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# Diocese of Erie

## Parish

## Faith Formation Policies

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Revised & Authorized by: Bishop Trautman  
February 16, 2012  
Current Revision & Authorization by Bishop Persico  
May 1, 2024

**Diocese of Erie**  
**Parish**  
**Faith Formation**  
**Policies**

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## 100 - Philosophy and Vision

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### The Value Sought

A clear articulation of our relationship and  
commitment to the Reign of God.

**110.00 The Faith Formation program will have a written mission statement.**

110.10 The Faith Formation program mission statement will reflect Diocesan guidelines.

**120.00 The Faith Formation program will have a written vision statement.**

120.10 The Faith Formation program vision statement will reflect Diocesan guidelines.

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## 200 - Faith Formation Leadership

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### The Value Sought

A Christian community characterized by mutual respect, charity and justice.

- 201.00 Each parish will have a designated Faith Formation leader(s) to assist the pastor.**
- 202.00 The Faith Formation leader(s) is a member of the Catholic faith and models this tradition in both words and lifestyle. This policy is further explained by the document *Catholic Practice Standards*:  
[https://www.eriescd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/ff\\_302CathPracform.pdf](https://www.eriescd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/ff_302CathPracform.pdf)
- 203.00 Faith Formation leaders will be assigned a level of certification by the diocesan Department of Faith Formation based on the *Faith Formation Guidelines* revised May 3, 1993 and updated in 2022.  
[Levels of Certification](#)
- 204.00 Faith Formation leaders must meet current requirements identified by the Diocesan *Policy for the Protection of Children*.  
<https://www.eriescd.org/childprotection/>
- 204.10 No parishes will host catechetical classes in homes.
- 205.00 Every parish will have a confidential personnel file for the Faith Formation leader(s) which contains all appropriate records as defined by current diocesan policy.
- 210.00 The Faith Formation leader serves, under the direction of the pastor, as the educational administrator in the parish for programs outside the parish school (if one exists).**
- 211.00 The Faith Formation leader will ensure that all materials presented under the auspices of the parish Faith Formation program are in conformity with Church teaching. All programs in use must be diocesan approved publishers and programs.
- 211.10 The Faith Formation leader will supervise catechists to ensure that they are covering the *Diocesan Curriculum* and meet the standards of 211.00.
- 220.00 Faith Formation leaders will meet Diocesan certification standards.**
- 221.00 The designated Faith Formation leader(s) will have as a minimum the

credentials to meet Diocesan standards for an Administrator of Faith Formation. Those who do not yet have these credentials must be enrolled in an approved certification program within one year from the time of hire.

- 230.00 Faith Formation leaders will enter into a professional agreement with the parish.
- 231.00 The elements of a Professional Agreement shall include a job description and a process for the completion of an annual review. Examples can be obtained from the diocesan Human Resource or Faith Formation department.
- 232.00 Lay Faith Formation leaders will be compensated, at least minimally, in accordance with the Diocesan salary.
- 232.10 Lay Faith Formation leaders will receive a benefit package in accordance with Diocesan guidelines.
- 232.20 Religious working in the capacity of a parish Faith Formation leader will be compensated at the Diocesan salary and benefit scale for Religious.
- 233.00 Once a year Faith Formation leaders will have a formal documented performance review initiated and performed by their immediate supervisor based on their job description.
- 234.00 Religious working in the capacity of a parish Faith Formation leader will follow hiring guidelines established by the Director for the Office for Religious.
- 235.00 Faith Formation leaders will have access to Diocesan due process in the event of an employment dispute and are required to use this process before any non-canonical process.
- 240.00 Faith Formation leaders are required to participate in yearly Continuing Education and Formation.**
- 241.00 Faith Formation leaders will complete at least seven contact hours of academic continuing education per year. Academic continuing education is achieved through courses, workshops or conferences in theology, methodology or related subjects. [A contact hour is defined as participation in a learning environment excluding breaks, lunch, etc.] This requirement will be stated explicitly in the contract between the Faith Formation leader and the parish and will be paid for by the parish or funds paid to the Faith Formation leader specifically for this purpose.
- 242.00 Faith Formation leaders will participate in a retreat or other spiritual Formation program each year. This requirement will be stated explicitly in the contract between the Faith Formation leader and the parish.
- 250.00 Faith Formation Leaders are to know and adhere to all provisions of**

**Diocesan policy.**

- 251.00 The Faith Formation leader will obtain a completed *Class Planning Schedule Form* from each catechist for each year.
- 252.00 Faith Formation leaders will oversee the *training* of all catechists and volunteers concerning the current *Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children*. [Diocesan resources for the Protection of Children and Youth](#)
- 252.10 Faith Formation leaders will ensure all catechists and volunteers have received the training and clearances required by the diocesan *Policy for the Protection of Children* and oversee catechists' and volunteers' *adherence* to the current *Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children*.  
<https://www.eriercd.org/childprotection/>
- 253.00 Faith Formation leaders will oversee the *training* and adherence of all catechists concerning the diocesan *Blood Pathogens Policy*.

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## 300 - Catechetical Staff

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The Value Sought: Catechists inspiring the Church to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus the Christ.

