

**BOOK 2: THE TEACHING FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH**

**of the**

**Code of Particular Law of the Diocese of Austin**

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## BOOK 2: THE TEACHING FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

### Title 1: Catechesis

*Numbering: The first digit of a section number indicates the Book, the second digit indicates the Title, and the third digit indicates the Chapter – e.g., Book 2, Title 1, Chapter 1, Section 01.*

*Terms: Definition of terms follows the convention described in the Preface of this Code of Particular Law.*

#### Chapter 1: The Formation of Catechists

##### Section

- 211.01 Diocesan Curia to Maintain Catechist Formation and Certification Program. The competent department of the Diocesan Curia is to maintain a program for the formation and certification of catechists.
- 211.02 Levels of Certification. The certification of catechists is to be of two levels:  
(a) Level 1 certification, which indicates a sufficient knowledge of Catholic doctrine, pedagogy, and methods to provide basic catechesis and sacramental formation; and  
(b) Level 2 certification, which indicates sufficient knowledge of Catholic doctrine, pedagogy, and methods to oversee a catechetical program.
- 211.03 Catechist to Complete Level 1. All those serving as catechists are earnestly invited to complete Level 1 certification. A Pastor is competent to establish more particular norms for requirements of catechists in his Parish.
- 211.04 DREs to Complete Level 2. Directors of Religious Education must complete Level 2 certification unless they possess at least a bachelor's degree in theology from an accredited Catholic institution of higher learning.
- 211.05 Continuing Formation for Catechists. All who serve as catechists are obliged to engage in continual formation in order to assist them in carrying out their function. A Pastor is competent to establish more particular norms for continuing formation of catechists in his Parish.

#### Chapter 2: Parish Catechetical Programs

##### Section

- 212.01 Parishes to Provide Catechetical Programs. Pastors are to provide catechetical programs by means of which the faithful may be prepared to receive the sacraments. Each Parish is to have catechetical programs to prepare adults and children for the sacraments of initiation, and to prepare those who are seeking to enter marriage.
- 212.02 Catechetical Programs for Children and Marriage Preparation. Catechetical programs for children and programs for marriage preparation must use curricula approved in the instructions of the Local Ordinary unless the Local Ordinary permits otherwise.
- 212.03 Requirements for Sacramental Preparation Programs. The requirements of particular law for each sacramental preparation program are established in Book III of this Code of Particular Law.

- 212.04 Pastors to Provide Youth and Children Programs. Pastors are to take care to provide suitable catechetical programs and youth groups through which children and youth may grow in their faith.
- 212.05 Pastors to Offer Catechetical Opportunities. Pastors are to take care that suitable catechetical opportunities for adults are offered in their Parishes.
- 212.06 All Children to Participate in Parish Catechetical Programs. It is earnestly recommended that all children, even those who attend Catholic Schools or who are home-schooled, participate in their Parish catechetical programs.
- 212.07 Other Means of Formation. It is not permitted to deny the reception of the sacraments solely on account of non-participation in a Parish catechesis program if it is demonstrated that a candidate for the reception of the sacraments has been adequately formed by other means.

### **Chapter 3: Lay Speakers**

#### Section

- 213.01 List of Approved Lay Presenters. The Local Ordinary or his delegate is to keep a list of approved lay presenters and musicians or bands.
- 213.02 Criteria for Inclusion in List. The criteria for inclusion in the list of approved lay presenters shall be determined by the Local Ordinary at his discretion.
- 213.03 When Approved Presenters are Required. Only lay presenters, musicians, or bands who are on the approved list may present, play, or sing at:  
(a) events hosted or sponsored by a Diocesan office;  
(b) events hosted or sponsored by two or more Parishes or other church institutions; or  
(c) events hosted or sponsored by a single Parish or church institution which is advertised outside of the Parish or institution's regular media.
- 213.04 Definitions. Events are deemed to be "hosted" when they occur on the property of the institution or Parish. They are deemed to be "sponsored" when they are paid for, planned, or carried out by the Parish or institution.
- 213.05 Submittal of Application. To be placed on the approved list, a lay presenter, musician, or band must submit a written application to the Diocesan Curia.<sup>1</sup>
- 213.06 Clergy Submit Suitability Letters. Clergy guest speakers from outside the Diocese must present letters of suitability.

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<sup>1</sup> Requests are processed through the Office of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry or Chancellor.



## **Instruction on Approved Curricula for Sacramental Preparation**

Re: Book 2, Title 1: Catechesis  
Code of Particular Law of the Diocese of Austin

The particular law of the Diocese of Austin ("Diocese") provides that catechetical programs for children and programs for marriage preparation must use curricula or programs approved in the instructions of the Local Ordinary. Accordingly, the Local Ordinary issues these instructions and revokes all prior instructions on approved curricula for Sacramental preparation.

