, such as combining the positions of director of religious education and choir director. It is nearly impossible for one person to fulfill two positions without one of them receiving inadequate attention or without causing excess stress to the individual. The director or coordinator of religious education should also have access to resources, such as a comfortable working space, secretarial help, and janitorial help, so that he or she can concentrate on providing comprehensive quality catechesis in the parish. Certain times of the year are more demanding on the catechetical leader, requiring a greater expenditure of time and energy than at others. It is reasonable and fair that, in recognition of this, there be flexibility in the work schedule.

The catechetical leader also needs to take responsibility for his or her own well-being. The person should avoid taking on extra tasks within the parish that are not directly related to the job description or that someone else could do. It is important to take time off in terms of vacation or retreat, for example. Attention to one's physical, spiritual and mental well-being are assets to the catechetical ministry.

Hiring

When seeking a director/coordinator/administrator of religious education, parishes are encouraged to communicate and work with the Diocesan Office of Religious Education. The office can assist the parish in identifying individuals for this ministry, in developing appropriate job descriptions and compensation, and in seeing to the proper formation of catechetical leaders. **The Bishop of Springfield would like all parishes (or groups of parishes) in the diocese to have an appropriately qualified and compensated catechetical leader, as outlined in this document, to oversee this very important ecclesial ministry.**

Oftentimes, the parish has individuals who have the fundamental qualities for potential catechetical leadership, but lack the training and expertise required for this ministry. The parish is urged to identify such individuals and encourage them to develop their potential. This can be a process that requires time and a willingness to invest resources into the formation of that person. One may begin as an administrator of religious education and advance to coordinator. The Office of Religious Education can provide valuable assistance in this process.

Smaller parishes that do not have the financial resources to hire a qualified catechetical leader may team up with one or more parishes to hire someone. This requires a carefully agreed upon plan and commitment for mutual cooperation and support. Yoked parishes also find it advantageous to share a catechetical leader. It is recommended that parishes work with the Office of Religious Education to facilitate this process.

Professional Interaction and Development

Once a person has been identified and/or hired for catechetical leadership, it is important that the individual meet with the diocesan religious education staff. The purpose of this is to familiarize him/her with diocesan services and policies and opportunities for formation and support, and to develop a working relationship with diocesan personnel.

The catechetical leader interacts with many groups within the parish. As a member of the parish staff, the director/coordinator of religious education attends regular staff meetings. The staff normally includes professional personnel such as priests, deacons, pastoral associates and pastoral ministers. He or she also is an ex officio member of the Parish Pastoral Council and its Education Commission. Catechetical leaders are responsible for convening boards for their area of expertise e.g., the religious education executive board or the RCIA team (See the previous section on "Education Commissions"). They also must communicate and interact with other groups such as the school, youth ministry, and Spiritual and Family Life Commissions.

Networking with other catechetical leaders provides support and a context for the sharing of ideas and resources. This can best be accomplished through membership in professional organizations, such as our diocesan Parish Religious Educators (PRE). This association links catechetical leaders with each other, with diocesan offices and the various parishes in the diocese. Its purpose is to provide a supportive community that seeks to update and inform its membership through its regularly scheduled gatherings and programs. Also, regional gatherings of coordinators provides a valuable form of networking.

It is critical that all catechetical leaders participate in ongoing professional development and formation. Programs are offered through the diocese, Catholic colleges, regional and national catechetical organizations. Periodic involvement in regional and national conferences (e.g., East Coast Conference, Institutes with the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, and the biennial New England DRE Convocation) are invaluable experiences for the catechetical leader. These programs provide professional, educational, and spiritual development. Catechetical leaders are urged to participate in such events. The parish should financially support their participation.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

Director of Religious Education

1. Initiate, organize and implement programs designed to meet the religious education needs of the total parish, e.g.:
 - a. develop educational programs for adults and children
 - b. develop sacramental programs
 - c. coordinate (or work with the Parish RCIA Team toward) the implementation of RCIA
 - d. recruit and train or provide for the training of volunteers to implement all catechetical programs
 - e. provide programs for support and spiritual growth for those involved in parish religious education
 - f. prepare schedules and communicate these schedules to appropriate individuals and groups
 - g. maintain appropriate records of programs and their participants
 - h. select appropriate educational resources
2. Maintain familiarity with educational resources such as:
 - a. programs and/or texts
 - b. audio visual materials
 - c. supplementary materials needed for effective implementation of catechesis
3. Maintain familiarity with official catechetical documents of the Church.
4. Prepare the budget for religious education.
5. Communicate and cooperate with the pastor and parish organizations which include:
 - a. meeting on a regular basis with the pastor and parish staff
 - b. attending all meetings of the religious Education Commission and/or Board
 - c. attending all meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council
 - d. convening the Religious Education Executive Board and
 - e. communicating with the parish community
6. Organize and maintain an efficient office which is accessible and responsive to the needs of parishioners.
7. Evaluate existing programs and make recommendations for revision or expansion of programs.
8. Prepare an annual report for the Parish Religious Education Board and/or Parish Pastoral Council or Education Commission.
9. Participate in ongoing professional development through reading and participation in workshops, seminars, and catechetical institutes.
10. Understand diocesan policies in order to develop parish polices which are consistent with diocesan policies.

Coordinators of Religious Education

1. Organize and implement part or all of the catechetical programs of the parish (as determined by agreement with the coordinator and the pastor or staff), e.g.:

- a. recruit and provide for the training of volunteers who assist in the program
 - b. provide regular meetings for catechists for support and formation
 - c. recommend to the parish director of religious education (or pastor) texts, programs, audio-visual materials and appropriate supplies to be used in the program
 - d. prepare schedules and communicate them to appropriate individuals and groups
 - e. maintain records of programs and participants
 - f. prepare (or collaborate in the preparation of) the catechetical budget
2. Communicate and cooperate with the pastor, the parish director of religious education and parish organizations to include:
 - a. meeting with the pastor (and director) and staff on a regular basis
 - b. participating in all meetings of Parish Religious Education Commission
 - c. convening the religious education board
 - d. participating in all Parish Pastoral Council meetings
 - e. communicating with the parish community
 3. Maintain an efficient office that is accessible and responsive to the needs of parishioners.
 4. Evaluate all programs relevant to the specific area of responsibility assumed and make recommendations for revision and/or expansion of programs.
 5. Prepare and present an annual report to the Parish Board of Religious Education and/or Parish Pastoral Council or Education Commission.
 6. Maintain familiarity with diocesan policies relevant to the specific area of responsibility assumed.
 7. Participate in ongoing formation through reading and attendance at catechetical workshops, seminars and institutes.

Administrator of Religious Education

1. Organize a particular segment of the religious education program in cooperation with the pastor (and/or the coordinator or director of religious education) to include:
 - a. scheduling catechetical sessions and communicating that schedule to appropriate individuals and groups
 - b. recruiting volunteers and seeing to their training and formation
 - c. maintaining a supply of resources for catechists
 - d. seeing that appropriate records are maintained
2. Cooperate and communicate with the pastor and appropriate groups to include:
 - a. meeting regularly with the pastor
 - b. participating in Parish Religious Education Board and/or Commission meetings
3. Participate in training and formation for catechetical ministry.

**DIRECTORS/COORDINATORS/ADMINISTRATORS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
Qualifications - Skills/ Competencies - Responsibilities**

	Director (DRE)	Coordinator (CRE)	Administrator (ARE)
Education/Experience	MA Degree in Religious Education or related field*	BA Degree in Religious Studies and Education <u>or</u> BA Degree plus LMF	LMF Catechetical Leadership certification
	1 year as a Coordinator	Catechetical Leadership	1 year as a parish
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		certification 3 years as a parish catechist	catechist
Skills/Competencies	Management/ Leadership Organization Goal setting Delegation, evaluation, communication Public relations Theological reflection Teaching	Leadership Organization Goal setting Delegation, evaluation, communication Theological reflection Teaching	Leadership Organization Spiritual reflection Teaching
Responsibilities:			
Ministerial	Sharing faith and knowledge with individuals & groups Listening & responding pastorally	Sharing faith and knowledge with individuals & groups Listening & responding pastorally	Sharing faith with individuals & groups Listening in time of need
Advocacy	For effective total parish catechesis	For effective total parish catechesis	For specific programs**
Theological	Serve as resource for catechists and individuals/groups Evaluate & choose resources Train catechists	Serve as a resource for catechists Evaluate and choose resources Oversee training of catechists	Work with pastor to choose resources Advise catechists of training opportunities
Administrative	Develop all catechetical programs & calendars Oversee keeping of records Recruit catechists Budget all programs	Develop some or all catechetical programs & calendars Keep records for these programs Recruit catechists Budget programs	Organize specific programs.** See to keeping records for and scheduling of specific programs Recruit catechists

* "related field" denotes religious studies, theology, or pastoral ministry

** "specific programs" denotes those for which the catechetical leader is responsible

SAMPLE CATECHIST APPLICATION FORM

Name _____

—

Address _____

—

Phone:

(Day) _____ (Evening) _____

Other activities in which you are currently involved (work/volunteer)

Previous catechetical experience (grade/age level and parish)

Catechetical training or workshops attended

Special interests/skills

Availability:	Days	Morning	Afternoon	Evening

Pastors/Administrators

“Experience bears out that the quality of catechesis in a community depends very largely on the presence and activity of the priest.” (GDC 225). It is the pastor who bears the responsibility for seeing that comprehensive catechesis is carried

out for adults, youth and children. Successful catechesis in a parish requires much time, effort, coordination and expertise. Therefore, the pastor shares this responsibility with others: catechetical leaders, catechists, and education commissions and boards.

“The function proper to the presbyterate in the catechetical task arises from the sacrament of Holy Orders. ... The ministry of the priest is a service which forms the Christian community and coordinates and strengthens other charisms and services. They work to see that the faithful are properly formed and reach true Christian maturity. Priests foster the vocation and work of catechists and assist them in carrying out a function which springs from Baptism and is exercised in virtue of a mission entrusted to them by the Church.” (GDC 224)

The active involvement of priests benefits themselves as well as the community. It helps them to establish relationships with the persons involved. These relationships contribute to building community. They enable priests to better identify their parish’s catechetical needs, as well as their parishioners’ gifts and talents. This interactive contact with the priest helps foster vocations to Christian ministry.

While pastors exercise their role as educators in the faith most explicitly through the homily, they are to see that the Christian faithful are given catechetical formation. They are also to move beyond the circle of active parishioners, making every effort with the help of the Christian faithful to bring the gospel message to those who no longer practice their faith or who do not profess the faith (See Can. 528.1).

The role of the pastor in the catechetical endeavor then, is primarily that of ensuring that the catechetical needs of the entire Christian community are met, including the evangelization of those who are seeking entrance into the community. He does this by calling forth the gifts and talents of those in the community, identifying catechists and leaders, and empowering them to carry out the catechetical plans and programs of the parish with him. The immensity of the task of catechesis is such that the pastor cannot do it alone.

It is essential to effective catechesis that the pastor hire a qualified and competent catechetical leader to help him in his role as educator in the faith. (See the previous section on “Catechetical Leaders”.) It is important that he

meet regularly with the catechetical leader for planning, coordinating and addressing any issues or questions that arise. This leader also participates in staff meetings along with other professional members of the pastoral staff.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (225) identifies the catechetical tasks of the parish priest as follows:

- To establish a sense of *common responsibility* for catechesis in the Christian community and a recognition of and appreciation for catechists and their mission;

- To care for the *basic orientation of catechesis* and its planning by giving emphasis to active participation of catechists and by insisting that catechesis be well structured and oriented;
- To promote and to discern *vocations* to the service of catechesis and to give great attention to the formation of catechists;
- To integrate catechetical activity into the program of *community evangelization*, and foster the link between catechesis, sacraments and the liturgy;
- To ensure that the catechesis of the community is in concert with the *diocesan pastoral program* of religious education.

The Office of Religious Education is available to assist pastors in carrying out their catechetical responsibilities.

Diocese

“In the Diocese catechesis is a unique service performed jointly by priests, deacons, religious and laity, in communion with the Bishop”.
(GDC 219)

“The diocesan catechetical office is the means which the Bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all the catechetical activities of the diocese”.
(GDC 265)

The Bishop

It is the Bishop who bears primary responsibility for catechesis within the diocese. He carries out this responsibility through his preaching, by putting forth a vision of catechesis, and by setting catechetical standards. It is he who provides the “overall direction of catechesis in the particular Church” (GDC 223). He delegates the day-to-day practical concern of catechesis to the Office of Religious Education. The policies, programs, and services of that office are carried out under the auspices of the Bishop. At both the diocesan and the parish level, all those who serve in catechetical ministry do so in collaboration with the Bishop.

The Office of Religious Education

The Office of Religious Education of the Diocese of Springfield (ORE) is missioned for advocacy, service and formation for quality catechesis for all ages.

As an *advocate*, it acts as the Bishop’s delegate in making catechesis a priority and putting forth a diocesan vision of catechesis that is reflected in its policies and guidelines. It acts as an advocate for pastors and parish leaders in their roles of implementing catechesis in the parish. The ORE advocates that quality catechesis is made available to adults, youth, and children of the parish, as well as those in the wider communities who are seeking a renewed or new relationship with God and the Church. The ORE is a place where all involved can bring their catechetical concerns.

In its role of *service*, the ORE provides consultation for parish leadership and other agencies in planning and implementing catechetical programs for adults, youth and children. Two resource libraries are available, one in Springfield and one in Pittsfield. For catechetical leaders and catechists these libraries have samples of catechetical resources, reference materials, and audiovisual materials for rental. General reading materials about our Catholic faith and spirituality are available for borrowing by interested persons.

A major component of the service of the ORE is *formation* for catechetical ministries. Training and enrichment programs are provided for catechists and

catechetical leaders in all areas of catechesis: adult education and RCIA, and catechesis for children and youth. A certification program for catechists and catechetical leaders is provided in conjunction with the Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program.

A brochure that further describes these services and formation programs is provided with this handbook and is available from the Office of Religious Education.

The Office of Religious Education relates to other agencies and groups. It works collaboratively with other diocesan offices, such as the Offices of Pastoral Ministry, Youth Ministry, Worship, and Catholic Schools. The staff attends to its own continuing education and enrichment, as well as its relationship to the wider Church. This relationship to the wider Church is attained through involvement in regional and national organizations e.g., the New England Conference of Diocesan

Directors of Religious Education, the National Conference of Catechetical Leaders, and the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

Parish catechesis is carried out under the auspices of the Bishop and the ORE, providing catechesis according to the diocesan vision, policies and guidelines. The parish benefits by taking advantage of the catechetical services provided by the diocese. Catechetical leadership in the parish works closely with the ORE in planning and implementing its catechetical programs.

C. Financial Commitment

The pursuit of excellence in catechesis is reflected in a financial commitment that recognizes the parish catechetical endeavor as a priority. The parish makes a serious effort to identify the broad spectrum of catechetical needs and develops an adequate budget to meet those needs. While some parishes have more resources available to them than others, all parishes have a responsibility to assure that specific funds are made available for catechesis, even as they assure funding for other necessary or required expenses.

Importance of Financial Commitment to Total Catechesis

The Parish Finance Council plays an important role in seeing that appropriate funding is developed and provided. “The purpose of the Finance Council is to aid the Pastor in the administration of parish goods in order to carry out the mission of the parish“ (*Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council Guidelines*, p. 18). The primacy of catechesis in the mission of the Church is reflected in Christ’s command to “go into the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15; also, see Mt. 28:19). Therefore, the Finance Council gives high priority to catechesis in its overall planning.

A specific budget for catechesis makes a strong statement to the entire parish community about the value of catechesis. It is a concrete expression of the parish’s commitment to form adults and children in the faith. It is a tool for planning that assists parish leadership in implementing comprehensive catechesis for each year. A catechetical budget gives leaders and catechists clear parameters for the available financial resources and encourages them to plan and prioritize spending.

Preparing a catechetical budget is a process that involves collaboration of several individuals and groups: the pastor, the catechetical leader(s), the Education Commission and its subgroups, and the Parish Finance Council. The process involves identifying catechetical needs, establishing priorities, identifying sources of income, and clarifying the place of catechesis in the overall parish budget.

Sample Budget

Items to be considered in a parish catechetical budget include but are not limited to:

- Catechist training
- Adult education programs
- RCIA catechesis
- Teaching materials such as texts and their supplements
- Audio-visual materials
- Speakers

- Library acquisitions and/or pamphlet rack materials
- Subscriptions to professional journals

- Catechist appreciation and support
- Supplementary programs such as retreats, Vacation Bible School, etc.
- Hospitality (refreshments, etc.)
- Supplemental catechetical supplies
- Office supplies, postage, etc.

A major component of a catechetical budget is salaries and benefits for the catechetical leader(s) and staff. (See “Catechetical Leaders” in Section 2 and the “Ministry Analysis Worksheet” in Section 5.) These are being listed separately since most parishes put salaries into a separate category. Benefits would include:

- Health insurance
- Pension
- Continuing education and formational experiences for the catechetical leader(s)
- Conference expenses for the catechetical leader(s)
- Mileage expense for meetings and conferences
- Dues for professional memberships

Each parish is unique. There is no one budget that fits all. It is important that the catechetical leaders and Finance Council work closely in designing a budget that fits into the budget structure of the entire parish.

D. Creative Possibilities

It is often advantageous for parishes to combine resources in order to provide a better catechetical program. This can be accomplished through implementing specific aspects of catechesis on a regional basis or by parish clustering that includes most or all of the catechetical programs. Some factors to determine the suitability of such combined programs would include:

- Geographical proximity and a positive relationship
- Small parishes that have limited resources
- Similar ethnic demographics

The primary consideration is to provide the most effective catechesis that maintains the basic elements of word, worship, service and community. Larger is not necessarily better. Class size, especially for children and youth, should include no more than 12 participants. It is important that those involved in combined programs do not lose a sense of community and parish identity. While financial considerations are an important factor, they are not the highest measure of whether such combinations will be successful. It is also important that all involved parishes make a clear commitment in terms of sharing resources and planning.

