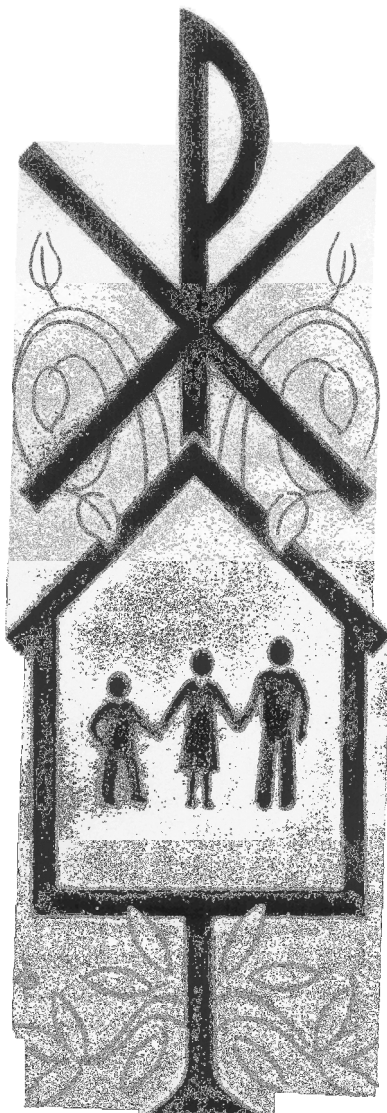


**Sacramental Catechesis Guidelines  
for  
Those Who Home School**



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# *Sacramental Catechesis Guidelines*

## *for*

### *Those Who Home School*

As the primary educators of their children, parents have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their children's needs. The family is the primary but not the only or exclusive educating community. The family has the primary responsibility for faith formation while the parish supports the family in its responsibility. The parish and the family share a common goal – the spiritual development of their children and their participation in the life of the Church.

Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, taking into account the cultural traditions of the family, which favor the good, and the dignity of the child. Home schooling is a viable option for the general education of children. Parents who choose to educate their children at home are not alone in this task. The Church encourages and supports them.

A parish is one expression of the Mystical Body of Christ. To separate children from the life of the parish deprives them of rich spiritual benefits and wonderful faith experiences. The most important part of sacrament preparation always occurs in the home – as children experience the faith, forgiveness, nurturing and service that occurs in the family. Bringing children to the parish program of preparation further enriches their lives by bringing them into contact with other adults and with peers on the same faith journey.

The preparation for a sacrament is a very special time in the life of the Church. Therefore the time of sacramental catechesis provides the entire parish community with the opportunity to deepen their spirituality in the sacramental life of the Church while at the same time lead others to receive a sacrament for the first time. As such, **sacramental catechesis** (the immediate preparation for a sacrament) **is an activity distinct from religious education.**

The interaction between the parish community and those preparing for a sacrament gives credibility to the belief that catechesis is the *“responsibility of the entire Christian community”*. [GDC, #220] and therefore *“is not an action which can be realized in the community on a private basis or a purely personal initiative”*. [GDC, 219.b]. *The parish is the pre-eminent place for catechesis.*” [GDC, 257] For this reason the *Code of Canon Law* requires the diocesan bishop and pastor to ensure that appropriate catechesis is provided to all those preparing to receive a sacrament.

*Canon 777 – Attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop, a pastor is to take care in a special way:*

- 1. that suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments;*
- 2. that through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time children are prepared properly for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and the Most Holy Eucharist and for the sacrament of confirmation;*
- 3. that having received first communion, these children are enriched more fully and deeply through catechetical formation;*
- 4. that catechetical instruction is given also to those who are physically or mentally impeded;*
- 5. that the faith of youth and adults is strengthened, enlightened, and developed through various means and endeavors.*

## **Policies and Guidelines**

1. The proper context for the celebration of the sacraments is the parish community. ***“Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church, which is the ‘sacrament of unity’”*** [CSL, #26]
  - Children/youth who are home schooled are to celebrate the sacraments in the parish and at the time determined by the pastor for all those in the parish-based program.
2. Sacramental catechesis ***“is an essentially ecclesial act”*** [GDC, #78] and therefore ***“not an action which can be realized in the community on a private basis or by purely personal initiative”*** [GDC, #219.b] Sacramental catechesis is to take place in a parish based program and parents/guardians who home school are expected to:
  - **register** their children for sacramental catechesis according to the regulations established by the parish;
  - **participate**, with their children, in all dimensions of the parish program for sacramental catechesis: catechetical, ritual, service, spiritual [retreats, etc.] and any other requirements for sacramental preparation as determined by the parish;

3. Liturgical celebrations have an integral role in sacramental catechesis since “*catechesis is intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action*” [GDC, 30]. The liturgy “*is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God*” [CCC, #1074]. Through the prayers, symbols, gestures, music and actions of the liturgical prayer, the faithful receive formation intimately connected to the catechesis that follows.
  - Parents/guardians and their children/youth are to fully participate in all of the liturgical prayers scheduled in the parish based program for sacramental preparation.
  - As parishioners of the parish, families who home school are expected to participate weekly in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist at the parish in which they are registered.
4. All parish-based programs for sacramental catechesis include formation of adults in the parish, especially those whose children/youth are preparing to receive a sacrament. The catechesis of children/youth and the catechesis of adults “*should not be separate watertight compartments*” [GDC, #72]. This structure promotes unity of vision within the parish and fosters harmony among the people of God.
  - Parents/guardians and sponsors [where applicable] of home schoolers will fully participate in all adult catechetical formation programs related to sacramental preparation of children/youth in the parish-based program.
  - Parents/guardians and sponsors [where applicable] are expected to participate in all other activities as required in the program, i.e., interviews, etc.
5. Children not baptized as infants and who have attained the age of reason, and are of catechetical age are to be prepared for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* [RCIA, #252.253], adapted for children.
  - Parents/guardians who home school children who are not baptized and are of catechetical age and have attained the age of reason, are to enroll their children in the parish catechumenate program for children.
  - These children/youth are to receive Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist in that order in one single ceremony preferably at the Easter Vigil together with the older catechumens [RCIA, National Statutes, 18].

6. The diocesan bishop has the responsibility “*to issue norms concerning catechetics*” [CCL, #775.1] and to ensure that all who exercise this ministry are in communion with him.
  - The policies, guidelines and directives developed by the diocese for sacramental catechesis are applicable to all those who home school their children/youth.

These policies and guidelines are meant to promote the evangelizing potential of sacramental catechesis in the life of the Church. We pray that the eagerness of the faith community to live the sacramental life will bring transformation to the whole world.