- 301.00 Each parish will recruit and train a sufficient number of catechists to serve the Formation needs of the parish community (children and adults).
- 302.00 Catechists are members of the Catholic faith and model this in both words and lifestyle. This policy is further explained by the document *Standards of Catholic Practice*.  
[https://www.eriescd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/ff\\_302CathPracform.pdf](https://www.eriescd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/ff_302CathPracform.pdf)
- 303.00 All catechists and volunteers who work with children must meet current requirements identified by the Diocesan Office for Protection of Children and Youth on their website, <http://www.eriescd.org/protectyouth.htm>. The cost of the clearances will be paid by the parish.
- 303.10 All catechists must be over the age of 18. Classroom aides and junior catechists under the age of 18 are permitted but must be paired with an adult catechist. All helpers under the age of 18 must also follow all Diocese of Erie catechetical staff policies and any Diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Youth clearances policies.
- 310.00 All catechists will have a confidential personnel file at the parish.
- 310.10 All records pertaining to the service of a catechist, will be maintained in their personnel file by the Faith Formation leader.
- 320.00 All catechists will meet Diocesan certification standards. Catechists will be certified through an accredited program or be working toward this goal.
- 321.00 All catechists are encouraged to become certified and “are called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith as it develops through its different stages.... (ANTIQUUM MINISTERIUM #6)

Several examples of approved certification programs can be found here:  
<https://www.eriescd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/Certifying%20Your%20Catechists.pdf>

Programs not listed in the examples above must include classroom management, Creed, Sacraments, Morality, Prayer, and Methods. This is the basic theological and catechetical foundation.

- 321.10 Faith Formation leaders will keep records of catechist progress toward certification on the Diocesan form *Diocese of Erie - Catechist Certification*

Record, if they are enrolled in the Echoes of Faith program.

[https://www.eriercd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/pdf/re\\_eofcatrecord.pdf](https://www.eriercd.org/images/sections/religiouseducation/pdf/re_eofcatrecord.pdf)

- 322.00 All catechists who have achieved full diocesan certification will participate in at least four hours of continuing education (classes/workshops) per year.
- 323.00 All catechists will be in-serviced on the current Diocesan *Policy for the Protection of Children* found on the diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Youth website: <https://www.eriercd.org/childprotection/>
- 324.00 All catechists will be in-serviced on the diocesan *Blood Pathogens Policy* for Religious Educators.
- 330.00 All catechists are required to meet Diocesan instructional standards.
- 331.00 Catechists will submit a copy of their yearly *Class Planning Schedule Form* to the Faith Formation leader outlining which lessons will be taught on which date. The Faith Formation leader will notify the catechist if this plan needs to be altered for any reason.
- 332.00 Each catechist's teaching will be formally observed by the Faith Formation leader or designate at least once per year.
- 332.10 Each time a catechist is observed the information will be recorded on a *Diocese of Erie - Catechist Observation Checklist*.
- 333.00 No catechist will invite any person to enter a classroom or meet with students without first gaining stated approval of the Faith Formation leader and any appropriate clearances for each occurrence.
- 334.00 Each catechist will complete a *Diocese of Erie - Catechist Effectiveness Checklist* at the end of each year.



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## 400 - Program Structures

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The Value Sought – Good order and the foundation of discipline, is the foundation of the spiritual life.

- 401.00 Parishes will provide Faith Formation programming for all the Christian faithful. (Canon 217)
- 401.10 Parishes will have a Faith Formation program for every child/youth beginning in Preschool and ending in the Twelfth grade.
- 401.11 Faith Formation program models may vary based on local need and the age of the children and youth being served.
- 401.12 If local needs require the combining of grades, the Faith Formation program will have a written plan which demonstrates how the curriculum is covered.
- 401.20 All children/youth will have a minimum of 40 contact hours of Faith Formation per year including a minimum of 30 hours of catechetical time. The remaining ten hours must consist of a mix of liturgical celebrations (excluding Sunday Worship, community building activities and service activities).
- 401.21 Each child's progress through the Faith Formation program will be tracked through the maintenance of permanent records, either digital or hard copies.
- 402.00 Faith Formation programs will serve the differing educational needs of children/youth in their parish through a determined effort at total inclusion using *Individualized Education Plans* for each child/youth.
- 402.10 Faith Formation programs will serve the differing educational needs of adults in their parish through a determined effort at total inclusion.
- 403.00 Each parish will have a written plan for children who come to the program in need of remedial preparation for one or more sacraments (refer to policy #640.00).
- 404.00 Parents are to be actively involved in the Faith Formation of their children. They will be invited, consulted and informed of all major activities involving their children.
- 404.10 Parents will be informed anytime a child is to be taken off church property for activities such as retreats, service projects or community building activities. A signed *Youth Confidential Release Form* must be obtained for every trip off church property. This form can be obtained at web site:

## Youth Confidential Release

[Trips off church property: things to consider](#)

[Act 175 - Taking kids out of public school for religious events](#)

[Act 175: sample letters](#)

[Small Group Meetings permission slip](#)

- 404.11 A record of every trip made off church property is to be kept. This record must clearly demonstrate that the *Youth Confidential Release Form* was received for each activity. These records should be kept on file at the parish for one year.
- 404.12 Each Faith Formation program will adhere to the current [Guidelines for Use of Photographic Images of Children and Youth](#) with an authorized permission form obtained from parents/guardians. Forms are available at web site: <https://www.eriecd.org/Protection-of-Children-and-Youth-Forms.html>
- 405.00 Parishes will actively engage adult parishioners in continuing education concerning the relationship of faith and life and have a written plan for accomplishing this responsibility.
- [Adult Religious Education: an introduction](#)  
[Adult Learning Characteristics. \(Think - parent meetings\)](#)  
[Adult Religious Education: how to](#)  
[Small Christian Communities](#)  
[Adult Religious Education Checklist](#)
- 411.00 Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given a copy of the *Parish Religious Education Handbook*.
- [Parent/Student Handbook sample](#) Click the link for several samples of parent handbooks. Please choose one or search for one to adapt to your parish. These samples are not specific policies of the Diocese of Erie. You must adapt these handbooks to your own parish after cross-checking with the diocesan policies.
- 412.00 Catechists will have a *Catechist's Handbook* which explains their rights and responsibilities in accordance with diocesan guidelines and parish procedures.
- 420.00 When, due to diminishing population<sup>1</sup>, a religious education program finds it difficult to maintain a traditional schooling model program, the following must be observed: The program must be combined with a neighboring parish religious education program<sup>2</sup> or an alternative model<sup>3</sup> must be initiated in the parish. If the program is to be transferred to another parish, policies 421-423 must be followed.

