

## PROGRAM STRUCTURES

### COMBINING PARISH PROGRAMS

The parish is, without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church. The parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word at once as teaching, education and life experience.

*GDC, #257*

The decision to close part of a religious education program or a whole program in a parish is one that should be done in prayer, discernment and careful planning. The policies for a parish that faces this possibility are noted below with rationale.

#### **POLICY 420.00**

If a parish cannot run its own religious education program or a part of the program, (e.g. youth ministry, or inclusion, etc.) the following three conditions must be observed:

##### **1. Policy 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 Religious Education Department will be consulted in an effort to maintain the children's/youth's identification with the local parish.

#### **RATIONALE**

The first goal of the diocesan department of religious education will be to seek solutions **with parish leaders** to maintain a viable parish program. There may be alternative models of religious education which will work in the current situation where a traditional program cannot be sustained. Strategies, different from larger parishes, may be necessary to sustain a viable, healthy religious education program.

If merging religious education programs with another parish is necessary, this conversation will provide strategies for maintaining a connection with the children/youth affected by the merger.

## PROGRAM STRUCTURES

### COMBINING PARISH PROGRAMS, CONT'D

#### 2. Policy 422.00

On the determination that a local religious education program or part of a program must be closed, the parish will consult with area parishes to determine where the children/youth should attend and make equitable financial arrangements for their religious education. The details of these arrangements will be in writing and signed by the appropriate persons.

#### RATIONALE

When closing a parish program, it cannot simply be assumed that another parish will “absorb” the children/youth. This action should be done in consultation with the parishes in the area. It is expected that the parish closing their program will financially support the religious education programs at the parish(es) which accept the children/youth. It is also expected that the parish which is closing the program will encourage catechists from the parish to follow the children/youth to the neighboring parish(es). This will help the children maintain connection with their home parish.

#### 3. Policy 423.00

The parish which is closing its religious education program or part of a program will also have a written plan that outlines how the parish will maintain contact with the affected children.

#### RATIONALE

This plan will evolve from the conversations with the diocesan religious education department. It is important to have these ideas in writing to serve as a reminder, over time, to pursue the goal of keeping the children and youth associated with the parish. These documents are particularly important if there is a transition in pastoral leadership.

