

Parish Catechesis for Children

Often times, in our current situation, families are unable to send their children to a Catholic school. In these situations, parents have the responsibility of ensuring that their children, from kindergarten through twelfth grade participate in catechetical programs offered at the local parish. Pastors are to ensure that a vital program exists in their parish or parish cluster for these students. The following is the policy for the Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota, pertaining to parish catechetical programs for children, and, in part, to the diocesan Catholic schools (taken from Diocesan Catechetical Manual, Section II. Policy, page 8).

1. *Program:* Every parish in the Diocese of Fargo must offer catechesis for children in grades K-12 (pre-school is optional) who are not attending a Catholic school, by utilizing their own resources or running a joint program with a neighboring parish or parishes. Parish clusters are to have a common program.
2. *Catechumenal Model:* The catechumenate or RCIA is the model for all catechesis. Thus, catechesis is the responsibility of the entire parish and is to be liturgical, catechetical and pastoral (cf. GDC 59, 90, CT 5, 20). In the case of children who have been baptized as infants, the model operates with the knowledge that these children have received all the graces of Baptism.
3. *Number of Sessions:* There should be at least 30 weekly catechetical sessions in the calendar year. This is easily accomplished by aligning the catechetical program with the academic year, i.e. September through May. For the most part, the liturgical and pastoral aspects would be carried out in addition to these catechetical sessions.
4. *Length of Sessions:* The length and time of each session is contingent on the student's age, parent's schedule and the facility. The recommendation is for each catechetical session to be at least 1 hour for elementary students and 1 ½ hours for older students.
5. *Curriculum and Texts:* All the Catholic schools and parish catechetical programs in the Diocese of Fargo are to use the *Curriculum Guidelines* mandated by the Bishop. Schools and parishes are to use only the textbooks approved by the Diocese of Fargo.
6. *Summer Programs:* Whenever possible, parishes should offer catechetical opportunities during the summer months. Be creative. Students' schedules are typically more flexible during these months.
7. *Parents:* Parental involvement in the parish catechetical program supports parents in their responsibility as first educators in the Faith. Inasmuch as it is the responsibility of the parish to provide catechetical opportunities for all parishioners, parents have a corresponding responsibility to see that their children participate each year. Parents choosing to homeschool their children may do so, but in collaboration with the local parish, especially for sacramental preparation.