

# Early Childhood Parish Religious Education Program Handbook



Archdiocese of Cincinnati  
Office of Evangelization & Catechesis  
2005

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## **THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY, THE FAMILY AND THE YOUNG CHILD**

The parish is a community of believers called to share the Good News of God's love with all. As the parish develops an understanding that faith formation is a lifelong endeavor, the community becomes committed to providing opportunities that will nurture the faith for all in the parish. It begins with parents who bring a child to the waters of baptism and continues with a process of catechesis for young children. Early Childhood catechetical programs not only evangelize young children, but draw parents into the life of the faith community in profound ways.

Family life in a Catholic community provides a way of living together that speaks of the presence of God. It is through close relationships that this presence is made real for the young child. Parents and other family members are the natural bearers of love, patience, and understanding for their children. Catholic Communities, in their critical role of faith formation will be concerned with helping parents understand and nurture the spiritual and faith development of their children. Over a period of years, through the mutuality of parish support and family involvement, children will begin to identify with the faith community.

“This age group, traditionally divided into early infancy or pre-school age and childhood, possesses, in the light of faith and reason, the grace of the beginnings of life, from which valuable possibilities exist, both for the building up of the Church and for the making of a more humane society. As a child of God, in virtue of the gift of Baptism, the child is proclaimed by Christ to be a privileged member of the Kingdom of God. For various reasons today, rather more than in the past, the child demands full respect and help in its spiritual and human growth. This is also true in catechesis which must always be made available to Christian children. Those who have given life to children and have enriched them with the gift of Baptism have the duty continually to nourish it.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC), no. 177 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1998).

## **PROGRAMMING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A PARISH SETTING**

The purpose of this document is to provide a sense of direction and support to those involved in planning and implementing an Early Childhood Religious Education Program in the parish. An Early Childhood Religious Education Program provides the community with opportunities to accept the young child, encourage the child's openness to God's loving presence, and foster the child's desire for belonging to the community. It encourages and elicits the interest and support of the parents of each child, as well as that of each of the members of the faith community, clergy and staff. The Early Childhood program seeks to unite the efforts of the home and Church in instilling a Catholic sacramental perspective.

The first years of life are critical in the spiritual formation of a person. A growing awareness of God as a creator and loving parent who is ever present in our lives begins during these years. In this document, early childhood is defined as the period of life from birth through the kindergarten year.

Throughout this time in a child's life, his/her faith can be nourished within the parish community through parents who are actively involved in faith formation. Parents that choose to grow in their faith will have a wonderful impact upon their families. The parish needs to provide catechesis for parents that is specific to their needs, particularly with respect to the faith development of their children. Families benefit from catechetical processes that encourage interaction and formation in faith among family members. Families that develop an ongoing presence of prayer in their lives strengthen the parish by their example.

- The parish Catholic community provides opportunities for support and ongoing guidance to the parents in revealing God's love to the children.
- The parish provides children and families with a sense of belonging to the community through evangelization and catechesis.
- Formal catechetical programs for young children should have competent leaders, catechists, assistants, and parents who are involved in meaningful roles.
- God's love is communicated to children primarily through the parents.
- During early childhood, “foundations are laid which influence the ability to accept self, relate to others, and respond effectively to the environment. Upon these foundations rests the formation...of one's human capacity for relating with God.”<sup>2</sup>
- Early childhood is a time for readiness for religious experiences.

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<sup>2</sup> United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education, *Sharing the Light of Faith, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*, no. 177 (Washington D.C. 1979).

Based on the above belief statements we suggest that the following goals and objectives are necessary for parishes to provide an effective religious education program for young children.

## **SUGGESTED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR A PARISH**

### **CHILD**

Goal: The child has opportunities for awareness and experiences of God's love.

Objectives:

1. to provide opportunities for the child to grow in knowledge of him/her self.
2. to provide opportunities for the child to appreciate self as a unique gift of God.
3. to provide experiences for the child that will deepen his/her sense of wonder about God's world.
4. to provide opportunities for the child to appreciate others as a gift of God.
5. to provide opportunities for the child to raise his/her awareness of God as a loving and caring parent.
6. to encourage prayers appropriate to the child's level.
7. to provide opportunities for the child to experience a sense of belonging to the faith community.
8. to introduce the child to the practice of rituals in celebrations.

## **PARENTS**

Goal: The parents understand that who they are in the eyes of their child, God is to the child.

Objectives:

1. to encourage parents to accept their role as the most influential educators of their children.
2. to encourage parents to participate in the Early Childhood Religious Education program.
3. to communicate information to the parents about the developmental stages of growth and religious formation.
4. to encourage parents to continue their own adult faith formation.

## **PARISH**

Goal: The parish community witnesses to its conviction of the importance of early childhood readiness.

Objectives:

1. to provide quality catechetical leadership and staff.
2. to insure that coordinators and catechists of the Early Childhood Program are certified according to the Archdiocesan Religious Education Policies.
3. to provide adequate materials and financial support for the Early Childhood Catechetical Program(s).
4. to provide adequate facilities for the Early Childhood Catechetical Program(s).
5. to provide opportunities for the continuing adult faith formation of the parents.
6. to provide opportunities for families to gather for formation together.

# PARISH/PARENT INVOLVEMENT

## ROLE OF THE PARISH

The parish is the local Catholic Christian community in action. It is the mission of the parish to make God's love visible. One means of bringing God's message of love to the community is through a faith formation program. The program should enable all members to mature in their potential to move closer to God and each other through Jesus Christ. The parish can support the families and their young child in their growth in faith through an early childhood religious education program. The parish education commission recommends sound policies which will encourage and facilitate a program. The commission could review the program and offer ongoing suggestions that will support the catechetical leader as he/she administers the program.

If early childhood programs are to be of utmost value, and if they are to contribute to the spiritual growth of the parish members, they must be planned and conducted in the context of the parish community's mission.

## ROLE OF THE PARENT

Learning begins at birth and continues throughout life with the first seven years being most influential to the formation of values for the child. These values are passed on to the child by the parent, the primary educator. The parent teaches the child simply by being the parent and by doing and saying all of the things that the parent says and does in the normal course of daily living. In this way a child learns a set of values and attitudes that influence and determine his/her relationship toward God, others, and the world. Specifically, who the parents are in the eyes of the child, God is to the child.

The young child is not capable of religious experiences in the same sense as adults. However, the early years are a time to set the stage for later religious understanding and growth. This time is critical to the child. Attitudes towards God, religion and others held later in life will depend largely on the ground work laid during these early years. It is suggested that these early years are so important that scarcely anything will alter or radically change the values and attitudes formed during this period of life. Thus, parents as primary educators of their children are essential and truly primary to early childhood programs. The programs, whether for infants, toddlers, preschool or kindergarten must include plans for support and involvement of parents.

## PARENT SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Early childhood religious education programs can support and involve parents as they strive to allow the child's sense of God to develop and to impart our Catholic Christian values. The Church should help parents lead their children to develop and appreciate Christian values and practice Christian virtues. In her article, "Ten Ways to Involve Parents," Kathy Hendricks gives us a list which respects and enhances the role of parents in the formation of their child in faith.

1. **Get to Know Them** – Study the demographics of your parish and community. Who are these parents? What are their needs and interests? What challenges do they face in your particular community? What obstacles stand in the way of their involvement in parish life? Look for ways to meet parents informally – at parish functions, before or after Mass, or as they participate in other parish activities. Building relationships is one of the most effective ways to start building a base for engaging parents in the catechetical work of the parish.
2. **Consult With Them** – Research has shown that when churches and schools set up consultative structures, parental involvement increases. Such structures might already exist in the form of religious education committees or boards. Consider, as well, more informal ways to consult with parents, such as phone trees, coffee klatches, and specialized advisory groups (parents of disabled children, for example.) These can all provide ways to find out what parents think, want, and value.
3. **Be Flexible** – If one is willing to be consultative, then one must also be willing to respond to suggestions and ideas. This means keeping programs flexible, adaptable, and open to change-even in mid-year. Always be ready to ask yourself, "Is this program or activity meeting their needs, or mine?"
4. **Communicate Lavishly** – Sending out a parent letter or putting an announcement in the bulletin isn't necessarily communication. Are these methods effective? Is anyone out there paying attention? For help with making communication methods optimally effective, tap into the talents of parishioners who have expertise in the areas of marketing, public speaking, or sales. They know the value of the written or spoken word and will be able to provide invaluable ideas and advice for developing a communications plan.
5. **Broaden Volunteer Opportunities** – As anyone who has recruited a catechist knows, it's more difficult than ever to find people who are able to say yes to such a regular, year-long commitment. For many parents, it is simply not feasible. Expand opportunities for them to be involved by breaking down volunteer jobs into smaller, less time-consuming tasks. This widens the margins and offers people options. In some cases, it gives them a chance to dip their toe in the water before taking the plunge into a more intensive commitment.
6. **Honor Their Time** – Not many families are functioning today with too much time on their hands. Whenever calling on parents to be involved, whether it's at a meeting, as a volunteer, or even reading a piece of mail, consider the time they

need to devote to it. Plan each and every parent activity well and with an eye on the clock. When people sense that their time has been considered and respected, they will respond in kind.

