

***Catechesis for Family Life***  
*Kindergarten through Grade 8*



**ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE**  
*Division of Catechetical and Pastoral Formation*  
*Division of Catholic Schools*  
*Office of Child and Youth Protection*

Second Edition

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Division of Catechetical and Pastoral Formation  
Office of Child and Youth Protection  
**Catechesis for Family Life – Kindergarten through Grade 8**  
Implementation Policies  
Second Edition 2013

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Archdiocese of Baltimore  
**Catechesis for Family Life – Kindergarten through Grade 8**  
Policy Regulations and Guidelines

**Program Summary**

The Archdiocese of Baltimore is committed to providing children and their parents/guardians a holistic catechesis for family life. This catechesis includes an understanding of the call to live a chaste life, developing an understanding of the dignity and value of all human life. It also includes safe environment training for children and education about sexual abuse.

This catechesis is to be offered as a core component of the curriculum of religious instruction and faith formation in the parish or Catholic school setting and in the home by parents and guardians. *Catechesis for Family Life* includes education about safe environment for children and youth, grades K-8, and their parents/guardians, using educational resources approved by the Archdiocese for this purpose.

**It is the policy of the Archdiocese that children and their parents in all Catholic school and parish faith formation programs receive family life catechesis, including safe environment training, in grades Kindergarten through Grade 8.**

**Goals of Catechesis for Family Life**

- Provide Catholic teaching on morality
- Present skills and virtues for Catholic family living
- Place human sexuality within the context of Catholic family moral living
- Help families address the complex issues of contemporary life
- Offer child safety education for children and their parents/guardians

**Purpose of *Catechesis for Family Life***

The purpose of this catechetical endeavor is to create a knowledgeable school/parish community that welcomes open communication and a holistic discussion around the issues of moral living, life skills, healthy sexuality and sexual abuse prevention from a Roman Catholic perspective.

The Archdiocese is committed to assisting parents as they fulfill their responsibility as primary educators of their children, especially in the understanding of faith and morality.

*Catechesis for Family Life* in the Archdiocese of Baltimore includes life skills for living as a member of a family and rules for respect for self and others, appropriate behavior, and healthy relationships.

### **Support for *Catechesis for Family Life***

The implementation of this catechesis is supported by the U.S. Bishops' 2008 document, *Catechetical Formation for Chaste Living: Guidelines for Curriculum Design and Publication*. "Assisting parents of adolescents and youth in the formation of their children for chaste living is essential to their formation in the Catholic faith and should be mandatory in Catholic schools and in parish religious education and youth ministry programs" (p. 17). The teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and the *National Directory for Catechesis* is normative in this area, and consultation of these documents is presumed by these guidelines.

### **Assisting Parents, the Primary Educators**

The *National Directory for Catechesis* calls for catechesis in human sexuality which "recognizes the duty of pastors and parish catechetical leaders to support and encourage parents as they carry out their role as educators of their children in human sexuality as well as to provide additional instructions regarding Catholic teaching and values that complement and complete the formation provided by parents" (NDC, Chapter 6, 178).

In their 1994 document, *Human Sexuality, a Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, the U. S. Bishops affirmed the importance of a collaborative effort between home and church for providing this catechesis: "Each child is a mysterious gift from God, entrusted not only to one's parents, but to the whole community as well. One's wider family, the church community, and the society at large, all have an interest in protecting new members, in safeguarding their rights and fostering their growth and development."

*Catechetical Formation for Chaste Living* (USCCB, 2008) acknowledges the primary role of parents and guardians in giving a concrete or more specific education in human sexuality.

- Catechetical instruction in chaste living needs to treat doctrinal truths insofar as they apply to the integration of the human mind, heart, will, and body.
- In the classroom setting, proper reference to human anatomy or physiology is to be made only to the degree necessary to teach morality and virtue.
- Catechetical instruction should include instruction about the dignity of the human person, the equality of male and female, the virtues, the role of grace, the meaning of sin (CFCL, p.3-5).

**Parents need community support.** Many parents are reluctant to speak with their children about sexuality and child sexual abuse prevention because they feel they do not know where to begin, or what to say first. For other families, the school and/or church is the center of their community and is the place where they turn for critical information and support around issues related to child development, including sexual development. Parents are more likely to feel confident in discussions with their children if they have support and direction from their church and/or school. Parents who are comfortable with communicating their values to their children are happy to have these values reinforced by the Church.

### **Value of Cooperative Efforts between School/Parish and Home**

The parish and school community has a duty to play a secondary but essential role in educating children for healthy relationships. In 2002, the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth*. In the *Charter*, the bishops committed the Church to “creating a safe environment within the Church for children and youth” (Preamble). In Article 12 of the *Charter*, the bishops specify that these programs be conducted cooperatively with parents to provide education and training for children.