<sup>1</sup>. Policy 420.00 is activated when the following standard is not met: there must be six (6) or more students in at least nine (9) of the grades to continue using the school model program in the parish. This standard is applied to students in

grades 1 through 9 only.

<sup>2</sup> If it is not possible to merge with a neighboring religious education program because of prohibitive distance or geographical obstacle, an alternative model must be used in the parish.

<sup>3</sup> Homeschooling is not an appropriate alternative model. The alternative method must be discussed with the Office for Faith Formation prior to its implementation. (Amended by Bishop Lawrence T. Persico, August 8, 2014.)  
[Combining RE programs: the policy and its rationale](#)

- 421.00 Prior to the discontinuation or transfer of the program approval of the Vicar is required. When deemed appropriate by the Vicar, the Diocesan Faith Formation Department will be consulted in an effort to maintain the children's/youth's identification with the local parish.
- 422.00 On the determination that a local Faith Formation program or part of a program must be closed, the parish will consult with area pastors to determine where the children/youth should attend and make equitable financial arrangements for their Faith Formation. The details of these arrangements will be in writing and signed by both pastors.
- 423.00 The parish which is closing its Faith Formation program or part of a program, will also have a written plan that outlines how the parish will maintain contact with the affected children/youth.
- 430.00 Each parish Faith Formation program will seek Diocesan program certification every six years.

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## 500 - Curriculum

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The Value Sought – Whole persons knowledgeably live Gospel values and Catholic Traditions.

- 501.00 Faith Formation programs will teach the specific grade level requirements defined in the current diocesan *Faith Formation Curriculum* as found on the Department of Faith Formation website:

<https://www.eriecd.org/religiouseducation/recurriculum.html>

- 501.10 All texts used in grade K through five must be listed on the USCCB approval document: *Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series*. The current list can be found on the USCCB website:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/current-conformity-list>

Textbooks must meet the following criteria: 1) the entire series must have both an Imprimatur and a Nihil Obstat 2) the series must have been found in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by the USCCB Subcommittee on the Catechism, 3) one series must be used for all grades K-five, 4) the school and Faith Formation program within a parish are encouraged to use the same religion text series but are not required to do so 5) it is also encouraged that “consumable” student texts be used as designed.

- 501.20 All parishes will use the diocesan program for grades six through 12, found on the web page: <https://www.eriecd.org/faithformation/ffprocess.html>. The program used for grades six through eight is *Edge*, and grade nine is *Purpose*, both run through Life Teen, a “Eucharist-centered movement within the Roman Catholic Church, Life Teen leads teenagers and their families into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.”

Grades ten through 12 programs are administered through the parish or regionally if possible and include Small Groups for grade ten, Spiritual Mentoring for grade 11, and Made for Mission for grade 12. Information on these is available at the webpage noted above.

- 510.00 Student assessment is an important element which helps to determine that program goals are actually being accomplished. Written assessment of student progress is to be communicated with parents.

- 510.10 If a Faith Formation program chooses to use report cards or other written reports of student progress, it will be clearly communicated to the parent(s) on the report that it measures a student’s progress in knowledge about the faith and is not a measurement of their progress in the spiritual life.

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## 600 Sacramental Preparation

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The Value Sought - A joyous relationship between Creator and creature.

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### First Reconciliation Preparation Policies and Guidelines

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September 1, 1995  
Revised July 15, 2005  
Reviewed Feb. 16, 2012  
Revised May, 2024

#### **First Reconciliation Guidelines** **Interpreting This Document**

This document is written in two sections. Please read the following descriptions to properly understand how to interpret each section.

##### **Diocesan Policy**

This section of the document is to be implemented in all parishes of the Diocese. The need to make individual exceptions for pastoral need could be considered.

##### **Diocesan Preferences**

This section of the document is to be considered Diocesan suggestions. These suggestions are offered to parishes to help them celebrate sacramental initiation with a greater faithfulness to the spirit of Church documents. Parishes are asked to consider these suggestions seriously.

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## First Reconciliation Guidelines

### Diocesan Policy - 610

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**610.00** Parishes will follow the *First Penance Preparation Policies and Guidelines*.

**611.00** **Administrative Policies**

611.10 The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated only with those who have been properly prepared, who are actively involved in the parish preparation process, and who freely choose to be reconciled.

611.20 Sacraments are celebrations of the believing community. The option for home-schooling during the preparation for this sacrament is discouraged except for serious pastoral need.

611.30 The recommended time for first Reconciliation is once the person has reached the age of discretion. (Canon 989) Children baptized before reaching the age of discretion will celebrate first Reconciliation in second grade.

611.40 The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be celebrated prior to the child's reception of first Eucharist. (Canon 914)

611.41 There will be a significant period of time between the celebration of first Reconciliation and first Eucharist. The catechesis for Reconciliation must be done separately from the catechesis for first Eucharist, and the preparation periods for these two Sacraments must not take place within the same time period nor overlap in any way. (NCD, 2005 quoted at #36, B-2, p.135)

**612.00** **Parent Policies**

612.10 Parishes must provide a minimum of one meeting with parents prior to the child's celebration of first Reconciliation. Parent(s)/guardian(s), the primary educator(s) of their children, are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for first Reconciliation. This helps parent(s)/guardian(s) renew and strengthen their own faith, and enables them to serve as a positive faith example for their children.

612.11 Requirements for the preparation process leading to first Reconciliation are to be clearly communicated to parent(s)/guardian(s) in a timely manner.

**613.00** **Catholic School Policies**

613.10 Children attending a Catholic school which is not in their home parish will prepare for and celebrate the sacrament in their home parish. Exceptions to

this will only be made with the express consent of the child's pastor.

#### **614.00 Catechist Policies**

- 614.10 It is essential that a parish utilize the talents of the most gifted and highly trained catechists for preparation for this sacrament. The first celebration of this sacramental encounter with God through Christ is an experience of significant and special grace and deserves the parish's best effort.