1. Catechetical Program for Children. Parishes may use catechetical programs for children that are approved and listed on the Diocesan website of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. A Pastor who desires to use other curricula or programs must first obtain the permission of the Local Ordinary.
2. Marriage Preparation Curricula.
  - (a) Parishes may use the following programs for preparation of couples seeking the Sacrament of Matrimony:
    - (1) Together in God's Love (OSV);
    - (2) For Better and Forever;
    - (3) Joy-Filled Marriage Ascension;
    - (4) Yo Te Elijo Para Siempre;
    - (5) Witness to Love;
    - (6) a translation of a program named in 2(a)(1)-(5).
  - (b) If specific circumstances prohibit the couple from completing the marriage preparation in person, a Parish may use the following on-line programs:
    - (1) The Marriage Group; or
    - (2) CatholicMarriagePrep.com
  - (c) In specific cases, Pastors may seek permission from the Local Ordinary, or his designate to use an alternative program appropriate for the specific circumstances.
3. Premarital Inventories. Parishes may use the following providers for a couple to complete a premarital inventory as party of the couple's preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony:
  - (a) Prepare-Enrich;
  - (b) FOCCUS; or
  - (c) Fully Engaged.

4. Natural Family Planning (NFP). Parishes may provide NFP education to couples, either directly or through an education provider, about any or all of the following NFP models or methods:
- (a) Billings Ovulation Method (BOMA);
  - (b) Creighton Model;
  - (c) Marquette Model; or
  - (d) Couple to Couple League.

Given at Austin, at the seat of the Diocesan Curia, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July 2025.

  
Very Reverend James Misko, Vicar General

  
Deacon Ron Walker, Chancellor



## **Supplemental Material**

Re: Book 2, Title 1: Catechesis  
Code of Particular Law of the Diocese of Austin

For a guide and resources regarding religious education and youth ministry, see the handbooks maintained by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, which may be accessed from the webpage maintained by that office or by contacting the office directly. Resources include, but are not limited to, a Religious Education Handbook and a Youth Ministry Handbook.

The requirements and procedure for the approval of lay speakers or lay presenters, as required in Chapter 3 of Title 1 of Book II, are published on the webpage maintained by the Office of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry (EIM). The EIM Office is available to assist Parishes or work directly with the lay presenter seeking approval. The list of approved lay presenters is maintained by the EIM Office. Parishes may call to determine if a name is on the list or seek other information related to the list.

## **Title 2: Catholic Schools**

*Numbering: The first digit of a section number indicates the Book, the second digit indicates the Title, and the third digit indicates the Chapter – e.g., Book 2, Title 2, Chapter 1, Section 01.*

*Terms: Definition of terms follows the convention described in the Preface of this Code of Particular Law.*

### **Chapter 1: Categories of Schools and General Requirements**

#### Section

#### 221.01 Categories of Catholic Schools.

- (a) A *Parochial Catholic School* is a school operated by a Parish as part of its ministry under the authority of the Pastor. The principal of a Parochial Catholic School is accountable to the Pastor and, for purposes of accreditation, is accountable to the Superintendent.
- (b) A *Diocesan Catholic School* is a school operated by the Diocese as part of its ministry or established by the Diocesan Bishop and operates as a public juridic person with the ministry of education in the name of the church. The principal of a Diocesan Catholic School is accountable to the Superintendent.
- (c) A *Private Catholic School* is neither Parochial nor Diocesan but is governed by its own statutes and is given permission by the Diocesan Bishop to bear the name Catholic. The principal of a Private Catholic School is accountable to its governing authority defined in its statutes and is accountable to the Local Ordinary as prescribed by ecclesiastical law and to the Superintendent for accreditation purposes. A Private Catholic School is obliged to:
  - (i) comply with this Code of Particular Law and, in particular, this Title; (ii) maintain its listing in the Official Catholic Directory; and (iii) express in its governing documents that it recognizes its obligations under, and intends to comply with, its canonical obligations under canons 793-806.

221.02 Universal Law Compliance. All Catholic schools, whether a Parochial Catholic School, Diocesan Catholic School, or Private Catholic School, are subject to universal and particular ecclesiastical law, to the instructions issued by the Local Ordinary, and to oversight and visitation by the Local Ordinary.