Whether catechesis is combined through regional programming or parish clustering, certain principles apply:

- Every effort must be made to maintain parish identity and a sense of community.
- The best setting for liturgical celebrations is the home parish.
- All involved parishes contribute their resources: personnel, finances and facilities.
- Planning needs to take place collaboratively. It may be helpful to develop a combined religious education board.
- All the principles outlined in this handbook for effective catechesis for adults, youth and children are to be followed.

Parish Clustering

In this model, two or more parishes combine their resources to hire a qualified director of religious education who oversees some or all of the combined programs listed above. All parishes involved benefit from the experience and expertise of a professional director that the individual parishes may not otherwise be able to afford. Well organized and quality catechesis is made possible. The model requires both collaboration and commitment on the part of all involved parishes. Parish resources of personnel, finances and facilities are shared.

This model has many variations. Consideration needs to be given to the needs of the region and the goals of the diocese. Planning for parish clustering takes place in consultation with the staffs of the involved parishes and the Diocesan

Office of Religious Education. Most, but not necessarily all, programs are combined. There may be coordinators or administrators of religious education who work with the director to take care of on-site details or to implement a specific area of catechesis, such as adult education or RCIA catechesis.

The section of the handbook on Catechetical Leaders further explains the function of directors, coordinators and administrators of religious education.

Regional Programs

Regional programs are those in which one or more catechetical programs are shared by one or more parishes. Some possible combinations are:

- **Adult education programming.** - This can be a very beneficial inter-parochial activity, whether through lecture series, small group experiences or parish missions. It is especially helpful when one parish does not have the financial resources to pay speakers or the facilities to host programs.
- **Adult sacramental preparation.** - Collaborating with local parishes to prepare adults for Confirmation is especially beneficial when there are small numbers in each parish.
- **RCIA catechesis.** - While some RCIA formation may take place in a combined setting, *it is essential that all rites, including the weekly dismissal rite and breaking open the Word, be done in the parish in which the catechumen or candidate will be initiated.* (See the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the RCIA in the Diocese of Springfield, 92-96* for further suggestions.)
- **Ecumenical and interfaith programs for adults.** - Programs focused on topics such as social justice, mutual understanding and dialogue, and local issues are most appropriate. It is essential that these take place under sound leadership with ecumenical sensitivity.
- **Catechist training and updating.** - These especially lend themselves to regional gatherings. They provide opportunities for catechists to interact with each other and share ideas.
- **School age catechesis.** - Either some or all aspects are combined. For sacramental preparation, the catechesis and parent involvement may happen jointly, but the liturgical celebrations should take place in the child's home parish.
- **Supplementary programs such as retreats and Vacation Bible School.**

SECTION 3

GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS IN THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD

Guide to Abbreviations

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Guide to Abbreviations

Can *Code of Cannon Law*, 1983

Gd. Refers to other sections of these Guidelines

GI General Introduction to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 1988

NS National Statutes for the Catechumenate, 1988

R *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 1988

Introduction

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) is the church's rite for initiating adults into the mission of Jesus Christ through communion with the Roman Catholic Church. It is celebrated in a series of periods (formation) and steps (liturgies) that unfold gradually over time. **“From September 1, 1988 the use of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is mandatory in the dioceses of the United States.”** (From the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, dated March 18, 1988, promulgating the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.)

The primary concern of the RCIA is the conversion of an individual to God within a community context. Such conversion is the work of God in which we, the church, participate.

In response to the provision in the RCIA for bishops "to lay down norms according to local needs" (R 34), the Diocesan RCIA Steering Committee presents these *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults in the Diocese of Springfield*.

These guidelines, containing commentary and recommendations, are designed to help in implementing and interpreting the catechumenate in the Springfield Diocese. They include adaptations for children of catechetical age. The guidelines and recommendations that follow are not intended to be a presentation or explanation of the RCIA. **There can be no substitute for reading the official document, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, promulgated by National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States in 1988.**

A. Persons Involved in the Process

Team Formation

1. Initiation into full membership in the church is the responsibility of all the baptized (R 9; GI 7). Individual Catholics, the local parish and the diocese share the support and formation of catechumens and candidates. Although the pastor is charged with implementing and overseeing the RCIA, it is strongly recommended that parishes organize an RCIA team.

2. Team members should be trained in their respective areas of involvement through study of the Rite, reading commentaries on the RCIA, and participating in diocesan and regional workshops and institutes. It is highly encouraged that at least some team members, especially the coordinator and pastoral leadership, participate in a Beginnings Institute.¹ Catechists are expected to participate in the diocesan RCIA Catechist Training Workshops or their equivalent. Shared prayer and scripture reflection are a necessary element in the formation of team members so that they can authentically model and invite catechumens and candidates into these activities. Ideally, members of the team are comfortable with faith sharing and have good listening and group dynamics skills.

3. The leadership and composition of the team will necessarily vary from parish to parish. With that in mind, the following roles can be identified as vital to the RCIA:

- The **pastor or a parochial vicar** who serves as spiritual guide and resource and presides over the major rites;
- A **director or coordinator** who is actively involved in organizing the process and coordinating the work of various team members;
- **Catechists** who are formally trained in catechetics, especially adult learning models and the lectionary.

In addition, it is helpful to have on the team:

- A **liturgy coordinator** who prepares the various liturgies of the *Rite* in conjunction with the celebrant and parish musicians;
- A **spiritual director** who acts as a spiritual guide and resource to the catechumens and candidates as well as the team;
- A **coordinator of sponsors** who acts as a liaison between the team and the sponsors;

- **Hospitality people** who assist in preparing a welcoming environment for all activities;

¹ Beginnings Institutes held in conjunction with the North American Forum on the Catechumenate offer pastoral training in Christian Initiation. There is usually one held annually in New England as well as several others around the country. Contact the Diocesan Consultant for RCIA for further information.

- **A coordinator of catechumenate for children** who acts as liaison to the larger team;
- **Other team members** who assist and support in the overall implementation of the *Rite*.

The make up of the team varies according to parish circumstances. The ideal is that the coordinator's sole responsibility is Christian initiation as opposed to another ministry for the DRE or pastoral minister. It may be expedient to divide the responsibilities between coordinators, particularly in parishes where volunteers carry out this ministry. In terms of team members, it is ideal that each of the above team tasks is handled by one person. However, some roles may be combined and fulfilled by one person according to the parish's available talents and the needs of the parish catechumenate. See Appendix A for job descriptions for Christian initiation ministers.

4. Initially, as the team first organizes itself, it needs to set goals and establish communication with the parish staff, the Parish Pastoral Council and the entire parish community. To get started, a team needs to attend to:

- The training and formation of its members;
- Organizing itself according to tasks and responsibilities;
- Educating and informing the parish community about the *Rite*;
- Establishing a calendar of its own activities as well as a time line for beginning the pre-catechumenate and potential dates for celebrating the rite of acceptance and/or welcome.

5. The ongoing tasks of the team include:

- Establishing an atmosphere of hospitality and openness in the parish to provide a basis for evangelization;
- Ongoing formation of the team members;
- Evaluation of the entire parish RCIA process;
- Discernment with and for those who approach the various steps of the *Rite*.

As the team grows and progresses with its implementation of the *Rite*, the roles and responsibilities of its members may change and expand. Periodic discernment of the gifts and level of commitment of the members needs to take place. All of the above needs to be carried out in a spirit of prayer and open communication with each other, the candidates and the parish staff.

Sponsors and Godparents

6. The introduction to the *Rite* (R 10, 11) makes a distinction between the sponsor and the godparent. The sponsor accompanies the candidate through the rite of acceptance and the catechumenate period. The godparent

accompanies the catechumens through the rite of election, the periods of purification and enlightenment, the celebration of initiation and the period of mystagogy. Actually, it works best when one person serves both roles. In the case of candidates for full communion, the sponsor serves through the entire process, since there is no need for a godparent.

7. The role of the sponsor is an active one that includes:

- Presenting the inquirer to the parish community at the rite of acceptance/welcome;
- Participating with the catechumen/candidate at all the liturgical rites of the catechumenate;
- Offering support and encouragement for the candidate;
- Witnessing to the candidate's moral character, faith, and intention;
- Providing a link to the parish community;
- Assisting in the discernment process of the candidate.

In order to fulfill these roles adequately it is presumed that the sponsor will regularly participate in catechetical sessions with the candidate/catechumen.

8. The role of the godparent which begins with the rite of election and continues throughout the candidate's baptismal life is clearly outlined in the *Rite* (11). As with the sponsor it includes active involvement with the elect, while offering support and encouragement.

9. Sponsors may be chosen by the parish RCIA team and/or the candidate, although both the team and the candidate need to be involved in this choice. Godparents are chosen by the catechumen and approved by the pastor. Since the role of the godparent is one defined by canon law, he or she must be fully initiated in the Roman Catholic Church, not a parent of the candidate, and be living a life consistent with the faith and responsibility of a godparent (Gl 10.2). Pastoral needs suggest that the same standards would apply to sponsors. Since both the sponsor and the godparent act as witnesses to the Christian faith, this example should be evident in a life of prayer, participation in the liturgical life of the parish, and a life of gospel values.

10. There are a variety of ways for choosing sponsors. Sometimes the sponsor may be a friend of the candidate, possibly even the one who initially brought him/her to the faith. Or, the candidate may know someone in the parish and would like to invite that person to act as his/her sponsor. On the other hand, the parish may have a pool of sponsors from which an appropriate one would be chosen for each individual. In any event the sponsor must be a member of the parish and know the candidate sufficiently to present him/her to the community at the rite of acceptance. Therefore, it is recommended that potential sponsors participate to some extent in the inquiry period. Both the sponsor and the candidate should be agreeable to the choice which is made with the approval of

the RCIA coordinator, sponsor coordinator, or team, as well as the pastor. Pastoral experience has shown that it may not be in the best interest of the candidate to choose a spouse or fiancé(e) as the sponsor.

11. Both sponsors and godparents must understand their role, have a basic understanding of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and be willing to make the commitment to serve in this role. Appropriate training should take place that includes methods of sharing faith and discernment. The sponsors and godparents also need to be familiar with the rites in which they will have a part. It is they who rehearse with the presider, not the candidates, so that they can lead the candidates through the liturgy. This allows the candidates to fully experience the liturgies without concern for details, such as, where to sit, when to stand, what to do.

Identification of Individual Needs of Catechumens and Candidates

12. Although the RCIA is designed specifically for unbaptized adults, the reality is that adults with particular spiritual needs and/or at various stages of the initiation process, as well as children, are approaching the Church seeking membership or spiritual nourishment and support. In order to respect each person's unique background and differing needs, special provisions have been included in the *Rite*.

13. Following is a list of the various categories of people who may approach the Church and the section of the *Rite* that would apply to them:

- a. **Unbaptized adults**, i.e., not baptized in either a Catholic or Protestant Church. See *Rite*, Part I.
- b. **Adults baptized in another Christian denomination.**²
See *Rite*, Part II, Nos. 4 and 5.
- c. **Adults baptized in the Catholic Church who were never catechized**, i.e., who never received instruction or upbringing in the Catholic tradition, and never received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. See *Rite* Part II Nos. 4 and 5.
- d. **Unbaptized children age 7 or older.**³ See *Rite*, Part II, No. 1.
- e. **Children age 7 or older baptized in another Christian denomination.**
See NS 19.
- f. **Unbaptized adults in exceptional circumstances**, e.g. sickness, old

² The baptisms of the mainline Protestant churches are accepted as valid. Please contact the Chancellor's Office if there is any doubt.

³ Canon 97.2: "Before the completion of the seventh year a minor is called an infant and is held to be incompetent. With the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason."

age, change of residence, long absence for travel. See *Rite*, Part II, No.2.

g. Persons in danger of death. See *Rite*, Part II, No. 3.

14. While the individuals described above may have some similar needs and may be able to take part in some parts of the RCIA together, it is important to respect the differences among them. It is especially important to acknowledge and respect the valid Baptism of those seeking to join the Roman Catholic Church from other Christian churches. Rites designed for the unbaptized catechumen cannot be celebrated with a baptized candidate without adaptation as provided in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Appendix I.

15. Following is a list of various circumstances and needs which the RCIA was not designed to address. A pastoral process should be established in the parish to meet these needs. Please contact the Diocesan Consultant for Adult Education and RCIA for suggestions, guidance and assistance.

- a. Children age 7 and older baptized in the Catholic Church** who are uncatechized and never received the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. The liturgical rites of the RCIA are not designed for children in this category.
- b. Catechized Catholics** who wish to complete their initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- c. Alienated but fully initiated adult Catholics** (received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) who wish to return to the Church.
- d. Fully initiated adult Catholics who seek updating or spiritual support.**

16. We need to recognize individual differences in the backgrounds and experiences of the candidates. The pastor or his delegate from the parish RCIA team needs to speak with each person seeking membership in the Church to assess his or her religious background and understanding, familiarity with the Catholic tradition, and family situation. With a spirit of

welcome and hospitality, this initial assessment should be done very early in the precatechumenate. A sample questionnaire is provided in Appendix B of this section to guide this initial meeting.

17. Christian initiation impacts an entire family system. RCIA team members must be sensitive to family situations. If family members of candidates or catechumens are not Catholic and/or are not supportive of the individual's decision to seek initiation into the Catholic faith, efforts should be made to allay their fears. Candidates and catechumens from such families need particular support and attention.

B. Stages and Rites

Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate

18. Evangelization is the responsibility of all the baptized. It is a parish's response to the mission of the church and demonstrates an ongoing effort to invite others to join the journey in an atmosphere of hospitality and openness. The goal of the pre-catechumenate is to help inquirers to realize an initial awareness of God's saving presence in their lives and their readiness to follow Jesus Christ.

19. In this stage, the catechist helps the inquirers make connections between their life stories and the sacred scriptures. Thus the role of the catechist is to formulate questions and to develop a process that leads the inquirers to a deeper awareness of God's presence in their lives. (See Appendix C, "Model Catechetical Session.")

20. This period could last anywhere from a few weeks to a few years depending on the background and readiness of each individual. For example, individuals

baptized and active in another Christian denomination may need only a few weeks, while those from non-churched or non-Christian backgrounds may need an extensive precatechumenate. **Pastoral experience has shown that this period is critical in the formation of these individuals and must not be rushed.**

21. Early in the precatechumenate it is important to conduct a personal interview with each candidate to determine one's sacramental status, any previous church affiliation, and whether there are any marriage issues to be resolved. (See Appendix B, "Inquiry Interview.")

22. If there are any irregular marriage situations, they should be addressed promptly with pastoral sensitivity. Where there is a need for an annulment, begin the annulment process as soon as possible. Although one may enter into the catechumenate period while an annulment is pending, that person may not celebrate the rite of election or the Sacraments of Initiation until the annulment is granted. If a marriage needs to be convalidated (properly witnessed and accepted by the church), that should take place during the catechumenate period before the rite of election. It is important that the RCIA coordinator work with the parish priest and, if necessary, with the Diocesan Tribunal when there are marriage issues to be resolved.

23. Before the rite of acceptance or welcome is celebrated, sufficient time should be set aside for the inquirers to enter into a process of discernment with the catechumenate team and sponsors. Part of this discernment process should include a personal interview with each individual with the pastor or

coordinator with regard to his or her readiness to move to the next stage. See *Rite* (42) for the prerequisite for celebrating the rite of acceptance or welcome.

STEP ONE: Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens

24. This is the first of the rites celebrated publicly marking the completion of the precatechumenate stage. As the *Rite* suggests, this celebration may take place on two or three dates during the year at a weekend liturgy. In choosing these dates, the following should be considered:

- The readiness of the candidates (See Gd. 23.)
- Sunday readings appropriate for the rite
- The liturgical season (avoid the seasons of Advent and Lent)

25. This celebration needs to be well prepared. The catechumens must understand the commitment they are making. The congregation needs to be informed ahead of time of its role, particularly the first time it is celebrated. The rite should be rehearsed with the presider, the sponsors (but not with the potential catechumens or candidates), the music minister and any other ministers who will be involved. Adaptations are encouraged where the *Rite* allows, such as the exhortations of the presider, the general intercessions and allowing for

responses of the candidates in their own words. Consideration must be made to maintain the integrity of the rite and the symbols: e.g., the movement, the full signing of all the senses and the presentation of the Word.

26. After the celebration of the rite of acceptance, the names of the catechumens are to be inscribed in the register of catechumens (R 46).

27. When there are candidates for full communion participating, a combined rite should be used (R 505-529).

28. If there are only candidates for full communion, the rite of welcoming the candidates is used (R 411-433).

Period of the Catechumenate

29. The period of the catechumenate is a prolonged period of formation in Christian life, to last a minimum of one full year and may extend for two or three years (NS 6). The duration of this period depends on the progress of the individual and may vary for each catechumen. This period may be abbreviated for candidates for full communion who are at least partially

catechized and have participated fully in the life of their church, whether Catholic or another Christian tradition.

30. This formation process is achieved through:

- Catechesis which is gradual, suitable and accommodated to the liturgical year
- Growth in a sense of Christian community through the support and witness of the entire community
- Celebration of appropriate liturgical rites
- Participation in the apostolic mission of the church e.g., by acts of charity and Christian witness

31. The primary text is the lectionary. Catechesis during this period follows the order and structure of the liturgical year. Other resources are used to expand on the issues and doctrine that arise out of the scriptures and the liturgical year. (See Appendix C, "Model Catechetical Session".)

32. Catechumens are expected to participate together in the Sunday Liturgy of the Word, after which they are to be dismissed ritually to break open the Word with a catechist. The rite of dismissal at Sunday Mass is a powerful experience for the catechumens and the community. It calls for those who remain to consider the meaning of the Eucharist in their lives and to give witness to their faith. Candidates for full communion are also encouraged to participate in the dismissal rite since they cannot come to the table; and this is a prime catechetical moment. (See Part II, Sections 4 and 5 of the *Rite*.)

33. The anointing of catechumens should take place at least once during this period and may be repeated as needed for God's help and strength. Blessings and minor exorcisms are also to be celebrated periodically, as will benefit the catechumens. It is desirable that these be celebrated within the context of a celebration of the Word or catechetical session.

