

§1800 CATECHESIS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Private schools that offer catechesis in conjunction with classes in language and culture, such as the independent ethnic schools operated privately in the Archdiocese of Chicago, are an excellent opportunity for the Catholic faith to be presented in a manner that preserves ethnic culture here in the United States. The Church teaches, “Catechesis... must strive to promote greater accord between ... the divine message and the various cultures and diverse languages of peoples” (GDC, 37).

Private schools are also an opportunity for parents/guardians to exercise their right and responsibility as the primary educators of their children and, under the supervision of legitimate ecclesiastical authority, to form their children in the practice of the Christian life by word and example (Canons 226, 774, 793, and 1136).

In keeping with the responsibility of the parish pastor to provide for the catechesis of the faithful,” it is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people...” (Canon 773; see also canons 776, 777).

The Catholic faith is a communal and participative faith. The parish is the center of the community of faith, whose “purpose is to help the child attain a sense of identity within and belong to the ecclesial assembly” (Directory for Masses with Children).

To coordinate the catechetical responsibilities of the pastor or his delegated catechetical leader and the parents/guardians, while respecting the authority of each, the following policies and procedures are offered with regard to catechesis in private schools:

1801.1. Policy Consistent with their right and duty to provide for the education and formation of their children in the Catholic faith, as well as the desire of some to support and preserve their ethnic culture and language, parents/guardians may send their children to catechetical programs at private ethnic schools or other private schools.

Procedure

Parents/guardians of private school students should belong to a parish community, preferably by registering as parishioners, especially if they go to church in a non-territorial parish.

1801.2. Policy It is necessary to inform the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago about catechesis provided in a private school. The administration of private schools and catechists enrolled in such schools must work collaboratively with the Office of Catechesis and Youth Ministry.

1801.3. Policy The catechetical program in a private school must be overseen by a pastor of a parish which is located in the same area where the school takes its activity, or by a priest delegated by the pastor (cf. canon 804, §1). The pastor or delegated priest will be responsible for the supervision and evaluation of catechists, as well as ensuring the sending of catechists to Archdiocesan training and retreats. He should approve the catechetical plan for the school year as well as the selection of textbooks and other resources.

Procedure

- a) During a school year there should be at least 32 catechetical sessions and class should last a minimum of 45 minutes.
- b) Parents/guardians should inform the pastor of their own parish of their children's attendance at a private school and their participation in the catechetical programs.

1801.4. Policy Catechists in the private schools must be certified or be in the Archdiocesan process of attaining catechist certification (cf. canon 805).

1801.5. Policy Catechists in the private schools must go through *Virtus* training as well as the criminal background check.

1801.6. Policy Catechists in the private schools must continue ongoing formation. They must participate in retreats days and formation sessions during the school year organized by the Office of Catechesis and Youth Ministry to nourish their own faith (cf. canon 804, §2).

1801.7. Policy The catechetical textbooks used in the private schools must have an *Imprimatur* from the proper and legitimate ecclesiastical authority and be approved by the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry and the USCCB (cf. canon 775).

1801.8. Policy Subject matter covered in each grade must follow the Archdiocesan religious education curriculum.

Procedure

Parents/guardians and children should take part in sacramental preparation activities planned to be held at the private school or the overseeing parish, *i.e.* Sunday Mass, Sacrament of Reconciliation, parent meetings, retreats, rehearsals, conferences, etc., in order to be a part of the community of faith.

1801.9. Policy The pastor or his designate shall determine the readiness of children in light of their disposition and preparation prior to the first reception of the sacraments (Canons 777 and 914), according to the following criteria (per policy 1701.4 of this Book III).

Criteria

- a) Penance or Reconciliation (criteria are to respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of the individual child)
 - 1) Understanding of the relationship of the sacrament to his/her life
 - 2) ability to recognize good and evil
 - 3) understanding of repentance
 - 4) understanding that one can turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church
 - 5) knowledge that faith is expressed through being forgiven and forgiving
(NCD # 126)

- b) Eucharist (criteria are to be adapted to the child's intellectual capacity)
 - 1) awareness of God's love
 - 2) awareness of the call to participate in Christ's sacrifice
 - 3) knowledge of the gift of the Spirit
 - 4) understanding that the Holy Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ
 - 5) ability to participate in experiences of sharing, listening, eating, conversing, giving, thanking, celebrating
 - 6) knowledge of the mystery of Jesus' life (cf. Canon 913)
 - 7) ability to receive the Body of the Lord with faith and devotion (cf. Canon 913)
(NCD #122)

- c) Confirmation (criteria are to respect the natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances of the individual child, are to be adapted to the child's intellectual capacity, are to include retreat experiences and include parents and sponsors in the catechetical preparation of the youth for Confirmation) (NDC # 36, A2)
 - 1) Understanding of the Rite of Confirmation and its symbols.
 - 2) Understanding the meaning of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and ability to apply them to their lives.
 - 2) Understanding that Confirmation strengthens the Baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit in order to incorporate them into the life of the community of faithful and prepares them to the mission of the Church.
 - 3) Ability to live up to their responsibilities as witness of the Christ and members of the Church.
 - 4) Ability to explain God's love for man and man's love for God drawn from an understanding of human love.

- 5) Ability to be a mature member of the Church by participating in the Eucharist, listening and sharing the word of God and being thankful for the gifts God has given.

(cf. Archdiocese of Chicago Policies and Procedures Book IV: The Sanctifying Office of the Church, Policy §104.3.1. See also the provisions for “Sacramental Readiness Review,” Archdiocese of Chicago Policies and Procedures Book I: General Norms, Accountability and Ecclesiastical Processes, Policy §1002)

1801.10. Policy The reception of the sacraments takes place in the church of the parish that oversees the catechetical instruction in the private school.

1801.11. Policy Monitoring compliance with this policy shall be the responsibility of the Office of Catechesis.