



# ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

*Office of Faith Formation*

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## GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION OF CATECHISTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 1. CATECHESIS

What is Catechesis?.....	1
What is the Purpose of Catechesis?.....	1

### 2. THE CATECHIST

Who is a catechist?.....	2
What are some qualities of a catechist?.....	2-3
Age of Lead Catechist in the Classroom.....	3
Legal Ramifications.....	3
Safe Environment Training Program.....	3

### 3. CATECHIST FORMATION

Purpose of Catechist Formation.....	4
What is Catechist Formation?.....	4
Requirements.....	4-5
How do I obtain Catechist Formation?.....	5-6

### 4. CATECHIST FORMATION REQUIREMENTS

Level 1 – Associate Catechist.....	7
Level 2 – Advanced Catechist.....	8-10
Level 3 – Master Catechist.....	10



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## CATECHESIS

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### WHAT IS CATECHESIS?

*Catechesis is an **education in the faith** of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted...with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life. While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect...the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness. (CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, #5 & 6)*

"Catechesis" originates from the Greek word meaning to "echo or resound". That which is echoed is God's Word, made flesh in Jesus Christ and continually enfleshed in the community of believers - Christ's body in the world. Catechesis has always been an esteemed term in Christian tradition. However, with the developments arising from the Second Vatican Council, publication of documents such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and a variety of parish and school sponsored programs and activities, the term is now heard more frequently.

While catechesis can refer to a variety of experiences and realities, at its core meaning, it involves **growth in faith**. Faith does not happen in a vacuum. Faith is transmitted through the interaction, communication and relationships between and among people. Catechesis takes place in many settings and in a variety of ways - liturgical celebrations, community building endeavors, outreach projects, and educational programs.

Therefore, catechesis can be described as a process whereby the Word of God, proclaimed through Scripture, Tradition, and the ongoing faith stories of believers, continues to be heard, understood and followed.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF CATECHESIS?

*The definitive purpose of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ. (GDC #80)*

*The aim is precisely to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith. (GDC #66)*

*Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. (GDC #86)*

Catechesis is a lifelong process. It is important that those who catechize realize that their efforts are but part of the Church's total efforts to help persons grow and mature. It serves persons of all ages and situations and is concerned with the growth of the entire person, including the individual's knowledge, understanding, values, attitudes, lifestyle, and skills.

Catechesis integrates the influence of ethnic and cultural realities in the growth of individuals and communities. It includes those with special needs, the elderly, and the socially and economically disadvantaged. Therefore, it is imperative that those who catechize understand and take into consideration how human persons grow and develop in different situations and at varying stages of their lives.

When catechetical efforts build in an orderly way, persons are enabled to make a mature response to the Gospel message and to manifest a faith that is indeed living, conscious, and active.

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## THE CATECHIST

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### **WHO IS A CATECHIST?**

*A catechist truly helps a person to encounter God. (GDC #139) The catechist is essentially a mediator, facilitating communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects amongst themselves, as well as with the community. The catechist ensures that his/her activities always draw support from faith in the Holy Spirit and from prayer. (GDC #156)*

By virtue of baptism, each Catholic is called to minister, to heal, to teach, to serve, and to affirm in Jesus' name. Some, however, are called to minister in a formal way by proclaiming and teaching God's Word.

The term "catechist" in this handbook refers to an individual who has accepted an explicit ministerial role; this person is referred to as a **formal catechist** in the community.

Formal catechists in parishes/schools includes, but are not limited to the following:

- Adult Faith Formation Leader
- Campus Minister
- Coordinator of RCIA
- Parish Catechetical Leader (i.e., Director of Religious Education, Coordinator of Religious Education, Pastoral Associate)
- Parish Religion Teacher
- Principal
- School Religion Teacher
- Young Adult Minister
- Youth Minister

### **WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES OF A CATECHIST?**

*It is necessary for catechists to have a deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity, as well as a great social sensitivity. Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators and witnesses of the faith. ...Besides being a witness, the catechist must also be a teacher who teaches the faith. (GDC #237, 240)*

In addition to these personal qualities, the following is offered as a challenge as well as a guide in the hope that catechists will come to realize that they will grow in these areas as they continue their pursuit of knowledge and skills and as they serve in this ministry.