7. **Provide Opportunities to Meet Other Parents** – The time crunches that families face can often lead to a sense of isolation and disengagement with others. This may be one reason why involvement in a child's sports activity is so popular among parents today: It gives them a chance to interact with other parents. Catechetical and sacramental programs hold great potential for bringing families together and for building community among them.
8. **Give Them Good Resources** – In addition to good informational pieces, parents should be receiving resources that support them in their role as “primary educators” of their children. Use consultative groups to assess family resource materials carefully. Are they family-friendly? Is the language inviting or intimidating? Are the suggestions for the activities home based or classroom-based? Will parents use the materials because they're attractive, practical, and well-stated, or throw them out because they're wordy, pretentious, or dull?
9. **Consider the Big Picture** - One problem with being a ‘specialist’ in ministry is the potential it holds for becoming myopic about one’s area of expertise. The parent who serves as a lector in the parish or helps out with social outreach is involved in the parish. The same holds true for the parent who leads a scout troop, coaches a ball team, or participates in community service. The creative challenge for catechetical leaders is to encourage and invite parents to reflect on these activities in order to make connections with their own spiritual life and the way in which they are forming their child in faith.
10. **Respect Parents** - Let’s face it, working with parents can be frustrating. Many parents can be non-responsive to even the most intensive efforts to involve, inform, and engage them in parish catechetical or sacramental programs. At such times, it’s tempting to feel belligerent toward them and to regard them as apathetic or even ignorant. If such temptations come your way, stop and consider the pressures and concerns that weigh on families today. It is also important to examine one’s own assumptions about families. Are parents non-responsive because they are apathetic or because they are overwhelmed by other, more pressing responsibilities? Are there factors in their lives-elderly parents or unstable work environments, for example-that preclude a more active presence in their child’s formal religious education? Being a compassionate, caring, and sensitive leader will do much to assure parents that you hold them in high regard.

Working with parents is certainly one of the most challenging aspects of being a catechetical leader. With a little bit of creativity, it can also be one of the most rewarding.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hendricks, Kathy, *Ten Ways to Involve Parents*, NCCL Catechetical Leadership, Summer 2000 Vol. 12, No 3, © \_\_\_\_\_ National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, 3021 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1102 [www.nccl.org](http://www.nccl.org) Used with permission. All rights reserved.

## PRACTICAL PARENT COMMUNICATION

### A. Parent Handbook

Those responsible for religious education at all levels must understand that they have responsibilities. New challenges are presented to us at this time in history and it is important that all involved in our parish programs be made aware that they are accountable. A clearly developed handbook for parents is a necessary tool to insure that all people involved in the parish program are aware of their rights, expectations and responsibilities. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis has developed a booklet called *Considerations When Writing Parish Religious Education Handbooks* to assist you in this effort. This booklet gives a Handbook checklist of areas that should be covered: the program philosophy, admission policies, financial procedures, attendance procedures, discipline, outside activities related to the program (field trips), safety and emergency procedures, and child protection policy. A Parent/Student Handbook which includes information for all of the children's Religious Education programs should be given to each parent.

### B. Beginning of the Year Parent Meeting

Possible agenda items to include in the meeting:

1. Open the meeting with prayer. Using simple prayer that parents can use with their child at home will probably be well received.
2. Share the goals of the program you are using. This can usually be found in the introductory pages in the catechist manual. Also look at the Goals and Objectives (pages 3 - 4) in this Handbook.
3. Acknowledge parents as the primary educators. The document on Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) in the Documents of Vatican II, states that "...parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children".<sup>4</sup> A parish religious education program for young children is one that supports the religious growth of the child begun in the home.
4. Give an overview of the program. Explain that throughout the year the children will develop a deeper understanding of God's love through the many gifts we see around us such as family, nature and community. This is the readiness needed to understand religious concepts that will be presented later. Look at the program's manual for background material as well as *Growing Together: Ministry to Children* which is the graded course of study for early childhood and elementary catechetical programs for our Archdiocese.

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<sup>4</sup> Abbott, Walter M., ed. *The Documents of Vatican II. Declaration on Christian Education* (*Gravissimum Educationis*) no. 3. Translated by Joseph Gallagher. New York: America Press, 1966.

5. Show the parents the text or handouts that accompany the program. This is a must if you will not be sending the text home.
6. Discuss the child's spirituality. Remember the parents need to understand the level of the child's spirituality. See "The Developing Child" (pages 11 – 14) section of this handbook for ideas as well as the Catechist Manual for the program you are using.
7. Tell parents about the special activities that you will be doing during the year, for example, prayers services to which they are invited. Children will appreciate the class more when they see their parents involved.
8. Walk through a sample lesson with the parents and explain how the Catechetical Process is used when teaching religion.
9. Notify parents that catechists and other volunteers adhere to the archdiocesan *Decree on Child Protection*.
10. Allow time for questions.

**C. Take Home Materials**

All of the texts that are included on the *Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List* include materials to send home to the parents. It is important to read these materials over carefully before sending them home to make sure you will be doing what it says.

**D. Newsletter**

A monthly or quarterly newsletter could include the following:

1. The importance of parents continuing the development of their own faith as well as listing opportunities to do this.
2. A list of ways for parents to be involved in the class.
3. The special events that happen in class such as visitors (human and animals), celebrations and anecdotes make for interesting reading. Parents always enjoy knowing that the classroom is a fun and pleasant environment for their child.
4. Catechist's biographies help make families aware of the truly special people who are part of the program.
5. Notifying parents of those who attend workshops, courses and meetings helps them to realize that catechists are involved in these activities in addition to their weekly class commitments.
6. Articles on the religious development of children.

7. Theme-related library books for children that were used in class and songs sung could be included. Often the Catechist Manual will include suggestions for children's books.
8. A listing of special program activities, such as Preschool/Kindergarten prayer services should be stated simply:

WHEN:

WHO:

WHERE:

WHAT:

HOW LONG:

WHY:

9. List resources that are needed for your class. Parents are eager to help if you let them know what is needed.
10. Appropriate Thank You's should be included.

## THE DEVELOPING CHILD

The first six years of life are of critical importance in the development of the young child. Research indicates that, just as children develop intellectually, morally, physically, socially and emotionally they also develop spiritually. All areas of development need to be kept in mind when planning for the religious education of young children.

In the past few years much has been published regarding the research on how the brain develops. In her article, “Brain Research and Its Implications for Early Childhood Programs”, Pam Schiller, an early childhood consultant, suggests that “children learn in the context of important relationships. During the first year of life, the baby is developing trust which is the foundation for all relationships.”<sup>5</sup> She states that “brain cell connections are established as the growing child experiences the surrounding world and forms attachments to parents, families, and caregivers.”<sup>6</sup> Schiller continues with the thought that “the quality of experiences and relationships in the first three years of life has a deep and lasting impact on how the brain gets wired.”<sup>7</sup>

In *Inviting Children into the Faith Community*, Patricia and Robert Boone tell us that “if we want our children to trust the loving God they can’t see, we have to provide a quality of life in the faith community where children experience trustworthiness and love.”<sup>8</sup> By understanding how children perceive God, and how they develop these perceptions, adults and the faith community can come to better understand how to communicate divine truth to young children. Infants and preschool children need, first of all, to feel safe.

Parents and catechists can encourage development in all areas by following the suggestions listed in “Promoting Young Children’s Healthy Development and School Readiness” found in *The First Years Last Forever*.

1. *Recognize that each child is unique*
2. *Be warm, loving and responsive*
3. *Establish routines and rituals*
4. *Respond to the child’s cues and clues*
5. *Encourage safe exploration and play*
6. *Talk, read and sing to the child.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Schiller, Pam, *Brain Research and Its Implications for Early Childhood Programs*, Child Care Information Exchange, July, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Blazer, Doris A., *Faith Development in Early Childhood*, *Inviting the Children Into the Faith Community*, P. 118, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpt from *The First Years Last Forever*, reprinted with permission from the I Am Your Child Foundation. [www.iamyourchild.org](http://www.iamyourchild.org).

Following is a short synopsis of the developmental stages. More information regarding the development of the young child can be found in the manuals for Preschool/ Kindergarten Religious Education Programs. The names of these series are available on the *Preferred Religion/Textbook Program List* published by the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.

## **THE CHILD OF THREE**

*Three-year-olds are busy discovering themselves and the world around them. They delight in discovering each new thing they can accomplish. "Look at what I did" or "Look at mine" can often be heard.*

**Spiritual Development** – In order for children to understand that God loves them, they must first experience love, not only from parents, but also from catechists. Three-year-olds are generally trusting and ready to accept what they are told about God. They will model the attitude of adults toward prayer. They also observe and imitate adult actions toward others. The preschool religious education class is often seen by three-year-olds as their “church.” Also, we must remember that three-year-olds accept everything said by adults as concrete reality. If we refer to the church as God’s house, children are going to think it has a kitchen, living room and bedroom just like their own.

