GUIDELINES FOR HOME-BASED CATECHESIS OF CHILDREN
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

I. HOME-BASED CATECHESIS

"Catechesis describes the essential ministry of the Church through which the teachings of Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages.... Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults." (*National Directory for Catechesis*, no.1) Home-based catechesis is understood as the work of Catholic parents/guardians who undertake the formal religious education of **their own** child(ren) for any length of time and in **their** home.

II. DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia recognizes that the Church's teaching consistently affirms that parents are called to be the primary educators of **their own** children.

- "Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children." (Second Vatican Council*, Declaration on Christian Education*, no. 3*)*

- "Parents have the first responsibility of the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* no. 2223)

- "Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children." (John Paul II*, Letter to Families*, 16*)*

- "Parents have the right and the duty to choose the kind of educational environment that they determine best suits their children's educational need. Therefore, home schooling is a viable option for the general education of children." (*National Directory for Catechesis*, no.61)

III. PASTORAL APPLICATION

Although home-based catechesis is a viable option, the words of Pope John Paul II must also be considered: "Catechesis can be given anywhere, but I wish to stress … that the parish community must continue to be the prime mover." *(Catechesi Tradendae*, no.67*)*

Parents who choose to provide the religious instruction of **their own** child(ren) in **their** home must recognize that "Catechesis must be complete and authentic. The bishop of the diocese, the pastor of the parish, the parents, and the children all have God-given responsibilities that must be respected in considering home-based catechesis.... **Parents who choose...to be the primary catechist of their children must adhere to the guidelines for catechists as outlined by the diocesan bishop."** (*National Directory for Catechesis,* no.61)

Home-based catechesis is a cooperative and collaborative effort between the parents and parish leadership. This relationship helps parents who choose home-based catechesis to be a part of the total catechetical effort of the parish and they "should not feel alone in this task."(*National Directory for Catechesis*, no. 61)

Categories of a Catholic family who chooses home-based catechesis are:

1. Parents who choose to have **their own** child(ren) home-schooled for all academic subjects and choose to provide formal religious education in **their own** home, assuming the role of catechist for only **their own** child(ren).
2. Parents who send their child(ren) to public or private non-Catholic school and provide formal religious education in **their own** home, assuming the role of catechist for only their own child(ren).

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia does not recognize home-based catechesis of children in a home other than **their own**, and therefore, does not permit groups of children gathering for catechesis other than at the parish.

IV. PARISH GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are provided to assist parishes in ministering to families who choose home-based catechesis:

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will register in their parish and declare their option for home-based catechesis for **their own** child(ren). The names of the children under instruction must be clearly identified in the Parish's Registration system/form.

2. Before the home-based catechesis begins, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are to meet with the pastor and/or his delegate to discuss the reasons for this decision and to ensure that the catechesis provided in the home is the catechesis of the Church. This dialogue is essential to the complete and authentic catechesis of **their own** children in **their** homes.

3. The pastor or his delegate will provide the parents with a copy of the Scope & Sequence Chart and Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guidelines for the grade level(s), approved textbooks, and a set of expectations which include:
    - Conduct a minimum of three meetings annually with the pastor or his designated representative to review the child's progress.
    - Liturgies, prayer services, Catechist Night Out, activities, retreats, programs, meetings, or other parish opportunities in which the child and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) attendance is expected.

4. Parish Religious Education Programs of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia may only use the religion series and sacramental textbooks which are approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The USCCB list includes only those texts which are in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Parents/guardians are required to use the textbooks and supplemental catechetical materials which have been approved by the pastor for use in the Parish Religious Education Program.

5. Families providing home-based catechesis should be included in any informational mailings pertaining to the parish religious education program and/or the preparation and celebration of the sacraments. They are to be welcomed in all parish catechetical program activities.

6. Since their children are being initiated into the Catholic Church, parent(s)/guardian(s) have an obligation to involve their children in the life and mission of the Church. They should participate in:
    - the spiritual life of the parish, particularly in the Sunday Eucharist.
    - the charitable works of the parish.
    - the catechetical and faith formation opportunities on the parish and archdiocesan levels.

7. The Basic Catechetical Certification Policy (Formation Series from Loyola Press) of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia fosters practical applications rooted in theological teaching. To support the role of volunteer catechists and PREP parents in the spiritual formation of children, the parish may choose from the following options for fulfilling the formation requirements by pastors and the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education (D/CRE):
    - **Strongly recommend to achieve the Basic Catechetical Certification**: Complete the Basic Catechetical Certification Program provided by the Office for the Catechetical Formation. This certification involves a structured curriculum designed to deepen theological understanding and enhance practical catechetical skills. To access the formation series from Loyola Press, DREs should share the following information with parents:
        - Go to https://digitallibrary.loyolapress.com/ and enter this Access Code: ***CFSPHILHOME***
    - **Attend Formation Sessions**: Participate in formation sessions organized by the pastor and/or D/CRE. These sessions are designed to provide ongoing support and guidance. Among these sessions, one must be an initial meeting where expectations, requirements, and resources are reviewed to ensure all participants are well-prepared for their roles.

    Pastors and/or D/CREs should provide access to the Catechetical Formation Series of Loyola Press in order for them to achieve the Basic Catechetical Certification Policy to parents/guardians who serve as catechists for their child(ren) and recommend their adherence to this policy.

Approved February 3, 2025
by Archbishop Nelson Pérez