**A catechist is a person who:**

**Receives** and responds to a ministerial call which springs from baptism and is strengthened by confirmation. (GDC #231)

**Shares** in the pastoral ministry of the Church and is willing to give of time and talent in serving others. (GDC #231)

**Communicates** a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship. (GDC #240)

**Tests** and validates understandings and insights in light of the teaching authority of the Church. (GDC #237)

**Demonstrates** familiarity with the Scriptures, and communicates the Gospel message effectively. (GDC #235)

**Seeks** peaceful and just solutions to complex problems such as war, poverty, racism, and environmental concerns. (GDC #239)

**Shows** compassion for the struggles and tensions being experienced today by individuals, families and nations. (GDC #241)

**Understands** how persons of differing ages and circumstances learn, grow and mature. (GDC #242)

**Acquires** the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for effective catechesis. (GDC #241)

### **AGE OF LEAD CATECHIST IN THE CLASSROOM**

The lead catechist in a parish religious education setting is to be at least **21 years of age**. All literature (Church and civil) presumes that catechists are adults. In catechizing others, it is through life experiences, in addition to knowledge and skills, that the person of the catechist is best able to model and witness to a life in Jesus.

Because the lead catechist in a parish religious education program is to be at least 21 years of age, persons of high school age are encouraged to participate as aides in any classroom where an adult is the lead catechist.

To introduce high school age persons to catechetical ministry, PCLs are encouraged to provide their own training for them, as aides, on the parish level. The training should be appropriate to their age. Following high school graduation, persons may begin catechist formation classes in preparation for becoming lead catechists.

### **LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS**

Supervision of young people on the parish level is a major concern. Young people under the age of 18 require adult supervision when they are present in parish buildings and/or on the grounds. This concern is not only for the safety and well being of young persons, but also for the legal protection of catechists and PCLs as their catechetical leaders.

### **SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING PROGRAM**

The Archdiocese of Louisville is committed to ensuring that children and youth who worship, study or participate in church-sponsored activities can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible. In an effort to fulfill this commitment, all employees or volunteers who have regular contact with children or youth are required to participate in one of the Safe Environment Training Workshops.

Each workshop lasts 2 ½ hours. Participants will receive a copy of the Sexual Abuse Policies and a resource manual. No registration is necessary. Sign-in sheets will be available at the workshops. You may find the Safe Environment Training Schedule on the Archdiocese of Louisville website at [www.archlou.org](http://www.archlou.org).

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## CATECHIST FORMATION

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### PURPOSE OF CATECHIST FORMATION

The purpose of catechist formation is to promote education of the Catholic faith, spiritual formation, development of catechetical skills, and strengthen the confidence of catechists as they fulfill their ministry in the Catholic Church.

In the catechetical document “On Catechesis in Our Time” (“Catechesi Tradendae”), it states: *The Christian community cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults... The faith of these adults too should continually be enlightened, stimulated and renewed...* (#43)

The Office of Faith Formation realizes the many demands in the lives of catechists and affirms their generous efforts. This process has been designed with those catechists in mind, and offers a high degree of flexibility and a variety of options. It is envisioned primarily from a ministerial point of view rather than as a way to fulfill certain requirements.

All catechists are encouraged to participate in catechist formation. The response to a call to share the catechetical ministry of the Church includes willingness to give time and talent not only to catechizing others, but to one’s own continued growth in faith and understanding. The faith of the community is nourished through the living example of such individuals.