Catechists who have been trained through a "Beginnings and Beyond Institute" or received RCIA Catechist Certification through the Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Program may preside at the blessings and minor exorcisms.

34. When the catechumenate is lengthy, the presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer may take place during this period. These are normally celebrated during the period of purification and enlightenment.

35. Before the rite of election is celebrated, a discernment process should take place similar to that before the rite of acceptance (Gd. 23). The catechumens are expected to have undergone a conversion in mind and in action and to have developed a spirit of faith and charity (R 120).

STEP TWO: Rite of Election

36. The rite of election celebrates the Church's recognition of the readiness of the catechumens to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation. "This step is called the enrollment of names because, as a pledge of fidelity, the candidates inscribe their name in the book that lists those who have been chosen for initiation" (R 119).

37. The rite of election is normally celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent for those who will be received into the Church during the Easter solemnities. This rite marks the beginning of the final and more intense preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation.

38. The Diocese of Springfield celebrates one combined rite of election of catechumens and of the call to continuing conversion of candidates who are preparing for Confirmation and/or Eucharist or reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church (R 547-561). All adult catechumens are expected to participate in this diocesan celebration with their godparents. All candidates for full communion are also strongly encouraged to participate in this rite along with their sponsors. Children in the catechumenate process and their godparents are encouraged to participate as well.

39. This solemn rite is the focal point of the Church's concern for the catechumens. **It is the Bishop who presides at the rite of election, normally held at the Diocesan Cathedral.** Only with serious exception and with permission of the bishop is this rite to be celebrated in the parish.

40. At the parish level, a rite of sending should be celebrated prior to the rite of election (preferably on that Sunday, but if pastoral need requires, it may be celebrated the Sunday before). This rite emphasizes the support of the local

community before going forth to the larger diocesan community. Refer to the *Rite* for an adapted rite for candidates for full communion (R 434-443), and also for a combined rite for catechumens and candidates for full communion (R 536-545).

41. In the Diocese of Springfield, the catechumens sign the book of the elect at the diocesan celebration. Therefore, they do not sign a book in the parish. In recognition of their Baptism, candidates for full communion do not sign the book of the elect.

Period of Purification and Enlightenment

42. "The period of purification and enlightenment is a time of intense spiritual preparation that occurs during Lent' (R 138-139). The focus of this

period in the RCIA is twofold: the proximate preparation of the elect for the Easter sacraments through prayer and penance, and the challenge to the local community to enter more deeply the cycle of the paschal event through the witness of the elect and their conversion journey. During this period there are certain rites that help bring about this purification and enlightenment: scrutinies, presentations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer, as well as the preparation rites for initiation."⁴

43. An integral aspect of this stage is the celebration of the scrutinies. It is required that all three be celebrated, one each on the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent. When the elect are present, the Cycle A readings are used throughout the Easter Season, since the prayers and catechesis are directly linked to these readings. To avoid confusion for the congregation, most missalettes now include or at least refer to the Cycle A readings during the weeks that the scrutinies are celebrated. Permission from the bishop is required to dispense with any of the scrutinies, and only for very serious reasons. (See Appendix C, "Model Catechetical Session on the Scrutinies".)

44. The scrutinies are not celebrated with the candidates for full communion. Rather, they participate with the rest of the baptized in praying for the elect. An optional penitential rite may be celebrated for the candidates for full communion on the Second Sunday of Lent (R 459-471).

45. The presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are to be celebrated at a liturgy with at least some of the community present. These presentations may have been anticipated during the catechumenate (Gd. 34).

46. Parishes are strongly encouraged to celebrate the preparation rites on Holy Saturday. It is suggested that these rites be celebrated in connection with Morning Prayer, a growing practice in many parishes.

⁴ Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA: Transforming the Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989) p.108.

STEP THREE: Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

47. This is the liturgical rite by which the elect complete their initiation through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. It takes place during the parish celebration of the Easter Vigil.

48. The priest who confers Baptism upon an individual is authorized to confirm that individual in the absence of the Bishop (NS 12; Can 885.2).

Period of Mystagogy

49. "Sacramental initiation does not end at the Easter sacraments. The RCIA provides for the final period, the period of postbaptismal catechesis or

mystagogy (that is, reflection on the mysteries). The neophytes, along with the community, reflect together on the celebration of the Easter mysteries - the paschal event - and begin the process of making it a full and active part of their lives. The neophytes continue to gather weekly, supported by the community and their godparents, until Pentecost."⁵

50. The neophytes (the newly initiated) continue to participate together with their godparents in Sunday Masses throughout the Easter Season. The Cycle A Readings are recommended for the Masses with neophytes.

51. Catechesis continues to focus on the Liturgy of the Word, as well as reflection on how the neophytes will participate in the life and mission of the Church. The neophytes need to discern their own particular gifts and how they will use their gifts to serve as disciples in the local and larger community. However, it is not recommended that the neophytes become involved in catechetical or liturgical ministries during the first year. Rather, they are encouraged to participate in works of charity, as reflected in the corporal works of mercy.⁶ (See Appendix C, "Model Catechetical Session".)

52. The *National Statutes* call for the period of mystagogy to continue until the first anniversary of the neophytes' initiation (NS 24). Monthly meetings for support, catechesis and social activities are recommended. In addition to gathering together as a group, the neophytes need to be integrated into catechetical, social and outreach activities of the parish.

53. Suggestions for Neophyte Gatherings and Activities

- Gather them for catechesis on Holy Days of Obligation, as well as other days in the Sanctoral Cycle e.g., Feast of the Assumption, All

⁵ Morris, p. 134.

⁶ Mt 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

Saints/All Souls Day, Feast of Peter and Paul the Apostles (June 29), Vincent de Paul (Sept. 27).

- Invite neophytes to witness to their experience at Sunday Mass or other parish events.
- Invite them to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at an Advent Penance Service.
- Extend a personal invitation to participate in parish adult education programs, social events, and opportunities for spiritual development.

- Extend a personal invitation to join parish societies and organizations.
- Connect them with people doing outreach ministries, such as, prison ministry, visiting the sick, working in the soup kitchens.
- The sponsors and/or godparents should keep in touch with them on a regular basis throughout this period.

C. Adaptations

54. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is to be followed for all who seek to join the Catholic Church. However, certain adaptations are made for children of catechetical age and adults who are already baptized Catholic but never completed their initiation, and for adults and children validly baptized in another Christian tradition.

Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age (R 252-330)

55. Unbaptized children who have attained the age of reason [seven years (Can 97)] and children baptized in another Christian tradition should be led through all the stages and rites of Christian initiation leading to their celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Gd. 13, d and e) and/or reception into full communion with the Catholic Church.

56. The children seeking initiation may come through the urging of their families or of their own volition. Children under the age of fourteen must have parental consent to enter this process. Parents/Guardians of children between the ages of 14 and 18 must be informed of their children's intentions. Great sensitivity must be used when dealing with the families of children who are journeying in the faith and they must be urged to be involved with the process as much as possible. Here are some suggestions for parent/guardian involvement:

- Participation in parent/guardian meetings recommended four times a year in preparation for the rites as children move from one stage to the next
- Regular participation at weekly liturgies and at the RCIA celebrations
- Take-home materials for parents to work with their children

57. Parents/Guardians, godparents, sponsors, catechists and the entire parish community should support children in the RCIA process. Peer companions from the parish can and should be encouraged to join the process as a support to the participants.

58. Frequently, unbaptized children or those who were baptized in another Christian tradition surface in the parish religious education program or the Catholic school. Either they themselves or their parents/guardians request initiation into the Catholic Church. Their preparation for initiation should take place in a catechumenate process apart from the religious education grade level program or the Catholic school. It may be appropriate to remove them from the parish grade level program, but not from the Catholic school religion

classes, while in the preparation process. However, it is the parish, not the school, which bears the responsibility of preparing for initiation sacraments.

Some of their peers from the parish or school should participate with them in a supportive role. After their initiation, they are to be integrated into the parish religious education program or continue in the Catholic school religion program. Mystagogical catechesis continues in this setting.

59. "The Christian Initiation of children requires both a conversion that is personal and somewhat developed in proportion to their age and the assistance of the education they need" (R 253). According to their age children should be able to demonstrate a relationship with Jesus as the heart of the Christian experience. The children should also be able to demonstrate a personal prayer life, an acceptance of the Christian moral life and a relationship with the community.

60. The catechesis and the liturgical aspects of the process for children need to be adapted according to their age and needs. Children benefit from experiencing all of the rites including the rite of acceptance/welcome, the rite of election, the scrutinies, the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and any mystagogical celebrations. Although the *Rite* suggests that only one scrutiny must be celebrated and an adaptation is provided, (R 294, 297), it is recommended that children participate in the adult celebration of all three scrutinies. It is important that appropriate catechesis precede and follow the scrutinies. When the adult rite is used, the language should be adapted accordingly. Initiation should take place at the Easter Vigil.

61. The length of preparation for children will depend on the individual. While the catechumenate should never be rushed, neither should it be unduly lengthened when dealing with children.

Preparation of Uncatechized Adults for Confirmation and Eucharist

(R 400-472; NS 25-29)

62. The status of baptized but uncatechized Catholic adults differs from that of catechumens since by Baptism they are already members of the Church. Although their catechesis may be shared with catechumens to some extent, their Baptism must be constantly recognized and affirmed. Their special status should always be differentiated from the catechumens, particularly when celebrating the rites. (See R, Part II, Section 4 "Optional Rites for Baptized Uncatechized Adults" 411-472; Appendix I: "Additional Combined Rites".)

63. Those who have had any catechesis or participation in the Church since their First Eucharist, although they may have been away from the Church

for some time, are considered candidates for Confirmation. The adaptation found in Part II, Section 4 of the *Rite* is not intended for them. **Although adult Confirmation candidates do need a preparation period, there should be a separate program for this.** (See Diocesan Handbook Section 1E "Immediate Sacrament Preparation: Adult Confirmation"). This adaptation is intended for baptized, uncatechized adults preparing to complete their initiation through the

sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Some people may have received Eucharist, but have not had any further catechesis or connection with the Church. This adaptation may also extend to these people, being careful to adapt the rites further to reflect their status as people who have already been in communion with the body of Christ.

64. Uncatechized adults preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist will benefit from an extended period of formation, similar to that of catechumens. The adapted rites for them will strengthen them in this formation process, as well as mark the stages of their progress. Participation in the dismissal rite is encouraged for these candidates, but may not be required of them since they do have a right by Baptism to participate in the Eucharistic Prayer. Each candidate should have a sponsor for support and guidance and to present the candidates for the rituals (See Gd. 7.).

65. Although they may be received into the Church at any time depending on their readiness, it is preferable that their final phase of preparation coincide with the Lenten season and they complete their initiation at the Easter Vigil. These candidates are also expected to participate in the rite of election of catechumens and the call to continuing conversion with the Bishop on the First Sunday of Lent. A penitential rite on the second Sunday of Lent may be celebrated in place of the scrutinies which are intended for the unbaptized only. The presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer may be celebrated with these candidates if these rites have not been part of their experience.

66. The celebration of the penitential rite may serve as a context for further preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament is to be celebrated with the candidates prior to and distinct from the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist

67. Ordinarily priests do not confer the sacrament of Confirmation upon baptized Catholics. (See exceptions: NS 28.) **Therefore, priests must request from the Bishop in writing the faculty to confirm baptized Catholics. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it is best to request this faculty before the rite of election or several weeks before their scheduled celebration of the sacraments.** The specific reasons for requesting this faculty must be clearly stated for each candidate.

68. In this diocese, the faculty to confirm Baptized adult Catholics who have participated in the RCIA process will be granted to the priest in either of the following situations:

If they have not received Eucharist or Confirmation and are uncatechized.

or

If they have received First Eucharist but have not participated in the sacramental life of the Church or had any further catechesis since that time.

69. Those who have completed their initiation into the Church through Confirmation and Eucharist are to participate in mystagogy along with the neophytes.

Reception of Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church (R 473-504)

70. The Rite of Reception into full communion may be celebrated at any time during the year, preferably at a Sunday Mass. No greater burden than necessary is required for the establishment of unity and communion. Those who have been validly baptized, catechized and actively involved in another Christian faith need little preparation. While continuing conversion is important, their preparation should focus on the Catholic way of life. It should include catechesis and an opportunity for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (See NS 36.)

71. Candidates for full communion are encouraged to participate in the adapted rites as found in Part II, Section 4. They participate in the Diocesan rite of election and continuing call to conversion if they are going to be received into the Church during the Easter season.

72. Uncatechized candidates for full communion require a lengthier period of preparation similar to that of uncatechized baptized Catholics. Their spiritual and catechetical formation will benefit greatly from the celebration of the adapted rite for those preparing for Confirmation and Eucharist. The presentation of the Creed and the Our Father are appropriate celebrations if these have not been part of their tradition.

73. The duration and context of preparation will depend on the candidate's previous experience as well as his/her participation in dismissal catechesis and the various optional liturgical rites. Previously baptized but uncatechized Christians will benefit from catechesis and liturgical rites along with the catechumens. **However, these candidates are never to be confused**

with the catechumens. Their special status is always recognized especially in the celebration of the liturgical rites. (See R Appendix 1: *Additional (Combined) Rites.*) Opportunities should be afforded to them to affirm and reflect on their Baptism, particularly during their immediate preparation for Confirmation and Eucharist.

74. Although all candidates may benefit from dismissal catechesis, it should be encouraged rather than forced upon them. Those who are previously baptized and catechized and/or have participated in the liturgical assembly for a long time especially should be consulted about their participation in dismissal catechesis. Their wishes should be respected.

75. All validly baptized Christians (See Gd. footnote 2), are to be confirmed by the priest who celebrates their reception into the Church.

76. After their reception, they are also encouraged to participate in mystagogical activities.

D. Preparation for Liturgies and Rites

77. The catechetical sessions form the core of the preparation of catechumens and candidates through the RCIA process. The liturgies/rites form the core of their liturgical preparation and the preparation of the congregation. The foundation of celebrating the rites well always starts with a thorough knowledge and understanding of each of the rites: what they signify and their impact on each of those present, i.e., the catechumens, candidates, sponsors and members of the RCIA team, and the congregation. The meaning and appropriateness of the various prayers, texts and ritual movements are to be understood thoroughly by those preparing the liturgy, so that in their celebration the congregation will also understand them.

78. Experiencing the various ritual celebrations is intended to lead both the participants and the congregation toward growth in faith. Those in attendance are prompted to reflect upon their own faith, their own growth, and their own transitions.

79. Appropriate music that stimulates and involves the community is to be encouraged. Resources are available from parish hymnals, as well as specific music for Christian initiation.

80. **Required Rites**

- Rite of acceptance/welcoming

- Rite of election

- Scrutinies

- The celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil

81. **Minor Rites whose use is recommended**

- The minor exorcisms

- Blessings

- Anointing with oil of catechumens

- The rite of sending

- Presentations of the Creed and Our Father

- The preparation rites on Holy Saturday

See Gd. Appendix D for a quick reference to which rites are celebrated with the candidates.

Process of Preparation for the Rites

82. **Discernment:** To ensure that the catechumen or candidate is truly prepared, careful and prayerful discernment must be exercised by all involved through the various transitions in the RCIA process (Gd. 23, 35).

83. **Prayer:** The presider prayerfully reviews the texts, gestures, movements, etc. to reach a level of familiarity that will lead to a deeper understanding of each celebration. Then the rites may be appropriately adapted (Gd. 25).

84. **Rehearsal:** Rehearsal with the presider, team members, sponsors, and music ministers is essential to the effectiveness of the celebration. Candidates and catechumens are not included in the rehearsal.

85. **Explanations:** Prior to the celebration of the rites, the community needs to be informed about the nature and purpose of the rite.

Proper Presiders for Each of the Rites

86. The regular presider for the rite of election is the Bishop of the diocese. For serious pastoral reasons, the pastor of the parish may celebrate the rite of election. The norm, however, is that the Bishop of the diocese preside.

87. For the other major rites (acceptance/welcoming, the scrutinies), the presider is a priest or deacon. Also, the priest or deacon does the anointing with the oil of catechumens.

88. The minor exorcisms and blessings may be done by a priest, deacon, or qualified catechist. A qualified catechist is one who has been trained and certified through the diocese and/or North American Forum on the Catechumenate institutes, and so been deputed by the Bishop for this ministry.

Celebrating the Rites

89. Appropriate settings are to be considered. Most of the rites are celebrated in the church itself during a weekend liturgy. The ideal settings for the minor exorcisms and blessings are a special Liturgy of the Word for the catechumens, at the end of the catechetical sessions, or at the dismissal rite at the end of the Liturgy of the Word at the Sunday Eucharist. By their nature, they are better celebrated at a special Liturgy of the Word for the catechumens, as they focus more on the personal level of the struggle of the catechumen.

90. Ritual gestures in each of the rites most effectively reveal their meaning when they are administered properly, not hurriedly, nor over dramatically. Each of the gestures carries within its nature the possibility of the purpose of the gesture in God's plan to be revealed. For example, during

the rite of acceptance/welcoming, as each of the senses is signed, a rich, full Sign of the Cross done with a whole hand will better show how that particular sense now belongs to Christ, rather than a quick gesture done with the thumb or forefinger.

91. Similarly, as each of the rites is celebrated, the ritual gesture must be done carefully, thoughtfully, and with purpose. Each of these moments has a very specific gesture which, for the most powerful impact, must be performed with purpose and understanding. The primary ritual gestures proper to each of the rites are as follows:

- Rite of acceptance/welcoming - the signing of the senses with the cross;
- Anointing with the oil of catechumens - the anointing gesture;
- Minor exorcism - the laying on of hands;
- Blessing of the catechumen - extending the hands over those to be blessed;
- Rite of election - the signing of the book of the elect;
- Scrutinies - the gathering of the catechumens with heads bowed for prayer of the community;
- Easter Sacraments: Baptism - pouring the baptismal water; Chrismation (Confirmation) - anointing with sacred chrism; Eucharist - the procession and reception.

