



## **Catholic Faith Formation in the Home:** **Diocese Guidelines, Expectations, Curriculum, and Recommended Practices**

Parents play a vital and essential role in handing on the faith to their children. This is precisely why Pope St. John Paul II referred to parenting as a “ministry.” The witness of parents’ lives and the faith lived and practiced in the home is essential to how children come to know, experience, and encounter the love of God. It forms the foundation for much of their understanding of the faith and how it is lived out. As such, the faith lived and handed on in the home is foundational to the life of the Church. Faith formation efforts in the parish then, assist and build on the life of the domestic church – the home.

Recognizing that some parents may choose to provide catechetical formation primarily in the home, we want to provide guidance that may be helpful for parents and parish leaders. We encourage parish catechetical leaders and parishes to reach out and be welcoming to families that have chosen or choose to provide faith formation at home. This effort of inclusion and welcoming will help families by contributing more effectively to the educational and spiritual integrity of these catechetical activities. These families should be included in pastoral and sacramental activities, ministries, and the life of the parish.

1. ***Parents:*** The Church teaches that parents are the “primary educators” with the “first responsibility” for their children’s growth in the faith. What does that mean? It means:
  - a. Parents are the first witnesses or primary evangelists: In their example and devotion, parents bear witness to the faith by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and service are the rule. This means that, in the home, parents seek to provide a good example; even in acknowledging their own shortcomings to their children, and thereby creating an atmosphere where mercy, virtue, and the Gospel message are continually proclaimed in word and action (see CCC 2223).
  - b. Parents are the first, or primary catechists. This means that it is from their parents that children first learn the essentials of the faith. Likewise, it is parents who teach by way of their example the truths that we profess. Parents also guide their children along the path toward a deeper knowledge and understanding of the truths of our faith – from doctrine to worship, this gradual awakening in the faith through the ministry of parenting is irreplaceable (GDC 169).
  - c. ***Taking in mind that not all family situations are the same and that every home is unique, if parents decide to provide their children with catechetical formation at home, it is recommended that they:***
    - i. Consult with their pastor or his designee on a plan for home catechesis. This need not be overly burdensome for parish leaders or parents. The Diocesan Office of Faith Formation is available to assist in this process as needed.
    - ii. Follow the policies and guidelines of the diocese and the parish regarding preparation for reception of the sacraments. It is possible that adaptation may be needed, and this is where communication with parish leadership is both important and helpful.
    - iii. Contact and maintain communication with the pastor, parish catechetical leader or their designee as needed, and in a timely manner about preparation for reception of a sacrament.
2. ***Parish Community:*** The parish community and its catechetical programs assist parents in their role of handing on the faith. Participation in liturgical, catechetical, and sacramental activities are a fundamental aspect of parish life, essential to one’s place in the family of God, and an expectation that

flows naturally from the communal nature of the Catholic Church. That said, there are a couple of important points to understand regarding the parish and catechetical formation:

- a. The parish is the “pre-eminent place for catechesis.” (GDC 257; CT 67).
- b. “The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents” (CCC 2226).
- c. ***Considering all of the above, parish leaders are encouraged to consider the following as possibilities to better serve parents who may choose to provide catechesis in the home:***
  - i. Have parents register with the parish faith formation or religious education program (even if not attending the “on-site” classes) so that children catechized at home will be included in all communications about parish activities and programs. Parents will need to be informed of:
    1. Faith formation activities which involve all the children of the parish.
    2. Diocesan/Parish guidelines for sacramental preparation (e.g. important dates, time sensitive requirements, etc.)
  - ii. Invite families to participate in religious education activities, retreats, or other events (even if virtual). Sacramental preparation particularly, provides an opportunity for growing deeper in the life of the parish and forming community.
  - iii. Request some record of student progress (though there are no “clock hours” or “number of classes” designation in our diocese). This could be as informal and simple as visiting with the parents to see how things are going or hold a discussion about what has been covered in the curriculum. This is a reasonable request to ensure that suitable and adequate formation in the faith is taking place. It also creates an opportunity to discover where areas of assistance may be needed and/or opportunities for collaboration may be present.
  - iv. **Consider** assigning a catechist to the families that do home formation (or simply offer one to be available) so that assistance and support to parents can be provided as needed. While there is no substitute for the lived catechesis that occurs in the home through the ministry of parents, so too is there no substitute for an experienced and well-formed catechist.
  - v. Every effort should be made to help parents feel comfortable in asking for and receiving the help and support that is needed for them to teach their children.
  - vi. Meet with families that choose to provide religious education in the home once or twice a year (even if virtually). This provides an opportunity for mutual collaboration, support, and shared experience that can help strengthen both the ministry of parenting and the ministry of the parish. It also allows pastors and parish leaders to gauge adequate formation of the child(ren).
  - vii. Utilize social media, technology, and other means to help support families and to continue to build and strengthen parish community.
  - viii. Dialogue with parents to determine what adaptations may be needed. The Office of Faith Formation is happy to help formulate adaptations, as well.