### WHAT IS CATECHIST FORMATION?

Catechist formation is a process to educate and form persons in their catechetical ministries to adults, youth, and children. Classes are taught using adult learning principles so that catechists may gain an understanding of the subject being taught and the ability to apply that understanding to their area of catechetical ministry.

The Catechist Formation Program consists of the following three areas:

- Theological Knowledge
- Skills in Catechetics/Methods
- Spiritual Growth

There are three levels of catechist formation:

Level 1 – Associate Catechist requires the completion of 20 clock hours.

Level 2 – Advanced Catechist requires the completion of Level 1, plus an additional 120 clock hours.

Level 3 – Master Catechist requires the completion of Levels 1 & 2, plus an additional 80 clock hours.

An outline with more details of the catechist formation program is found in Appendix A of this handbook, titled Catechetical Ministry.

### REQUIREMENTS

**Catholic School Teachers of Religion/Theology and Principals** are required to complete the Associate Level by the end of the second year of their professional role in the Archdiocese of Louisville Catholic school system. After completing the Associate Level, they are to work toward the Advanced Level at the rate of 30 clock hours every two years. Thereafter, they are to complete 15 clock hours every two years. (Refer to Archdiocese of Louisville Handbook for Catholic Schools #4155.2.) After completing the



Advanced Level, all continuing clock hours will be applied to the Master Level. To maintain their current level in catechist formation teachers and principals will need to complete 15 clock hours every two years.

**Parish Catechists, Parish Catechetical Leaders, Adult Faith Formation Leaders, Coordinators of RCIA, Youth Ministers, and Campus Ministers** are encouraged to participate in catechist formation by completing 15 clock hours every two years.

### **HOW DO I OBTAIN CATECHIST FORMATION?**

Catechists may obtain formation credit through completion of catechist formation classes offered through any of the following: Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute, the archdiocesan media options, online courses, an event sponsored by a parish or agency in the archdiocese, an event sponsored by another diocese, a catechist certificate awarded in another diocese, and academic credit.

**Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute (ALMI) Enrollment** is the first step in receiving catechist formation. Contact the Office of Faith Formation to enroll.

**Archdiocese Professional Development Catalog** is a listing of all classes offered by the Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute. It is published three times a year (Spring, Summer, and Fall). You may obtain a copy through the Office of Faith Formation.

**Catechist Certificate awarded in another diocese** may be approved for catechist credit. Since diocesan requirements vary, the catechist is requested to submit information on the classes and workshops involved.

**Academic Credit** from a Catholic university in the area of theology may be approved for catechist credit. Submit a transcript from the university and information about the class if the title of the class is vague.

**Archdiocesan Media Option** is designed to add flexibility to the catechist's formation process. This option offers the catechist a formational experience via DVDs or online videos. In addition to watching videos catechists are required to complete assignments. The catechist should maintain a balance between the use of the media option and attendance at regular classes.

**Internet-based Distance Learning** through the University of Dayton, Virtual Learning Faith Formation Community (VLCFF) is available for catechist credit. The Archdiocese of Louisville has a partnership with the University of Dayton, VLCFF to offer adult faith and catechist formation classes, such as Scripture, Sacraments, Catholic Beliefs, Church History, Christology, Social Justice, Morality, Media Education, and many more. Each course is either a 3-week or 5-week long course and is designed to be an experience within a small virtual community, not an independent study. Consult <https://vlcff.udayton.edu/> for current information and registration, or the Office of Faith Formation, Archdiocese of Louisville.

**Office of Faith Formation Catechist Certification Stipend Incentive** may be submitted by a parish administrator (pastor, principal, PCL) for a catechist who has completed 15 hours in the archdiocesan catechist formation program. When a catechist completes 15 hours of catechist formation courses sponsored by the Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute including those completed with VLCFF, a reimbursement of \$50.00 may be obtained. The maximum annual reimbursement per catechist is \$100.00. Contact the Office of Faith Formation to request the form to request a stipend.

