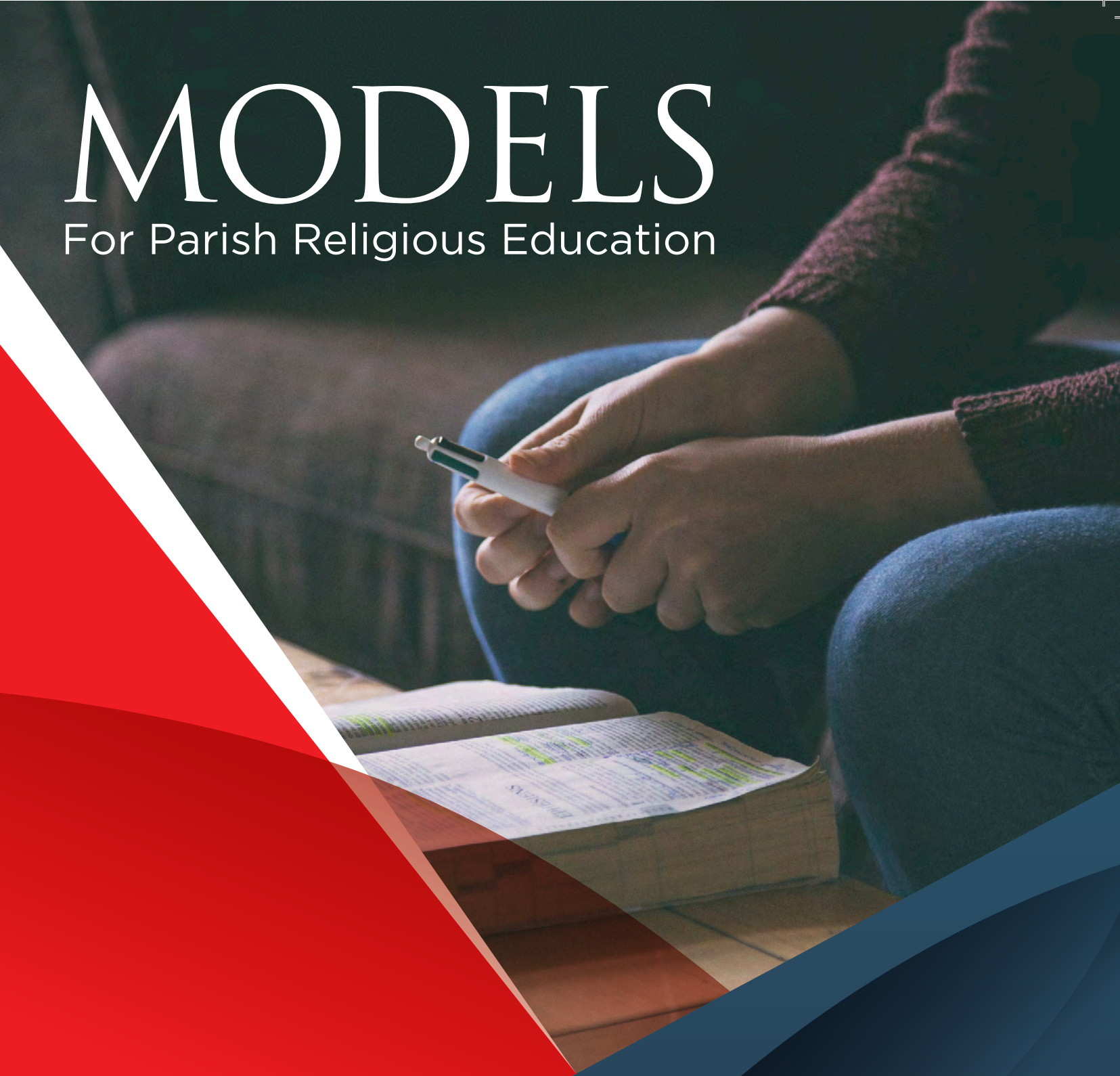
MODELS

For Parish Religious Education



ARCHDIOCESE of NEW YORK

Department of Youth Faith Formation

WHY ARE WE PROMOTING MULTIPLE MODELS FOR OUR PARISHES?

In short, in an ever-changing environment, we want help our parishes effectively form young people and their families for discipleship as part of the Catholic church.

Catechesis is "the totality of the Church's effort to make disciples" (CCC 4) and religious education is a critical component of this. Effective catechesis fosters an intimacy with Jesus, builds up a community of believers, helps make meaning of life's situations, and gives tools and guidance to be God's hands in the world. Effective religious education focuses on the cognitive (head), affective (heart), and behaviors (hands). It evangelizes, teaches, and forms disciples.