E. Implementation of Christian Initiation with Combined Parishes

92. The changing parish structure which is taking place in this as well as other dioceses raises special issues of implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. In addition to individual parishes, the following structures are currently present or emerging in the Diocese of Springfield:

- Parishes with missions
- Two or more parishes sharing one pastor
- Separate parishes, which combine some programs e.g., religious education.

93. The *Rite* presumes certain principles that guide the initiation process in all of these situations. The guiding principle is that initiation is the responsibility of all the baptized (R 9). This implies that each worshipping community should call forth its own members to assist in the initiation process. Similarly, initiation takes place in the midst of the community. The catechumens and candidates breathe new life into the community through their interaction with it. When the catechumenate takes place apart from the community or in another community, the faithful are deprived of the experience of conversion, which is a reminder of the treasure of faith. The potential for bringing new life to the parish is lost.

94. On the practical side it is best to keep initiation parish based so that neophytes will have been formed in their permanent community of worship. It is difficult for the neophyte who has prepared for initiation apart from this community to return to it. Oftentimes, neophytes in this situation, in fact, end up becoming worshipping members of the parish in which their formation took place, which is a loss to what could have been their "home" parish.

95. In light of the above, the following guidelines are to be followed:

- All the rites, including dismissal catechesis for catechumens and candidates, are to be celebrated in the parish that will be their permanent community of worship.
- The elect and candidates must be initiated at the Easter Vigil (or other appropriate time) in their own parish.
- Mid-week catechesis may take place with combined parishes.
- Apostolic works may take place with combined parishes.

- Combined or regional parishes may benefit from one coordinator who oversees the implementation of the *Rite* for more than one community, with on-site coordinators in each of these communities.
- Team formation and support may take place in parish groupings while assuring that there are some team members for each community of worship.

96. Every effort must be made to keep the initiation process parish based.

While it may be convenient or easier to combine parish processes for initiation, this practice compromises the *Rite* and deprives the parish community of a profound and life-giving experience. Even if there is only one candidate in any given parish community, the effort is to be made to form that person and celebrate the conversion process in that community. This complies with the spirit of the *Rite* and serves the best interests of the catechumens/candidates and the parish.

F. Samples/Appendices

- Appendix A:** Job Description for the RCIA Coordinator
Remuneration for Certified Coordinators
Job Descriptions for Various Coordinators of RCIA Ministries
- Appendix B:** Inquiry Interview
- Appendix C:** Model Catechetical Sessions for each of the Four Stages
Catechesis in the Precatechumenate Period
Catechesis in the Catechumenate Period
Catechesis in the Period of Purification and Enlightenment
Catechesis During Mystagogy
- Appendix D:** Guide: Who Participates in the Rites
Addendum: Eastern Churches

Appendix A

Job Description for the RCIA Coordinator

- Puts forth the vision of the Christian initiation process for the parish community, its leadership and the team;
- Provides or arranges for training of all ministers;
- Coordinates all the ministries within the RCIA;
- Convenes meetings for the team coordinators;
- Communicates with all members of the team and oversees communication with the parish, the coordinators, the catechumens and the candidates;
- Keeps abreast of diocesan and regional events for team members and communicates these to the team and the other initiation ministers as needed;
- Enables, encourages and supports the Christian initiation team in their ministry;
- Oversees the keeping of appropriate records of catechumens, candidates and neophytes.

Remuneration for Certified Coordinators

Christian initiation of adults and children is the responsibility of all the baptized. This assumes that the parish fully understands its mission to initiate so that enough ministers are available to assist the coordinator.

A fully involved coordinator needs extensive training and invests a great amount of time in the implementation of the *Rite* in the parish. Therefore, a just remuneration is appropriate for those who meet the following criteria:

- They are fully trained and/or certified through our Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation program or hold an appropriate degree.
- They spend a substantial amount of time in coordinating the initiation process over and above what can be expected of a volunteer.

The use of the *Ministry Analysis Worksheet* (Diocesan Handbook Section 5) will be helpful in determining this remuneration.

Job Descriptions for the Various Coordinators of RCIA Ministries

Inquiry:

- Publicizes the RCIA process and invites people to consider it
- Calls meetings for people interested in joining the Church
- Calls forward people to help with greeting and informing inquirers

- Informs RCIA Team when inquirers come forward
- Calls meetings to coordinate inquiry team schedule
- Helps provide welcoming environment for inquirers
- Schedules meetings for discernment process

Liturgy:

- Acts as liaison between team, clergy and music ministry of the parish
- Plans the celebrations of the rites
- Rehearses team and sponsors for celebrations

Hospitality:

- Recruits and schedules hospitality volunteers
- Explains task of hospitality ministry
- Makes resources available to provide welcoming atmosphere and environment for catechetical sessions
- Coordinates receptions, pot-luck, etc. for significant events

Catechist:

- Relays information, questions and concerns between the catechists and the RCIA coordinator
- Recruits and schedules catechists
- Meets periodically with the catechists
- Makes resources available for catechesis and prayer experiences
- Makes resources available for research on topics for discussion
- Works with the RCIA coordinator to arrange initial training and ongoing formation of catechists

Sponsor:

- Calls volunteers forward to be potential sponsors
- Sees to the formation of sponsors
- Coordinates opportunities for catechumens and candidates to meet with potential sponsors
- Relays information, questions and concerns between sponsors and the RCIA coordinator

Children's Catechumenate:

- Understands the RCIA process
- Participates as a member of the parish RCIA team
- Works with parents of the children through the entire process
- Supplies resources for the Children's Catechumenate
- Arranges for training of catechists involved in the Children's Catechumenate
- Coordinates and schedules children's catechetical and dismissal sessions
- Coordinates hospitality with the hospitality coordinator
- Solicits and coordinates peer and family companions for the Children's Catechumenate
- Works with each coordinator to plan any liturgical rites or significant events for the children and their families

Appendix B

Inquiry Interview

(This form serves as a guide for the initial interview. It is intended to be completed by the interviewer, not the inquirer. Confidentiality should be assured to the inquirer.)

Name:

Address:

Occupation:

Home Phone: _____ Work

Phone: _____

When and where do you preferred to be called?

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Any other pertinent family background or issues which would be helpful to the RCIA team:

SACRAMENTAL STATUS

Baptized: Yes (Baptismal certificate required) No

Denomination: _____ Date (if known): _____

Where:

Confirmed: Yes No Where:

If Catholic, have you received Eucharist? Yes No

MARITAL STATUS:

Married Single Engaged Separated Widowed
 Divorced Annulled by Church

If married, name of spouse:

Church/place of marriage:

Married by: Priest Minister Justice of Peace

If married or engaged, is this your first marriage? Yes No

(If no)---Name of previous

Spouse: _____

Church/Place of marriage (of spouse):

Ended by: Death? Divorce? Annulled by Church?

Has your partner been married before?: Yes No

(If yes)---Church/Place of marriage:

Ended by: Death? Divorce? Annulled by Church?

If engaged, name of fiancé(e):

Projected date of Marriage: _____ Place: _____

Spouse's/Fiancé(e)'s religion:

CHILDREN:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Baptized</u>
_____	_____	Yes No
_____	_____	Yes No
_____	_____	Yes No
_____	_____	Yes No

OTHER INFORMATION:

Describe any previous religious training, education, or affiliation?

—

—

—

Who or what prompted you to inquire about the Catholic Church?

What members (if any) of this parish do you already know?

Add any other information that might be helpful for the pastoral staff:

Additional Information For Children Seeking Initiation Sacraments

Name _____ of _____ Father:

Religion _____ of _____ Father:

Name _____ of _____ Mother:

Religion _____ of _____ Mother:

Marital Status _____ of
Parents: _____

Siblings: _____ Age _____ Baptized? _____

Any other pertinent family information:

Appendix C

Model Catechetical Session for Each of the Four Stages

CATECHESIS IN THE PRE-CATECHUMENATE

The purpose of catechesis in the pre-catechumenate is to bring people to initial faith and conversion, i.e. evangelization (R 36-38). It is also a time for the inquirer to begin to develop a relationship with the local church community. The methodology involves helping people to connect the stories of their lives with the stories of Scripture and Catholic Tradition in an informal atmosphere. It is important that the inquirers be given an opportunity to raise their own questions and thus set the agenda for this stage.

A MODEL OF A PRE-CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Topic: Who Is God?

- I. Talk about some common images of God that people may have, such as Father, Creator, Judge, Provider, Sustainer, etc.
- II. A. Ask how they understand God at this time in their life. Give the participants time to think adequately about their own image of God.

B. Hand out paper and markers. Direct them either to draw a picture or write a few words or phrases that reflect their understanding of God.
- III. Have them talk about their image in small groups - sharing any stories that lead to this image - to the extent they are comfortable doing this. Catechist shares his/her image.
- IV. Read Luke 9:18-20 (Who do you say that I am?)
- V. Give a brief presentation about how Catholics understand or know God – making any or all of the following points. We know God through...
 - Jesus - the manifestation, incarnation and revelation of God
 - The Scripture
 - Our Catholic Tradition, i.e. the Catholic Teachings (on the Creed), Practice and Worship - Creation - our experiences of nature, love, etc.Or the catechist could also talk about Jesus as the Messiah.
- VI. Share with them some other scriptural images of God...(These could be written on a handout for further reflection.)
e.g. Shepherd - Ps 23; Jn: 10-1-21;
Creator - Gn 1-2; Ps 19;
Mother Hen - Mt 23:37-39;
The Vine and the Vine Grower Jn 15:1-9.
Have any team members share their favorite image from Scripture.
- VII. A. Have the participants reflect on or journal:
What difference does believing in God make in my life?

B. Have them share in small groups their reflections (to the extent that they are comfortable).
- VIII. Close by reciting Psalm 121

Note: This session may raise more questions about God or Jesus that could be further explored in future sessions.

CATECHESIS IN THE CATECHUMENATE PERIOD

Catechesis in this period aims at forming the catechumens in the Christian life through catechesis accommodated to the liturgical year, participation in the community, the liturgical celebrations and apostolic works (R 75). Each catechetical session flows from the Liturgy of the Word. They have two parts: breaking open the Word (normally following Sunday dismissal) and catechesis on Catholic teachings and practices as they arise from the Sunday readings.

A MODEL FOR CATECHESIS IN THE CATECHUMENATE

Part 1 Participation in Sunday Liturgy of the Word

- Listening to the Word
- Dismissal rite after the homily for catechumens (and candidates)
- Breaking open the Word session, which includes a re-reading of one or more of the Scriptures for the day, shared reflection on that reading and prayer.

Part 2 Catechetical Session

- Follow-up catechesis on Catholic teachings and practices continues after breaking open the Word or may resume at another time during the week. Spouses and sponsors are invited to the catechetical session.

- Catechist gives brief synopsis of breaking open the Word discussion to start this session
- Catechesis on Catholic teaching and practice flows from the breaking open the Word session.

A Sample of Part 1: Breaking Open the Word

Based on Cycle C: Sixth Sunday of the Year.

Theme: Beatitudes

- I. After the reading (Luke 6: 17, 20-26), the catechist may give a brief reflection pointing out the themes of trust, God as the center of our lives and/or pointing out the differences between Luke's and Matthew's versions of the beatitudes.

- II. A. Ask: What is your initial reaction to this reading and its message?
How did you feel when you heard it?
Did it raise any questions for you?

B. Share responses in small groups. It is important that the catechist share his/her response (which may have already been done in the reflections).

- III. A. Catechist leads a guided reflection such as:
Imagine yourself in the crowd listening to Jesus... Are you one of the poor? the hungry? the suffering? the persecuted?

or

Are you one of the rich? the full? the happy? those esteemed by others?

Give them silent time to place themselves in the crowd.

B. Either on paper or in their minds, ask them to reflect on the following:
What is Jesus telling you? What is his message to you?
How can you respond to this message in your life? What attitude may need changing or what action will you take to respond to the message?

C. In a word or a phrase, ask the participants, if they are comfortable doing so, to share their message with the larger group.

D. Catechist may summarize and help participants to make practical application to the Scripture message.

- IV. Prayer
Have participants either speak or reflect silently on where they need God's help in living the message.

Play the song: "Blest Are They" from the tape *Come and Journey* by David Haas, Marty Haugen, and Michael Joncas (or another appropriate song).

or

Pray the Responsorial Psalm for the day.
End with the opening prayer from the day's Mass.

or

Pray minor exorcism D (R 94)

A Sample of Part 2: Catechetical Session

Theme: Beatitudes

- I. Brief Synopsis of breaking open the Word session
- II. Reflection and discussion
 - What would make you fully happy and content?
 - How do you define success?
- III. Presentation on Beatitudes
 - A. "Be-Attitudes": Attitudes for living
 - A value system
 - A blueprint for living.
 - B. We live by the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.
 - C. Using a *Catholic Update* on the Beatitudes or some other resource, discuss the meaning of each beatitude.
(*Catechist shares some of his/her own experience trying to live the beatitudes.*)
- IV. Discussion:
 - Which beatitude do you find most consoling?
 - Which do you find most challenging?
- V. Reflection/Journaling:
 - In what way(s) can you best make the beatitudes a part of your daily life?
- VI. Prayer
 - A. Have each participant read from either Matthew's or Luke's version one phrase or Beatitude that has meaning for them.
 - B. Close with a spontaneous prayer, simply asking God's help in living the Beatitudes.

Note: Other possible topics for development out of the readings for that Sunday (Cycle C: Sixth Sunday of the Year) may be: Ten Commandments, justice, reign of God, resurrection, discipleship.

CATECHESIS DURING THE PERIOD OF PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Lent is a period of more intense spiritual preparation consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction (R 139). During Lent the Sunday readings continue to be the focus for reflection and dismissal continues. For the elect, the scrutinies provide the primary context for their spiritual preparation. Cycle A readings are used during the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent when there are elect preparing for sacraments.

For the model here we will focus on catechesis on the scrutinies which will fall into two parts: preparation for, and reflection on, the celebration of the scrutiny.

A MODEL FOR PREPARING FOR AND REFLECTING ON THE SCRUTINIES

A Sample of Part 1: Preparation for the Scrutiny

Theme: The First Scrutiny, "The Woman at the Well"

(This is done on either the previous Sunday or at some time during the week prior to the Third Sunday of Lent.)

- I. Explain that the elect will be celebrating the scrutinies the next three Sundays. Include a brief explanation of the purpose of the scrutinies.
- II. A. Have participants reflect on the meaning of water in their lives, especially as life-giving - perhaps remembering a time of great thirst. Ask them to share these experiences/memories.

B. Brainstorm or discuss the many ways that water can be life-giving

- C. Have the participants list:
- Places or situations in the world, our country and our communities that thirst for God.
 - Situations in their own lives where they thirst for God.
- D. List their responses on chalkboard or newsprint.
These could be integrated into the intercessions for the first scrutiny.

- III. Read John 4:5-42 or suggest that they read it at home before next Sunday.
- IV. Pray a blessing, especially blessing B (R 96) and/or sing a Lenten song.

A Sample of Part 2: Reflecting on the Celebration of the Scrutiny
Theme: The First Scrutiny, "The Woman at the Well"

- I. Gathering: Re-read the Gospel story of the "Woman at the Well".
Sing or listen to "The Water I Give", David Haas
- II. A. Have the participants reflect on or journal about...
What did you experience, feel or hear during this celebration?

How does the Gospel speak to you of your thirst, especially in light of the preparation session?

In what ways has your thirst been quenched?
- B. Share any of these reflections with the larger group.
- III. Catechist briefly explains the nature of sin and God's redeeming love.
- IV. Pray together the Responsorial Psalm. Then close by praying the opening prayer from today's Mass.

CATECHESIS DURING MYSTAGOGY

The purpose of Catechesis during the period of Mystagogy is twofold: to assist the neophytes in deepening their understanding of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist; and to help them discern how they will live out their Christian faith as fully initiated disciples of the Catholic Church. (See NS 23.) It is recommended that the Cycle A readings be used during the Easter season, at least at those masses in which the neophytes participate. These were chosen for this purpose. Sessions may be held after Sunday mass or during the week.

A MODEL OF A MYSTAGOGICAL SESSION

The Third Sunday of Easter. Gospel - Luke 24: 13-35.
Theme: The Emmaus Story.

- I. Opening Reflection. Pray the alternate opening prayer from the Mass.
Sing or listen to: "Song of the Body of Christ", David Haas.
- II. Read the Gospel
- III. Group Process
 - A. Have participants reflect on the following: (Perhaps give them a handout with these questions.)

How does this reading speak to you about expectations, faith, or recognizing Jesus in others?

In the Emmaus Story, the disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. What do you experience in the breaking and sharing of bread at Mass?

In other words, what do you experience in the Eucharist?

How do you experience Eucharist in other people?
 - B. Share responses in small groups (if your group is large).

C. Large group feedback: From your experience or this reading, what insights have surfaced about Eucharist?

IV. Input Segment

A. Catechist briefly develops any or all of the following points:

- Eucharist as the Body of Christ
- The Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist
- The presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic community
- Living out the Eucharist in our daily lives.

B. Address any questions the neophytes may have about the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

V. Integration/Action Response

A. Have the neophytes discuss:

What does it mean for you to be a member in full communion with the Catholic Church?

B. Give them quiet time to reflect on or journal about:

The strangers in the story went to tell the others the good news. How can you bring the good news to others; e.g. in your family, your work place or your community?

Ask for volunteers to share their responses.

VI. Prayer

Read Peter 1: 17-21 (the Second Reading)

Catechist leads intercessions asking the group to surface their needs in living out their commitment to the faith. The response will be, "Lord, show us the path of life".

Or pray the Responsorial Psalm.

