

ARCHDIOCESE OF  
CINCINNATI

# Youth Religious Education

## POLICIES FOR PARISHES

EFFECTIVE  
JANUARY 1, 2024





# LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP SCHNURR

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Your faithful dedication to the Catholic formation of young people is invaluable. I am deeply grateful for your ministry.

In 1983, Pope St. John Paul II called for a commitment to evangelization “that is new in its ardor, new in its methods, and new in its expression.” The New Evangelization challenges us today to discern innovative approaches to religious education for young people that will bear fruit despite the confusion of our current culture.

This *Youth Religious Education Policies for Parishes* is meant to be received in that context. It provides the parameters within which creativity and boldness in the important task of evangelizing young people can flourish. To that end, I urge you to move forward prayerfully and prudently, but also with great courage and zeal.

During the press conference to unveil the *Directory for Catechesis (DC)* in 2020, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the then Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, identified two “chokeholds” in our catechetical approaches that urgently require pastoral conversion.

The first chokehold is the classroom environment. These environments typically do not “constitute the best places for the unfolding of catechetical activities” (*DC 222*). I encourage you to dream of new catechetical environments that better serve the ongoing conversion of young people.

The second chokehold is the use of a sacramental “carrot” that associates participation in religious education programs with somehow “earning” a sacrament of initiation. The consequence of such an approach is that young people disengage altogether after the reception of that sacrament, which they incorrectly perceive as a type of graduation.

When we free ourselves from these chokeholds, we will be able to breathe new life into our religious formation of young people. Certainly, this new life should include a renewed emphasis on a kerygmatic catechesis. The Kerygma must permeate every stage and phase of the journey of discipleship.

This new life of formation also must include meaningful partnerships with parents that allow *them* to be the primary formators of their children. This will require a firm reliance on the reality that believing parents, not catechists, have “the most effective capacity to transmit the beauty of the Christian faith to their children” (DC 124).

Amidst rampant secularization, it is time for parish religious education to imagine and realize its fullest potential as a comprehensive pathway of discipleship for young people. The team at the Center for the New Evangelization is eager to assist you with ideas and resources.

May all your good work begin with God’s inspiration, continue under His guidance, and be brought to fulfillment with His blessing.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dennis M. Schnurr". A small cross symbol is written above the first letter of the first name.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr  
Archbishop of Cincinnati

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## **2000.00 INTRODUCTION**

### **2000.01 PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES**

The purpose of this document is to provide a standard minimum expectation for youth religious education programs throughout the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Religious education programs are required to be in full compliance with this document by Aug 1, 2024.

## **2001.00 CATECHIST CERTIFICATION & ONGOING EDUCATION**

### **2001.01 ROLES IN CATECHESIS**

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati recognizes three primary roles in catechesis: Parents, Professional Catechist, and Volunteer Catechist.

Parents are the primary catechists of their children (Directory for Catechesis, 124). All parish religious education programs should assist parents in catechizing their children.

A Professional Catechist is any staff member of a parish responsible for evangelization, catechesis, and/or discipleship formation (including, but not limited to: directors of evangelization, youth evangelists, directors of religious education, youth ministers, paid catechists, evangelists of adults, RCIA coordinators, etc.).

A Volunteer Catechist is any parishioner, who is not a staff member, who is responsible for evangelization, catechesis and/or discipleship formation (including, but not limited to: religious education teachers, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd facilitators, family catechesis facilitators, youth ministry core team members, small group leaders, RCIA volunteers, Alpha table leaders, etc.).

### **2001.02 PROFESSIONAL CATECHIST CERTIFICATION**

Professional Catechists are required to complete and pass the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Professional Catechist Examination, which will be made available on Jan 1, 2024, within the first year of employment or by Aug 1, 2024 if employed at the promulgation of this document. Individuals may repeat the examination, in whole or in part, as necessary to achieve the minimum passing score.

### **2001.03 PROFESSIONAL CATECHIST ONGOING EDUCATION**

Professional Catechists are required to complete the annual ARK assessment beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

The Pastor and/or his delegate (e.g. the Director of Evangelization) is required to ensure the continuing education of each Professional Catechist (including the Director). Professional Catechists are required to complete 20 hours per year of continuing education in the areas of spiritual, pedagogical, and/or theological formation. The Pastor and/or his delegate is required to submit an annual Professional Catechist Education Plan, included with the annual Student Count Survey, to the Center for the New Evangelization for all Professional Catechists in his/her Family of Parishes.

#### **2001.04 VOLUNTEER CATECHIST ONGOING EDUCATION**

Volunteer Catechists are required to complete the annual ARK assessment beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

The Pastor and/or his delegate (e.g. Director of Evangelization) is required to ensure the ongoing professional education of each Volunteer Catechist. Volunteer Catechists are required to complete 5 hours per year of continuing education in the areas of spiritual, pedagogical, and/or theological formation. The Pastor and/or his delegate is required to submit an annual Volunteer Catechist Education Plan, included with the annual Student Count Survey, to the Center for the New Evangelization for all Volunteer Catechists in his/her Family of Parishes.

