

GUIDELINES FOR PARISHIONERS INVOLVED IN MINISTRIES WITH CHILDREN IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING PARISH OF LUXEMBOURG

General Introduction

At present we have over 150 people involved in various ministries in our parish community, serving as: Ministers of the Eucharist, Baptism Catechists, Children's Liturgy Catechists, First Holy Communion Catechists, Confirmation Catechists, Marriage Preparation Catechists, Adult Catechists, Readers, Music Ministry, Serving in the Community (including Refugee Aid), Parish Social (including after Mass refreshments), Parish Council and associated groups, Altar Servers and leaders.

This is a great sign of the vitality of our community, and at the same time an organisational challenge. The relationship between the different groups involved is somewhat ad hoc, often necessarily so; but there is also need to clarify a number of points, making explicit what unites us, and what common principles and practices we share. I propose the following, but remain open to adding, subtracting or modifying according to advice. Where there are issues relating to the principles outlined, these in general should be brought in the first instance to the Coordinator of the ministry concerned, then if necessary, to the Parish Priest or Parish Council. Each ministry will have *specific* procedures, where necessary. Specific procedures are outlined for each ministry below.

General Principles (*in no particular order of priority*)

1. We are united by our Catholic-Christian faith and our use of English in worship
2. We are committed to safeguarding children and those who are vulnerable in our midst
3. We deal with each other in a spirit of co-operation and mutual assistance
4. Where necessary, we are discreet, treating as precious what we learn about each other
5. We participate fully in the sacramental life of our parish, insofar as we are able
6. We have our own parish identity, but are clearly and demonstrably part of the wider Church, in communication and co-operation with the archdiocese
7. We maintain cordial and deeply-rooted relationship with our Christian sisters and brothers in other churches
8. We deal with our differences respectfully and gently
9. Our liturgy, our preaching and our catechesis are rooted in the Word of God and consonant with our Catholic Christian faith as it has been expressed in the worship and organisation of our community since its inception.
10. We are an open, welcoming community
11. We have a genuine spirit of service, helping both those in our midst and those outside our community who are in need
12. None of us has a *right* to minister in the Church – it is a *calling* and a *privilege*, coming from God through our parish community; we are at the service of this community.
13. As public representatives of our parish community, we are all in that sense accountable to the community.

These principles have, of course, practical out-workings for all the specific ministries. All of the above principles apply equally to the Parish Priest. I propose that the co-ordinator of each ministry present a report to the parish council evaluating the general (and, where appropriate, specific) state of our adherence to these guidelines – initially within 6 months of their first publication, and annually thereafter.

Children's Catechists (*Children's Liturgy; First Holy Communion; Altar Servers*)

- A. Catechists are believing, practicing members of our community, in communion with our parish and with the wider Church
- B. Children's Catechists have a faith consonant with that of the wider Catholic Church and in tune with the spirit of the worship and organisation of our community since its inception.
- C. Children's Catechists try to live good, Christian lives
- D. Children's Catechists minister in a dignified, respectful way
- E. Children's Catechists are open to ongoing training and formation, enabling them to deepen their understanding of their ministry and to serve in accordance with training
- F. Children's Catechists are subject, as are all our members, to safeguarding requirements
- G. Children's Catechists minister in co-operation with each other and with other ministries in our parish. They meet and communicate regularly in order to share their experiences and to learn from one another. They always make themselves available after the children's liturgy they have led to meet parents and other parishioners.

Aims of Children's Liturgy

- (i) To educate children regarding the readings of the day;
- (ii) To familiarise the children with different ways of praying (traditional prayers, picture-based prayer, etc)
- (iii) To give children an age-appropriate positive experience of church
- (iv) To prepare children for the next stage of their catechesis, viz. First Holy Communion Preparation
- (v) To help the children get to know each other as fellow-parishioners
- (vi) Children's Catechesis is linked with parish life, is always lectionary-based, closely linked with the liturgical life of the parish

Classes:

- (1) are interactive, with appropriate activities for the children
- (2) always keep a focus on Jesus Christ
- (3) have a clear central message
- (4) involve both teaching and prayer, and may involve singing
- (5) disciplined, but not oppressively so
- (6) May present artwork or a song etc. to the wider congregation after class

Procedures

- Any suggestions, concerns or complaints regarding the *content* of catechesis should in the first instance be referred to the catechetical co-ordinator or the parish priest; thereafter addressed to the parish council.
- Any suggestions, concerns or complaints regarding teaching methods, discipline, practical arrangements, materials used in catechesis etc should be referred in first instance to the catechetical co-ordinator, then to the parish council.
- Any suggestions, concerns or complaints regarding Health & Safety (including First Aid, Fire Escape procedures, allergies, children with behavioural issues) and Safeguarding should be in the first instance referred to the parish Safeguarding Responsible; then to the parish council, or, if appropriate, to the parish priest. All concerns, suggestions or complaints will be dealt with in accordance with our parish Safeguarding Policy [*soon to be published*] This policy will include procedures for referring concerns or complaints outside the parish where appropriate, to the diocesan Safeguarding person or to the police.
- Safeguarding procedures will reference where necessary and appropriate 'CHILD PROTECTION IN LUXEMBOURG' published by the British Embassy in Luxembourg in January 2016, which, amongst other things, gives useful addresses and telephone numbers regarding Child Protection.

All Children's Catechists will receive two copies of these guidelines one to sign and submit to the CL coordinator for the files, and the second to keep for personal reference, so that our parish community may strive, and be seen to strive, for best practice in relation to the children of our parish community.