**Physical Development** – At this age, children are developing coordination. This can be seen when they are walking up and down stairs, alternating feet as they go. They are also running with more smoothness than they did at two. Pouring from a small pitcher, putting on shoes and unbuttoning accessible buttons are now possible.

**Social/Emotional Development** – Three-year-olds are ritualistic, wanting to do things the same way everyday. Some sort of routine in the classroom helps create a sense of security for them. They are taking an interest in playing with other children but still like parallel or solitary types of activities. "Friends" is a word that is used extensively because they are starting to treat other children as individuals. They are just beginning to understand what it means to take turns and to share toys. This is not to be expected at all times. Sacrificing immediate satisfaction of something on a promise of a later privilege can be seen sporadically. Their sense of independence is getting stronger. "I'll do it myself" is a familiar phrase they often use.

**Intellectual Development** - They are using language more fluently and with confidence. Conversations are often one-sided because they are perfecting speech and understanding and also because of still being egocentric. At this age, there is an increased interest in listening to stories. A circle can be copied from a picture and an "x" can be made if they see it done. When working with creative materials, the process of using the paint, crayons, paste, etc., are more important to them than the finished product. Three-year-olds learn by experiencing and imitating. Curriculum for three-year-old children should emphasize language, activity, and movement, with major emphasis on large muscle activities. Some appropriate

activities include dramatic play, puzzles, blocks and opportunities to talk and listen to simple stories.

**Moral Development** – Three-year-olds are provided with additional opportunities to develop their senses, feelings and imagination in an environment which encourages curiosity and questioning. They need to feel accepted and to have peer play experiences.

## THE CHILD OF FOUR

*Four-year-olds have a need to be creative. All kinds of materials should be provided; crayons, paints, markers, clay, glue and large sheets of paper. They admire their creations and like others to do the same.*

**Spiritual Development** - Children at age four are full of awe and wonder at creations and yet like to have explanations for the many things they are observing. They have many questions about the God who is responsible for it all, but seldom wait for the explanation to be finished before asking the next question. They attribute human qualities to God, e.g., eyes, hands, ears. Four-year-olds can become absorbed in ritual, loving the drama, the song and the challenge to their imagination. Children of this age are naturally curious and contemplative about nature and God's creations. Some four-year-olds are self-critical and need to know that God loves them as they are and that there will be a "next time" to try again.

**Physical Development** – Children of age four are full of energy. This is obvious in their constant physical motion. Four-year-olds jump, climb, run ahead, and wait for others to catch up. Four-year-old children enjoy a greater variety of experiences and more small motor activities such as using scissors, art and manipulatives.

**Social/Emotional Development** - Socially, four-year-olds are becoming more conscious of others and can, for example, sometimes show sympathy for others. They will comfort mother when mother has an ache or a pain. They like parties and celebrations of every kind, hating to be left out of the group. They might take the initiative to invite a playmate to their home, but only one playmate at a time.

**Intellectual Development** - The energy of four-year-olds can also be observed in verbalizing. These little ones make up words, the sillier the better. They delight in long words, and rhyming words. They ask how and why and are sometimes frighteningly imaginative. They can go on and on with a story - the more dramatic, the better. Four-year-olds are more able to concentrate and remember as well as recognize objects by shape, color, or size.

**Moral Development** – Organized rules, social interactions with problem solving situations help preschoolers to develop the skills for moral reasoning. Adults need to provide care in a loving manner, set limits and be consistent to help these skills develop.

## KINDERGARTEN

*Kindergartners, ages five and six, are fun to be around and are usually anxious to please the adults in their lives. They are trusting and open to new experiences. Five and six-year-olds are filled with curiosity and wonder which enables children of this age to delight in the discovery of God's wonderful creations.*

**Spiritual Development** – At this age, children are capable of knowing that God made and loves them and wants them to share that love with others in their world. Five and six-year-olds are at the age where they take pleasure in participating in religious community experiences and rituals which are geared to their age level. They still interpret Bible stories and other stories literally as they often cannot understand the author's intent. The historical Jesus and Trinity are beyond their mental capacities. This is a good time to lay a foundation for young children to develop a friendship with Jesus.

**Physical Development** – Children of five or six have made great strides in motor control and care of self. Greater small muscle control allows them to draw, cut and accomplish other tasks more quickly and more to their satisfaction.

**Social/Emotional Development** – Kindergarteners are learning to be more cooperative in a group. They can play in a small group and they like to role-play adult situations. Their favorite people can become the elderly gentleman down the street, an aunt, a teacher, or any one of a number of people now a part of their lives. These children are anxious to do what is right and look to adults for approval of what they do. They want to see a purpose for their activity and are content when they have accomplished a task like setting the table or running an errand for an adult.

**Intellectual Development** - They are learning to tell time, to recognize words and numbers, and to memorize their address and phone number. These youngsters are not yet able to deal with abstract concepts and have difficulty understanding the reasons for past events; they live in the "now." Kindergartners are showing an increased ability to pay attention for longer periods of time.

**Moral Development** – Children learn from modeling their peers and adults. This relationship with others helps them develop a sense of community which helps them to understand their needs and meet the needs of others. The adult nurtures, demonstrates, and reinforces behavior in children.

# ORGANIZING THE PROGRAM

## PERSONNEL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

The staff of an Early Childhood Religious Education Program generally consists of a catechetical leader and/or coordinator, catechists, classroom assistants and other helpers. The coordination of any program involves responsibilities in the areas of administration, catechist formation/development, communication and resourcing. The extent to which the coordinator covers these areas depends on the size of the program, the parish structure and the number of persons with whom responsibility may be shared.

The following duties should be adapted and tailored to fit individual parish circumstances. The most important thing is to have mutual understanding of expectations among all persons involved. This job can either be volunteer or paid. For information concerning the Religious Education certification of catechetical leaders and catechists in your parish, consult your regional Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.

### COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

The person(s) who is responsible for the religious education of Preschool and Kindergarten age children can have any or all of the following duties:

#### A. Program Maintenance

1. Implements the Archdiocesan Early Childhood Guidelines as outlined in this handbook and Religious Education Policies. These policies are available from your regional Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.
2. Develops or assures that Early Childhood has been included in the Parish Religious Education Handbook for Catechists and Parents.
3. Acts as liaison between the Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization & Catechesis and parish Early Childhood staff.
4. Acts as liaison between the building manager, school principal and teachers and catechists in regard to upkeep of facilities.
5. Coordinates the selection and purchase of manuals, children's activity sheets/texts and other materials that accompany the program used.
6. Plans the yearly calendar which includes scheduling of lessons for all levels of the Early Childhood Program, parent meetings and special activities.

7. Organizes the registration. This should be conducted at the same time as the rest of the parish religious education programs to emphasize the place of Early Childhood within the total program. See Appendix for sample registration and medical forms. It is advisable to check the Office of Youth Ministry Web site <http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/youthmin/releaseforms/releasepolicy.htm> for revisions of the medical/release form.
8. Assigns the catechists, assistants and children to classes. Children may be grouped together or divided according to age. The diversity of the program should be mirrored in each group, i.e., equal number of boys and girls and cultures. If children are divided according to age, the suggested class sizes are as follows: Three-year-olds - 8, four-year-olds - 10, and five-year-olds/Kindergarten - 12.
9. Keeps appropriate records. It is important to have a list of catechists, class rosters, and attendance records. You are encouraged to work with the rest of the parish religious education program regarding the type of records kept so that they are consistent.
10. Works within the budget allocated for the program.
11. Assures there are written program goals, objectives and strategies. See the “Goal Setting and Evaluation” (page 35) section of this Handbook for details.
12. Assists with lesson planning. The coordinator's role at lesson planning sessions is to offer ideas and resources. Generally, a unit is covered during one planning session.
13. Assures that an annual evaluation of the program is conducted.
14. Works toward or has acquired Catechetical Leader certification through the Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.

## **B. Development**

1. Recruits catechists, classroom assistants and substitute catechists to meet the programs needs. When recruiting new catechists or other staff it is important to explain in detail the philosophy of your program and the responsibilities of the job. It is best to ask for a commitment for a specific period of time.
2. Supervises catechists and classroom assistants.
3. Promotes catechist certification and sees that catechists and classroom assistants are kept informed of the availability of courses and workshops for certification.
4. Provides ongoing support, praise and encouragement for the catechists and assistants. Many catechists and assistants volunteer their services. To support them in this important role see the Volunteers section of the *Personnel Policy Guidelines for Parishes, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Department of Personnel Services*. Each parish has a copy of these Guidelines.