#### **615.00 Educational/Formational Content for First Penance**

- 615.10 The preparation process must follow Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines published on 1/1/95. (Available in the diocesan *Faith Formation Policy*-Section 500)
- 615.20 The preparation process must respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of the individuals.
- 615.30 The catechist for first Reconciliation will emphasize the love and mercy of a forgiving God and the importance of repentance and conversion.
- 615.31 Sin will be presented in a manner and language understood by the child.
- 615.32 Sacramental Reconciliation is required of those who are in serious sin; it is recommended for those in venial sin. (Canon 988) The catechist of seven-year-old children must strive not to blur this distinction and make venial sin into something more than it is.
- 615.33 Catechesis for first Reconciliation should "explore the meaning of the symbols, gestures, prayers and Scriptures of the Rite of Reconciliation." (NDC #36, B-2, p. 136)
- 615.34 Children must "understand how to celebrate the Rite of Reconciliation." (NDC, 2005 #36, B-2, p. 136)
- 615.40 A very simple Act of Contrition is to be used: one which is easily understood by the child. See some examples recommended by the Vatican: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/prayers/act-of-contrition.html>

#### **616.00 Liturgical Policies**

- 616.10 The liturgical experience of first Reconciliation will follow the *Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution* as described in the Book of Rites.

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## *First Reconciliation Guidelines*

### *Diocesan Preferences*

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1. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults suggests that it is important for all Catholics, including our children, to reflect on the nature of sin in their lives, in the community and in the world around them. This reflection is best done within the context of the larger Catholic community. The proper liturgical season for this reflection is the season of Lent. It is, therefore, the preference of the Diocese that preparation for first Penance be completed prior to the beginning of Lent that the children be exposed to the community's reflection on the reality of sin and they be sacramentally reconciled shortly before the beginning of the Triduum.
2. The celebration of first Reconciliation should be held as a parish celebration, e.g., children in the Faith Formation program celebrate with the children in the Catholic school.
3. Celebration of First Reconciliation is parish-based and includes children from both the Faith Formation program and Catholic school if there is one. Every effort should be made to bring the group together for such events as a retreat, parent/child gatherings, etc. so that the children get to know one another as the "parish First Reconciliation group" before they are asked to celebrate the sacrament.
4. Two meetings with parents prior to the celebration of first Reconciliation are preferred. The Diocesan Guidelines give suggestions for the content of these meetings.
5. Since it would help the child to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with confidence, it is recommended that every effort be made for the priest(s) who will be the minister of the sacrament to be familiar with the children. This may be accomplished through his (their) presence at the retreat or other gatherings with the children, as well as a consistent presence in the Catholic school and Faith Formation program.
6. Since all the sacraments are celebrations of the larger faith community, it would be appropriate to ask the parish to pray for the children preparing to make their first Reconciliation. This can be done in various ways, e.g., banners with names and/or pictures of children displayed somewhere in the church, frequent bulletin announcements, etc.

One example of an appropriate Act of Contrition is the following which is adapted from the Rite of Reconciliation:

My God,  
I am sorry for my sins  
with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong  
and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you



whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help,  
to do penance, to sin no more, and  
to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

Any parish which would find it necessary, for pastoral or theological reasons, to deviate from these guidelines, will submit an alternate plan to the appropriate diocesan office (Liturgy: Office for Divine Worship; Catechesis: Department of Faith Formation) for recommendations and final approval.

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# First Eucharist Preparation Policies and Guidelines

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September 1, 1995  
Revised July 15, 2005  
Reviewed Feb. 16, 2012  
Revised May, 2024

## **First Eucharist Guidelines**

### **Interpreting This Document**

This document is written in two sections. Please read the following descriptions to properly understand how to interpret each section.

#### **Diocesan Policy**

This section of the document is to be implemented in all parishes of the Diocese. The need to make individual exceptions for pastoral need could be considered.

#### **Diocesan Preferences**

This section of the document is to be considered Diocesan suggestions. These suggestions are offered to parishes to help them celebrate sacramental initiation with a greater faithfulness to the spirit of Church documents. Parishes are asked to consider these suggestions seriously.

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## First Eucharist Guidelines

### Diocesan Policy - 620

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**620.00** Parishes will follow the *First Eucharist Preparation Policies and Guidelines*.

#### **621.00 Administrative Policies**

621.10 First Eucharist will be celebrated only with those who have been properly prepared (Canon 913 #1), who are actively involved in the parish preparation program, and who freely choose to receive.

621.20 Sacraments are celebrations of the believing community. The option for home-schooling during the preparation for this sacrament is discouraged except for serious pastoral need.

621.30 Children who were baptized Catholic before reaching the age of discretion will normally celebrate first Eucharist in third grade.

621.40 First Eucharist will be celebrated only with children who have previously been sacramentally reconciled.(Canon 914) (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, p. 127)

621.41 There will be a significant period of time between the celebration of first Reconciliation and first Eucharist. The catechesis for first Eucharist must be done separately from the catechesis for Reconciliation and the preparation periods for these two sacraments must not take place within the same time period nor overlap in any way. (NCD, 2005 #36, B-2, p. 135)

#### **622.00 Parent Policies**

622.10 Parishes must provide a minimum of two meetings with parents prior to the child's celebration of first Eucharist. Parent(s)/guardian(s), the primary educator(s) of their children, are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for first Eucharist. This helps parent(s)/guardian(s) renew and strengthen their own faith, and enables them to serve as a positive faith example for their children.

622.11 Requirements for the first Eucharist preparation process are to be clearly communicated to parent(s)/guardian(s) in a timely manner.

#### **623.00 Catholic School Policies**

623.10 Children attending a Catholic school which is not in their home parish will prepare for and celebrate the sacraments in their home parish. Exceptions to this will be made only with the express consent of the child's pastor.

