

FAITH FORMATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN HOME SCHOOLING SETTINGS

Archdiocese of Los Angeles in collaboration with the **Dioceses of Monterey, Orange, San Bernardino and San Diego**

The religious education/faith formation of children and youth is the responsibility of parents, pastors and the local parish community. The Code of Canon Law supports this direction:

- **Can. 773:** Pastors of souls especially have the proper and serious duty of seeing to the catechesis of the Christian people, so that, through doctrinal formation and experience of the Christian life, the faith of the people may be living, manifest and active.
- **Can. 774 §1:** The care for catechesis, under the direction of lawful ecclesiastical authority, extends to all members of the Church, to each according to his or her role.
- **Can. 774 § 2:** Before all others, parents are bound to form their children, by word and example, in faith and in Christian living. The same obligation binds sponsors and those who take the place of parents.

Therefore, it is the obligation of the parish leadership to provide religious education programming for children/young people. There are situations where some families choose to “home school” their children/young people. It must be understood that these efforts cannot be done independently of the parish setting. The following guidelines give direction to such efforts.

- The primary responsibility of parents for the education and formation of their children in the Faith cannot be interpreted in an isolated way, since the family is an integral part of the larger ecclesial community. All religious education must be carried out in a way that builds unity within the Church. No home schooling can be tolerated which does not promote the understanding that being a Christian is not a private matter of individual choice but rather of a personal vocation within the context of the Church lived out in the experience of the parish community.
- Since the pastor has the obligation to know of the parents’ intention to home school their children/young people, parents must notify the pastor early in the process. Parents are required to follow the guidelines set by the pastor and must register their child/young person with the parish Director/Coordinator of Religious Education.
- Home schooling parents are responsible for the participation of their child/young person in the immediate sacramental preparation as required or approved by the parish, through interviews for sacramental readiness, practice for sacramental celebrations, appropriate initiation rites and retreats. Home schooling parents must participate in parish parent meetings and parent preparation programs for the sacraments.

- Parents have the responsibility to participate in catechetical formation so that they will be able to prepare their child/young person for the sacraments, in collaboration with the parish community. This is supported by:

Can. 780: Local Ordinaries are to ensure that catechists are duly trained to carry out their office properly, namely, that continuing formation is available to them, that they have an appropriate knowledge of the teaching of the Church, and that they learn both the theory and the practice of the principles of pedagogy.

- With regard to the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation parents must ensure that their children/young people are correctly prepared and connected to the local parish.
- The pastor and Director/Coordinator of Religious Education will require a periodic progress report to be made by the home schooling parents. A form should be developed by the parish to assist in this reporting. Children/young people must be interviewed by the Pastor, Director of Religious Education or designated representative to determine their understanding of and readiness for the reception of the Sacraments.
- Since the passing on of the faith tradition is the responsibility of the whole parish community; pastors, parents, and Directors of Religious Education must collaborate to insure that the children/young people are appropriately catechized and prepared for the reception of the sacraments. As parishioners, families are expected to participate in the parish Sunday liturgy.
- The rights of children and young people to catechetical formation can best be served when pastors, parents and catechists offer formation appropriate to the level, development and disposition of the young person.
- The parish Director/Coordinator should serve as a resource to the parents. Approved textbooks and other appropriate materials must be used in all sessions. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the General Directory of Catechesis are excellent resources for parents and catechists.