5. Plans and implements meetings for catechists. A meeting should be held for all catechists and assistants at the beginning of the year as a means of orientation. It is recommended that two other meetings be scheduled for enrichment and time should be allotted for sharing.

### **C. Communication and Relationship**

1. Provides continued communication with catechists. Catechists should be given information regarding each child in their class, i.e., parent(s) or guardian(s) name, address, phone, birthdates, school if they attend and special needs or allergies. Catechists should also be made aware of the different family life styles and the plurality of living situations of the children in their class. All should be kept informed as to the purpose and activities of the Early Childhood program as well as the rest of the Religious Education program.
2. Is responsible for maintaining communication with parents. Parents need to know the purpose and activities of the program. This can be done at the beginning of the year meeting or can be distributed in written form, e-mail or via a web page. Other necessary communication might include take-home materials, suggestions on newsletters. See “Parish/Parent Involvement” (pages 5-10) section of this document for suggestions.

### **D. Resource**

1. Coordinates the use of media which includes ordering from the regional media center ([www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec)), library or parish religious education center and making sure the equipment (TV, VCR, CD player, DVD player, tape player, etc.) are available and in good working order.
2. Makes sure that a plan is in place to acquire helpful support material for the program

### **E. Safety Measures**

1. Conducts the appropriate number of fire and weather drills in accordance with local laws. Makes sure that appropriate personnel complete an Incident Report when a child has an accident. See the Appendix for a form.
2. Has knowledge of the archdiocesan *Decree on Child Protection* and the procedure for implementing it in the parish. Assures that all catechists and adult volunteers have attended the orientation for the *Decree on Child Protection* and have been fingerprinted.
3. Is responsible for seeing that facilities for classes are safe.

## F. Calendar Suggestions for Program Coordinators

JUNE	Continue recruiting catechists and other personnel Order catechists manuals, texts or handouts etc. from publisher Select and purchase new creative materials and supplies Recommend ideas for parent education to Adult Faith Formation Leaders
JULY	VACATION!
AUGUST	Set up yearly calendar of lessons for each level Set dates, times, locations for meetings, classes and other gatherings Reserve space where needed Continue recruiting catechists and other personnel Purchase needed supplies and equipment Reserve Media material from Office of Religious Education Media Center in your region Encourage catechists to attend fall Congress, courses, and workshops Plan for parent involvement Notify catechist of the orientations for the <i>Decree on Child Protection</i>
SEPTEMBER	Attend courses and workshops for certification Participate in Catechetical Sunday celebration Publicize program Conduct fall registration Conduct orientation meeting for parents to explain program, philosophy and program rationale Conduct orientation meeting for catechists, classroom assistants and volunteers Conduct lesson planning sessions for each level Inform catechists, assistants and parents of courses and workshops
OCTOBER	Complete and return forms sent by Archdiocesan Office of Evangelization & Catechesis Plan seasonal celebrations/activities/prayer services: All Saint s Day, Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas Conduct All Saints Day Celebration

NOVEMBER	<p>Conduct Thanksgiving celebration</p> <p>Finalize plans for Advent and Christmas celebrations</p> <p>Conduct second lesson planning sessions for all levels</p> <p>Assess progress of program</p> <p>Conduct enrichment meeting for catechists and classroom assistants</p> <p>Plan for catechists and assistants Christmas gifts or/and celebration</p>
DECEMBER	<p>Conduct Advent celebration</p> <p>Give catechists gifts or have celebration in their honor</p>
JANUARY	<p>Conduct Christmas celebration</p> <p>Evaluation of program thus far by parents and catechists</p> <p>Plan for Valentine and Easter celebrations</p> <p>Inform catechists, assistants and parents of courses and workshops</p>
FEBRUARY	<p>Have enrichment program for catechists (retreat, day of renewal, speaker etc.)</p> <p>Conduct third lesson planning sessions for all age levels</p>
MARCH, APRIL	<p>Plan closing celebration for children and their families, catechists and assistants.</p> <p>Conduct Easter celebration</p> <p>Conduct spring registration</p> <p>Estimate need for new catechists, assistants, etc. and begin recruitment</p> <p>Plan budget for the coming year</p>
APRIL, MAY	<p>Hold final session(s) and closing celebrations for children, parents, catechists and assistants.</p> <p>Evaluate the program. See the "Evaluation" section (page 35) of this Handbook for suggestions. Propose changes as needed.</p> <p>Inform catechists, assistants and parents of summer courses and workshops</p> <p>See that records are complete and up-to-date</p> <p>Encourage attendance at summer Vacation Bible School, if applicable.</p>

## CATECHIST RESPONSIBILITIES

The catechist, whether he or she works alone or on a team, has the major responsibility of conducting the weekly lesson with the children.

### A. Before Class

1. **Lesson plans** need to be prepared in advance. This includes selecting and obtaining or reserving the materials and audio visuals needed for class.
2. **Environment** is part of the responsibility of the catechist. She/he needs to arrive well in advance of starting time in order to have the room ready for the arrival of the children.
3. **Discuss** with assistant specific tasks that need to be done during class.

### B. During Class

1. **Greet** the children and their parents as they arrive for class.
2. **Conduct** the class adjusting the lesson plan as needed.
3. **Attend** to the class needs as well as to individual needs of the children in their care. Being aware of a child's needs may help them to participate better in class.
4. **Delegate** clearly to the assistant his or her responsibilities in the classroom. See "Classroom Assistant's Responsibilities" (page 21).
5. **Communicate** with the program coordinator any needs or concerns that need to be taken care of during the class period.
6. **Attendance** taking is the responsibility of the catechist.
7. **Dismissal** of children. The catechist is responsible for seeing that children leave with their parents or someone designated by the parents.

### C. After Class

1. **Clean** up the area used for class and leave it as it was found.
2. **Communicate** with the coordinator any needs or concerns

### D. Other

1. **Evaluation** - the catechist needs to participate in the evaluation of the program with a view towards seeing that it is improved.
2. **Certification** - The catechist needs to be working towards or acquire certification according to *The Ministry of the Catechist*.
3. **Decree or Child Protection** – New catechists attend the orientation on the *Decree on Child Protection* and complete the necessary fingerprinting.

## CLASSROOM ASSISTANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Many catechists need and are grateful for the cooperation of a classroom assistant. Each catechist conducts his or her class in the manner which is comfortable for him or her and the children. Assistants have the opportunity to help the catechist and to enjoy being with the children.

### A. Before Class

1. **Arrive** early, about 15 minutes before class begins.
2. **Discuss** with the catechist specific tasks that need to be done during the class.

### B. During Class

1. **Coats, etc.** - help the children as they arrive
2. **Attendance** - help with the chart if asked.
3. **Join** the group for discussion and show a listening attitude.
4. **Participate** in songs, games and finger plays, etc.
5. **Be ready** to help the catechist set up, distribute and collect the materials.
6. **Creative Activities** - assist the children if asked. Encourage the children in what they are doing. A simple "I like the color you are using," means a lot. Try to avoid showing the children how to do the activity.
7. **Be Alert** to what is happening. The group situation is the responsibility of the catechist. However, there may be times when the assistant will see something before the catechist does. A suggestion the assistant might make to a child could avert a problem.
8. **Avoid socializing** with the catechist during class. The catechist wants very much to hear your comments and answer questions, but not during class time.
9. **Bathroom** - assist the children as needed.

### C. After Class

- A. **Leavetaking** - assist the children with coats, parent letters, projects and other items. Be sure no child leaves without being called for by family members.
- B. **Clean up** - Help the catechist clean up the class area. Leave the room as it was found and return all items borrowed to their proper place.

## **OTHER VOLUNTEERS**

The following are suggested tasks for additional volunteers. Requests for volunteers can be included on the registration form, through the parish bulletin or other parish communication.

### **Age Level Assistant:**

Is responsible for gathering and preparing all materials needed for class. It is necessary that they attend all lesson planning sessions.

### **Hospitality Chairperson:**

Is responsible for organizing volunteers who will provide refreshments for parent meetings, catechist training sessions and classroom celebrations.

### **Office Help**

Volunteers to help with various duties and needs in the office. Would be responsible during class time to make needed copies, find needed materials for catechists and perform any odd jobs the coordinator might need.

### **Telephone Volunteers:**

Would be responsible for organizing a telephone relay for contacting parents regarding program activities and sudden class cancellations. This volunteer could also make a reminder call to parents the week before they are to help in the classroom.

### **Communications:**

Would be responsible for organizing and publicizing the children's program, meetings for parents, and getting notices into the parish bulletins. Could also assist with writing a program newsletter.

### **Music Coordinator:**

Is responsible for assisting the catechist(s) in teaching songs to the children and leading the music in classroom prayer services.

### **Artists and Craft Persons:**

Are responsible for developing ideas and gathering materials for creative endeavors in the classroom.