## **624.00 Catechist Policies**

624.10 It is essential that a parish utilize the talents of the most gifted and highly trained catechists for preparation for this Sacrament. The first celebration of this Sacramental encounter with God through Christ is an experience of significant and special grace and deserves the parish's best effort.

624.20 The pastor or parochial vicar will be involved in the preparation of children and their parent(s) /guardian(s) for the celebration of first Eucharist. (Canons 528/777)

## **625.00 Educational/Formational content for first Eucharist**

**625.10 The preparation process must follow Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines published on 1/1/95. (available in Faith Formation Handbook - Section 500).**

625.11 The preparation process must respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of the individuals.

621.20 The child must know, in an age appropriate way, that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ.

625.21 The child must be able to distinguish the Body and Blood of Christ from ordinary food. (Canon 913 #2)

625.22 The child must be able to demonstrate reverence appropriate to the situation.

625.30 The child must know the proper response to the minister of Eucharist when presented with either the Eucharistic bread or the Eucharistic cup.

625.31 The child must be aware of the laws concerning Eucharistic fast.

625.32 The child must be able to demonstrate the proper hand position for the reception of Eucharist.

625.33 The child should be taught in an age-appropriate way that "the Eucharist is the living memorial of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of all and the commemoration of his last meal with his disciples." (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, page 127)

625.40 Children should be taught that from "first Communion on they can as full members of Christ's Body take part actively with the People of God in the Eucharist, sharing in the Lord's table and the community of their brothers and sisters." (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, page 127)

- 625.41 The child should understand that the appropriate commitment to word and sacrament is the altering of their life so that their entire life is a response to Jesus.
- 625.42 The preparation process should be designed to “develop in children an understanding of the Father’s love, of their participation in the sacrifice of Christ and of the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (NDC, 2005 #36 A-3A, Page 127)
- 626.00 Liturgical guidelines for first Eucharist**
- 626.10 First Eucharist will normally be celebrated within the Easter season.
- 626.20 First Eucharist is not to be celebrated on Holy Thursday.
- 626.30 The liturgy will be kept simple in order to prevent the appearance of a “performance.”
- 626.40 The opportunity to receive both the Eucharistic Bread and Eucharistic Cup is to be provided. Education and rehearsal on receiving the Blood of Christ is important and will be provided so that receiving from the cup is a reasonable option for the child

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## First Eucharist Guidelines

### Diocesan Preferences

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1. The celebration of first Eucharist should be held at regularly scheduled Sunday liturgy(ies). This will ensure that the initiation dimension of the sacrament is more clearly visible to those who are celebrating for the first time and the community at large.
2. The community should be involved as much as possible in the preparation process. Eucharist is a sacrament of initiation and therefore should include the entire community to whatever extent is pastorally reasonable. Examples of community involvement might include ceremonies of enrollment and acceptance, special blessings, etc.
3. The celebration of first Eucharist is parish-based and includes children from both the Faith Formation program and Catholic school if there is one. Every effort should be made to bring the group together for such events as a retreat, parent/child gatherings, etc. so that the children get to know one another as the “parish First Eucharist group” before they are asked to celebrate the sacrament.
4. There should be two meetings with parents prior to the celebration of first

Eucharist.

5. Since all the sacraments are celebrations of the larger faith community, it would be appropriate to ask the parish to pray for the children preparing to make their first Eucharist. This can be done in various ways, e.g., banners with names and/or pictures of children displayed somewhere in the church, frequent bulletin announcements, etc.
6. Clothing should be kept simple. The traditional “bride’s dress,” while not to be actively discouraged, is also not to be encouraged so that the liturgy becomes secondary to dress.
7. Individual picture taking should be discouraged. Liturgical prayer must never be a show. A practical suggestion to eliminate excessive photography is to provide pictures/videos for the parent(s)/guardians at either no cost or minimal cost.

Any parish which would find it necessary, for pastoral or theological reasons, to deviate from these guidelines, will submit an alternate plan to the appropriate diocesan office (Liturgy: Office for Divine Worship; Catechesis: Department of Faith Formation) for recommendations and final approval.

*Diocese of Erie  
Department of Faith Formation  
September 1, 1995  
Format Revised, Jan 2001  
Revised: July 15, 2005  
Updated NDC - Jan. 1, 2006*

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# Confirmation Preparation Policies and Guidelines

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January 1, 1992  
Revised Jan. 1, 1999  
Format Revised Jan. 2001  
Updated Jan. 1, 2006  
Revised Feb. 16, 2012  
Revised May, 2024

## **Confirmation Guidelines**

### **Interpreting This Document**

This document is written in two sections. Please read the following descriptions to properly understand how to interpret each section.

#### **Diocesan Policy**

This section of the document is to be implemented in all parishes of the Diocese. The need to make individual exceptions for pastoral need could be considered. If a particular policy statement has been revised the date is noted and the revision is indicated in bold.

#### **Diocesan Preferences**

This section of the document is to be interpreted as Diocesan suggestions. These suggestions are offered to parishes to help them celebrate sacramental initiation with a greater faithfulness to the spirit of Church teaching. Parishes are asked to consider these suggestions seriously.

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## Confirmation Guidelines

### Diocesan Policy - 630

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**630.00** Parishes will follow the *Sacrament of Confirmation Preparation Policies and Guidelines*.

**631.00** *Administrative policies:*

631.10 Confirmation will be administered only to those who have been properly instructed, actively involved in the parish program, and who freely choose to be confirmed.

631.11 Parishes have the responsibility to provide adequate opportunities for preparation of candidates for this sacrament. Requirements for the Confirmation Program should be clearly communicated to both candidates and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

631.12 Confirmation preparation, as a distinct catechetical experience, must adhere to Policy 401.20 which requires 40 hours of contact time. Up to five hours of service requirements may be applied toward this 40-hour requirement. Those parishes which extend Confirmation preparation across two or three years are to plan 40 hours of contact time in each of these years.