APPENDIX D

GUIDE: WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE RITES

	CATECHUMENS	BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS	ADULT UNCATECHIZED BAPTIZED CATHOLICS	ADULT CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES CATECHIZED	UNBAPTIZED CHILDREN OF CATECHETICAL AGE	BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN CHILDREN	BAPTIZED UNCATECHIZED CATHOLIC CHILDREN	ORTHODOX OR EASTERN RITE CATHOLICS
Rite of Acceptance	*			Do not participate in RCIA process or the rites.	*			See addendum on Eastern churches.
Rite of Welcome		O/R	O/R			O/R		
Anointing with oil of Catechumens	*				O/R			
Minor Exorcisms	*				O/R			
Blessings	*	O, 1	O, 1		O/R	O	O,1	
Rite of Sending	O/R	O/R	O, 1		O/R	O		
Rites of election & Calling to continuing conversion	*	O/R	O/R		O/R	O		
Scrutinies	*				*, 4			
Penitential Rite		O/R	O/R			O	O	
Presentations	*	2	O		O/R			
Baptism, Confirmation, & Eucharist at Easter Vigil	*				*			
Confirmation & Eucharist at Easter Vigil		*	*, 3			*		
Confirmation by the Bishop				*		*		

<p>* Essential for the integrity of the Rite</p> <p>O Optional</p> <p>O/R Optional, but highly recommended for the integrity of the process</p>	<p>KEY</p> <p>1 With adaptations</p> <p>2 If uncatechized</p> <p>3 Pastor needs to request faculty from the Bishop</p> <p>4 See Part II, 1 (R 291-301)</p>
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Appendix D

Addendum

Eastern Churches

In all cases involving Orthodox Christians and/or Eastern Rite Catholics, their spouses or children, please consult the Diocesan Vicar for Canonical Affairs before proceeding with the process.

Orthodox Christians and Eastern Rite Catholics must undergo a process in order to transfer to the Latin (Roman) rite. This process is intended to protect the integrity of and to show respect for their Churches. They do not participate in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Eastern Rite Catholics

Eastern Rite Catholics (e.g., Melkite Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, Maronite Catholic, etc.) are required to obtain the permission of their own Eparch/Bishop before they can change Rites. The actual change in membership is effected, not by a profession of faith, but by communication between the Eastern Eparch/Bishop and the Latin Rite Bishop.

Orthodox Christians

The Orthodox Christians (e.g., Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Albanian Orthodox, etc.) normally should seek membership in the corresponding Eastern Rite. If they desire membership in the Latin Rite, the Eparch/Bishop of the corresponding Eastern Church and the Latin Rite Bishop must each approve.

The Code of Canon Law also makes further provisions for the spouses and children of Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholics.

G. Glossary

Blessings	Prayers used to help strengthen the catechumens during the catechumenate.
Candidate	An already validly baptized person who is preparing for reception for Full Communion into the Catholic Church or to complete initiation through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. In the <i>Rite</i> it also refers to an unbaptized person in the precatechumenate.
Catechist	A facilitator for the catechetical session, who shares his/ her faith in a formal setting.
Catechumen	One who is unbaptized and is preparing for full initiation at the Easter Vigil through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
Catechumenate	The second period in the Christian Initiation process which involves formal preparation in Word, Worship, Community Life and Apostolic Works.
RCIA Coordinator/Director	Person charged with overseeing the entire Christian initiation process in the parish.
Cycle A, B, C	The three year cycle of Liturgical Readings for Sundays: Cycle A, Matthew; Cycle B, Mark; Cycle C, Luke. All three cycles incorporate the Gospel of John.
Discernment	The prayerful process for determining readiness of an individual in the initiation process to move from one period to another.
Dismissal Rite	The rite after the Liturgy of the Word, in which the catechumens (and candidates) are sent along with a catechist to another place to reflect further on the Scripture which they have heard.
Elect	The name given to catechumens who have celebrated the rite of election expressing the awareness of having been called by God to be a member of God's people.
Evangelization	The task of the church during the precatechumenate which involves inviting, welcoming, witnessing, sharing of faith, and the proclamation of the Gospel to the inquirers/candidates.
Exorcism	Prayer of purification - especially prayed as part of the scrutinies.
Godparent	One chosen by the catechumen (and approved by the parish priest) to support him/her in their final preparation for initiation and in living out his/her baptismal commitments. The godparent formally begins the ministry at the rite of election.
Hospitality	An atmosphere of welcome and "home", usually provided by particular team members.
Initiation of Children	An adaptation of the adult process used for children of catechetical age (7+) who have not been baptized, or were baptized non-Catholic.
Inquirer	One who is participating in the precatechumenate, "inquiring" into Catholicism.
Minor Exorcism	Prayers of purification during the catechumenate designed to ask God to help catechumens overcome obstacles as they proceed through the catechumenate.

Minor Rites	Rites during the catechumenate which include exorcisms, blessings and anointings.
Mystagogy	The final period of the Initiation process, normally during the Easter Season. It means "unpacking the mysteries" or reflecting on the sacraments, prayers, and reality of life as a Catholic Christian.
National Statutes	Particular law for implementation of Christian Initiation in the United States presented by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
Neophyte	A newly initiated person.
Neophyte Year	Period from the end of Mystagogy (Pentecost) to the first anniversary of initiation.
Oil of Catechumens	Oil blessed by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week and used as a medium for strengthening of catechumens in their life of faith.
Purification and Enlightenment	The period in Christian Initiation of Adults to prepare with a more spiritual focus for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. It usually coincides with the season of Lent.
Rites	Liturgical Celebrations. In the <i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i> they include:
<i>Rite of Acceptance -</i>	Marks the end of the period of inquiry and celebrates the beginning of formal preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation.
<i>Rite of Welcome -</i>	Marks the end of the period of inquiry and celebrates the beginning of formal preparation for reception into full communion.
<i>Rite of Sending -</i>	Parish celebration to prepare the catechumens for the cathedral rite of election and candidates for the calling to conversion.
<i>Rite of Election -</i>	Celebration on the First Sunday of Lent at the cathedral. The Bishop in the name of the diocese acknowledges election by God of catechumens.
<i>Rite of Calling to Continuing Conversion-</i>	Celebrated on the First Sunday of Lent for candidates in the adapted initiation process, coinciding with the rite of election.
<i>Scrutinies -</i>	Rites celebrated with the elect on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent to free them from the power of sin and to strengthen them in Christ.
<i>Penitential Rite-</i>	An adaptation of a scrutiny celebrated with candidates for full communion.
<i>Preparation Rites -</i>	Celebrated with the elect on Holy Saturday. These may be the ephphetha, recitation of the creed, and the choosing of a new name.
<i>Sacraments of Initiation -</i>	The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, usually celebrated at the Easter Vigil.
Sponsor	One who accompanies the catechumen or candidate through the catechumenate period. This person helps by offering support, encouragement and witness.
Validly Baptized	Baptized through immersion or by pouring with water which has been blessed, and with the required words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

H. Resources for RCIA

Primary Resource

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Approved for use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See, 1988. Various publishers: USCC; Catholic Book Publishing; Liturgy Training Publications; and Liturgical Press. A Study Edition in paperback is available for parish teams and a Ritual Edition for liturgical use.

For Preparing the Parish

A.V. Resources:

- * *Our Baptismal Covenant, With Christ* DeSales. An 8-part video series that explores history/theology of Baptism, RCIA, and Lay Ministry.
- * *RCIA: The Journey Through Easter* Brown/ROA. A 30-minute video reflection/presentation on the RCIA.

Inexpensive Handouts:

About the RCIA Channing L. Bete Co., Inc. Scriptograph booklet.

How Does a Person Become a Catholic? Liturgy Training Publications. Leaflet.

The RCIA: The Art of Making New Catholics *Catholic Update* St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1986.

What is the RCIA?. Liturgical Press, 1984. Leaflet.

For Forming and Training Teams/Ministers

A.V. Resources:

- * *Becoming an RCIA Sponsor* Paulist Press. A 45 minute, 3-part video on the role and responsibilities of the sponsor and the sponsor-candidate relationship.
- * *Becoming an RCIA Catechist* Paulist Press. A 40 minute video on catechesis in the RCIA focusing on pre-catechumenate.
- * *Celebrating Christian Initiation: Liturgical, Catechetical and Musical Dimensions* David Haas and Thomas Morris. CTNA. 8 talks on audio tapes.

- * *Celebrating Christian Initiation: An Introduction and Overview of the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* CTNA. A presentation of the Catholic

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

Telecommunications Network and the North American Forum on the Catechumenate in 3 parts:

Part 1. General overview of pastoral issues of implementing the RCIA and an overview of the period of the pre-catechumenate.

Part 2. Liturgy and catechesis, with particular focus on the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens and the period of the catechumenate.

Part 3. Rite of election and the great ninety days.

- * *This is the Night* Liturgy Training Publications. A 30 minute video following the elect and candidates from the celebration of the third scrutiny through their Baptisms and receptions at Easter, while recalling the entire initiation experience.

Books:

- * *Christian Initiation of Adults: A Commentary (Study Text 10)* Secretariat, Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy, United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1988. Reviews the history of the *Rite*, comments on each of the stages of the *Rite* and offers pastoral directions.
- * *Echoing God's Word* James B. Dunning. Liturgy Training Publications, 1993. Formation for catechists and homilists in a catechumenal church.
- * *Finding and Forming Sponsors and Godparents* James A. Wilde, ed. Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.
- * *Foundations in Faith* Resources for Christian Living, 1997. Series of handbooks for sponsors, catechists, coordinators, and priests.
- * *Guide for Sponsors* Ron Lewinski. Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.
- * *How to Form A Catechumenate Team* Karen M. Hinman. Liturgy Training Publications, 1986.
- * *How to Teach With the Lectionary, With Leader's Guide* Philip McBrien. Twenty-Third Publications, 1992. Available with leaders guide.
- * *RCIA Spirituality: Formation For the Catechumenate Team* Barbara Hixon. Resource Publications, 1992.
- * *Walking Together in Faith* Thomas H. Morris. Paulist Press, 1992. A workbook for sponsors of Christian Initiation.

- * *Welcoming the New Catholic*, third edition Ron Lewinski. Liturgy Training Publications, 1993. A basic introduction to the process and stages of the *Rite*.

RCIA Coordinators/Teams

Periodicals:

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation Liturgy Training Publications. Published six times a year. Articles focus on the theology, issues of implementation of RCIA, and reflections on Sunday Scripture.

Forum The North America Forum on the Catechumenate. A quarterly newsletter containing timely articles and information on upcoming workshops and conferences.

Books:

- * *The Catechumenate and the Law: A Pastoral and Canonical Commentary for the Church in The United States* John M. Huels. Liturgy Training Publications, 1994. Canonical issues in the RCIA, particularly sacramental and marriage issues.
- * *Celebrating the Rites of Adult Initiation: Pastoral Reflections* Victoria Tufano, ed. Liturgy Training Publications, 1992.
- * *Christian Initiation Resources Reader* William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1984. A four book series that features articles on the theory and implementation of the RCIA; one book for each of the four stages.
- * *Discerning Disciples: Listening for God's Voice in Christian Initiation* Donna Steffen, S.C. Paulist Press, 1997. Offers both the theory and practical ideas for discernment in the RCIA.
- * *New Wine: New Wineskins* James B. Dunning. William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1979. Highlights the pastoral implications of the RCIA.
- * *One at the Table: The Reception of Baptized Christians* Ronald A. Oakham, O. Carm., ed. Liturgy Training Publications, 1995.
- * *The RCIA: Transforming the Church, Revised and Updated Edition* Thomas Morris. Paulist Press, 1997 (Revised 1999). A resource book offering general guidelines and practical directions on specific areas of pastoral concern.
- * *Resource Book for the RCIA* William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1988. A collection of practical articles for implementation of RCIA.

- * *Transformation vs. Instruction: Catechesis within the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* Nancy Sheridan, S.A.S.V. and Joseph Sinwell. Brown/ROA, 1992.

Implementation and Catechesis

Pre-Catechumenate:

- * *The Catholic Church: Who Are We?* Franciscan Communications, 1986. A twelve page booklet for inquirers.

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

- * *Choosing the Way* Sandal Strap Technologies, Inc., 1990. Video and print program offering a retreat format for preparing for the Rite of Acceptance.
- * *Come Follow Me* Joseph P. Sinwell, ed. Paulist Press, 1990. Resources for the period of inquiry in the RCIA.
- * *Foundations In Faith: Handbook for Inquirers* Resources for Christian Living, 1997.

How Does a Person Become a Catholic? Ronald Lewinski. Liturgy Training Publications. A small leaflet for inquirers.

- * *What it Means to be a Catholic* Rev. Joseph M. Champlin. Franciscan Communications, 1986. A sixty-four page book on the Catholic Faith for inquirers.

Catechumenate:

At Home With the Word James A. Wilde, ed. Liturgy Training Publications. Contains the Sunday readings and reflections on them. Published for each liturgical year.

- * *Breaking Open the Word of God* Karen M. Hinman and Joseph P. Sinwell, eds. Paulist Press, 1986, 1987, 1988. Resources for using the lectionary for catechesis in the RCIA – Cycles A, B, and C.
- * *A Catechumens' Lectionary.* Robert M. Hama. Paulist Press, 1988. A complete Sunday lectionary with reflection for catechumens.
- * *The Catholic Update Sourcebook* St. Anthony Messenger Press. A copy of all *Catholic Updates* printed, with a topical index. Some may also be used in pre-catechumenate and mystagogy.
- * *Foundations In Faith* Resources for Christian Living, 1997, 1998, 1999. Catechist manual and participants books for catechumenate, years A, B, and C.
- * *Living The Good News* Living the Good News, Inc. Lectionary based teaching resource. Published seasonally.

Lent and Mystagogy:

- * *Easter for 50 Days* Bernard J. Maxwell, Judy Foster, and Jill Shirvington. Twenty-Third Publications, 1989. Practical ideas for celebrating the Easter season for the parish including special suggestions for the neophytes.
- * *Experiencing Mystagogy: The Sacred Pause of Easter* Gerard F. Baumbach. Paulist Press, 1996. A reader and workbook for the neophytes to assist in their mystagogical reflection through the Easter season.
- * *Foundations in Faith: Resource Book-Purification and Enlightenment Year A, B, C* Bob Duggan, et al. Resources for Christian Living, 1997.

Lenten Journey: A Resource for Christian Initiation Living the Good News, Inc. Reflection and group activities based on Cycle A readings for catechumens.

Also, a basic catechism may be used as a resource as topics arise to support doctrinal catechesis.

Some possibilities are:

* *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second ed., 2000.

Exploring Our Catholic Faith: Basic Teachings and Practice Rev. John Pollard. Benziger Publishing Company, 1998.

The People's Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults Raymond Lucker, Patrick Brennan, and Michael Leach, eds. Crossroad Publishing, 1989.

This Is Our Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults, revised. Michael Pennock. Ave Maria Press, 1999.

Music:

* *Who Calls You By Name: Music for Christian Initiation*, Vols. I & II David Haas. GIA, 1988, 1991. Printed.

Christian Initiation with Children

A.V. Resources:

* *The Catechumenate for Children* Rev. Don A. Neumann. Tabor, 1991. Two videos with nine 15 minute segments.

* *Preparing Children for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation* Frank Sokol and Maureen Kelly. St. Anthony Messenger Audiocassettes.

Books:

* *A Child's Journey, the Christian Initiation of Children*. Rita Burns Senseman. St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1998.

Christian Initiation of Older Children Sandra Figgess. Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.

* *Children and Christian Initiation*. Kathy Coffey. Living the Good News, Inc., 1995. A series of practical guides for all stages of the *Rite* for catechists, sponsors, children, and parents.

* *The Christian Initiation of Children: Hope for the Future* Robert Duggan, Maureen Kelly. Paulist Press, 1991.

* *The Church Speaks Out About Sacraments With Children* Mark Searle, ed. Liturgy Training Publications, 1990.

* Available to borrow from the Office of Religious Education Resource Library.

* *Issues in The Christian Initiation of Children: Catechesis and Liturgy* Kathy Brown, Frank Sokol. Liturgy Training Publications, 1989.

Catechetical Resources:

Children's Catholic Catechism Brown/ROA, 1989.

Christian Initiation: A Catechesis for Junior High James Bitney. Benziger, 1995. Benziger Sacramental Preparation Series.

God's Plan for Us: A Catechism for Young People Joan Mitchell, CSJ. Good Ground Press, 1984.

Guided Meditations for Children, Vols. 1,2,3 Jane Reehorst, B.V.M. Brown/ROA, 1991.

Let the Children Come to Me Rev. Thomas Long, Emily Filippi. Brown/ROA, 1988. Program manual and two level students' books.

Living the Good News Living the Good News, Inc. Lectionary based materials. Published seasonally.

Opening the Word: Exploring The Sunday Readings Sadlier, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993. Two level catechist and student texts available for each cycle of readings.

Our Catholic Faith Rev. Msgr. John F. Barry. Sadlier, 1987.

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies Hi-Time/Pflaum Publishing Co., Lectionary based materials. Published seasonally.

This is Our Faith: Heritage Program, I & II Kate Sweeney Ristow. Silver Burdett & Ginn, 1989. Catechist manual and two level student texts.

SECTION 4

DIOCESAN GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

- A. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation**
- B. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Eucharist**
- C. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation**
- D. Diocesan Policy Relative to Catechetical Texts**
- E. Guidelines for St. Pius X Awards**
- F. Guidelines for Home Study Option**
- G. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism for Children**
- H. Guidelines for the Employment of Catechetical Leaders**

A. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. These guidelines are to be read in light of the following documents:
 - A. **The Rite of Penance**, 1973
 - B. **The General Directory for Catechesis**, 1997
 - C. **The Code of Canon Law**, 1983
 - D. **National Catechetical Directory**, 1977
 - E. **General Catechetical Directory, Addendum**, 1971
 - F. **Diocese of Springfield Handbook on Catechesis**, 2000
2. "For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation 'is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation.' Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true 'spiritual resurrection,' restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1468)
3. This guideline concerns itself with the preparation of children baptized in the Catholic Church at infancy for first participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Other occasions for first reception of Reconciliation (e.g., those preparing for full communion with the Catholic Church) can be found in the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the Diocese of Springfield*.
4. Timing: "After having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year" (*Code of Canon Law*, Can. 989). "With the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason" (Can. 97).

"Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede First Communion and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation. This is to be done so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent and so that, before receiving First Communion, the child will be familiar with the revised Rite of Reconciliation and will be at ease with the reception of the sacrament. The Sacrament of Reconciliation normally should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Communion." (*National Catechetical Directory*, 126)

In order to meet these various timing requirements the Diocese of Springfield recommends that the celebration of First Reconciliation take place before or during the season of Advent, and the celebration of First Eucharist take place during the Easter season. This usually corresponds with the child's second grade year of schooling.

Other options for preparation and celebration are possible (e.g., summer programs or family programs) that work outside a school year schedule. Celebration of the sacrament may take place following such preparation, given that the preparation attends fully to the catechesis named below.

As a rule, a child will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation after appropriate catechesis for that sacrament but prior to the reception of First Eucharist. In an exceptional case, if it seems clear to those involved in the sacramental catechesis (priest, DRE/CRE, catechist and parents/guardians) that an individual child is not ready for the sacrament of Reconciliation, then it should be postponed until the child is ready. This does not mean that First Eucharist must be postponed (See *Code of Canon Law, Can. 843*).

5. Catechesis: “Catechesis for children must always respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of individuals. It seeks, **first**, to make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child’s life; **second**, to help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrongdoing, and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church; **third**, to encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving; **fourth**, to encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.” (*National Catechetical Directory, 126*)

According to the *Rite of Penance* (6) there are four parts of the Sacrament:

- *Contrition* - a heartfelt sorrow for one’s wrong doings.
- *Confession* – admitting one’s sins to an ordained minister of the Church.
- *Act of Penance* – an effort to make amends for one’s sins
- *Absolution* – receiving God’s pardon through the sign offered by the Church’s minister.

This catechesis may take many forms, including education about the sacrament as well as liturgical, communal and spiritual formation for its reception. Catechesis for First Reconciliation should take place in the child’s home parish, even for those children enrolled in Catholic schools. While the Catholic school’s curriculum may be concerned with education about the sacrament, the liturgical, communal and spiritual elements of immediate preparation are the concern of the parish.

There may be situations, given parish size, where local parishes join catechetical staffs, resources and liturgical celebrations in order to improve this preparation.

Children should be made familiar and comfortable with the sacramental ritual before they actually celebrate it. However, practice for reception does not replace catechesis for reception.

Children should learn a prayer of contrition that is appropriate for their level of comprehension. The rite does not demand any specific prayer (*Rite of Penance, 45*).

6. Parent/Family Involvement: According to the *National Catechetical Directory* (126), “parents should be involved in the preparation of children for this sacrament.” Times of sacramental preparation for children are an excellent opportunity for welcoming other family members into a closer relationship with God and with the Church. Parents/Guardians should be made aware of expectations for the family and child in the reception of the sacrament and the general themes of catechesis for the sacrament. Family participation in the catechetical process and in the liturgical celebrations relative to reconciliation should be encouraged. Parishes are to provide meetings and/or other opportunities in order to offer adult catechesis on the sacrament, to communicate program expectations and to integrate parents/guardians in the catechesis of their children.

7. Celebration of the Rite: The Diocese of Springfield strongly encourages use of the second form of the rite (Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution) for the celebration of First Reconciliation with children. As well, it is necessary to provide for options: the penitent being clearly visible to the confessor, or behind a screen (*Rite of Penance*, 12).

Although it is the responsibility of the parish to prepare children for the celebration of reconciliation, it is not appropriate to insist that a child receive the sacrament.

8. Sacramental Records: Prior to the reception of First Reconciliation the parish must obtain proof of baptism for all candidates (Cans. 842, 894).

9. Ongoing Catechesis and Celebration of the Sacrament: Catechesis for the immediate reception of the sacrament should be age appropriate and not attempt to address all issues relative to Reconciliation. “Because continuing, lifelong conversion is part of what it means to grow in faith, catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is ongoing. Children have a right to a fuller catechesis each year” (*National Catechetical Directory*, 126). Likewise, children should be taught by word and by example of the worshipping community that sacramental reconciliation should be practiced and sought regularly.

B. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Eucharist

1. These guidelines are to be read in light of the following documents:
 - A. **The General Directory for Catechesis**, 1997
 - B. **The Code of Canon Law**, 1983
 - C. **The National Catechetical Directory**, 1977
 - D. **Diocese of Springfield Handbook on Catechesis**, 2000
2. "The Eucharist is the center and heart of Christian life for both the universal and local Church and for each Christian. All that belongs to Christian life leads to the eucharistic celebration or flows from it." (*National Catechetical Directory*, 120)
3. These guidelines address the preparation of children baptized in the Catholic Church at infancy for first participation in the Eucharist. Other occasions for first reception of Eucharist (e.g., those preparing for full communion with the Catholic Church) can be found in the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults in the Diocese of Springfield*.
4. Timing: Children who have reached the age of reason and have been properly catechized may receive their First Eucharist (*Code of Canon Law*, Cans. 913, 914). "With the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason" (Can. 97).

"Catechesis for First Communion is conducted separately from introductory catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, since each sacrament deserves its own concentrated preparation." (*National Catechetical Directory*, 122)

In order to meet these various timing requirements the Diocese of Springfield recommends that the celebration of First Reconciliation take place before or during the season of Advent, and the celebration of First Eucharist take place during the Easter season. This usually corresponds with the child's second grade year of schooling.

Other options for preparation and celebration are possible (e.g., summer programs or family programs) that work outside a school year schedule. Celebration of the sacrament may take place following such preparation, given that the preparation attends fully to the catechesis named below.

Reception of the sacrament may be delayed if it seems clear to those involved (priest, DRE/CRE, catechist and parents/guardians) that an individual child is not ready for the sacrament (Can. 914).

5. Catechesis: "For the administration of the Most Holy Eucharist to children, it is required that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so as to

understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and can receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion.” (Can 913)

According to the *National Catechetical Directory* (122) catechesis for children “adapted to their intellectual capacity” should:

- “Strengthen awareness of the Father’s love, of the call to participate in Christ’s sacrifice, and of the gift of the Spirit”
- Teach that “the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ”
- Explore concepts of “sharing, listening, eating, conversing, giving, thanking, and celebrating”
- “Familiarize them with the main events of Jesus’ life”
- “Help them participate more meaningfully in the action of the Mass”
- Help the child “to receive Christ’s body and blood in communion in an informed and reverent manner”

This catechesis may take many forms, including education about the sacrament as well as the liturgical, communal and spiritual formation for its reception. Catechesis for First Eucharist should take place in the child’s home parish, even for those children enrolled in Catholic schools. While the Catholic school’s curriculum may be concerned with education about the sacrament, the liturgical, communal and spiritual elements of immediate sacramental preparation are the concern of the parish.

There may be situations, given parish size, where local parishes join staffs, resources and liturgical celebrations in order to improve this preparation.

Children should be made familiar with the Mass and comfortable with the sacramental ritual before they actually celebrate it. However, practice for reception does not replace catechesis for reception.

6. Parent/Family Involvement: According to the *National Catechetical Directory* (122) “parents have a right and duty to be intimately involved in preparing the children for First Communion. Catechesis aims to help parents/guardians grow in understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist and participate readily in catechizing their children.”

Times of sacramental preparation for children are an excellent opportunity for welcoming other family members into a closer relationship with God and with the Church. Parents/guardians should be made aware of expectations for the family and child in the reception of the sacrament and the general themes of catechesis for the sacrament. Family participation in the catechetical process and in the liturgical celebrations

relative to Eucharist should be encouraged.

Parishes are to provide meetings and/or other opportunities in order to offer adult catechesis on the sacrament, to communicate program expectations and to integrate parents/guardians in the catechesis of their children.

7. Celebration of the Rite: Celebration of First Eucharist should take place in the child's home parish, even for those children enrolled in Catholic schools.

"The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life'" (CCC 1324, LG 11). As First Eucharist is a further step in the initiation of a child into the worshipping community, the ideal time for celebration of First Eucharist would be during the Sunday celebrations.

To further emphasize their place in the worshipping community the children should be encouraged to participate in the liturgy to the fullest of their abilities.

8. Sacramental Records: Prior to the reception of First Eucharist the parish must attain proof of baptism for all candidates (Cans. 842, 912 & 894). After the reception of First Eucharist the parish is responsible for keeping records on those who have received the sacrament.
9. Ongoing Catechesis and Celebration of the Sacrament: Catechesis for the immediate reception of the sacrament should be age appropriate and not attempt to address all issues relative to Eucharist. "Continued catechesis is given yearly in all catechetical programs for children, inasmuch as the sacraments require lifelong participation and study." (*National Catechetical Directory*, 122) Likewise, children should be taught by word and by example of the worshipping community that participation in the Mass and reception of the Eucharist are to be practiced on the Lord's Day and on Holy Days.

C. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation

1. These guidelines are to be read in light of the following documents:
 - A. **The Rite of Confirmation**, 1971
 - B. **The General Directory for Catechesis**, 1997
 - C. **The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**, 1987
 - D. **The Code of Canon Law**, 1983
 - E. **National Catechetical Directory**, 1977
 - F. **Diocese of Springfield Handbook on Catechesis**, 2000

2. “Those who have been baptized continue on the path of Christian initiation through the sacrament of confirmation. In this sacrament they receive the Holy Spirit whom the Lord sent upon the apostles on Pentecost. This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more fully to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his Body in faith and love.” (*Rite of Confirmation*, 1,2)

“Confirmation renews and strengthens the Christians’ baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of His body.” (*National Catechetical Directory*, 118)

3. These guidelines address the preparation for the reception of Confirmation of those adolescents and adults previously baptized in the Roman Catholic Church who have received First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. Other occasions for full initiation into the Roman Catholic Church are addressed in the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults in the Diocese of Springfield*.
4. Timing: “The faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time; their parents/guardians and shepherds of souls, especially pastors, are to see to it that the faithful are properly instructed to receive it and approach the sacrament at the appropriate time.” (*Code of Canon Law*, Can. 890)

Canon 891 permits each national episcopal conference to determine the appropriate age of confirmation, and in the United States, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has permitted each diocese to set its own age criteria. Therefore, in the Diocese of Springfield the Sacrament of Confirmation for adolescents is to be celebrated no earlier than the junior year of high school or after the candidate reaches the age of sixteen.

Permission to confirm children or adolescents before the age named here must be sought from the Bishop of Springfield in writing. In the case

where the candidate is in danger of death, no permission need be sought. According to Canon 889 §2, readiness for reception is determined by the candidate’s:

- Having the use of reason
- Being suitably instructed
- Being properly disposed
- And being able to renew his or her baptismal promises.

Discernment for readiness is to be done by those responsible for preparing the candidates for Confirmation, appropriate clergy, parents/guardians and the candidates themselves. Therefore, some process should be in place during preparation to aid in this decision.

If reception of the sacrament is delayed for any reason - either by the choice of the adolescent candidate or by that of the pastor, director of religious education, catechist or parent/guardian - the parish is still responsible for ministering to the religious education needs of the adolescent.

If a student has received the sacrament in advance of his or her classmates (either in another diocese, parish or through the RCIA process), the parish is still responsible for ministering to the catechetical needs of the adolescent.

5. Catechesis: "As with Baptism, catechesis for this sacrament takes place within the parish community, which has an obligation to participate in the catechetical preparation of those to be confirmed. The parish is the faith community into whose life of prayer and worship they will be more fully initiated. It also embodies the message to which they are to respond and gives witness, in service, to the faith they profess. The parish should strive to catechize on behalf of 'obedience to Christ' and 'loyal testimony to him' through the power of the Spirit." (*National Catechetical Directory*, 119)

Therefore, catechesis for Confirmation should take place in the candidate's home parish, even for students of Catholic schools. There may be situations, given parish size, where local parishes join catechetical staffs, resources and liturgical celebrations in order to improve this preparation. Such collaboration should allow parishes to celebrate the sacrament annually.

The Confirmation program for adolescents should encompass the catechetical elements of community, word, worship and service. Students of Catholic schools must participate in those elements of catechesis which are unique to the immediate preparation for reception of the sacrament and are not a part of the Catholic school curriculum (e.g., catechesis on the sacrament, liturgical celebrations, parent/guardian and sponsor events, retreats, etc.).

The Confirmation program for adults may follow a different schedule from that of the adolescents. However, the catechesis should also substantially attend to the elements of community, word, worship and service.

- **Community**: belonging to the Catholic Church, especially emphasized in membership in the local parish. Candidates should be integrated into the life of the parish, and the parish should show interest and support for the candidates.
- **Word**: understanding the call to and requirements of discipleship with special attention to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation catechesis should not be seen as an opportunity to review all elements of the Catholic faith.
- **Worship**: participating in the prayer life of the Church and assisting the candidate in becoming a person of prayer. Participation of the candidates in the Chrism Mass in the Diocese of Springfield is highly recommended during the year of preparation.

- **Service:** witnessing the life of service to the world and the Church. This should be seen as an element of Christian discipleship witnessed by all in the community, and not simply a requirement of confirmation.

A Confirmation retreat during the year of preparation is highly encouraged.

6. Parent/Family Involvement: “As the primary educators of their children, parents, along with sponsors, are to be intimately involved in catechesis for Confirmation. This will help them renew and strengthen their own faith, besides enabling them to set a better example for their children and godchildren. The parental program is an important element in planning for Confirmation for children and young people.” (*National Catechetical Directory*, 119)

Times of sacramental preparation for young people are excellent opportunities for welcoming other family members into a closer relationship with God and with the Church. Parents should be made aware of expectations for the family and the young person in reception of the sacrament and the general themes of catechesis for the sacrament. Family participation in the catechetical process and in the liturgical celebrations relative to Confirmation should be encouraged. Parishes are to provide parent/guardian meetings and/or other opportunities in order to

offer adult catechesis on the sacrament, to communicate program expectations and to integrate parents/guardians in the catechesis of their son or daughter.

7. Sponsor Involvement: “It is for the sponsor to see that the confirmed person acts as a true witness to Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations connected with this sacrament.” (Can. 892) In order for one to be admitted as a sponsor he or she must fulfill the following criteria (as outlined in Can. 874):
 - Be a confirmed Catholic who has received First Eucharist and lives a life befitting the role to be undertaken;
 - Be at least seventeen years old;
 - Not be a parent of the candidate;
 - Not be under canonical penalty;
 - Preferably, be the candidate’s baptismal sponsor/godparent.

As much as possible, the sponsor should be involved in the preparation process so that he or she may better serve as a companion to the candidate on the journey toward mature faith.

8. Celebration of the Rite: Confirmation is to be celebrated by the Bishop (Can. 882). If the Bishop is not able to confer the sacrament himself he may give faculty to another presbyter in his place (Cans. 883-885).

Celebrations may take place at any time within the year, exclusive of the season of Lent. Requests for dates are to be made in writing to the office of the bishop.

Confirmation is to be celebrated in the candidate's home parish unless a just cause suggests otherwise. At the request of the Bishop, local parishes may combine the liturgical celebration of the sacrament.

9. Sacramental Records: Prior to the celebration of Confirmation the parish must attain proof of baptism for all candidates (Cans. 842, 889 & 894). After the Confirmation the parish is responsible for keeping records on those confirmed with reference to the minister, parents, sponsor, date and place (Can. 895). Those records also should be shared with each confirmand's baptismal parish for recording there.

D. Diocesan Policy Relative to Catechetical Texts

Textbooks are guides for learning, summary statements of course content, and ready instruments of review. They must present the authentic and complete message of Christ and His Church, adapted to the capacity of the learners, with balanced emphasis proportionate to the importance of particular truths. (National Catechetical Directory, 264)

Recognizing the unique nature of each parish, no one text is appropriate to all parish situations. Each parish must determine those materials that best suit both the capacity of the teachers to use them effectively and the needs of the learners. It is the responsibility of the catechetical leader (ARE/CRE/DRE), in concert with the parish board of religious education and the pastor, to investigate available materials and to select the curriculum most suitable to the parish's individual needs.

The Diocesan Office of Religious Education keeps abreast of all available catechetical materials, and evaluates them on educational, as well as, theological grounds. More will be said below on how such evaluations are done. Those materials which are recommended for parish use can be found on display at the Diocesan Offices. Those materials that have been found wanting in educational and/or theological dimensions are not recommended. Their use is definitely discouraged by this office.

Changes of series of textbooks within a parish program should be made in consultation with the diocesan staff. Changing texts frequently is contrary to good educational procedure and, therefore, is against diocesan policy.

In 1996 the United States Catholic Conference's Office of the Catechism instituted a Protocol for catechetical texts. Publishers of catechetical texts are encouraged to volunteer their material for the process. The aim of the Protocol is to insure the presentation of sound doctrine within the texts in accordance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Those texts that have been submitted to the Protocol process and have passed will be marked as such by the publisher.

The Protocol is not an effort to evaluate good educational processes, catechetical supports, nor age appropriateness of material. In light of these other elements it is still appropriate for the Office of Religious Education to evaluate texts in order to determine their suitability for parish use.

Evaluation

According to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in the 1997 *National Catechetical Directory* (NCD) *Sharing the Light of Faith*:

“All catechetical textbooks and other materials are to be prepared according to the criteria and guidelines contained in this NCD. It is also fully expected that all such texts and materials will be evaluated by those responsible for catechesis in light of these criteria and guidelines. (266)

This directive is understood by the Diocese of Springfield Office of Religious Education as its responsibility to review and evaluate those catechetical texts likely to be used in parish settings.

The evaluation tool used, *How to Choose Catechetical Textbooks: Process and Criteria* (1984, revised 1996), was developed for the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL). This tool is based on the NCD, the *Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Textbooks* (USCC, 1990), and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican, 1994). It evaluates texts along the following lines:

- Format (presentation, readability, and balance)
- Content (considered in four areas):
 - Message (doctrine, age appropriateness)
 - Community (connection with parish and wider Church)
 - Worship (uses of and opportunities for prayer)
 - Christian living and service (living and reflecting on faith)
- Assistance for the catechist (methodologies, background, resources)
 - Resources for parish, family and parent involvement (communication with and material for)
- Additional resources (support materials, reference)

Copies of the tool are in the Diocesan Office of Religious Education libraries.

