



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND
CATHOLIC FORMATION**



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

Catechist and Religious Education Teacher Certification
2004

I. Catechetical Mission Statement

The catechetical mission of the Diocese of Austin is to journey with and to empower parish catechetical leaders to strengthen their faith and to be effective witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. Vision of Success

Parishes are rich in numbers of people who, in community, are:

- A. Committed Catholic Christians who live their faith and evangelize by their Church lives, work lives, and society in general
- B. Truly Christian disciples acting justly and spreading the Gospel
- C. Fully participating in parish life as Eucharistic people
- D. Seeking leadership roles within the Church
- E. Generously serving others
- F. Experiencing conversion of heart and life
- G. Actively participating in and supporting adult formation
- H. Parents who accept their responsibility as being the primary educators in the faith of their children

III. Called to the Ministry of Catechesis

- A. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (hereafter GDC) speaks of the important call to the ministry of catechesis.
 - 1. It states that, “In all the ministries and services which the particular Church performs to carry out its mission of evangelization, catechesis occupies a position of importance” (GDC 219).
 - 2. The Directory goes on to say that the call to the ministry of catechesis springs from the sacrament of baptism and is strengthened in the sacrament of confirmation.
 - 3. The call to be a catechist is a personal call of Jesus Christ and is articulated by the local church and the Bishop.
 - 4. It also recognizes that all persons responding to the call do so according to their particular situations.

- a. Some are called to serve in a parish catechetical program while others are called to serve as a Catholic school religion teacher. Yet, the response to this call includes the willingness to give time and talent not only in catechizing others but also to a commitment to continue one's own faith formation.

IV. Commitment to the Ministry of Catechesis

- A. In answering the call, catechists become witnesses to the faith by sharing their faith commitment through Word, worship, service, experience, and prayer.
- B. In making a commitment, catechists/Catholic School teachers become responsible for:
 1. Continuing their spiritual development through taking time to nourish their personal relationship with the Lord
 2. Becoming aware of and faithfully attempting to witness and teach only authentic Church teachings
 3. Continuing their personal and educational development through attendance at courses and workshops
 4. Attending all class sessions and any other in-services required by the parish and the Diocese of Austin, preparing lessons, and organizing age-appropriate materials needed for class activities
 5. Providing a positive classroom atmosphere
 6. Regularly evaluating their own teaching techniques, being sensitive to cultural differences, and special needs of students
 7. Collaborating with and affirming parents as the primary educators of their children's faith formation

V. Catechist Certification Requirements

The *Catechist Certification Booklet* outlines the levels of catechetical certification and explains the process of becoming a certified catechist. All catechists are strongly encouraged to work towards full certification.

- A. By 2018, all Directors of Religious Education must either be certified by the Diocese of Austin or have earned a degree in Theology or the equivalent from a Catholic college or university.
 1. Catholic school teachers are required to complete level one certification.
 2. Catholic school religion teachers are required to complete full certification or to have earned a degree from a Catholic college or university.

- B. Consult the *Catechist Certification Handbook* located on the Diocese of Austin website under the “Religious Education and Formation” resource tab.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Policy on Sacramental Preparation for Catholic Schools

Effective June 1, 2004

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. Children who attend Catholic schools should participate in their local parish catechetical program for preparation of and the reception of the sacraments as directed by the pastor. “The parish is the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed” (GDC 257).
- II. If the parents wish to supplement the catechetical program with additional resources, the material should be on the list approved by the USCCB.
 - A. This list is available from the parish or the diocesan Department of Religious Education and Formation.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Policy on Home Schooling

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. Parents are the primary educators of their children in the Catholic faith.
 - A. They have the responsibility of awakening a sense of God, beginning the formation of a sense of conscience and celebrating the loving presence of God in their families.
 - B. They also have the responsibility of participating with their children in their local parish community, "the pre-eminent place for catechesis" (*Catechesi Tradendae* 67).