### **Carrier for Library Materials:**

Most of the texts have a listing of children's books that could accompany a lesson. The carrier would reserve and pick up and return these or other books suggested by the coordinator and catechists.

## BUDGET

The Early Childhood program should be part of the total educational efforts of a parish. Thus the program should share in the total religious education budget. Many resources are needed to enable a program to run smoothly. To defray the cost some parishes will charge a fee. The Program Coordinator, in cooperation with the parish DRE, should submit a budget to the Education Commission. Following are suggested items to include in a budget. Salaries are not included with these suggestions.

### PROGRAM MATERIALS

**Catechist Manuals** - A copy of the manual being used should be purchased for each catechist and the coordinator.

**Weekly Handouts** - Every series on the *Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List* is accompanied by handouts, either solely for the parents' use or ones to be used in the classroom then sent home. If these are not purchased some form of communication with the parents should be provided regarding the theme either weekly or monthly. Suggestions of things they can do at home should also be included.

**Support Materials** - Each series has a variety of support materials for their programs. Some of the materials include puppets, audio cassettes, flannel board figures, posters, activity books and puzzles. It is up to the coordinator and catechists to determine which support materials will be of benefit to their programs.

### SUPPLIES

**Catechist Bin** - It is helpful for each catechist to have a bin with supplies that will be used every week. This bin could include crayons, markers, scissors (for 4 and 5 year old children) large scissors for catechist, cellophane tape, paper towels, tissues, stapler, glue sticks or small bottles of glue for children, and a plastic tablecloth.

**Art/Craft Supplies** - Paper of different kinds (construction, newsprint and finger paint), paints, paint brushes, painting smocks, plastic tablecloths to protect tables during creating projects, extra glue, chalk, crayons, and masking tape are a few of the many items that need to be purchased.

**Celebrations** - The largest cost in this area would be for nutritious snacks and drinks. Some programs call for a snack each week and others only occasionally.

**Miscellaneous** - Flannel boards and stories, puppets, cost of duplicating materials and binders for each catechist should be included in the budget. Every week a variety of materials may be required and they should be in the budget.

## BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

**Children's Books** - Many of the series suggest books to go along with their themes. Some of these may be obtained through your local library or you may wish to consider purchasing some.

**Books and Magazines for Catechists and Parents** – Resource books are important to have for catechists. Allotting a certain percentage of your budget each year toward the purchase of these items will assure your parish of a good library in a few years.

## MEDIA

**Music** - is an integral part of an early childhood program. There are a variety of music cassettes and CD's that are available which would enhance the program and thus consideration should be given to purchasing some.

**Equipment** – CD players, tape recorders, DVD players, VCR's and TV's need to be available for catechist use.

**Media Rental** – Each regional office of the Archdiocese has a media center where audio visuals may be rented. Parishes may purchase a media contract which enables them to borrow as many materials annually as they wish or they may pay on a per item basis. Materials may be picked up at the Media Centers or they can be mailed. A media catalog listing available materials may be accessed on-line at [www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec) by clicking on “**Media**”. Supplements to the Media Catalog are e-mailed quarterly. If desired, a hard copy may be obtained from the Media Centers. Media may be reserved on-line, by phone, or by visiting the Media Centers. It is strongly recommended to reserve the media you need well in advance of the date to be used.

## WORKSHOP AND COURSE FEES

Each catechist is urged to acquire certification. Part of the certification requires courses and skill workshops which are offered throughout the year. The parish is encouraged to be responsible for the fees involved. See *The Ministry of the Catechist* for the requirements for certification.

## GIFTS

**For Children** – Some of the programs give the children a small gift at Christmas and sometimes at the end of the year. Ornaments, small nativity scenes, etc. may be given for Christmas. For the end of the year some things given have been class pictures, certificates etc.

**For Staff** – Include in your budget, gifts for the staff. Some parishes remember the staff with a gift at Christmas and then maybe a social gathering at the end of the year. Remember to include spouses at social gatherings.

## GOAL SETTING AND EVALUATION

### GOAL SETTING

Most parishes have periodic visioning and goal setting processes. The Early Childhood program can assist the parish in reaching some of its goals. If this process is already in place, the Early Childhood staff will work with the parish leadership to establish objectives consistent with parish goals. If there is no process in place, the Early Childhood staff will want to engage in its own goal setting and determining objectives and strategies. Listed below are definitions of goals, objectives and strategies. The examples for an Early Childhood program are in italics.

**Goals** are clearly defined statements of desired directions or activities in broad general terms.

*To be a welcoming community to the families in the Early Childhood Program.*

**Objectives** are specific, time-oriented and realistic statements of "what" we are going to do, for "whom", "when" we will do it and "how much" we are going to do.

*To make three efforts to connect the parents with the program and the larger parish community during the 200\_ year.*

**Strategies** are specific actions that will be used in attaining the objective.

- 1. The Coordinator will greet all children and their families as they enter the building for each class.*
- 2. The Chairperson of the Worship Commission and the Early Childhood Coordinator will send a letter to all parents of the program inviting them to serve as liturgical ministers during the 10:00 a.m. Sunday liturgy by October 1, 200\_.*
- 3. A Sign-Up sheet for Festival Workers will be sent home to all parents by the last week in April 200\_.*

### WHY EVALUATE?

The purpose of an evaluation is to affirm the strengths of the program and to determine areas that need improvement. Evaluation of your program should happen on a regular basis.

### WHAT AND HOW SHOULD YOU EVALUATE?

**Goals, Objectives and Strategies** should be reviewed by the coordinator and catechists to determine the progress made.

**Elements of the Program** - this would include the text and media used, the facilities, supplies, resources, catechist training and the support given to the staff. In essence you would be asking, "Do you have the tools and support needed to accomplish the role responsibilities?"

**Catechist Review** - this would include looking at the parish's list of responsibilities for catechists. Also see *The Ministry of the Catechist Administrator's Guide* (2003), for a Catechist Observation Form, Catechist Interview Guides for the different levels of certification and a Plan of Study for Further Growth and Enrichment form.

**Coordinator Review** - this would include looking at the parish's role responsibilities for coordinators noting the strengths and areas for improvement.

**Parents' Perspective** can be determined by asking them to complete a satisfaction survey. This could be given to all parents or only a random sample. If any of your objectives and strategies included parents, a related question may be included. Sample Evaluation forms can be found in the Appendix.

**Children's Perspective** can be determined through observation by the catechist or coordinator.

## **WHEN SHOULD YOU EVALUATE?**

Generally, evaluation takes place toward the end of the year. Some may prefer to ask the parents to evaluate during January or February so as to make sure things are going in the right direction. It is recommended that Goals should be evaluated every 3 - 4 years and objectives and strategies should be done annually. Catechists and Coordinators should be reviewed annually or bi-annually.

## **REPORTING THE FINDINGS**

The end of the year review could be included in the DRE's annual report to the Education Commission. Suggestions for future goals and objectives should be brought to the following year's goal setting process.

**Sample evaluation forms can be found in the Appendix section of this Handbook**

## THE CATECHETICAL EXPERIENCE

“Catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways.”<sup>10</sup>

When planning the process for transmitting the message of the Gospel to the preschool and kindergarten-age child, we must keep in mind that research affirms that children learn most effectively through a concrete, activity-oriented approach. Children acquire knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which they live through interactions with objects and people. They need years of engagement with real objects and events before they are able to understand the meaning of symbols. As young children touch, manipulate, experiment with things, and interact with people, learning takes place. The Bishops of the United States affirmed this understanding by saying “effective catechesis takes into account the fact that the child’s comprehension and other powers develop gradually. Religious truths are presented in greater depth, and more challenges are proposed as the capacity for understanding and growth in faith increases”.<sup>11</sup>

When planning catechetical experiences for Early Childhood Religious Education we look to the *General Directory for Catechesis, Growing Together: Ministry to Children* (Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs), and the NAEYC *Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum Content and Assessment*.

- A. ***General Directory for Catechesis*** lists six tasks of catechesis which we have modified for the young child in an Early Childhood Religious Education Program.
1. **Promoting Knowledge of the Faith** – Opportunities are provided that help our children grown in faith as they come to know and love God through creation and others. Young children need to hear words such as God, Father, creator, love, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Memorization of prayers is reserved for later years.
  2. **Liturgical Education** – Celebrating with words, gestures and rituals are part of all programs. Each session/class is encouraged to begin and end with some ritual such as a special place to pray with a Bible, candle and prayer cloth. Using the colors of the liturgical seasons for the prayer cloth will help the young child recognize the seasons of the church.
  3. **Moral Formation** – A foundation for moral reasoning is laid by giving children the opportunity to learn about feelings and the chance to make choices. Colored eggs to be delivered at shelters for the homeless for Easter, role playing simple situations with conflict resolutions or coloring grocery bags to be used for donation collections are ways to put their faith in action.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 105 (Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1998.)

<sup>11</sup> United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education, *Sharing the Light of Faith, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*, no. 181 (Washington D.C. 1979).