Systematic Catechesis and Curriculum

An important thing to remember when considering curriculum is that good catechesis is ongoing throughout a person’s life. Therefore, it is not necessary, and it is even ineffectual, to try to teach all aspects of the faith to one person at one time. However, it is essential that over time “the authentic and complete message of Christ and His Church” be attended to in a systematic way (NCD 264).

Keeping this in mind, the series of texts should be chosen and adapted according to grade units (e.g., primary, intermediate, junior and senior high levels). Consideration should be given to the scope and sequence of each series so as to assure continuity in the curriculum as well as appropriate educational methods.

For junior and senior high school catechesis recommendations for curriculum themes were made in the 1986 document *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis: Maturing in Faith*. This document was developed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry in collaboration with other national Catholic educational organizations, including the USCC.

Its recommended themes for older adolescents (ages 14-19) are: faith and identity; the gospels; Hebrew scriptures; Jesus; justice and peace; love and lifestyles; morality; Paul and his letters.

Its recommended themes for younger adolescents (ages 11-15) are: Church; Jesus and the gospel message; morality and moral decision making; personal growth; relationships; service; sexuality.

The writers of the document recognize that “local leaders need to adapt the framework to the particular needs of their youth, and they may also need to include additional faith themes” (p. 120). Good catechesis at this level asks that the curriculum balance doctrinal and scriptural issues with those that ask for their integration into the lives of adolescents.

As for the scope and sequence of curriculum for lower grades there is no document that speaks to that age group as such. So looking to the NCD (Chapter 5), Diocesan policy would ask that sufficient attention be given over the years to the principal elements of the Christian message: the mystery of the one God; creation; Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit; the Church; the sacraments; the life of grace; the moral life; Mary and the saints; and death, judgment and eternity. In teaching any and all of these it is essential to present them at the level and ability of the learners.

It is important for each catechist to appreciate the necessity of his or her role in the larger scheme, and remain faithful to the curriculum they have been asked to teach.

Christian prayers should be introduced and learned as they fit with the curriculum and as their concepts, language and degree of difficulty are appropriate for the learners.

It is also advisable that during times of preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation that texts designed for immediate preparation be used alongside or instead of grade level texts.

E. Guidelines for St. Pius X Award

The St. Pius X Award is given by the Bishop of Springfield through the Diocesan Office of Religious Education. Pastors and/or parish catechetical leaders may choose 1 (one) person each year to receive this award. The award is to be presented to a person who has given outstanding service voluntarily to the parish in the area of religious education for a minimum of 5 years. This may include those who contribute at any level (elementary, adolescent, adult and RCIA) as well as any type of support staff.

The award is to be presented at regional celebrations by the Bishop. In addition, parishes are encouraged to recognize their recipient at a liturgy or celebration within the parish following the award ceremony.

Paperwork to facilitate the reception of these awards will be sent by the diocesan office to parishes of a given region prior to the scheduled date of the ceremony.

The designated regions and the seasons of this award ceremony will be:

- Northern and Southern Berkshire Deaneries – Fall
- Greater Holyoke and Hampden Central and East Deaneries – Fall
- Franklin and Hampshire Deaneries – Spring
- Greater Springfield I & II and Hampden West Deaneries – Spring

Planning for the events will be done through the diocesan office in collaboration with participating parishes. Each celebration will follow a similar format.

See the *Parish Application Form for St. Pius X Award* which includes the criteria for choosing a recipient.



Diocese of Springfield
OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Parish Application Form

St. Pius X Award

The St. Pius X Award is presented once a year to persons who have given outstanding service to the parish in the area of Religious Education. Each parish is eligible to recommend one person for this award. The minimum requirement for a candidate for this award is five years of voluntary service in the parish religious education program.

In his encyclical "Acerbo Nimis" Pope St. Pius X set forth the importance of the catechetical ministry. He encouraged the teaching of religion to children, youth and adults. Thus, it is appropriate that this award be given the name of Pope Pius X. The St. Pius X Award consists of a medal of St. Pius X, one inch in diameter, suspended from a pin-back ribbon.

The award will be presented at a regional celebration sponsored by the Diocesan Office of Religious Education with the Bishop presiding. Parishes wishing to present the medal outside of the regional celebration may petition the Bishop in writing to do so.

The candidate must be recommended by the Pastor and/or Director of Religious Education and approved by the Diocesan Director of Religious Education.

I. General Criteria

- a. The candidate must have, at least, five years of service in the parish religious education program, and still be active in it. Catechists on any level, e.g., elementary, adolescent, adult and RCIA, as well as members of the program's support staff, are eligible.
- b. The award is presented to adult volunteer members of the parish religious education program.
- c. Only one award per parish per year is to be bestowed. Combined programs and team teaching situations require special consideration. Please call the Office of Religious Education before nominating candidates in these circumstances.
- d. The Diocesan Director of Religious Education will review all applications.

II. Parish Recommendation: *(Please print clearly.)*

I recommend
Name _____ of _____ Candidate _____

Address

City/State/Zip _____ Telephone

Parish _____ Parish City

_____ as worthy of receiving the St. Pius X Award for service to the parish Religious Education program.

Date of the Diocesan Celebration at which it will be accepted _____

Please share with us some specifics about this person that you feel make the reception of this award appropriate. These comments will be used to introduce the candidate to the Bishop and congregation.

Please include (on a separate sheet of paper) but not necessarily in the following order:

- name of the parish;
- name of the recipient;
- primary role of the recipient in the religious program (e.g., grade level, Board member, etc.) and the number of years of service;
- a significant attribute of the person's service (e.g., enthusiasm, dedication, tactfulness, cheerfulness, perseverance, etc.);
- any secondary religious education role(s) of service, including the number of years;
- any other areas of service to the parish;
- brief statement of thanks or appreciation;
- any religious education courses or workshops completed.

The final composition will be edited so that there will be some uniformity of length and scope for each recipient.

Signed _____

Date

Pastor or Director of Religious Education

Please include \$25.00 to cover the cost of the medal and incidental expenses related to the celebration.

III. Applications should be sent with a check, payable to "**Office of Religious Education**" to:

Office of Religious Education
P. O. Box 1730
Springfield, MA 01102-1730

Revised 10/06

F. Home Study Option

*“Parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children
....Parents should frequently be reminded of their obligation to
see to it that their children participate in catechetical programs
sponsored by the Church.” (NCD 212)*

The parish must continue to be the prime mover and the pre-eminent place for catechesis (See CT 67).

The Diocese of Springfield recognizes the important catechetical role and responsibility of both parents/guardians and the parish community. There are times when parents/guardians may find it necessary to choose the home study option for catechesis for their children.

Some pastoral reasoning that may necessitate this are:

1. In those families with two parents/guardians working and with increased pressures on their time, the ability for some to participate in the weekly religious education programs offered by parishes may be difficult. The schedule of families sometimes does not match the schedule of religious education at the parish.
2. In families that have experienced separation or divorce, custody of children is often shared with children spending alternate weeks and/or weekends with different parents. This has resulted in a child's being unable to participate in religious education in a parish nearly half the time.
3. In rural situations or when families live at a distance from the parish where they worship, transportation has sometimes become a severe difficulty and participation in religious education has become more complex and difficult.

While this option may be appropriate and necessary for the time, its use should be limited and done in consultation with the catechetical leader of the parish (ARE/CRE/DRE) and with the approval of the Pastor.

The following guidelines should be upheld:

1. Permission should be given on an individual basis for the period of one year.
2. Parents/guardians and students should meet with parish leadership to determine goals for the year and a means for evaluating those goals.
3. Texts used in the home are to be approved by the parish.

4. Families should be encouraged to participate in community activities and supportive programs in order to maintain contact with other children and the parish community.
5. Because of the communal nature of the sacraments, immediate preparation for First Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation should take place in the parish program.

“It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates. ‘Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the Church which is the “sacrament of unity,” namely the holy people united and organized under the authority of the bishops” (CCC 1140).

G. Guidelines for the Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism for Children

(Infants and Children below Catechetical Age)

1. These guidelines are to be read in light of the following documents:
 - A. The Rite of Baptism for Children, 1969**
 - B. The Code of Canon Law, 1983**
 - C. The National Catechetical Directory, 1977**
 - D. General Directory for Catechesis, 1997**
 - E. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997**
 - F. NCCB Decree: Baptism Records for Adopted Children, 2001**

2. “By accepting Baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection, people affirm their faith and are initiated and welcomed into the community of faith. Dedicated to and enlightened by the Spirit, made sons and daughters of God with a permanent relationship in Christ, and cleansed from sin through water and the Holy Spirit, they become a new creation.”
(National Catechetical Directory, 116)

3. These guidelines are concerned with how children or infants begin the process of initiation into the Roman Catholic Church through Baptism. “The term ‘children’ or ‘infants’ refers to those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore cannot profess personal faith” (RBC 1). These are children who have not reached the age of 7 years. The initiation of older children into the Roman Catholic Church is addressed in the *Handbook for Parish Catechesis* under *Guidelines and Recommendations for Implementing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the Diocese of Springfield (Section 3C, 55)*.

4. Timing:
In considering the timing of Baptism in the life of a child there are several things to keep in mind. Of primary consideration is the welfare of the child and the desire to give him/her the benefits of the sacrament as soon as possible. Obviously any child in danger of death should be baptized without delay. Ordinarily efforts should be made to baptize an infant within the first weeks after birth.

Several pastoral considerations may delay an infant’s Baptism.

- Consideration for the mother’s health - Care should be taken that she is able to be present at the Baptism.
- Time afforded for proper preparation of parents/guardians for the celebration of the sacrament and their responsibilities in raising the child within the faith. This includes consent by at least one of the parents/guardians to the Baptism as well as a founded hope that the infant will be raised in the Catholic religion.
- Ability of the extended family to be present for the Baptism

Every effort should be made to baptize the child as soon as possible. It is suggested that baptismal preparations begin before the birth of the child.

Baptism may be delayed, but unless there is no sign of hope that the child will be raised in the faith it may not be denied. In those cases when the Baptism is delayed, concrete reasons are to be given to the parents so as not to alienate them, but rather to encourage them toward a regular practice of the faith.

5. Catechesis:

A. Context:

The Sacrament of Baptism initiates one on a journey of faith as a disciple of Christ. Baptism celebrates and welcomes new members into the community of faith. The domestic church, the family blessed with the birth of new life seeking the graces of the sacrament, brings to the community its gifts and builds up the Body of Christ.

Since a child obviously is incapable of a faith commitment, the Church looks to the faith of the parents as a basis for baptizing the child. Godparents also have the important task of guiding these children to live a Christian life. It is the extended family and community that support the parents in their task of nurturing this faith. Baptism is a celebration of the entire faith community affecting parents, godparents and extended family.

B. Process:

Parents should be made aware of the expectations for the family in the reception of the sacrament. The process of preparation for Baptism affords an excellent opportunity for bringing parents into a closer relationship with God and with the Church. The parish community offers catechesis and/or other opportunities for faith formation.

Noting the critical significance of the beginning stages of faith development in the life of a child, parishes are to offer opportunities for the ongoing faith formation of parents.

C. Content:

In realizing more deeply the mystery of Christ and the abundant love of God, parents and godparents are drawn to re-examine the meaning of faith in their lives. In response to this shared reflection, parents and godparents are made aware of their responsibility for providing a Christian family environment where the faith of their child will be nurtured. Parents are the first evangelizers bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to their children.

Parents and godparents are to be prepared to celebrate the sacrament with understanding through catechesis which considers

the rituals and symbols of the sacrament in all their richness and profound meaning.

According to the *National Catechetical Directory* (117), baptismal

catechesis centers on:

- The Father's love
- The life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Son
- The cleansing of original and personal sin
- The gift of the Spirit to the Church
- The proclamation of God's word, so that those called may respond in faith

The *Rite of Baptism for Children (Intro. II, 5 #1)* recommends that suitable books and materials designed for families are to be provided.

Catechesis in preparation for the celebration of Baptism should provide parents with the support to develop a good Christian home; therefore, encouraging and strengthening their own personal faith development.

The initial entrance into the life of Christ through Baptism must continue through participation in the life of the parish community. Parishes are to be supportive in fostering this relationship.

6. Persons Involved in the Process:

"It is the duty of the priest to prepare families for the baptism of their children and to help in the task of Christian formation that they have undertaken. It is the duty of the Bishop to coordinate such pastoral efforts in the diocese, with the help also of deacons and lay people " (*RBC Intro. II,7,#1*).

The Diocesan Office of Religious Education assists in this role by offering resources and services to parishes implementing sacramental preparation.

In light of the responsibility of the priest and community to the parents, the Diocese of Springfield strongly recommends that parishes create baptismal teams consisting of members of the parish, a deacon and/or priest, catechetical leader and/or pastoral minister, as determined by the pastor. Catechesis also involves the entire community who share their faith with and give witness and support to the parents and godparents of the newly baptized.

Since a child cannot profess personal faith, parents carry the responsibility of providing Christian formation that will lead the child to the acceptance of the faith that was professed on his/her behalf.

Parents are to choose qualified godparents to assist in this task. Godparents are to model for the child the Catholic way of life. Therefore, godparents are required to:

- Be at least 16 years of age
- Have been fully initiated into the Roman Catholic Church (having received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist)

- Live in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken

Parents may not be godparents for their own children. Only one godparent is required. If parents desire two godparents, one must be male, the other female. A Christian of a non-Catholic ecclesial community may serve as an official witness together with the Catholic godparent. (Can. 872-874) There is nothing in church law requiring a certificate that states that godparents are in good standing. Parents are to be exhorted to choose responsibly according to the above requirements.

The ordinary minister of Baptism is a bishop, priest or deacon. In case of imminent death anyone may and should baptize.

7. Celebration of the Rite:

Baptism is the gateway to life in the Church. The appropriate place of celebration is in the church or oratory where there is a baptismal font. Baptisms are to take place in the parish church of the parents of the child to be baptized. If there is a legitimate reason for the Baptism to take place at another church location, out of courtesy a notification ought to be given to the home parish of the parents.

If a visiting minister is requested to celebrate the sacrament, permission of the pastor/pastoral administrator is to be obtained.

A Christian name, i.e. the name of a saint is encouraged though not required. Only a name that is not offensive to Christian belief or practice is acceptable.

It is recommended that Baptism be celebrated on Sundays or at the Easter Vigil. It is most appropriate that Baptisms take place during a Sunday liturgy when the community is gathered in worship.

While no liturgical law prohibits Baptism during the penitential seasons,, parishes might consider refraining from the celebration of Baptism during Lent. The Easter season is most appropriate, emphasizing its Paschal character and drawing on the model of the RCIA.

The richness of the words and symbols of the ceremony speak of the dignity of a new creation entering a holy covenant with God. Baptism may be conferred either by pouring water over the head of the one to be baptized or by immersion. Immersion signifies more clearly the entering

into the Paschal Mystery of Christ. (CCC 1239) The beauty of the sacrament is to be celebrated to its fullest to ensure the reverent participation of all.

8. Sacramental Records:

The pastor has the responsibility to see to it that the names of the baptized are recorded in the parish baptismal record book carefully and

without delay. To be noted are the names of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses if any, and the place and date of the conferred baptism, together with the date and place of birth.

In the case of a single mother, the recording of the father's name is not enforced unless the father acknowledges his paternity. The record should be in keeping with what is written on the birth certificate. (Can. 877)

In accordance with the *National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Decree: Baptism Records for Adopted Children*, the record for adopted children should mention the Christian name(s) of the child, adoptive parent(s), sponsors, the date and place of birth, with the date and place of baptism. The fact of adoption is to be noted without the names of the natural parents. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish are the same as other baptismal certificates with no mention of the fact of adoption.

The record book for children baptized before their adoption should be completed after the adoption is finalized. Parentheses are to be placed around the names of the natural parents and the adoptive parent(s) added. The child's former surname is to be parenthesized and the new surname added. The legal adoption is to be noted. Baptismal certificates issued by the parish should not give mention of the adoption and the sponsors' names are not to be given. Names of the adoptive parents only and the new surname of the child with date and place of baptism and the name of the minister who conferred the sacrament are to be noted on the certificate.

Persons having access to the parish records have an obligation not to disclose information that would reveal the fact of adoption.

9. Ongoing Catechesis:

The sacrament of Baptism takes on its meaning as a child is formed in faith. The beginning stages of life set the direction and foundation for the future. As a child develops in the basic human capacity to relate to others in love, trust and respect, that child also develops the human capacity for relating to God. Parents and extended family are significant influences at this time of life. Faith is nourished continually in a Christian environment. The Church is to support families in providing catechesis at every age level. The gift of Baptism must be continually nourished. (GDC 177)

APPENDIX

NCCB DECREE: BAPTISM RECORDS FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN 2001

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in accord with the prescription of Canon 877.3, hereby decree that:

1. For children **baptized after their adoption is finalized**, the following shall be entered in the register:
 - the Christian name(s) of the child as designated by the adoptive parent(s);
 - the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s);
 - the date and place of birth;
 - the names of the sponsors selected by the adoptive parent(s);
 - the place and date of the baptism;
 - the fact of adoption but **not the names of the natural parents.**

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for adopted children will be no different from other baptismal certificates. No mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.

2. For children **baptized before their adoption is finalized**, the following notations shall be added to the baptismal register, but only after the adoption has been finalized and with due regard for the civil law of the jurisdiction:
 - parentheses shall be placed around the names of the natural parents;
 - the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s) shall then be added;
 - the child's former surname shall also be parenthesized and the surname added;
 - a notation shall be made that the child was legally adopted.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals shall give only the name(s) of the adoptive parent(s), the child's new legal surname, the date and place of baptism, and the name of the minister who conferred the sacrament. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) shall not be given, and no mention of the fact of adoption shall be made on the baptismal certificate.

For future ease in reference, and to afford what may often be the only possibility of reference after the adoption has been finalized, a baptismal entry for the adopted child can be made in the baptismal register of the adoptive parents' parish, citing the date and location of the original baptismal record, listing only the name of the adoptive parent(s) and the date and place of birth.