- II. Children who are home schooled by their parents in academic subjects should participate in their local parish catechetical programs for preparation of and reception of the sacraments and to participate fully in the life of their parish. "The parish is the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed" (GDC 257).
 - A. At times, parents who home school their children in the faith may request an exception in particular cases.
 1. They should notify the pastor or his designate of their intention to home school the child in religious education and/or sacramental preparation.
 2. The pastor or his designate needs to assess the child's understanding, disposition, and readiness before a sacrament is conferred.
 3. The pastor or his designate should talk with the parents about the value of formal teaching of the faith in a parish setting and the importance of the participation of their children in the life of the parish.
 4. They must use catechetical materials approved by the diocese.
 - B. If the parents wish to supplement the catechetical program with additional resources, the material should be on the list approved by the USCCB.
 1. This list is available from the parish or the diocesan Office of Religious Education and Formation.
 2. The Office of Religious Education and Formation can assist parents who are home schooling their children with questions regarding sacramental preparation.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Policy on the Celebration of the Quinceañera

Effective Sept. 24, 2004

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. The celebration of the Quinceañera is a custom of the Mexican culture that is often celebrated among families who celebrate their faith in the parishes of the Diocese of Austin.
 - A. This is an opportunity for evangelization for the young woman or man and for the family and friends.
 - B. Parishes are encouraged to provide a way to respond to the requests for families who want to celebrate this time of blessing in their lives.

- II. The following recommended guideline is a way to encourage and support the celebration of the Quinceañera in the local parish.
 - A. Parishes with an identified Hispanic population will be most affected by this request; however, other parishes may also find themselves presented with this opportunity.
 - B. All parishes are encouraged to celebrate the Quinceañera when approached by the faithful.
 - C. Formation includes the process of
 1. Faith Formation
 - a. It is recommended that no more than six (6) months of religious education class can be expected or required of the quinceañera girl or boy prior to the celebration of the quinceañera.
 - b. This may be accomplished by attending ongoing religious education classes and/or the confirmation class.

2. Sacraments

- a. It is required that the sacraments of baptism, first Communion, and first reconciliation be completed.
- b. It is required that confirmation be completed or in the process of completion.

3. Reservation of Ritual Date at Parish

- a. The party seeking the reservation of a date to celebrate the quinceañera should contact the parish six (6) months to one (1) year in advance.

4. Celebration of the Quinceanera

- a. See *Supplementary Norms 54*.

III. All Quinceañeras will be celebrated according to the *Order of Blessing on the Fifteenth Birthday* as published by the USCCB.



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

Lineamiento sobre la Celebración de la Quinceañera

Efectivo a partir del 24 de Septiembre del 2004

Con el fin de atender las necesidades del pueblo de Dios en la Diócesis de Austin y de ser administradores responsables de los dones dados, la Diócesis de Austin emite la siguiente política:

- I. La celebración de la Quinceañera es una costumbre de la cultura mexicana que se celebra a menudo entre las familias que celebran su fe en las parroquias de la Diócesis de Austin.
 - A. Como muchas celebraciones de los sacramentos y de las cosas importantes en las vidas de la gente, esto es una oportunidad para la evangelización de los jóvenes (mujeres u hombres), y para la familia y los amigos.
 - B. Se exhorta a las parroquias que proporcionen una manera de responder a las necesidades de las familias que desean celebrar este tiempo de bendición en sus vidas.
- II. Las siguientes directivas recomendadas es una manera de exhortar y de apoyar la celebración de la Quinceañera en la parroquia a nivel local.
 - A. Las parroquias identificadas con una población hispana serán las más afectadas por esta petición; sin embargo, otras parroquias pueden también tomar esta oportunidad.
 - B. Se exhorta a todas las parroquias que celebren la Quinceañera cuando se acerquen los fieles con esa petición.
 - C. *La formación* incluye el proceso de:
 1. Formación de Fe
 - a. Se recomienda que no se espere o se requieran más de seis meses de clase de educación religiosa por parte de la muchacha o del muchacho antes de la celebración de la quinceañera.
 - b. Esto requisitos pueden ser cumplidos asistiendo a las clases en curso de educación religiosa y/o a las clases de confirmación.