4. **Teaching to Pray** – Prayer is our response to God. By introducing our children to a variety of prayer experiences we can help them find a way that will help them grow in relationship with God. Young children will be influenced by the power of prayer when their catechists and family talk to God. Children will model what they see. Catechists need to encourage families and the children to talk to God at church and throughout the day. Reciting simple meal prayers and singing responses and simple songs that use motions help make prayer inviting to the young child.
5. **Education for Community Life** – Opportunities are provided for the children to come together with their peers and adults in the community to share catechetical experiences and thus feel connected. Praying for the needs of the parishioners who request help and encouraging families to participate in parish dinners, picnics, and festivals are ways to link the child to the faith community.
6. **Missionary Initiation** – Catechists are encouraged to inspire generosity and selflessness in our children by reaching out to the community. One example is drawing a picture for those in the parish who are shut-ins. Having posters and stories that use multi-cultural images help to link the child with the rest of God’s creation. Also, using materials sponsored by the Holy Childhood Association and the Mission Office will help to unite children with their brothers and sisters around the world.

B. ***GROWING TOGETHER: MINISTRY TO CHILDREN, Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs***, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2001.

“Religious education strives to enable all students to develop a vital, personal relationship with God and to share Gospel truth in a spirit of faith, hope and love. Through study of the Catholic faith, as it has developed within our rich tradition, catechists help prepare all students (children) to celebrate God’s love, proclaim God’s message and live in accord with this message. The process of catechesis leads both catechist and student to a deepening discovery of God through affective and cognitive learning experiences.”

This document is intended to serve as a reference tool to guide catechetical leaders and catechists in understanding the degree of development or mastery of a particular topic expected of the child.”<sup>12</sup> If a concept listed is appropriate for the 3, 4, 5 and Kindergarten-age child, there will be an “R” or “I” in the appropriate box in the document.

R= Readiness: Learning Activities that prepare and provide the foundation of a new idea, skill or concept.

I= Introduce: Learning Activities that begin, start and/or introduce a new idea, skill or concept.

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<sup>12</sup> Department of Educational Services, *Growing Together: Ministry to Children Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Program* p. 4 (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001)

The following are the program goals with examples of what Readiness might look like.

**Goal I - Revelation**

- a) God is responsible for the creation of the world
- b) God loves all things
- c) The Bible is presented as a special book
- d) The Scripture stories used are age appropriate

**Goal II- History of Salvation**

- a) God made all things good
- b) Shows respect for all God's creations
- c) God is always with us

**Goal III - Jesus**

- a) Jesus is God's only Son
- b) God sent Jesus to us - Simple telling of the Nativity story
- c) Jesus is our friend and helper
- d) Love God and love others
- e) Simple telling of the entrance into Jerusalem - K only
- f) Easter - celebration of new life

**Goal IV – Church**

- a) We belong to God's family
- b) God made us to love one another
- c) Mary is the mother of Jesus and our mother
- d) Saints are friends and helpers

**Goal V - Sacraments**

- a) Through Baptism we become members of God's family
- b) Sharing food with friends
- c) Use of concrete symbols in lessons
- d) Lesson on feelings
- e) Use of songs, music, words and actions

**Goal VI – Prayer and Worship**

- a) Prayer is talking to God
- b) Provide a variety of prayer experiences such as praise, thanksgiving, echo and spontaneous.
- c) Use gestures and music
- d) Mindful of the liturgical year

### Goal VII – Life in Christ

- a) We are all special to God
- b) Respectful to family and friends
- c) Guides children to act lovingly
- d) Experiences wondrous gifts of God
- e) Encourages sharing
- f) Talks about feelings
- g) Encourages being helpful to others
- h) Encourages children to love, care, forgive and support
- i) Encourages children to take care of the world

C. **The National Association for the Education of Young Children's *Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum Content and Assessment in Programs Serving Children Ages 3 through 8*** list the following which have been adapted.

1. **Children learn best when their spiritual, emotional, social cognitive and physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe.** Children construct their own knowledge through repeated experiences involving interaction with people and materials.
2. **Children's learning reflects a recurring cycle that begins in awareness, and moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally, to utilization.** Awareness is generated from experience. Children can only become interested in objects, events, or people if they are aware that they exist and have had some experience with them.
3. **Children learn through play.** During play a child learns to deal with feelings, to interact with others, to resolve conflicts, and to gain a sense of competence. Perhaps most important, it is through play that children develop their imaginations and creativity.
4. **Children's interests and "need to know" motivate learning.** Activities that are based on children's interests provide intrinsic motivation for learning. Curriculum that is based on children's interests and internal motivation to understand fosters desirable dispositions and feelings, such as initiative, curiosity, attention, self-direction, industry, competence, and love of learning.
5. **Curriculum should support and encourage positive relationships with children's families.**
6. **Children learn by doing, touching, experimenting, choosing, talking, negotiating.** Active manipulation of the environment is essential for children to construct knowledge.
7. **Children need music and movement.** A number of research studies support the value of music and movement. Both help children develop a sense of patterns. Singing has many benefits. It helps develop language, reduce anxiety, keeps us feeling happy, and enhances auditory discrimination.

## **SELECTING A TEXT – Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List**

The Textbook Evaluation Committee of the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis reviews texts as they are published. To be placed on the *Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List*, a text must meet the requirements of the Archdiocesan Graded Course of Study and also reflect good catechetical methods.

The *Preferred Religion Textbook/Program List* includes a suggested process for a parish to select a textbook. This process begins by contacting the consultant for your parish from the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis. He/She will help to guide you through the process.

**Remember that any text is only as good as the catechist who uses it.** All texts need to be adapted by the catechist to the children and the learning situation. The text is only a teaching aid. **If the catechist decides to present a concept to the children and it is not included in the text, please refer to *Growing Together: Ministry to Children* (Graded Course of Study for Early Childhood and Elementary Catechetical Programs).**

## CREATING A RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which an early childhood religious education program takes place should be designed and arranged to facilitate learning, to encourage creativity in the catechist and the child, and to generate a sense of awe and wonder of God and life. Furniture and seating should be flexible enough to afford a variety of settings that encourage interpersonal communications between children as well as between children and catechists.

Safety/health precautions need to be considered in each space you share with young children. Be aware of outlets that need to be covered. The room temperature should be comfortable and proper lighting needs to be available. Fire exits should be clearly marked and the class needs to know emergency procedures for exiting the room. Adults need to know where the fire extinguishers are and how to use them. Carefully consider the uses of water and candle flames. If water is to be used, a plan for cleaning up spills needs to be in place. Some parishes have policies on the use of flames in a parish facility. Thinking ahead can help prevent dangerous accidents, falls, or burns.

When sharing space with other groups, be aware of the size of items in the room. Small objects may need to be covered or stored where young children can not reach. Putting the room back as you found it is a respectful courtesy.

### SUGGESTIONS

**A Religion Corner** is a special area filled with hands-on materials. It is a place where children are free to explore, reflect, observe, enrich and come to a better understanding of the theme of the religion lesson. Tables in the classroom could be used for personal work and follow-up activities. The religion corner must be introduced and monitored by a catechist like any other learning center.

**A Religion Bulletin Board** can display current themes with posters, pictures, banners, children's work or slogans. A wall could be used if a bulletin board is not available. Pictures or posters etc. should be hung at the child's eye level and should reflect an appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of our church and nation.

**A Prayer Table** is a small table with a pretty cloth. Using cloth that is the color of the liturgical season can begin to lay the foundation for getting in touch with the church's liturgical seasons. At the beginning of the church year (Advent) use purple. For Ordinary Time, use green, during Lent, use purple and, during the Easter season, use white. Place some of the following on the table: Bible, vigil light, leaves, flowers, plants, fish bowl, pretty shells, mirror, religious pictures, bowl of water. All items should be able to be handled by the children.

**Children's Books** that go along with the theme should be available for each lesson. By using ordinary stories, the catechist can help the children see how God is a part of their daily experience.

**Large Floor Pillows** provide a place for children to be free to curl up and look at or read religion or theme related books.

**Flannel Board Stories** often accompany the program. Either the catechist or the children can use the pieces to tell or retell stories.

**Puppets** can be used to act out or retell a story or lesson.

**Creative Materials** such as odds and ends of yarn, string, fabric, scraps of construction paper, pencils, crayons, seeds, twigs, leaves, and markers should be available to help little ones make something related to the theme of the lesson. It is also good to include paste, scissors, paint and brushes, magazines, modeling dough, drop-cloth, or tray for messy activities.

**Multimedia Materials** such as tape recorders, books, tapes, headphones, TV, VCR, and cassettes, DVDs, computers, computer software, and CD players can provide aids to a religion lesson.

**An Album or Poster** containing individual snapshots of all the children could be part of the environment. Pictures of the child's family can give comfort in their new setting. To emphasize the church family include pictures of parishioners representing all ages and backgrounds.