Parish personnel having access to parish registers have an obligation not to disclose to any person any information which would identify or reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted.

H. Guidelines for the Employment of Catechetical Leaders

“The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader” (National Directory for Catechesis, USCCB, 2005, p. 24).

“Successful catechesis in a parish requires much time, effort, coordination, and expertise. Therefore, each parish needs a designated leader or leaders whose primary responsibility is to coordinate its catechetical endeavors. Each designated leader should be recognized by the Office of Religious Education in accordance with its current guidelines” (Handbook, Section 2, p.11).

“The Bishop of Springfield would like all parishes (or group of parishes) to have an appropriately qualified and compensated catechetical leader, as outlined in this document, to oversee this very important ecclesial ministry” (Handbook, Section 2, p. 14).

These guidelines are to be read in conjunction with Section 2B of our diocesan *Handbook for Parish Catechesis*.

Role:

The catechetical leader is a faith-filled ecclesial minister with the following roles:

- Guide for sound educational approaches to catechesis
- Theological resource person who is solidly grounded in the Catholic faith
- Skilled administrator of parish resources and services

These tasks require organizational and interpersonal skills, as well as knowledge of educational theory in general and catechetical theory and practice in particular.

Each parish must determine the exact role needed for the parish. Nationally the terms DRE, CRE and ARE are used to describe people with various functions and degrees of education. In the diocese of Springfield we use the term *parish catechetical leader* to refer to the person or persons the pastor considers in charge of the entire parish program or a part of it.

Role Description:

Every parish has its own personality and therefore its own needs. In determining the needs of their parish, the pastor, Religious Education Commission and Parish Council should consider the Assessment for Parish

Catechetical Programs and Sample Job Description found in Section 5 of the *Handbook for Parish Catechesis*.

Qualifications:

Personal

- Person of faith and prayer
- Practicing Roman Catholic who upholds the teachings of the Church
- Witness to the Gospel
- Willing to share one's faith
- Gifted with the grace for ministry
- Willing participant in ongoing formation.

Professional:

The catechetical leader assumes responsibility for one of the most important ministry in a parish. This ministry, which reaches all members of the parish from children to adults, requires professional training and experience. Ideally the catechetical leader would have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Religious Education or a similar field (education, theology, pastoral ministry). Experience and knowledge in both educational theory and theology are important for successfully completing the necessary tasks.

Participation in our diocesan Lay Ministry program should be a requirement for those holding this leadership position without previous theological and educational preparation. The parish should assume the expense of these courses and upon completion of leadership training adjust the salary accordingly.

Compensation and Support

Parish catechetical leaders come from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds. Their work is varied and time consuming. They often have irregular hours and at various times of the year have to work long hours. The fact that most of their work is with volunteers adds another unusual dimension to their work.

A *Ministry Analysis Worksheet* is included in Section 5 of the *Handbook for Parish Catechesis*. Using this document will help a parish determine what a just salary might be. In addition to financial remuneration the catechetical leader who works more than 20 hours a week should be offered benefits, which should include health insurance (30 hours per week required), membership in the diocesan pension plan, paid vacation, and continuing education opportunities.

All employees regardless of the number of hours they work should receive reimbursement for expenses, including mileage and pre-approved job related

continuing education costs. The pastor and catechetical leader should review the budget on an annual basis.

Accountability

The catechetical leader is responsible to the pastor or his designated representative. A written job description of mutual responsibilities and benefits is essential and important for both the parish and the individual. Regular meetings should be held to insure good communication between the pastor and the catechetical leader. When staff meetings are held, the catechetical leader should be part of those meetings

The catechetical leader should establish regular office hours when she/he is available to teachers, parents and others who may want to meet with him or her.

Certain times of the year are more demanding than others on the catechetical leader, requiring a greater expenditure of time and energy. It is reasonable and fair that in recognition of this there be flexibility in the work schedule.

Once a year the pastor and catechetical leader should engage in an in-depth evaluation of their mutual expectations and the success of the parish program. This evaluation could include the religious education commission or board.

Hiring Process

All parish catechetical leaders are to be hired in consultation with the Office of Religious Education. A member of the Religious Education Office staff must interview a candidate before the parish hires him/her. As part of the ongoing educational goals for the catechetical leader, he/she will be required to participate in appropriate training sessions offered through ORE. This approach offers better assurance that those leading our parish programs have the qualifications and academic standards for the position. The pastor of course will make the final determination regarding the person to be employed by the parish. Pastors are reminded that it is their responsibility to see that CORI forms are submitted to the Human Resource Director and Code of Conduct forms are signed.

The Office of Religious Education:

- Is available to advertise existing positions and assist throughout the interviewing process. A packet of materials to assist parishes in this process is available from the ORE.
- Is willing to assist parishes in writing job descriptions, developing parish profiles, formulating a search committees, and conducting interviews.

- Endorses the salary guidelines in the *Ministry Analysis Worksheet* as proposed by the New England Directors of Religious Education, Inc.

Once a parish has hired a catechetical leader, he/she should be guided by the pastor to meet with the staff of the ORE. The diocesan staff will offer information on diocesan policies and services, in addition to adding the individual to diocesan mailing lists.

Diocesan Certification

All parish catechetical leaders should be certified through our diocesan Office of Religious Education in conjunction with the Office of Lay Ministry. This process will include filling out an application for certification and an interview with a diocesan staff person to assess the developmental needs for the position and to determine how the office can assist the person in fulfilling the role.

SECTION 5

SAMPLES/APPENDICES

Consent and Release Form
Assessment for a Parish Catechetical Program
Sample Catechist Application Form
Sample Job Description
Ministry Analysis Worksheet
Employee Agreements
Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 119, Section 1, p. 54,
reference)

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESOURCES

**CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM
FOR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Child's name

Parent's name

Street Address

Street Address

City/Town, State, Zip Code

City/Town, State, Zip Code

Telephone No.

Telephone No.

We hereby request that the above-named Child be allowed to participate in the following program: _____ and any other activities or events incidental to, associated with, or sponsored by said program, including transportation to and from such program, event or activity. The above-named Parent represents that he/she is the person with legal custody of the above-named Child. Parent and Child each hereby agrees to abide by all rules, regulations and requirements pertaining to the Child's participation.

In consideration of the Child being allowed to participate in this program, the undersigned Parent and Child, for themselves and for their heirs, representatives and assigns, do forever RELEASE, ACQUIT, DISCHARGE and COVENANT TO HOLD HARMLESS the Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield, a corporation sole, the school, parish or other organization sponsoring the program, events or activities, _____, their respective agents, servants, employees and representatives, and the advisers, coaches, teachers, assistants, supervisors, helpers, volunteers and any and all others who may be involved in the organization, supervision or conduct of such extracurricular activities, from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, suits and demands, on account of or in any way growing out of, directly or indirectly, all known and unknown bodily injuries, personal injuries and property damage which the Child, Parent or other family members may suffer as a result of or in connection with the Child's participation in said program, events or activities.

THIS IS A RELEASE OF RIGHTS - READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING

Date

Child's signature

Parent's signature

ASSESSMENT FOR A PARISH CATECHETICAL PROGRAM

Please check all that applies to your program.

Adult Education

- Adult education is offered on a systematic basis.
- A variety of adult catechetical programs are offered each year.
- Programs for adults are implemented in light of adult education principles.
- The parish has a library of adult materials to borrow.

Catechesis of Children and Youth

- Texts used are those in keeping with the *Diocesan Policy Relative to Catechetical Texts*.
- Children and youth have their own texts in which they can write, take home and keep.
- Supplementary resources connected to the text are available to catechists.
- Audio visual resources are used appropriately and effectively.
- Other supplies are available to catechists.
- Scheduling takes place according to "A Planning Checklist" in the Scheduling section of this handbook.
- Communication with parents/guardians takes place on a regular basis.
- Catechetical activities take place in a welcoming and comfortable environment.
- Regular learning groups have no more than 12 participants.
- The program is adaptable to people with special needs.

Supportive Programs Offered

- Retreat/Prayer opportunities
- Liturgies
- Intergenerational programs
- Service projects
- Vacation Bible School or other summer activities
- Programs such as youth ministry and family gatherings integrated with religious education.

Sacramental Preparation Programs

- Sacramental preparation uses texts designed specifically for that purpose.
- Immediate sacramental preparation takes place in the parish for all children, including Catholic school children.
- Parent/Guardian meetings are held for sacramental preparation - Eucharist, Penance, Confirmation.

Other Elements of the Program

- The catechetical program has a specific and adequate budget.
- The program is coordinated by a trained, certified catechetical leader.
- Catechists are adequately trained.
 - All have taken *Teaching Religion Effectively* or its equivalent.
 - All have some formal theological education (through Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation Programs or parish adult education).
- Regular catechist meetings are held.
- At all age levels, the program integrates
 - Word (message)
 - Worship
 - Service
 - Community.
- The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* is implemented according to diocesan guidelines and recommendations.

SAMPLE CATECHIST APPLICATION FORM

Name _____

—

Address _____

—

Phone:

(Day) _____ (Evening) _____

Other activities in which you are currently involved (work/volunteer)

Previous catechetical experience (grade/age level and parish)

Catechetical training or workshops attended

Availability: Days	Morning	Afternoon	Evening

Special interests/skills

Sample Job Description

Director of Religious Education

1. Initiate, organize, and implement programs designed to meet the religious education needs of the total parish, e.g.:
 - a. develop educational programs for adults and children
 - b. develop sacramental programs
 - c. coordinate (or work with the Parish RCIA Team toward) the implementation of RCIA
 - d. recruit and train or provide for the training of volunteers to implement all catechetical programs
 - e. provide programs for support and spiritual growth for those involved in parish religious education
 - f. prepare schedules and communicate these schedules to appropriate individuals and groups
 - g. maintain appropriate records of programs and their participants
 - h. select appropriate educational resources
2. Maintain familiarity with educational resources such as:
 - a. programs and/or texts
 - b. audio visual materials
 - c. supplementary materials needed for effective implementation of catechesis
3. Maintain familiarity with official catechetical documents of the Church.
4. Prepare the budget for religious education.
5. Communicate and cooperate with the pastor and parish organizations which include:
 - a. meeting on a regular basis with the pastor and parish staff
 - b. attending all meetings of the Parish Religious Education Commission and/or Board
 - c. attending all meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council
 - d. convening the Religious Education Executive Board and
 - e. communicating with the parish community
6. Organize and maintain an efficient office, which is accessible and responsive to the needs of parishioners.
7. Evaluate existing programs and make recommendations for revision or expansion of programs.
8. Prepare an annual report for the Parish Religious Education Board and/or Parish Pastoral Council or Education Commission.
9. Participate in ongoing professional development through reading and participation in workshops, seminars, and catechetical institutes.
10. Understand diocesan policies in order to develop parish policies, which are consistent with diocesan policies.

Coordinator of Religious Education

1. Organize and implement part or all of the catechetical programs of the parish (as determined by agreement with the coordinator and the pastor or staff), e.g.:
 - a. recruit and provide for the training of volunteers who assist in the program
 - b. provide regular meetings for catechists for support and formation
 - c. recommend to the parish director of religious education (or pastor) tests, programs, audio-visual materials and appropriate supplies to be used in the program
 - d. prepare schedules and communicate them to appropriate individuals and groups
 - e. maintain records of programs and participants
 - f. prepare (or collaborate in the preparation of) the catechetical budget
2. Communicate and cooperate with the pastor, the parish director of religious education and parish organizations to include:
 - a. meeting with the pastor (and director) and staff on a regular basis
 - b. participating in all meetings of the Parish Religious Education Commission
 - c. convening the Parish Board of Religious Education
 - d. participating in all Parish Pastoral Council meetings
 - e. communicating with the parish community
3. Maintain an efficient office that is accessible and responsive to the needs of parishioners.
4. Evaluate all programs relevant to the specific area of responsibility assumed and make recommendations for revision and/or expansion of programs.
5. Prepare and present an annual report to the Parish Board of Religious Education and/or Commission
6. Maintain familiarity with diocesan policies relevant to the specific area of responsibility assumed.
7. Participate in ongoing formation through reading and attendance at catechetical workshops, seminars and institutes.

Administrator of Religious Education

1. Organize a particular segment of the religious education program in cooperation with the pastor (and/or the coordinator or director of religious education) to include:
 - a. scheduling catechetical sessions and communicating that schedule to appropriate individuals and groups
 - b. recruiting volunteers and seeing to their training and formation
 - c. maintaining a supply of resources for catechists
 - d. seeing that appropriate records are maintained
2. Cooperate and communicate with the pastor and appropriate groups to include:
 - a. meeting regularly with the pastor
 - b. participating in Parish Religious Education Board and/or Commission meetings
3. Participate in training and formation for catechetical ministry.

MINISTRY ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

See separate file

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 119

Section 51A

Injured children; reports; privileged communication; penalties; notice of determination.

Mandated Reporters

Any physician, medical intern, hospital personnel engaged in the examination, care or treatment of persons, medical examiner, psychologist, emergency medical technician, dentist, nurse, chiropractor, optometrist, podiatrist, osteopath, public or private school teacher, educational administrator, guidance or family counselor, day care worker, or any person paid to care for or work with a child in any public or private facility, or home or program funded by the Commonwealth or licensed pursuant to the provisions of chapter 28A, which provides day care or residential services to children or which provides the services of child care resource or referral agencies, voucher management agencies, family day care systems and child care food programs, probation officer, clerk/magistrate of the district courts, parole officer, social worker, foster parent, firefighter or police officer, Office for Child Care Services licenser, school attendance officer, allied mental health and human services professional as licensed pursuant to the provisions of section 165 of chapter 112, drug and alcoholism counselor, psychiatrist, and clinical social worker, who in his professional capacity shall have reasonable cause to believe that child under the age of 18 years is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare including sexual abuse, or from neglect, including malnutrition or who is determined to be physically dependent upon an addictive drug at birth, shall immediately report such condition to the Department by oral communication and by making a written report within 48 hours after such oral communication; provided, however, that whenever such person so required to report is a member of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school or facility, he shall immediately either notify the Department or notify the person in charge of such institution, school or facility, or that person's designated agent, whereupon such person in charge or his said agent shall then become responsible to make the report in the manner required by this section. Any such hospital personnel preparing such report, may take or cause to be taken, photographs of the areas of trauma visible on a child who is the subject of such report without the consent of the child's parents or guardians. All such photograph or copies thereof shall be sent to the Department together with such report. Any such person so required to make such oral and written reports who fails to do so shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars. Any person who knowingly files a report of child abuse that is frivolous shall be punished by a fine of not more that one thousand dollars.

Information contained in reports

Said reports shall contain the names and addresses of the child and his parents or other person responsible for his care, if known; the child's age; the child's sex; the nature and extent of the child's injuries, abuse, maltreatment, or neglect, including any evidence of prior injuries, abuse, maltreatment or neglect; the circumstances under which the person required to report first became aware of child's injuries, abuse, maltreatment or neglect; whatever action, if any, was taken to treat, shelter, or otherwise assist the child; the name of the person or persons making such report; and any other information which the person reporting believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries; the identity of the person or persons responsible therefore; and such other information as shall be required by the Department.

Death of a child

Any person required to report under this section who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has died as a result of any of the conditions listed in said paragraph shall report said death to the Department and to the District Attorney for the county in which such death occurred and to the medical examiners as required by section six of Chapter 38. Any such person who fails to make such a report shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

Any person may report, Immunity

In addition to those persons required to report pursuant to this section, any other person may make such a report if any such person has reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering from or has died as a result of such abuse or neglect. No person so required to report shall be liable in any civil or criminal action by reason of such report. No other person making such report shall be liable in any civil or criminal action by reason of such report if it was made in good faith; provided, how-ever, that such person did not perpetrate or inflict said abuse or cause said neglect. Any person making such report who, in the determination of the Department or the District Attorney may have perpetrated or inflicted said abuse or caused said neglect, may be liable in a civil or criminal action.

Retaliation against reporters; Liability

No employer of those persons required to report pursuant to this section shall discharge, or in any manner, discriminate or retaliate against any person who in good faith makes such a report, testifies or is about to testify in any proceeding involving child abuse or neglect. Any such employer who discharges, discriminates or retaliates against such a person shall be liable to such person for treble damages, costs and attorney's fees.

Notice of DSS' determination

Within 60 days of the receipt of a report by the Department from any person required to report, the Department shall notify such person, in writing, of its determination of the nature, extent and cause or causes of the injuries to the child, and the social services that the Department intends to provide to the child or his family.

Privileged communications

Any privilege established by sections 135A and 135B or Chapter 112 or by section 20B of Chapter 233, relating to confidential communications shall not prohibit the filing of a report pursuant to the provisions of this section or the provisions of section 24.

Publishers' Addresses

American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023
Tel: 800-322-4253
Fax: 212-408-8765

Web: <http://www.americanbible.org>

Ave Maria Press; PO Box 428, Notre Dame, IN 46556-0428

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Benziger, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill; 15808 Breckenridge Pkwy., Suite A, Tampa, FL 33610

Tel: 800-257-5755

Web: www.glencoe.com

Center for Learning, The; Box 910, Villa Maria, PA 16155-0910

Tel: 800-767-9090 (operator 38)

Fax: 888-767-8080

Web: www.centerforlearning.org/religion.htm

Center for Ministry Development, PO Box 699, Naugatuck, CT 06770

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Web: www.Cmonline.com/cmd/home.htm

Channing L. Bete Co., Inc.; 200 State Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373-0200

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Web: www.familyrosary.org

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Little Rock Scripture Scripture Study; A partnership of the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas and The Liturgical Press.

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Fax: 717-541-8128

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National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co., The; Office of Publication, 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111-6493

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Fax: 202-832-2712

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Web: www.nccl.org

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Web: www.nccbuscc.org/opps/catalog.htm

National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry;

Web: www.nfcym.org

North American Forum on the Catechumenate; 3033 Fourth Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20017

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Vision Video; PO Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490-0540
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Fax: 610-584-6643
Web: www.catholicvideo.com

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