It is our desire that these models will provide the tools and flexibility to design programs that will respond effectively to the following realities impacting their communities.

Families are changing. According to the US Census, only about seven percent of household are the image of the "traditional family"—a married couple with children and one parent working. Approximately one-third of young people live in single parent households. It is more likely than not in two-parent households that both parents are working. (US Census) And they work a lot. The average person works 47 hours with 39% of people working more than 50 hours a week. (Gallup) However, wages have not kept up with expenses. (BLS) Sports, often seen as bane of many religious education programs, are often the one time where young people and their parents can be together and in community with their friends. These issues directly impact how and when parents and children can participate, volunteer, and give in our parishes.

Decrease in affiliative faith but still a deep desire for meaning. Sociologists have been tracking the rise of the religious "nones" since the late 1990s and their increase is significant. The religiously unaffiliated have surpassed Catholics in percentage of adults in the United States. Yet, Americans still seek communities of belonging—whether in churches or in gyms. A recent article in Vox called "meaning making" a growth industry.

Changes in learning and teaching. The classroom of twenty years ago is definitely not the classroom of today. They are filled with technology, integrated learning, group projects, and flipped learning (content taught online at home and practice/processing done in the classroom). Individualized learning plans—once reserved for young people with special educational needs—are now being developed for every student.

Living in a post-modern world. In a post-modern world, our young people and increasing their parents are choosing faith rather than embracing it as an inheritance. The Church is seen as one option among many.

KEY STANDARDS AND ECCLESIASTICAL NORMS

- Canon law 773-80, 528
- Six fundamental tasks of catechesis (GDC 85-86)
  - Knowledge of the faith
  - Liturgical education
  - Moral formation
  - Learning to pray
  - Education for community life
  - Missionary discipleship and service
- Directives of the *General* and *National Directories for Catechesis*
- US Bishops' protocol: content to be taught in all religious education programs
- *The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium* and *The Catechist in the Third Millennium* (NY State Bishops)
- The Archdiocese of New York Guidelines for Catechesis (PreK-6 and 7-8)
- Stated hope of Cardinal Dolan that young people who go through religious education, pre-K through 12 will be able to: articulate the basics of the faith, actively participate in the sacraments and Church life, discern God's purpose in their lives, live their lives with a Catholic lens, and look outward to serve others."
- Deepening spiral curriculum, based on pedagogical stages of growth

Defining Terms

Catechesis is "the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help [people] believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ." It includes the "teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking in an organic and systematic way, with a view of initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life." (CCC 4-5)
Religious Education is defined as formal instruction in the beliefs, tenets, and practices of the faith. Religious education in a Catholic setting is always a part of catechesis, but it is not the only part.
Youth Ministry is the evangelistic, catechetical, and Christian apprenticeship work of the Church primarily with those in middle and high school. "It is the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community." (*Renewing the Vision*) Youth group can be a part of youth ministry but is never the only part.
Faith Formation can be used synonymously with catechesis; however, the term is not as rich in meaning as the term catechesis.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR ALL MODELS

The following components need to be included in all models:

1) Embraces a vision of catechesis as an intrinsic component of evangelization
2) Is organized and administered by qualified, competent, well-formed director/coordinator of religious education
3) Is systematic, comprehensive, intentional, and based on a spiral curriculum
4) Offers regular early childhood religious education
5) Plans for continued engagement in youth ministry
6) Includes parent faith formation and family catechesis
7) Follows the Archdiocese of New York Guidelines for Catechesis (PreK-6 and 7-8)
8) Uses a USCCB or Department of Youth Faith Formation approved text or series
9) Provides an annual minimum of 45 hours for formal religious education, plus a minimum of five hours of family catechesis (does not apply to early childhood religious education)
10) Includes evaluation process, based on the *Guidelines for Catechesis* by grade
11) Complies with the administrative and legal responsibilities described in the Archdiocesan *Handbook for Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education*
12) Provides comprehensive formation for directors/coordinators of religious education and for catechists by the Department of Youth Faith Formation.

The following are preliminary proposed models for parish faith formation programs. Note: all models need to be adapted for children with special needs.

Models for Pre-K to Sixth Grade

Models for Early Childhood
Meets weekly with session length determined by parish
Options include:
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- Systematic religious education program, using one of the USCCB-approved series

Models for Grades 1-6
1) Weekly religious education program
   - Predominant model in the United States
   - 30 sessions of 90 minutes each, plus five hours of family catechesis
2) Weekly religious education with parent formation
   - Includes 30 sessions of 90 minutes each
   - Three weeks with the children at the parish
   - Fourth week for the children and parents at the parish
   - Catechists work with the children; director/coordinator works with parents
3) Family-based model
   - Three weeks at home and the fourth at the parish
   - Fourth week includes formation of parents for the next month
   - Catechists work with the children; director/coordinator works with parents
4) Online family-based model
   - Online catechetical formation at home for three weeks, using resources approved by the Dept of YFF
   - Fourth week includes formation for the following month, provided for parents at the parish by the director/coordinator; catechists work with the children
5) Parish-developed model
   - Includes the "Essential Components"
   - Must identify and articulate specific outcomes
   - Includes an annual evaluative process based on outcomes
   - Is approved by the Department of YFF.