### **Provide a Safe Environment**

Because it is the responsibility of adults to protect children, this curriculum must be accompanied by diligent screening and training of adult volunteers and education of parents and educators on the dangers to children that are present in the culture, as mandated by the *Child Protection Procedures for Implementation and Compliance* of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

## **Encouraging Participation by Parents/Guardians**

The Catechesis for Family Life is an important part of our religion curriculum.

**It is the policy of the Archdiocese that parents/guardians must have the opportunity to examine any and all materials used in this program, including the student textbooks, parent resource booklets, and child safety update pages.**

**Parents can request an alternative to *Catechesis for Family Life*, choosing to have their child not participate in any single lesson of the program or the whole program.**

**Parents/guardians who desire an alternative to *Catechesis for Family Life* should express their wishes to the school/parish faith formation coordinator in writing.**

Teachers will schedule family life catechesis in such a way that parents may make an informed decision on when their child will not participate. When the child is not participating in the classroom, an appropriate alternate activity will be provided by the school or faith formation program.

**If a parent/guardian requests an alternative to *Catechesis for Family Life*, he/she contacts the director of faith formation or school principal. Parents/guardians who opt out of any portion of the program must sign the Archdiocesan form for this purpose, available in APPENDIX I.**

## **Essential Role of Teachers / Catechists / Program Coordinators**

Teachers and catechists for *Catechesis for Family Life* will seek to

- Give witness to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ
- Teach that God has created each individual and that every human being has dignity.
- Make a commitment to express Church teachings clearly and accurately
- Respect parents' role and be willing to assist them in fulfilling this role
- Keep parents informed about what the children are learning
- Assist parents and guardians in helping their children integrate what they have learned into the family's life
- Encourage parents' participation

- Listen attentively when parents speak
- Know their students well and be sensitive to home situations
- Help students to understand the blessing found in all families
- Believe that the body is a gift from God, something to be treated with respect and admiration and not fear or guilt
- Welcome children's questions responsibly and, when necessary, guide children to address particular concerns to their parents/guardians
- Speak about the Church's teachings on human sexuality with prudence and modesty
- Model and teach values and attitudes regarding sexuality and boundaries in their every day work with children
- Serve as supports/helpers for children who disclose abuse.
- Identify and report concerns about possible abuse, in accord with the law and with Archdiocesan policy.
- Reinforce lessons learned at school and at home to present a stronger, unified, protective message to children
- Guide children to respect family privacy during classroom discussions, while being alert for signs that a child may need to share with the teacher/catechist in private

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

**It is the policy of the Archdiocese that *Catechesis for Family Life*, including the safe environment training for children, be an integral part of the faith formation program in each parish and school. It is required that each parish and school program include classroom/on-site time for *Catechesis for Family Life*.**

- Lessons may be taught as a unit, scheduled throughout the program year.
- *Catechesis for Family Life* lessons may be correlated with basic religion lesson themes, as long as the approved program materials are utilized.
- Parents should receive a schedule of *Catechesis for Family Life* lessons so that they may decide to have their child participate in the classroom, as well as prepare to have discussions at home.
- Teachers and catechists are to plan ways for the lesson to be reinforced in the home.

- Students whose parents have chosen to not have them participate in *Catechesis for Family Life* lesson will receive an appropriate alternate assignment in school or to complete at home.
- It is not sufficient to give the materials to the parents and guardians without also teaching the lessons in the classroom (unless the parent/guardian has opted out of the program in writing).

### **Formation in Christian Virtue**

At each grade level, children will learn and understand Church teaching about how to live a virtuous life in relationship to God, self, and other people. This formation will include an age-appropriate catechesis for family life which includes

- Education for authentic love
- Understanding of one's sexuality as a gift
- Cultivation of all the virtues, especially charity
- The virtue of temperance
- Respect for human dignity in oneself and in others
- The practice of decency and modesty in behavior, dress, and speech
- Respect for one's own body and for others as temples of the Holy Spirit
- Acquiring self-control (CFCL, p. 8)

### **Positive Safety Messages**

*Catechesis for Family Life* integrates child safety education into a holistic approach to Christian living. In requiring all Catholic schools and parish faith formation programs to implement the Catechesis for Family Life, parishes and schools provide safe environment training for children and youth, in accord with the 2002 *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Child safety education in *Catechesis for Family Life* is designed to encourage them to speak freely and frequently with their parents and other trusted adults, to teach them express their feelings appropriately and that abuse is never the fault of the child. Child protection messages for all grades will include

- Respect for the body -- Boys and girls have bodies that are different and equally good. The body is spoken of respectfully.