Many opportunities must be provided for the child to come to know God. Every effort should be made to provide an atmosphere of love and welcome for each child. Children learn best in a healthy and pleasant environment. The catechist can establish a positive and respectful atmosphere by modeling good listening, sharing, and cooperative actions. Welcoming each child by name, praising children for their accomplishments, concentrating on what they are saying in class all help to mirror God's love for us all. When the catechist reflects quietly in prayer or encourages children to learn from each other and from simple mistakes, the class will learn these behaviors. The catechist sets the tone for the class.

## LESSON PLANNING

In planning lessons for the children, the primary guide will be the text/program that has been adopted for use in the parish. Each week, however, the catechist will have to adapt the lesson to the group of children he or she has before her/him.

The class atmosphere should be informal. The seating arrangement should be casual, i.e., low chairs in a circle or carpet squares arranged in a circle. Catechists will be challenged to be creative in using their area because many classroom spaces will be used for other purposes. Everything must be portable and easy to handle. There should be some materials for the children to choose at random when they enter the room: crayons and paper, puzzles, games, children's books, etc. to go along with the theme of the day. (See Gathering Time listed below) The catechist and assistant could spend this time talking to each child informally.

As a catechist, you are called upon to share your faith with the children and help them to see God in their daily activities. The general goal of religious education is conversion of our lives to the living God... (Matthew 3:2, Acts 2:38) or the gradual opening of our hearts to find a God who is alive and active in our daily lives. One of the ways we address this goal is through the application of human development theory to the process of faith formation. The following four-step Catechetical Process honors the life experience of the learner and the Catholic perspective on reality, leading the child to respond in faith. Two steps before the process include determining the *aim* and planning the activities for *gathering time*.

### AIM:

In good lesson planning, the aim is essential. While not part of the Catechetical Process, it is a presupposition in any class. The aim states the attitude and/or value about God that the catechist wishes to share with the children. Even though this should be stated simply and concisely in the catechist's own words, it is not a simple statement of fact but goes to the core of the message. In writing your aim, be sure to keep in mind your desire of the following for the preschool child:

*Help the child appreciate*

*Help the child to be aware of*

*Help the child to experience*

*Help to lay a foundation for the understanding of some concept*

Some procedural hints to keep in mind:

*Read over the whole lesson in your catechist's manual*

*Look for a common thread*

*If too many ideas, choose the ones you are most comfortable with, remembering to follow the Catechetical Process*

*Write the aim in your own words – keep this in a prominent place to review throughout the week prior to your lesson*

## **GATHERING TIME:**

This is the time for activities/experiences that relate to the theme of the day. These are put out for the children to participate in as they gather for class. There should be a minimum of two activities so as to give the children the opportunity to make a choice. Choose activities/experiences that relate to the theme. For example, a lesson on trees might include:

1. Have a display of parts of a tree that children can examine with a magnifying glass.
2. A variety of books on trees.
3. Puzzles of trees.

**OR**

Review activities used in previous lessons such as songs or books

## **THE CATECHETICAL PROCESS**

**Human Experience:** All learning for the young child goes from the known to the unknown (inductive). This section of the lesson plan deals with the gathering of a particular experience common to all so that the MESSAGE can be built on it. Beginning with the experience, it creates an openness for the message to be received and helps the children to see that religion and life are not separate. This part of the lesson could include talking and listening time, stories, media, songs, etc., that bring the theme of the lesson into focus for the children. Pick out all of the activities that help the children become aware of the aim.

**Message:** This is the core of what we teach. It answers the question: What does God have to do with this human experience? For the most part, it gives information. The catechist should give this part directly to the children and by his/her manner, voice or the environment indicate that this is special.

**Discovery:** This is the "Aha!" moment of the lesson. It is climaxed by the child integrating the message into his/her own experience. Choose activities (creating art, singing, story time, media, finger plays or other activities) that help children integrate the message into their lives. Sometimes the catechist must make the link between human experiences and message. For example, "Let's have fun with God's trees" or "Let's read a story about God's trees".

**Response:** After the child has made the discovery he/she is moved to respond to the message. In this section, God is treated as a person who has given this **Message**, and, I, the child want to respond because my heart has been touched. A spontaneous prayer, a song with gestures, prayerful activity, talking time could be used. Set atmosphere for prayer. Have a special place, if possible.

**EVALUATION:** Make up one or two focus questions to help you decide if the aim has been accomplished.

This process is further developed in the Catechetical Process Learning Module that is offered throughout the Archdiocese. The following lesson plan is a sample. If you were planning a class for one hour with a group of three-year-olds, you would include more activities.

## **SAMPLE LESSON PLAN**

### **"GOD GIVES US WATER" Three-Year-Olds**

**AIM:** To help the children to develop a greater appreciation for God's gift of water.

**GATHERING  
TIME:**

As the children arrive, they are given opportunities to explore water. 1) tub of water with items that sink and float, 2) tub of water to wash play dishes, 3) puzzles that show water, 4) bowl with ice cubes melting, 5) variety of books about water.

**HUMAN  
EXPERIENCE:**

1) Discuss with children the various uses of water that are pictured on the take-home sheet from the activity book. 2) Discuss with the children their experiences during self-initiated activities. 3) Read *Rain Drop Splash* by Alvin Tresselt. 4) Sing, "Oh, who can make the raindrops?"

**MESSAGE:** Water is a wonderful gift from God. Mention the various ways we use God's gift of water.

**DISCOVERY:** 1) Paint with water colors. 2) Use water to make a fruit drink. Talk with the children about God's wonderful gift of water and how refreshing it is to drink.

**RESPONSE:** The children will take turns thanking God for water by completing the following prayer sentence "I am glad that I have water for \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you God!" or encourage spontaneous prayer.

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

**Gathering Time**

- \* tub of water with items that sink or float such as cork, wooden block or plastic spoon.
- \* tub of water and plastic dishes and towels for drying
- \* puzzles with water scenes
- \* bowl with ice cubes
- \* variety of books about water
- \* items from previous lessons such as books.

## **General**

- \* activity pages
- \* book – *Rain Drop Splash* by Alvin Tresselt

## **Creative Activities**

- \* pitcher of water
- \* powdered fruit drink mix
- \* spoon
- \* paper cups
- \* water color paints
- \* paint brushes
- \* plain paper
- \* cloth to cover surface of paint area

**EVALUATION:** Did the children enjoy experiencing the many uses of water?  
Did the children verbalize that God created or gave us the water?

## **HELPS FOR LESSON PLANNING**

**Creative Activities:** When planning the lesson be sure to try any creative work yourself. Encourage the children to do work the way they want to. Invite the children to help solve problems in creating things. (How can we hang them up? - What would happen if...?). Use very few words in demonstrating a skill so children will look at your hands and not at your mouth. Encourage the children to work together, helping one another, while at the same time respecting one another. Always be ready to adapt to the children's needs. Accept whatever the child creates.

**Media:** The Archdiocesan media catalog is listed on-line at [www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec/catalog](http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/oec/catalog). Media can often provide a simulated life experience from which the children may reflect on their own experience. Above all, the catechist should be aware of human resources such as musicians, artists and craft persons. There are many people who would be willing to help.

# APPENDIX - FORMS

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
NURSERY AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

**INCIDENT REPORT**

1. Name of Group \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Incident \_\_\_\_\_  
(city, state and zip code)

2. Name of Injured Child \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

3. Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the Incident \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Person Involved/Name \_\_\_\_\_

How was this person involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the area of the child's body that was injured \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where in the facility did it happen? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did the incident happen? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of adult supervising child at time of incident \_\_\_\_\_

How did the child respond after the incident? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was First Aid given or some other action taken? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

If Yes, by whom \_\_\_\_\_

Describe action taken \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person completing the form \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Supervising Adult \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT NOTIFICATION**

4. This is to confirm that I have received a copy of this report on **(Date)** \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\* \* \* \* \*

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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

Sample form to Initiate a New Program

**PARISH  
PRESCHOOL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

"It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the  
first seven years of life are the most important  
for the religious development of the child..."  
R.S. Lee

Some of the parents would like to begin a preschool (3 yr. old through kindergarten) religion readiness program on Sunday mornings during Mass starting in October. The shape and form that the program will take depend on your response.

**PARENTS ONLY**

1. Would you be interested in having your child/children take part in such a program?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, complete the following:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Name/s of Preschool Children \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

2. What time would you prefer? (List Mass Times) \_\_\_\_\_

**PARISHIONERS AND PARENTS**

3. Do you have a friend who has a preschool child who might be interested in such a program?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, complete the following:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Friend's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Child \_\_\_\_\_

4. Even though you wouldn't have a child in the program, would you like to help?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please check below ways in which you are willing to help with the program:

Typing at home \_\_\_ phone calls \_\_\_ art work \_\_\_ classroom assistant \_\_\_

help with celebrations \_\_\_ catechist \_\_\_ buying supplies and looking for new ideas \_\_\_

keeping records \_\_\_ providing occasional treats \_\_\_ help plan parent meetings \_\_\_

6. Have you had previous experience in this type of program that you could share with others?

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** If you are interested in teaching, training and help with lesson planning are available.