Preparation for First Penance and First Eucharist
First and second grade religious education is foundational for the Sacraments of First Penance and First Eucharist. Immediate preparation for First Penance and First Eucharist is separate from the first and second grade program. See Archdiocesan *Handbook for Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education*, p 6 and pp. 8-12

Evaluation
To be developed. Note that for all grades, the evaluation process will be adapted for children with special learning needs upon consultation with the regional youth faith formation specialist.

Models for Seventh and Eighth Grade

1) Weekly religious education program
   - 30 sessions of 90 minutes each, plus five hours of family catechesis
2) Youth ministry style
   - Weekly or biweekly gatherings
   - Topics are covered over a two year period
   - Includes regular, systematic, and intentional catechesis
3) Segments with a set-order
   - Four segments in each grade taught in a specific order
   - Segments are taught by catechists with expertise in subjects
4) Segments with choice of order
   - Four segments for each grade are offered simultaneously
   - Students/families choose order
   - Must complete all segments
   - Segments are taught by catechists with expertise in subjects
5) Flipped model (online-onsite hybrid)
   - Three weeks on online formation
   - Fourth week in parish for processing and formation
6) Parish-developed model
   - Includes the "Essential Components"
   - Must identify and articulate specific outcomes
   - Includes an annual evaluative process based on outcomes
   - Is approved by the Department of YFF.

Preparation for Confirmation:
Seventh and eighth grade religious education is foundational for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation is separate from the 7th and 8th grade program. See Archdiocesan *Handbook for Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education*, Sacraments p. 6 and pp. 13-19.

Recommended Additional Enrichment Experiences

- Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Vacation Bible School
- Catholic summer camps (e.g. Camp Veritas)
- Summer enrichment which is supplemental to regular, systematic program
- Encouragement of parent/family participation in parish offerings, e.g. parish mission, adult faith formation, Stations of the Cross

The Mission of Catechesis Found in Our Documents

HEART OF CATECHESIS

"At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father...full of grace and truth, who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. It is Jesus who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life,' and Christian living consists in following Christ, the sequela Christi.... Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ; only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.'" (CT5)

Aim of Catechesis

To catechize is to teach others that, in the Person of Jesus Christ, the whole of God's eternal design is revealed. (Excerpted from the *CCC426* and *GDC35*)

"The aim of catechetical activity consists in precisely this: to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith. The Church, to achieve this, transmits to catechumens and those to be catechized, her living experience of the Gospel, her faith, so that they may appropriate and profess it. Hence, "authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living active *traditio*." (*GDC 66*)

Catechesis and the Pastor

"It is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people so that the living faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life." (*Canon 773*)

Evangelization and Catechesis

"Catechesis is an indispensable stage in the rich, complex, dynamic reality of evangelization. (*NDC pp.41-42*)"The Church 'exists in order to evangelize' that is 'the carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and renew the human race.'"(*GDC 46*) The Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* places catechesis firmly within the Church's mission and notes that evangelization is a rich, complex and dynamic reality which comprises essential but different "moments". "Catechesis", it adds, "is one of these moments—a very remarkable one—in the whole process of evangelization." (*GDC 6*)

Catechesis and Formation

"Continuing formation in the faith is directed not only to the individual Christian, to accompany them in their journey towards holiness, but also to the Christian community as such so that it may mature also in its interior life of love of God and of the brethren as well as in its openness to the world as a missionary community. The desire of Jesus and his prayer to the Father are an unceasing appeal: 'May they all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' Approaching this ideal, little by little, demands of the community a great fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit, the constant nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ and continuing education in the faith, listening all the time to the word." (*GDC 70*)

Catechesis and Liturgy

"On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass." (*Canon 1247*)."Catechesis both precedes the Liturgy and flows from it. It prepares people for a full, conscious, and active participation in the Liturgy by helping them understand its nature, rites and symbols. It stems from the Liturgy insofar as it helps people to worship God and to reflect on their experience of the words, signs, rituals, and symbols expressed in the Liturgy; to discern the implications of their participation in the Liturgy; and to respond to its missionary summons to bear witness and offer service." (*NDC 33*)

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