631.13 The appropriate period for the celebration of Confirmation is to be no earlier than the ninth grade. This policy is to be understood with the following clarifications:

- Three (3) full years of catechesis prior to Confirmation is required by the policy.
- Confirmation will typically therefor be celebrated in the Spring of ninth grade.
- The combining of multiple grades into a single Confirmation class so that Confirmation may be held in a parish is not permitted.
- All students in the Confirmation year (normally 9th grade) must attend the Confirmation preparation in their home parish Faith Formation program. This includes all students enrolled in a Catholic high school.

631.14 All Confirmation names must be that of a saint or blessed of the Church. Only saints whose names can be found in *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, or saints that have been canonized by the Catholic Church since the Butler's publication may be used. The names of persons beatified and titled "Blessed" in the last 150 years may also be used. This policy does permit the use of Scripture names of the holy persons/angels of both the Old and New Testaments.



631.15 Each Confirmation candidate must request the Sacrament from the Bishop in a letter that follows the attached instructions. The appropriate personnel in the parish must review all letters to ensure that the Bishop does not receive letters from candidates indicating that they do not wish to be confirmed or containing inappropriate material.

631.16 The pastor or his representative must interview each candidate at least once at the end of the preparation process.

### **632.00 Parent Policies**

632.10 As the primary educators of their children, parent(s)/guardian(s) are to be intimately involved in the catechesis for Confirmation. This helps them renew and strengthen their own faith and serve as a positive faith example for their children.

### **633.00 Retreat Policies**

633.10 The Confirmation retreat is an important part of the candidate's preparation and is not to be omitted. (Pennsylvania's Act 175 offers a ready opportunity for release of students for such retreats during the school day.)

633.11 The retreat before Confirmation is a valuable opportunity for the students to build community, receive catechesis and experience conversion. The full text *Expectations for a Confirmation Retreat* can be found at: [Confirmation Retreat Expectations](#)

### **634.00 Service policies**

634.10 Service opportunities are an important part of the Formation of young Catholics. Parishes are to provide service opportunities for the confirmation candidates based on the needs of the local community.

### **635.00 Educational/Formational content for Confirmation**

635.10 Candidates should be taught that "Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, *imprinting an indelible character on the soul*" (NDC, 2005 #36, A-2, p.123)

635.11 Candidates should be taught that "Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthen their bond with the Church, associate them more closely with the Church's mission, increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deeds." (NDC, 2005 #36, A-2, p.123)

635.12 Candidates should be taught "about the role of the Holy Spirit and the gifts and

fruits of the Holy Spirit.” (NDC, 2005 #36, A-2, p.123)

635.13 The preparation process must respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of the candidates.

635.14 The preparation process for Confirmation should include “instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.” (NDC, 2005 #36, A-2, p.123)

#### **636.00 Liturgical policies**

636.10 Specific liturgical requirements for Confirmation are promulgated each year by the Diocesan Chancellor at the time of the distribution of the Confirmation schedule. These instructions should be reviewed carefully to ensure that Confirmation is well celebrated. Questions about these directions can be directed to the diocesan Office for Divine Worship or to the Chancellor.

#### **637.00 Sponsor policies**

637.10 Sponsors are to be confirmed, practicing adult Catholics other than the candidate’s parents. Since Confirmation is the completion of Baptism, one’s godparent could well be a candidate for this role. Sponsors do not have to be of the same sex as the candidate.

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## Confirmation Guidelines

### Diocesan Preferences

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1. Eight to ten months prior to Confirmation, an invitation is sent from the pastor to the candidate along with parent and sponsor (Canon 893-Qualifications) for a meeting to explain their roles in the Confirmation process.
2. An initial interview by the pastor/staff member is strongly encouraged to determine whether the candidate is ready to begin the preparation process. This is encouraged in addition to the interview required by policy 631.16. Critical to the determination of a candidate's readiness would be the candidate's willingness to receive the Sacrament and to fulfill the requirements of the program.
3. It is suggested that the candidate's letter to the Bishop be used as an outline for the final required interview.
4. The Confirmation preparation program should be parish-based, and include Catholic high school students as well as public high school students.
5. The Rite of Intention, modeled on the Rite of the Catechumenate from the RCIA is to be celebrated with the parish community at a Sunday liturgy. [Please note #34 in the General Introduction and #67 in the Introduction to the RCIA itself]
6. Parish staff and Catholic high school staff are to cooperate in acknowledging service projects whenever possible.
7. A Rite of Acceptance, modeled on the RCIA is celebrated at a Sunday liturgy sometime after the second interview.

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Updated Jan. 1, 2006  
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## Confirmation Guidelines

### Letter to the Bishop

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#### Instructions

The following issues should be addressed in the letter to the Bishop requesting the Sacrament of Confirmation. As you respond to each question, please use the question number to identify your response. The letter should be addressed and sent to the Bishop who will be ministering Confirmation at your celebration. Please respond in full sentence form.

1. Why do you feel you are ready to celebrate this sacrament?
2. Please list the service projects in which you were involved.
3. Please write a few words on how you felt about giving during your service projects. How will these experiences encourage you to further service in the future?
4. What saint's name have you chosen?
5. What characteristics of the saint or the person whose name you are taking would you hope to model in your life?
6. What was the theme of your Confirmation retreat? Please write a few words on what was the most meaningful part of the retreat for you.
7. Tell why you picked your sponsor. What in your sponsor's life tells you what it means to be a follower of Christ?
8. God calls each of us to be disciples in a particular way of life. This call is lived out through a variety of vocations such as marriage, the single life, the life of a deacon or priest or that of a religious sister or brother. Have you prayed to God asking that he reveal your vocation to you?
9. Have you ever thought God might be calling you to follow him as a priest or deacon, religious sister or brother?

## Christian Initiation guidelines

### Interpreting this Section

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The information contained here is taken from the ***Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*** which is mandatory for the initiation of adults, children of catechetical age (also referred to as the “age of discretion,” typically understood as age seven and beyond), and teenagers, according to the general law of the Church. This Rite became mandatory for the dioceses of the United States on September 1, 1988.