2. Sacramentos

- a. Se requiere que los sacramentos de bautismo, de primera comunión y de la primera reconciliación se hallan completado.
- b. Se requiere que la confirmación se haya completado o esté en proceso de completarse.

3. Reservación de la fecha ritual en la parroquia

- a. Los interesados, quienes solicitan la reservación de una fecha para celebrar la quinceañera, deberán comunicarse con la parroquia de seis (6) meses a un (1) año de anticipación.

4. *Celebración de la Quinceañera*

- a. Ver el número 54 de las *Normas Suplementarias*.

III. Todas las quinceañeras se celebrarán de acuerdo con la publicación de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB por sus siglas en inglés), *Orden de la Bendición al cumplir quince años*.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Policy on the Institute for Spiritual Direction

Effective 2005

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. The Institute for Spiritual Direction is a three (3) year program open to practicing Catholics to prepare them for the ministry of spiritual direction.
 - A. Successful completion of the program leads to diocesan recognition as a spiritual director or retreat director.
- II. Before acceptance into the program, applicants will be asked to complete the following:
 - A. Diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Workshop
 - B. Criminal background check
 - C. Psychological testing
 - D. Spiritual autobiography



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Policy on Natural Family Planning

Effective August 1, 2003

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. The Diocese of Austin is committed to upholding the Catholic Church's principles concerning marriage and family life as contained in *Gaudium Et Spes*, *Humanae Vitae*, *Familiaris Consortio*, *Donum Vitae*, and other related Church teachings.
 - A. It is our desire to provide the people of the diocese adequate formation in matters that support the Sacrament of Marriage and the right to life. Therefore, the diocese has adopted high standards with regard to the Natural Family Planning (hereafter NFP) Program.

- II. In order to "safeguard the holiness of marriage so that it may always be lived in its entire human and Christian fullness and render life of parents and children easier and more joyous, to render living together in human society more fraternal and peaceful, in faithfulness to God's design for the world," (*Humanae Vitae* 30) the Diocese of Austin has established the following policy:
 - A. The Diocese of Austin has adopted the standards for diocesan NFP programs as established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Pro-Life Activities Committee.
 1. Available at www.usccb.org/prolife or from the diocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities and Chaste Living.
 - B. The Diocese of Austin has adopted additional standards that ensure the highest standards for the NFP program.

- III. There are four NFP programs approved for use in the Diocese of Austin:
 - A. Creighton Method
 - B. Billings Method

C. Sympto-Thermal Method (Couple to Couple League)

D. Family of the Americas Ovulation Method

IV. There are a number of quality NFP programs available. Any NFP program that is interested in teaching in the Diocese of Austin must meet not only the USCCB standards but also the following:

A. NFP teachers must have successfully completed a teacher training program recognized by the Diocese of Austin that includes an educational phase with certified instructors.

B. Teachers must have successfully completed a supervised practicum, which includes an on-site evaluation of the person's ability to teach by a nationally recognized team or diocesan team.

C. Teachers must be able to exhibit the ability to effectively manage difficult cycles, including breastfeeding women, normal length cycles with abnormalities, and long cycles (40 days or more) such as experienced by women with polycystic ovarian disease, etc.

D. Couples must be followed in private follow-up sessions for at least six months.

E. The certifying NFP program must have completed an effectiveness study on its own program.

F. Teachers must have completed the diocesan Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Workshop.

V. Potential NFP instructors must contact the Diocese of Austin Office of Pro-Life Activities and Chaste Living for information on meeting these standards.

A. All NFP presentations and sessions must be coordinated through the diocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities and Chaste Living.

VI. For more information on diocesan-approved NFP programs, visit www.austindiocese.org/prolife



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The Diocese of Austin has a separate Handbook of Policies for Catholic Schools. It can be viewed at www.austindiocese.org/catholicschoolhandbook