### **Record Keeping**

The Office of Faith Formation keeps an updated record on all active catechists. It is the responsibility of the catechist to make sure that all courses and workshops not offered through the Archdiocese of Louisville

Ministry Institute are turned to the Office of Faith Formation for proper credit. Updated catechist records are sent out yearly to school Principals and Parish Catechetical Leaders.

**Earning Credits in Programs outside of ALMI offerings**

A Program Approval Catechist Credit Request Form must be filled out with detailed information about a class and submitted for approval of credit when the class takes place outside of ALMI or University of Dayton, VLCFF courses. Credits may be earned from programs offered through parish programs in the Archdiocese of Louisville, other catholic dioceses, catholic institutions or catholic publishers. Contact the Office of Faith Formation to request the form. No more than 15 credits may be earned per a singly program.

## **Catechist Formation**

### **Level 1 - Associate Catechist (20 clock hours)**

The following are specific classes the Archdiocese of Louisville offers for completion of Level 1 – Associate Catechist formation.

#### **Overview of Catechetical Ministry Part I (2 hours)**

An introductory overview of catechesis, which includes a general understanding of the purpose, goals, and methodology of the ministry of catechesis. It will introduce the Kentucky Religious Education Guidelines and provide ideas and resources to use in catechetical session planning.

#### **Overview of Catechetical Ministry Part II (3 hours)**

An overview of the catechetical process in passing on the faith, distinguishing characteristics of the Catholic Church, the process of catechist formation, and practical resources to use in catechetical sessions.

#### **Faith Development (2.5 hours)**

A study of the development of the nature of faith and the diverse expressions of faith formed by tradition, culture, and life experience.

#### **Images of God (2.5 hours)**

An exploration into both the personal and communal images of God and how that impacts a sense of community and ministry.

#### **Introduction to Christology (2.5 hours)**

A study of the Christian understanding of the person of Jesus and the impact it has on one's practices.

#### **Introduction to Prayer (2.5 hours)**

A study of the diverse forms of individual and communal prayer and identification of one's own preferred style of prayer.

#### **Introduction to Sacraments (2.5 hours)**

An exploration of the meaning of the sacraments, the role they have in the Church, and the principles of liturgical celebration of the sacraments.

#### **Introduction to Scripture (2.5 hours)**

An exploration of the Catholic understanding of Scripture and the meanings of inspiration and revelation.

## **Level 2 - Advanced Catechist (120 clock hours)**

Level 2 consists of three areas of formation: Theology Formation, Catechetics Formation, and Spiritual Formation.

- Theology formation is learning the knowledge of the Catholic faith.
- Catechetics formation is learning skills and techniques in teaching the faith to others.
- Spiritual formation is nurturing a deeper relationship with God.

A description of each area and requirement of hours is as follows:

### **Theology Formation (40 clock hours)**

Theology formation consists of 14 **categories** of study in Catholic theology for Level 2 – Advanced Catechist. A minimum of 7 categories must be fulfilled.

Classes in these categories may be taken through the following Catholic Institutions: Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute, University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community, parishes and religious communities, national conferences, and universities. A Program Approval Catechist Credit Request Form must be filled out with detailed information about a class and submitted for approval of credit when the class takes place outside of ALMI or University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community.

#### **Scripture**

A study of the Catholic understanding of Scripture.

#### **Church**

A study of the historical development, organizational structure, major features, and mission of the Catholic Church.

#### **Christology**

A study of the Catholic Church teachings regarding the person of Jesus Christ, his divinity and humanity, as well as the Biblical reflections on the identity and work of Jesus.

#### **Sacraments**

A study of the Catholic Church teachings on sacraments and the celebration of these sacraments in the parish community.

#### **Liturgy**

A study of the basic principles of celebrating liturgy in the Catholic Church.

#### **Spirituality**

A study of diverse expressions of both personal and communal spirituality in the Catholic Church and the exploration of the activities of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world.

