

Guidelines for Parish ECF Classes

Introduction

“Our Lord Jesus Christ before his ascension into heaven instructed his disciples, saying: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’ (Mat 28:18-29). This commission of Christ to proclaim the Good News was given not only to the first disciples, the apostles, it is directed to the Church in all times, even to the end of the ages. Our parishes are those special places where we all grow closer to God and mature in our faith.

The goal of this pastoral program is to help all the ECF participants of our Church to **learn** “to live in order to please God” (1 Th 4:1), and thus to grow in holiness and unity in Christ Jesus.

- 1) ***God With Us*** catechetical books are the approved texts to be used for our ECF classes within the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic. They can be ordered at: <http://store.godwithusbooks.org/catechetical-series/>
- 2) On October 1 of each year, Pastor/Administrator should update their parish Catechist list and contact information. Pastors are asked to submit their updated Catechist list to the Eparchial ECF Office no later than November 1 of that year. The updated Catechist Directory will be used by the ECF Office to provide catechetical resources, publish news and announcements throughout the year and or other ECF program related purposes.

GUIDELINES for Catechesis of Children

- Catechetical classes are to take place at a time that does not conflict with Sunday Divine Liturgy;
- Catechesis should be experiential in nature;
- Parents are the primary catechists of their children;
- Catechists in our Byzantine Catholic Tradition serve more as guides, tutors, and models of Christian life, rather than simply as teachers and classroom administrators, and those whom they lead are to be treated more like disciples learning to follow Christ than mere students and participants in a program;
- Catechetical classrooms should have an icon corner, in the eastern corner of the room if possible;
- Each child enrolled in our catechetical program should have their own Bible and bring it to each class;
- Educational content should conform to the liturgical cycle in which our Church is living;
- Religious education should be in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

STANDARD STRUCTURE FOR THE CATECHETICAL YEAR FOR THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

- 1) The Catechetical Year should begin in the month of September with “Catechetical Sunday.”
- 2) Prior to teaching, every Catechist and Catechist Assistant must have completed all the requirements of the Safe Environment Office and been certified/ approved by it.
- 3) Once the Catechetical Year is launched, an updated Catechist Directory with contact information should be emailed to the Eparchial ECF Office. Parishes are requested to submit the updated directory no later than November 1.
- 4) In addition to the Catechists’ Directory, parishes are requested to submit an enrollment report, detailing the number of students and families that are registered in the parish catechism program, the number and level of classes provided, and comparison chart to the previous Catechetical Year.
- 5) Catechism classes should take place weekly at the appointed time which does not conflict with Sunday Divine Liturgy.
- 6) At least twice during the Catechetical Year, all students should be brought into the Church for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- 7) As explained above, educational content presented by the catechetical textbook in use and determined by the schedule of the academic year, should conform to the liturgical season in which the Church is living.
- 8) The Catechetical Year should conclude in the month of May with an end of the year program or ceremony. At the conclusion of the Catechetical Year, a progress report should be submitted to the Eparchial ECF Office outlining the overall health of the parish program and sharing particular successes and challenges which the parish catechism program experienced during the Catechetical Year.

Suggested Structure For Catechetical Classes in the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

- 1) **Arrive early for set up and prayer.** To follow proper safety procedures, the catechist should arrive in the classroom prior to any student. Because the Catechist is a guide and example, upon entering the classroom, Catechists are encouraged to pray before the icon of Christ the Teacher that he or she may fulfill the ministry of catechesis through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that the students may be open to receiving the gift of Divine Life.
- 2) **Students begin by reverencing the icon.** When students arrive to the classroom they should be accustomed to immediately go to the icon corner to reverence the Icon of Christ or festal icon before being seated. While students are arriving, a CD or smart phone with the Resurrectional Troparion for that Sunday may be played quietly.
- 3) **Classes should begin and end on time.** Catechetical classes should begin at the appointed time and should not be delayed for late arrivals. If some students have not yet arrived, class should begin without them. When late arrivals enter the classroom, they should

immediately go to the icon corner, reverence the Icon of Christ and join the class quietly. The class instruction should not be interrupted to bring the student up to speed unless absolutely necessary.

- 4) **Classes might begin with the Trisagion Prayers.** Once the time for class has arrived, the students are asked to proceed to the icon corner once more and the class prays the Trisagion prayers together (this could be led by a particular child who has prepared himself or by the class as a whole). Over time, as Catechists and students become familiar with the prayers, this part of the class will become natural and take very little time to complete. Once familiar, this part of the class should take no more than three minutes.
- 5) **Use the appropriate section of the *God With Us* catechetical series.** The catechetical lesson in the *God with Us* series is covered with activities suggested. Catechists should not attempt to cover every aspect of the material presented in the *God With Us* lesson, but rather focus the student's attention on the most central points. The details of the lesson and the entirety of the unit are to be reviewed and taught at home by the parents. Catechists are encouraged to prayerfully prepare themselves each week for this important time with their students and they should make an effort to present the catechetical lesson within the context of the liturgical cycle in which the Church is living. The Bible, as the "language" of catechesis, should be used regularly throughout the instruction and students should be encouraged to open their Bible and read passages whenever there is an opportunity. In classes for younger ages a craft project is commonly worked on during some part of the catechetical lesson. Many helpful weekly resources could be found here: <https://godwithusonline.org/> under "Catechetical Resources" section.
- 6) **Conclude the class by reverencing the Icon of Christ.**

For more information, clarification or any other catechetical needs, please contact Rev. Vasyl Chepelskyy at: direcf@eparchyofpassaic.com