This section is to be implemented in all parishes of the diocese without exception.

With the promulgation of the Rite in 1988 and the new Code of Canon Law in 1983, the norm for the reception of unbaptized adults and children of catechetical age into the Church is through their enrollment into the CATECHUMENATE, in which they will be led through various stages of preparation to sacramental initiation and then mystagogy. This rite of initiation is **MANDATORY**, and *must replace any contrary custom or practice*. The optimal time for the celebration of Initiation is the Vigil of Easter.

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## Christian Initiation guidelines

### Confirmation Guidelines

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**Adults, children of catechetical age, and teenagers subject to the norms of the Order of Christian Initiation *do not follow the ordinary diocesan policies for Eucharist and Confirmation*, but, as noted above, are prepared *in the catechumenal process for the reception of the three Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist simultaneously*, according to the ancient tradition of the church.**

Although the Diocesan Bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, Canon Law provides priests with the faculty to confirm. This faculty *must* be exercised regarding candidates for Confirmation according to the Order of Christian Initiation.

#### **Priests may confirm in the following cases**

- a. Necessity involving the danger of death.
- b. The priest who by virtue of his office or by a mandate from the diocesan bishop baptizes an adult or admits a baptized adult into full communion with the Catholic Church. (Canon 883:2) This also includes children of catechetical age.
- c. Priests who do not exercise a pastoral office must obtain a mandate from the

diocesan bishop to baptize and confirm. This is necessary for validity.

The table on the following page is provided to indicate what persons the priest is to confirm according to the Order of Initiation, and what permissions may be necessary. Note that this also applies to children of catechetical age and older.

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## Christian Initiation guidelines

### Summary of Confirmation Regulations (for adults, children & teenagers of catechetical age in OCIA)

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Candidate	Minister	How Permitted
Person baptized Catholic in infancy	Bishop/Priest	from the law (candidate is subject to Diocesan Confirmation Policy)
Baptized Catholic but uncatechized	Priest	with Bishop's permission for validity
Baptized Catholic but apostate (totally repudiated the Catholic faith)	Priest	from the law (RCIA: NS #28)
Baptized Catholic but <u>formally</u> joins another religion	Priest	from the law (RCIA: NS #28)
Baptized Catholic but without fault adheres to a non-Catholic religion (as a child baptized Catholic but raised by grandparents in a Protestant church)	Priest	from the law (RCIA: NS #28)
Baptized Catholic but without fault never practices Catholic faith (e.g., a person prevented from practicing the faith by persons or circumstances: child of lax parents; mentally impaired; elderly in nursing home; or special military circumstances)	Priest	with permission of the Bishop for validity
Validly baptized non-Catholic entering the full communion of the Catholic church	Priest	from the law (Canon 883 #2)
Eastern Rite (Orthodox) seeking full communion in Latin Rite.	Priest	special circumstances; no formal reception; already validly confirmed

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## Christian Initiation guidelines

### First Penance Guidelines

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The preparation of children and teenagers within the Order of Christian Initiation will differ from the usual Diocesan policy and will follow the process indicated in the Rite of Initiation itself.

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The Church's requirement for the usual sequence of first Penance then Eucharist is a way of celebrating Reconciliation as a reminder and renewal of the "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins" with which Christian initiation first began, so that the Eucharist may be received with "heart renewed."

Adults and children entering full communion with the Catholic Church are to observe the above order in the Diocese of Erie. Adult and children catechumens will receive the sacrament after an appropriate interval following their Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist.

Adults, teenagers and children entering full communion will usually experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance at the time of the celebration of the Rite of Continuing Conversion during the season of Lent prior to their reception. These directives are given in the Order of Christian Initiation text.

In the case of children, it would be ideal if their peers in Faith Formation could also be prepared to celebrate the sacrament during Lent, so that all the children could take part in the same ritual.



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## Christian Initiation guidelines

### Overview of the Catechumenate adapted for Children

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The Order of Christian Initiation is adapted for use with children (and younger teenagers) [decisions about the grouping of teens with children or other teens must be done with attention to their individual maturity] according to the norms given in the Rite itself (see RCIA: no. 255 ff.)

How and when should children be admitted to the catechumenate? The following guidelines will be helpful in making this determination:

1. Children under the age of discretion (usually considered to be about the age of seven) may be baptized according to the Church's Rite for Infant Baptism, according to the wishes of their parents in this matter. The parents may also decide to have their children baptized at the time of their own baptism or entrance into full communion.
2. Unbaptized children who have reached the age of discretion are to be admitted to the children's catechumenate and are to be initiated in the same manner as adults who are enrolled in the catechumenate: they are to receive Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist (in this sequence) within the same liturgical celebration.
3. Children baptized in infancy as non-Catholics who have reached the age of discretion are to be enrolled in the catechumenate for children. They will celebrate First Penance and later be received into full communion. They will be received into full communion in the same manner as adults, i.e., reception, Confirmation, First Eucharist, in the same celebration and in this sequence.
4. Depending upon the degree of their maturity, older teenagers might be admitted to the adult catechumenate. If ages in a particular gathering range from seven to nearly eighteen, for example, obviously the participants will need to be grouped so as to meet their particular needs, even if several catechumenal groups must be formed to accomplish this.
5. Children generally require a longer period of Formation than adults. For this reason, children being prepared for baptism or full communion should ordinarily not be admitted to the sacraments of initiation until they have completed a two-year catechumenate.
6. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, children in the catechumenate take part in the program of Faith Formation along with their peer group. This peer group in turn becomes a support for the catechumens as they in turn become acquainted with the workings of the catechumenal process.
7. The peer companions referred to in number 5 (or any pre-teen Catholic children who accompany unbaptized children during their catechumenal formation period) are

not to be confirmed at the same time as their companions in the catechumenate, but are to follow the norms of the Diocesan Confirmation Policy.