### **2002.00 ORGANIZATION & CURRICULUM**

#### **2002.01 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOKS**

Parishes should provide a religious education handbook to parents which includes, but is not limited to: religious education calendar for the academic year, expectations for parents and students, religious education policies and procedures, necessary contact information for professional and volunteer catechists, and curriculum(s) to be used.

#### **2002.02 PRIMACY OF KERYGMATIC CATECHESIS**

Every religious education program should focus on the kerygma, or Gospel proclamation, and a kerygmatic catechesis on the Mystery of God, the Person of Christ, the Paschal Mystery, Scripture, the Dignity of the Human Person, Morality (including a focus on Theology of the Body), Sacraments, Prayer, Vocation, Social Ethics, and the Church.

#### **2002.03 GRADED COURSE OF STUDY FOR PARISHES**

Religious education programs should follow the Parish Spiral of the Graded Course of Study, a guideline for parish catechetical formation. (See the Center for the New Evangelization's **recommended resources for curriculum**, each of which complies with the Parish Spiral of the Graded Course of Study.)

**2002.04 HOMESCHOOL OPTIONS**

When parents provide the formal religious education of their children at home, the pastor and/or his delegate should offer assistance in developing a catechetical plan and choosing catechetical materials suitable for home-based religious education (**Canons 776, 793**). (See the Center for the New Evangelization's **recommended resources for curriculum** to assist in selecting the best materials.)

When parents believe that their child is ready to receive a particular sacrament for the first time, the Pastor should determine whether the child is properly prepared for reception (**Canons 777, 914**).

**2003.00 TIME ALLOTMENTS**

**2003.01 TIME ALLOTMENTS**

Religious education programs are required to include a minimum of 25 weeks per year of instruction at a minimum of 60 minutes per week. Abbreviated summer programs are not a replacement for ongoing comprehensive religious education.

**2003.02 MASS ATTENDANCE**

Religious education programs should not take place simultaneous with Sunday Mass at the same church.

**2004.00 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**2004.01 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Parishes shall evaluate on a case-by-case basis whether or not they can meet the needs of the individuals who seek admission to religious education programs. If the parish can make reasonable accommodations to meet the individuals' needs, then the parish may offer the individuals an opportunity to participate in the religious education programs. (Please contact the Office for Persons with Disabilities for more assistance: [opd@catholicaoc.org](mailto:opd@catholicaoc.org).)

**2004.02 INCREASED PRIVACY**

Parishes shall provide reasonable accommodation to a private bathroom for use by any student who desires increased privacy.



**2004.03 GENDER CONFUSION AND GENDER DYSPHORIA (DSM-V)**

*For purposes of this policy, “biological sex” and “sexual identity” both refer to a person’s God-given and permanent identity as male or female from conception.*

Catholic institutions shall not encourage, affirm or validate the expression of any “gender identity” asserted in contradiction to the truth of the person’s God-given and permanent sexual identity as male or female from conception. Parish staff and volunteers shall uphold Catholic teaching on sexual identity in word and conduct.

All activities sponsored by an institution of the Catholic Church or held on the property of a Catholic church or institution shall be rooted in and consistent with the mission and teaching of the Catholic Church. Therefore:

- **Pastoral Care:** Individuals who experience distress or confusion related to sexual identity, or who are diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria (DSM-V), shall be treated with the sensitivity, respect, mercy and compassion due to any child of God.
- **Restrooms & Locker Rooms:** Access to sex-specific facilities (such as restrooms or locker rooms) shall be based solely on one’s biological sex.
- **Sex-Specific Activities:** Access to sex-specific activities (such as clubs or sports designated for males or females) shall be based solely on one’s biological sex.
- **Sleeping Accommodations:** Sleeping accommodations on overnight trips shall be designated according to biological sex.
- **Pronouns:** Parish staff shall refer to each member of the parish community by the pronouns proper to his or her biological sex only.
- **Educational Materials:** All informational and pedagogical materials shall align with the Catholic understanding of the human person.
- **Medication:** No person shall possess on-site medication(s) for the purpose of hormonal or medical “gender transition.”



## **2005.00 EVALUATION**

### **2005.01 AOC STANDARD ASSESSMENT**

Religious education programs are required to administer the ARK assessment for all students and catechists annually beginning in the 2024-2025 school year.

### **2005.02 FORMAL PROGRAM EVALUATION**

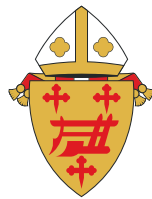
The Pastor and/or his delegate (e.g. Director of Evangelization) is required to annually evaluate their religious education program, utilizing the ARK assessment. (Contact the Center for the New Evangelization for assistance: [cne@catholicaoc.org](mailto:cne@catholicaoc.org).)





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