- Privacy -- Each person has the right to refuse unwanted touches.
- Feelings -- Everyone has all kinds of feelings and feelings are neither good nor bad. Children should learn appropriate ways to express and act on their feelings.
- Asking for Help -- Children should know that when they are feeling “mixed up” or confused about anything – including touching, secrets, or their bodies -- they can ask adults for help. If we encourage children to ask for help when they feel confused or mixed up about things, including touch, we may be able to remove the secrecy surrounding abusive situations.
- Language to Communicate Clearly -- Children must be equipped with the language and communication skills necessary to be able to ask for help.
- Identifying Trustworthy Adults – Children should be able to identify three or four adults they can ask for help. Children need a network of adults with whom they feel comfortable asking sensitive questions.
- Secrets -- Children should beware of those who ask them to keep secrets, especially about something that they know is wrong or that makes them uncomfortable. They learn that touching is never a secret.
- Promises -- One is not obligated to keep a promise about something that is wrong or when that individual or another person could be hurt.
- Reducing shame -- Abuse is never a child’s fault.

## **EDUCATIONAL METHODS**

### **Repetition and Reinforcement**

The most successful child safety programs were offered over a significant period of time and provided children multiple opportunities to learn, interact with, and apply the rules of child safety. The child safety components of *Catechesis for Family Life* are to be integrated into the whole message of Christian living and family.

### **Using Approved Program Materials**

**It is the policy of the Archdiocese that parishes and schools will use approved program materials for teaching Family Life Catechesis in the classroom/on-site. All approved program materials include resources for the parents/guardians.**

While *Catechesis for Family Life* lessons will compliment basic faith formation lessons in many cases, use of supplementary program materials facilitates instruction, consistently involves parents/guardians in the lessons, and fulfills the Archdiocese's commitment to child and youth protection education. Approved program materials will:

- involve the parents in every lesson
- contain skills for moral living in family and community
- teach the necessary child protection content

Specific information about human sexuality is reserved to the parents to teach privately at home, at the appropriate period of the child's development. In grades 5 and 6, educational resources about human sexuality and reproduction are to be sent home to the parents/guardians to discuss with their children.

With the informed consent of parents/guardians, it is permitted to offer an age-appropriate presentation about human sexuality and puberty in the classroom. Parishes and schools should have the parents/guardians sign a permission form (provided by the parish or school for this purpose).

### **Program Materials Selection Criteria**

Program materials approved for use in parishes and schools for the Catechesis for Family Life have been judged to adhere to these strict requirements:

- Conforms to Church teachings
- Sensitive to the meaning of human sexuality as presented in official Church documents
- Recognize the role of parents and guardians as the primary teachers of their children
- Provide information for parents and guardians, as well as learners
- Provides clear knowledge of Church teaching for catechists on moral questions.
- Provide correct information for adults and children to promote safety from abuse
- Recognize challenges from culture, with suggestions for addressing sexual morality
- Facilitate effective reinforcement of safe environment messages
- Repeat key concepts throughout the program and from grade to grade
- Present human sexuality within the context of the spiritual, moral, physical, and social development of the learner

- Concepts and language used are appropriate for the age and development of the learner.
- Materials are sensitive to the life experience of the learner.
- Proper reference to human anatomy or physiology is to be made only to the degree necessary to teach morality and virtue.
- Presentation of biological information is accurate and age appropriate.

**Approved Resources – Grades K – 8 (Schools and parish faith formation programs)**

- *Family Life*, (2010 Edition) RCL-Benziger, 2<sup>nd</sup> Printing

**Approved Resources – Grades 9-12 (Catholic high schools and youth ministry programs)**

- *Created to Love* (2009) Archdiocese of Baltimore

**Approved Resources – Grades 6-8 (Alternate model for parish programs only)**

- *Created to Love* (2009) Archdiocese of Baltimore
- *Catholic schools must use the approved textbook series, but they may choose to use Created to Love as an additional resource.*
- *For Created to Love in middle school, parents accompany their children in the sessions.*

For program assistance with *Created to Love*, contact the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, 410-547-5372

**CONCLUSION**

“Guided by the Holy Spirit and the relationship of love within the Holy Trinity which has been given to the entire world, Christ’s disciples are called to live in relationships which demonstrate this same love of God.”

- *Catechetical Formation for Chaste Living*, USCCB, 2008, Introduction

The Church has an important and beautiful message to share about chaste living in imitation of Jesus Christ. In partnership with parents and guardians, *Catechesis for Family Life* is an integral part of the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s catechetical ministry which aims to foster growth towards personal maturity and Christian faith in children, youth and adults.



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE  
OFFICE OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION

**Parent/Guardian Declination**

*For Catechesis for Family Life*

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardians have the right to opt out of Catechesis for Family Life, in whole or in part, by expressing this request to the parish catechetical leader or school principal and signing the following declaration.

\_\_\_\_\_ As a parent/guardian, I have decided to not have my child participate in Catechesis for Family Life.

\_\_\_\_\_ The parish/school has offered to provide safe environment training materials for me to utilize with my child.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have received the safe environment training materials from the parish/school.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child may participate, however I would like the following accommodations for my child when he/she participates in Catechesis for Family Life:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY</b>	
Principal/Parish Catechetical Leader's Signature:	_____
Information Forwarded to Teacher/Catechist:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Materials Given to Parent/Guardian:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Notes:	_____ _____