221.03 Basic Requirements of Catholic Schools. All Catholic schools in the Diocese must:

- (a) provide quality education focused on faith, academic excellence, leadership, and service, rooted in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church;
- (b) maintain accreditation with the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops;
- (c) adhere to the current edition of the accreditation documents of the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department;
- (d) participate in collegial collaboration and communication with the Superintendent and with other Catholic schools in the Diocese;
- (e) actively participate in the larger Catholic school community in the Diocese by: (i) attending all major events for the larger Catholic school community, as defined by the Superintendent; (ii) requiring its new teachers to attend Diocesan orientations for new teachers; and (iii) participating in continuing formation programs offered by the Diocese for principals and teachers;
- (f) timely provide all information to the Superintendent which the Superintendent reasonably



- requests or which is necessary for making reports to civil or ecclesiastical officials;
- (g) adopt a policy to offer not less than 6% of its operating budget for tuition assistance unless the Superintendent allows a lesser amount;
  - (h) permit the Superintendent to attend all board meetings of the school;
  - (i) include the Superintendent in any search committee or other group to hire a principal;
  - (j) consult the Superintendent before making a decision to expel a student or to dismiss a principal;
  - (k) adopt and enforce a school uniform, except that a Private Catholic School that is a high school may adopt a dress code in lieu of a uniform;
  - (l) maintain an obvious and clear Catholic identity acceptable to the Diocesan Bishop;
  - (m) diligently work to incorporate the Gospel in all its instructions and programs, regardless of the subject matter;
  - (n) provide a school Mass and require all students to attend Mass at least once each week;
  - (o) insure that its instructions, programs, and teachers do not teach any subject matter in a manner that is contrary to the Catholic faith or the teachings of the Church, as determined by the Local Ordinary;
  - (p) require its faculty and staff to comply with the Ethics and Integrity in Ministry provisions of this Code of Particular Law;
  - (r) require its faculty and staff to maintain their professional and personal lives in a manner that is not contrary to Catholic faith or the teachings of the Church; and
  - (s) comply with the *Diocesan Handbook of School Policies* as promulgated by the Diocesan Bishop after consultation with the Diocesan School Advisory Board and others, as applicable. [N.B. A Private Catholic School is obliged to comply only with those provisions stated in the handbook as applying to Private Catholic Schools.]
- 221.04 Compliance with Bishop's Instructions. The Local Ordinary is competent to issue more particular instructions governing Catholic schools.
- 221.05 Opening, Expanding, or Closing a School. A Catholic school may not be established, erected, opened, notably expanded, notably reduced, or closed without the prior consent of the Diocesan Bishop.
- 221.06 Use of School Property in Videos or other Recordings. Without the prior consent of the Local Ordinary, a Parish or Catholic School shall not grant permission or a license for any person to use Parish or school property for the purpose of recording, producing, or staging any type of recording, including but not limited to music videos, movies, television programs, news footage, social media production, or electronic gaming.

## **Chapter 2: Teachers in Catholic Schools**

- 222.01 Appointment of Teachers of Religion. In all Catholic schools, whether a Parochial Catholic School, a Diocesan Catholic School, or a Private Catholic School, teachers of religion must be appointed or approved by the Local Ordinary and may be removed by him for reasons of religion or morals, according to the norm of canon 805.
- 222.02 Level 1 Catechist Certification Required. Persons who teach religion in any Catholic school must obtain Level 1 certification as a catechist, as described by Title 1 of this Book 2 of this Code of Particular Law, within 2 years of beginning their employment at a Catholic school unless they possess at least a bachelor's degree in theology from an accredited Catholic institution of higher learning.

222.03 Continuing Formation of Teachers. All teachers in Catholic schools are ministers of the Christian faith and have an obligation to present the courses they teach in accordance with principals consistent with the Christian faith. All Catholic schools are to offer teachers continuing formation to assist them in meeting the expectations of this section.

## **Instructions**

Re: Book 2, Title 2: Catholic Schools  
Code of Particular Law of the Diocese of Austin

*RESERVED*

## **Supplemental Material**

Re: Book 2, Title 2: Catholic Schools  
Code of Particular Law of the Diocese of Austin

1. Handbook for Catholic Schools. Each principal should have a copy of or access to the Diocesan Handbook for Catholic Schools, issued by the Diocesan Bishop, which is updated from time to time. The handbook is available to Catholic Schools or Parishes from the Office of Catholic Schools.
2. Supplemental Material on Use of the Internet, Social Media, and Communications. The use of the internet and social media presents various challenges and opportunities. For best practices in these areas please consult with the Office of Catholic Schools or the Diocesan Office of Communications, which provide resources or manuals related to communications and social media. Additionally, the Diocesan EIM policy and the Diocesan Handbook for Catholic Schools have certain requirements related to such matters.