8. In the diocese of Erie, all who were baptized Catholics as infants (before reaching the age of discretion) are subject to the Diocesan Confirmation Policy.

For further information about the Order of Christian Initiation or its implementation please call the Office of Parish Support.

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## 700 - Resources and Environment

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The Value Sought - Education in the sacred arts requires our noblest effort.

**701.00 Parishes will provide Faith Formation programs with adequate resources, both personnel and fiscal, to assure a quality Formation in the Gospel for all parishioners (children, youth and adults). Canon 229**

702.00 Parishes will provide materials to catechists for effective and quality programming, including but not be limited to: textbooks, paper, writing implements, media materials, *Edge* and *Purpose* subscriptions, etc.

703.00 Parish Faith Formation programs will have access to secretarial support services.

703.10 Every parish Faith Formation leader is to have direct access to a computer with Internet access whose use is for Faith Formation. Each of these computers will have the *Ministry Platform* program installed. Every Faith Formation leader is also to have access to additional business machines (copiers, etc.) necessary to run the Faith Formation program.

704.00 Parish educational facilities will have essential educational equipment including up to date technology as much as possible so that the *Diocesan Curriculum* can be faithfully presented.

705.00 Faith Formation programs will plan for the continuing integration of current technology into their program, including but not limited to computers, internet access, etc.

710.00 Parish Faith Formation programs will have a budget and follow *Diocesan Faith Formation Budget Guidelines*.

710.10 Budgeting will provide resources for the religious formation of children, youth and adults to ensure that the *Diocesan Curriculum* can be faithfully presented.

**720.00 Parish facilities will strictly adhere to child safety and welfare regulations.**

720.10 The physical plant is to meet reasonable standards for the health and safety of all who use the buildings, including but not limited to adequate, marked and accessible fire exits, adequate restroom facilities, etc.

720.20 Each Faith Formation program will have one safety drill (fire, tornado, etc.) annually. All catechists must be instructed regarding safety procedures and receive a copy of the procedures for their reference.

- 721.00 Parish educational facilities will be suitable and comfortable to those for whom the space is primarily intended.
- 722.00 The Diocese of Erie does not sponsor any Middle School dances. Some dances have been advertised as “Catholic.” There is no permission to use that title in identifying any such dances. The Diocese of Erie in no way, shape, or form sponsors these dances. Such dances are not associated with the Catholic Church, its schools, institutions, programs, and/or organizations.
- 730.00 Visible signs, symbols and images of the Catholic Tradition will be present in classrooms and throughout the parish educational spaces.**
- 731.00 The Sacred Scriptures will be reverently and tastefully displayed in every space used as a classroom.

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## 800 - Relationships

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The Value Sought – That all may know the love of God in the way we treat them.

**801.00 As the primary educators of their children, parent(s) will be informed of all activities of the Faith Formation program that affect their children.**

802.00 As the primary educators of their children, parent(s) will be consulted whenever major decisions need to be made concerning the program.

**810.00 Both parents and parishes will follow the *Diocese of Erie Guidelines for Homeschooling* in circumstances concerning the home schooling of children in religion.**

820.00 Confidentiality will be strictly enforced concerning students and other staff members.

820.10 The discussion of the physical, psychological, mental or emotional condition of any student with anyone except the pastor and/or student's parent(s) or those the parent(s) designate is strictly prohibited.

820.20 All Health and Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) laws and policies must be followed concerning information about a person's health and well-being.

<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/laws-regulations/index.html>

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## Diocesan Policies for Faith Formation (Abbreviated)

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### Quick Reference List

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The Faith Formation program has a written mission statement.

The Faith Formation program has a written vision statement.

The parish has a designated Faith Formation leader other than the pastor.

The Faith Formation leader meets Diocesan certification standards.

The Faith Formation leader has a signed Professional Agreement with the parish.

The Faith Formation leader is justly compensated.

The Faith Formation leader participates in yearly continuing education and formation.

Catechists are all practicing members of the Catholic faith.

There are confidential personnel files for each catechist at the parish.

The catechists have achieved Diocesan Certification or are in the process.

All catechists have been in-serviced on the Child Abuse and Blood Borne Pathogens Policies.

All catechists have completed a yearly Class Planning Schedule Form.

Each catechist is observed teaching by the Faith Formation leader once a year.

The parish has a program for every child beginning in preschool through twelfth grade.

The Faith Formation program has a minimum of 40 hours per year, including instruction, liturgical celebrations, community building and service activities.

The parish will make every effort to serve the differing education needs of the children/youth.

A written plan exists for children in need of remedial preparation for one or more sacraments.

The parish has adult Faith Formation opportunities and has a written adult education plan.

The Faith Formation program has handbooks for the parents/students and each parent has a copy.

The Faith Formation program has handbooks for the catechists and each catechist has a copy.

Specific grade level requirements are taught as defined in the Diocesan Faith Formation Curriculum.

The parish has a written plan that identifies those areas of the curriculum not being

covered in the text series and outlines how these areas will be covered.

The parish participates in the Diocesan Student Assessment Program every three years.

The parish is using a text series that has been approved on the USCCB *Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series*.

The parish follows the First Penance Preparation Policies and Guidelines of the Diocese of Erie.

The parish follows the First Eucharist Preparation Policies and Guidelines of the Diocese of Erie.

The parish follows the Confirmation Preparation Policies and Guidelines of the Diocese of Erie.

The parish follows the OCIA guidelines when planning for its adaptation for children.

The parish provides the Faith Formation program with adequate resources, both personnel and fiscal, to assure a quality formation in the Gospel for all parishioners.

There are visible signs, symbols and images of the Catholic tradition in each learning area.

The Sacred Scriptures are visibly and reverently displayed in each learning area.

The parish follows the Diocese of Erie Guidelines for Homeschooling.

The parish informs parents of all activities in the Faith Formation program that affect their children.