

DIOCESE OF CAMDEN POLICY FOR HOME SCHOOLING

The “deposit of faith” as described in 1 Tim 6:20 “is like the treasure of a householder; it is entrusted to the Church, the family of God”. It is the responsibility of the Magisterium of the Church to ensure that each generation receives the message of Christ in its entirety.

Rationale for Home Schooling -Parents are their children’s primary educators, but not their only educators. When it comes to religion, due consideration must be given to the role of the Church as the Mother for humankind. She “begets children conceived by the power of the Spirit and born of God. In her role as Mother, the Church is also the educator in faith. The teaching Church, therefore, has the responsibility to preserve the integrity of Christian doctrine --the revealed truth that comes from Jesus Christ --whenever that doctrine is conveyed. The General Directory for Catechesis states that, “Catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act”. Individuals are created and called uniquely to be part of the People of God, the Church. Formation in faith, therefore, ideally, takes place within the context of the community of the People of God. Parents fulfill their obligation to educate their children in knowledge of their faith by enrolling them in schools of religion. In this environment, children learn not just doctrine, but have the opportunity to experience the communal aspect of their Faith in a learning environment. While Catholic Schools or Parish Programs are the preferred environments for Religious Education, there may arise a family situation that makes it difficult for a child to participate in a regular program. In these circumstances, both parents and the teaching church are to be respected in the dialogue of home-schooling because of their unique, distinct charisms to propagate the faith of the church. Parents are obligated to fulfill their duties, as are priests and bishops, and all must cooperate in this single endeavor to educate in Christ's name.

Procedure to be followed for Homeschooling - Parents wishing to home-school their children must meet with their pastor/ administrator who is ultimately responsible for the catechesis that takes place within the parish. With the input of the catechetical leader the determination concerning homeschooling is made based on an understanding of the practice of faith within the given family and the capability of the parents to do this. Due concern needs to be made to insure that complete catechesis takes place. Therefore, provisions must be made for the families to meet with either the pastor/ administrator or his parish catechetical leader on a periodic basis to monitor the catechetical development of the children being home-schooled. This catechesis must be in accord with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, The General Directory for Catechesis, the Diocesan Religion Curriculum Guide and the approved parish religious education textbooks which are tailored to the mental, emotional, spiritual, and psychological development of each child in the family being home-schooled. Parents must have access to the materials they will need in order to catechize properly. They also need to be in regular communication with the parish catechetical office so that they will be kept abreast of classes and workshops that are being offered that will be of assistance to them as the catechists of their children. All families opting for home-schooling are expected to participate in the regular liturgical and sacramental life of the parish. Parents of home-schooled children are urged to provide regular interaction and involvement between their children and Catholic peers especially when such involvement is possible as part of parish-sponsored events. In this way both they and the Catholic community are built up and strengthened.

Re-admittance into Parish Religious Education Program - To rejoin the Parish Religious Education Program, the children will be tested according to their particular grade level to ascertain their readiness based on the Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines for their particular level.

Homeschooling and Sacramental Preparation - Families opting for home-schooling must follow all diocesan guidelines pertaining to reception of first sacraments. Parents, in direct communication with the parish catechetical program, are to attend all parent sessions. Children are to participate in retreats, rehearsals, interviews, service requirements, and any other formational activities that are offered by the parish in accordance with diocesan policies and procedures.

Resources for Homeschooling - The pastor/administrator and parish catechetical leader act as resource persons for those parents who home-school to answer any questions and to make recommendations for materials for use by the parents so that the children may come to a comprehensive understanding of their faith and a sincere desire to know and love Jesus Christ.

Home-Schooling and Safe Environment - The parish is usually where formal catechetical instruction takes place. Religious education by catechists, youth ministry and other events involving minors are not to occur in personal residences. Adults who choose to ignore this and meet with minors in people’s homes place themselves and the minors at risk and are personally liable should any negative event occur.