#### **Prayer**

A study of the meaning of prayer in our life and the diverse forms of prayer.

**Catholic Beliefs and Practices**

A study of Catholic Church teachings, documents, and practices.

**Morality**

A study of the Catholic Church fundamental concepts of morality and the consideration of conscience, sin, moral values, Church authority, and moral decision making in contemporary moral issues.

**Catholic Social Teaching**

A study of the basic themes of social justice and social teachings of the Catholic Church.

**Cultural/Diversity**

A study of diverse cultural faith experiences (e.g. ethnicity, religion, and age) in light of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

**Family Life**

A study of the teachings of the Catholic Church's vision of marriage and family.

**Theology of the Body**

A study of God and the purpose of our existence, as discovered and revealed through our bodies.

**General Theology**

The general study of Theology.

**Catechetics Formation (40 clock hours)**

Catechetics is a content area of study in which catechists will have the opportunity to concentrate on their particular area of ministry – adult, youth, or childhood. Catechists will learn strategies and techniques for teaching and facilitating their learning sessions.

**Catechetics (25 clock hours)**

Classes in this area may be taken through the following Catholic Institutions: Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute, University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community, parishes and religious communities, national conferences, and universities. A Catechist Credit Request Form (found in Appendix C and D of this handbook) must be filled out with detailed information about a class and submitted for approval of credit when the class takes place outside of ALMI or University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community.

**Mentoring Experience (15 clock hours)**

Mentoring Experience is a program designed to provide encouragement, guidance, and support, while offering suggestions to the person learning to enhance their skills as a catechist. The catechist will select a mentor who has given witness to his/her faith in the context of effective catechetical ministry. The mentor may be a Principal, PCL, Coordinator, or another Catechist who has obtained a Master Catechist Certificate or other equivalencies. The catechist and mentor will designate the best use of their time based on the catechist's needs (e.g. help with prayer services, liturgy planning, resourcing, creative experiences, etc.).

To begin the Mentoring Experience program, the catechist and mentor will meet with the Consultant for Catechetical Ministry to receive materials and instructions about the program.

A catechist with ten years religious teaching experience may apply for an exemption from the mentoring experience. Contact the Office of Faith Formation for a copy of the “Waiver Request” Form.

### **Spiritual Formation (40 clock hours)**

Spiritual Formation is a content area to help the catechist grow in their understanding and appreciation of the integral relationship between life, prayer, and discipleship through experiences such as days of reflection, retreats, parish missions, prayer groups, spiritual direction, etc. Events in this area may be taken through the following Catholic Institutions: Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute, University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community, parishes and religious communities, national conferences, and universities. A Catechist Credit Request Form (found in Appendix C and D of this handbook) must be filled out with detailed information about a class and submitted for approval of credit when the class takes place outside of ALMI or University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community.

## **Level 3 – Master Catechist (80 clock hours)**

Level 3 consists of three areas of formation: Theology Formation, Catechetics Formation, and Spiritual Formation.

- Theology formation is learning the knowledge of the Catholic faith.
- Catechetics formation is learning skills and techniques in teaching the faith to others.
- Spiritual formation is nurturing a deeper relationship with God.

A description of each area and requirement of hours is as follows:

### **Theology Formation (40 clock hours)**

Theology formation consists of 15 **categories** of study in Catholic theology for Level 3 – Master Catechist. These categories are the same as those for the Advanced level with the addition of an area for Electives. A minimum of 5 categories must be fulfilled.

### **Catechetics Formation (20 clock hours)**

Please note the description of catechetics in Level 2.

### **Spiritual Formation (20 clock hours)**

Please note the description of spiritual formation in Level 2.

## **Ongoing Catechist Formation**

Upon completion of the Master Level, the catechist will have completed 220 hours of catechist formation and receive a certificate of completion as a Master Catechist.

To keep catechist formation active and current, the catechist must complete 15 clock hours every two years.

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