## **Recommendations for In-Home Curriculums:**

### **A Family of Faith (Sophia Institute)**

A Family of Faith was created to help develop strong Catholic families in which children learn the joys of following Jesus Christ and the truths of the Faith through the witness of Christian life given by their parents. Although individual families can easily use A Family of Faith independent of the parish, this program was designed to be used by parishes as an alternative to faith formation classes.

Studies show that parental involvement in the faith-life of children is by far the most important element in ensuring that a child develops into a practicing Christian. A Family of Faith provides both the parish catechist and the parent with an easy-to-use, turnkey solution to catechizing the whole family and helping parents lead their children to Heaven.

### **Virtues In Practice (Nashville Dominicans)**

Free at: <https://www.nashvilledominican.org/apostolate/evangelization-and-catechesis/virtues-in-practice/>

Virtues in Practice is a program for children in grades pre-kindergarten through eight to grow closer to Jesus by imitating His life and virtues. It is set up in such a way to study Saints and virtues each month. It provides a whole-family focus. The program covers 27 virtues over a three-year cycle, with 81 saints held up as models of the virtues.

### **Pathways**

<https://www.fflcm.org/pathways>

Pathways is an integrated and family centered formation suite designed to facilitate a personal encounter with the Trinity and sustain a lifelong development of faith within the family. We are all at different points on the journey and a one size faith formation program does not fit all. This is a shift to a greater focus on parents as the primary educators of the faith. Create a path forward that is best for your families with our resources which include home and church experiences. Click on the logo of a particular program for more information.

### **Saints Among Us (Restored Order option)**

Available at: <https://saintsdenver.com/curriculum/>

“A Sacramental Preparation Curriculum to encounter God more fully when receiving the sacraments.”

Saints Among Us, a two-year curriculum, prepares students for the reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion. This curriculum is designed not only to impart the necessary content of the faith to students, but also seeks to form their hearts as they prepare for these sacraments. It does so by drawing students to the divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. Children listen to the Word of God, learn other forms of prayer, and by this relate the content to their lives both in the classroom and at home. This curriculum supports the implementation of the Restored Order of the Sacraments of Initiation in the Archdiocese of Denver. Although these lessons are written with second and third graders in mind it can be adapted and used with older children.

### **Spirit of Truth (Sophia Institute)**

For so many families, the conventional textbook experience is underwhelming. Spirit of Truth was created to help you change that dynamic.

Our new K-8 religious education program takes your children on an immersive and memorable journey through the Catholic Faith. Our engaging session plans and activities will give you the confidence you need to create an engaging environment that you and your child(ren) actually look forward to each week.

### **Seton Educational Material**

Found at: <https://setonbooks.com/97-seton-books?page=2>

The “For Young Catholic” books are among the approved curriculums for homeschooled faith formation. For example: “Bible History *for Young Catholic*” or “Religion *for Young Catholics*.” Seton Educational Material creates a large variety of homeschooling books and curriculums for family and child(ren)’s use.

**Wild Goose** (FREE video based series for CONFIRMATION Preparation)

The Wild Goose was a term that the ancient Celts had for the Holy Spirit and apart from the Wild Goose there is no life. This series is an invitation to join Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR on a journey led by the Holy Spirit.

- YouTube playlist with all 14 videos and some others. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLE6t-PqUvPEemaneqIWybKUn4j8olfe9h>
  - Also found on Formed.org: <https://watch.formed.org/the-wild-goose-with-fr-dave-pivonka> (also available in Spanish)
  - Leader guide can be downloaded off of Formed.org

**Other helpful tips** for living the faith at home can be found at <https://scdiocese.org/curriculum-guidelines> in the downloadable “Parent Information” pages.