Thank you for completing this form,

(Name of Organizers)

**EARLY CHILDHOOD RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**FAMILY INFORMATION**

Family's Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Are you registered in the parish \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different than above)

Mother's First & \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_  
Maiden Name

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
(If different than above)

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

<b>CHILD'S NAME</b>	<b>DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, year)</b>	<b>AGE AS OF SEPT. 30TH</b>	<b>SEX (M or F)</b>	<b>IS CHILD BAPTIZED CATHOLIC (Yes or No)</b>
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Please note below any special needs such as *Learning disabilities, allergies, etc.*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE CHECK BELOW WAYS IN WHICH YOU ARE WILLING TO HELP IN THE PROGRAM:

\_\_\_ phone calls \_\_\_ art work \_\_\_ classroom assistant \_\_\_ help with classroom celebrations  
\_\_\_ catechists \_\_\_ buying supplies and looking for new ideas

**EARLY CHILDHOOD RELIGION EDUCATION PROGRAM  
FAMILY BACKGROUND SHEET**

Parents:

Please take time to complete this background information on your child and return it to his/her teacher as soon as possible. Any additional information can be written on the back.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_

Family Members & pets: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Likes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dislikes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Food: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Where Child Falls in the Family (Oldest, youngest...) \_\_\_\_\_

Five Words Describing Your Child (by mother): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Five Words Describing Your Child (by father): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Archdiocesan Policy: Guidelines for Youth Activities**

Parental rights, good administration and youth protection dictate that the appropriate sharing of information and granting of permissions be involved when youth participate in parish-based activities.

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati has developed a sample form (pages 45 – 46) to satisfy these needs. While this particular form is not mandated for use in the parishes of the Archdiocese, it is recommended.

Whether the particular recommended form is used or not, the following written documentation is required in some form, whether a child is registering for an ongoing program or for a single activity.

1. Name of student
2. Name of parish/school
3. Name of adult in charge
4. Date of activity or regular time for program
5. Location of activity
6. Telephone number where youth can be reached in case of a family emergency
7. Starting time or date, ending time or date
8. General description of program or activities which are involved
9. Method of transportation (if any)
10. Cost (if any)

In addition to providing this information to the parents, the form must provide a place for the parent to give permission for the child to participate in the program or activity and to receive emergency medical care (including pertinent medical information), if the activity will take the youth some distance from home. In addition, there must be a release of the Archdiocese, parish and school from liability in the event of accident or injury to the youth. A parent or legal guardian must provide for the above by written signature and date and also supply a telephone number where the parent can be reached in case of an emergency involving the child.

The permission forms are to be maintained throughout the duration of the activity. They are to be carried by a designated adult on trips off church/school premises.

(Policy established June 1996)

**ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI  
PERMISSION, RELEASE AND MEDICAL POWER OF ATTORNEY**

1. I, the lawful parent or guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ (the "child"), give permission for my child to participate in the activity described on the reverse and release from all liability and indemnify the Archbishop of Cincinnati ("the Archbishop"), both individually and as trustee for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and all parishes within the Archdiocese, and their officers, agents, representatives, volunteers, and employees from any and all liability, claims, judgments, cost or expenses, including attorney fees, arising out of any injury or illness incurred by my child while participating in or traveling to or from the activity.

2. I agree to instruct my child to cooperate with the Archbishop or his agents in charge of the activity.

3a. I appoint the Archbishop or his agents who are acting as leaders of the activity as my attorney in fact to act for me in my name and my behalf, in any way that I would act if I were personally present, with respect to the following matters if any injury, illness or medical emergency occurs during the activity or related travel:

(i) To give any and all consents and authorizations to any physicians, dentist, hospital or other persons or institutions pertaining to any emergency medications, medical or dental treatments, diagnostic or surgical procedures or any other emergency actions as our attorney shall deem necessary or appropriate for the best interest of the child.

(ii) I understand that the agents of the Archbishop will make a reasonable attempt to contact me as soon as possible in the event of a medical emergency involving my child.

3b. This power of attorney shall lapse automatically upon completion of the activity and related travel.

4. I agree that the Archbishop or his agents may use my child's portrait or photograph for promotional purposes, website and office functions.

I have carefully read this statement, and my signature acknowledges that I fully understand the content and meaning.

Signature of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (h) \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (h) \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**Medical Information — Completed by Parent or Guardian — Please Print**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies \_\_\_\_\_

Medications \_\_\_\_\_

Chronic Conditions (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes) \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Insurance Co. \_\_\_\_\_ Policy No. \_\_\_\_\_

Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_

Family Doctor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

(See reverse for activity information)

**ACTIVITY INFORMATION**

**Completed by Church Agency - Please Print**

(As a convenience to parent(s) or guardian(s), a duplicate copy of this information may be attached so as to be retained by them; also, any additional information may be attached to further inform them of specific scheduling details, additional activity information, etc.)

**A. On-Going Program**

Church Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Program or Group \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Date \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Date \_\_\_\_\_ Registration Fee \_\_\_\_\_

Usual Location \_\_\_\_\_ Usual day and time \_\_\_\_\_

Routine Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Leader \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if any additional information is attached. Note: any additional activity information (e.g. schedule, list of specific activities, etc.) may be attached to further inform parents(s) or guardian(s).

**B. One-Time Activity**

Church Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Activity \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency No. \_\_\_\_\_ Cost \_\_\_\_\_

Starting Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Place \_\_\_\_\_

Ending Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Place \_\_\_\_\_

Activities Involved \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Transportation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Group Leader \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if any additional information is attached. Note: any additional activity information (e.g. schedule, list of specific activities, etc.) may be attached to further inform parents(s) or guardian(s).



## EARLY CHILDHOOD LESSON PLAN FORM

Age Level \_\_\_\_\_ Text \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Number & Title \_\_\_\_\_

*Lesson Plans should include the following: circle time, creating time, activities (games, etc.), song-music, fingerplay, books, and spontaneous prayer.*

**AIM:**

**GATHERING TIME:**

## CATECHETICAL PROCESS PROCEDURE

**HUMAN EXPERIENCE:**

**MESSAGE:**

**DISCOVERY:**

**RESPONSE:**

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Gathering Time Activities

General

Creative Activities

**YOUR EVALUATION OF THE LESSON:**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD LESSON EVALUATION FORM**

PARISH \_\_\_\_\_

Catechist's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Level \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Were enough activities planned to fill the class time?      YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you need any additional supplies?      YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If media was used, did it work well with the lesson?      YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ANY OTHER  
COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SAMPLE PARENT EVALUATION

We welcome any comments that you have about each question on this form. The comments you make help us in planning our program for the future.

1. I felt that the parent letters/handouts that were sent home help kept me informed about the Religious Education program.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Fair    \_\_\_ Poor

2. The information was helpful to me as primary religious educator of my child/ren.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Fair    \_\_\_ Poor

3. I felt that my child/ren was/were made to feel welcome and that there was a climate of hospitality.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Fair    \_\_\_ Poor

4. I feel that my child benefited by coming to religious education classes.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Fair    \_\_\_ Poor

5. The family celebration/s were meaningful in building a community spirit in this program.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Fair    \_\_\_ Poor

6. The opening parent meeting was helpful to me in understanding what would be happening in the Religious Education classes and in the Religious Education program.

\_\_\_ Excellent    \_\_\_ Good    \_\_\_ Fair    \_\_\_ Poor

7. Is there a way we could assist you in your involvement in our Religious Education program?

COMMENTS:



**SAMPLE END OF THE YEAR/QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CATECHIST**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. What lesson or event was most effective in your class this year?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Would you prefer another order in which the themes are presented?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What materials or supplies would you like added or deleted?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What other improvements do you feel are necessary?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What courses/workshops would you be interested in taking as a preschool catechist?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Were catechists' meetings a help? \_\_\_\_\_ time? \_\_\_\_\_ place?

7. What would be the ideal number of children for you to teach? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you prefer team teaching? \_\_\_\_ or by yourself? \_\_\_\_

9. Will you be available to teach preschool again next year? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

If not, could you help in another capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

10. List courses or workshops which you have taken this year as part of Archdiocesan Catechist Training for certification on reverse side of this sheet.

Please return next week in order that the results can be tallied. Thank you.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**CATECHIST INTENT**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I would like to teach next year

\_\_\_ I will not be teaching next year

\_\_\_ I do not know at this time if I will be available for teaching next year

Grade/s level I prefer include:

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

Thank you for being so kind to give of your time to the young children of our parish. I have enjoyed working with each of you. Please return this by \_\_\_\_\_. We are always looking for good candidates. If you are aware of any candidates, please let me know.

Thanks,

Early Childhood Coordinator