

ECHOING THE GOSPEL



**CATECHIST FORMATION AND
CERTIFICATION
IN THE DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS**

Revised 2009

“A disciple is not above his teacher,
but everyone when he is fully taught
will be like his teacher.”

Luke 6:40

“You then who teach others,
will you not teach yourself?”

Romans 2:21a

Diocese of Grand Rapids

Office for Catechesis

360 Division Ave. S.

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

2009



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

February 2, 2009

Dear Friends,

I welcome your collaboration in offering our children, youth and adults the opportunity to encounter Christ through the living truths of the Catholic faith. A revised program of formation and certification for catechetical leaders is now available. **Echoing The Gospel - Catechist Certification Policy and Procedures 2009** leads those who are called to catechize through a personal experience of transformation. Centered on the person of Jesus Christ it integrates as foundational four dimensions of formation: the catechist as a person of faith; an understanding of the person being catechized; the method used in teaching and witnessing to the faith and the content of the message.

Our Holy Father in a recent letter addressed the importance of catechesis. Without adequate education in the faith “no lasting and profound evangelization, no growth or maturation, no change in mentalities and cultures is possible. Young people harbor a deep desire for a full life, for genuine love, for constructive freedom; but unfortunately, their expectations are often betrayed and come to nothing.” The challenge to lead our children, youth and adults into the mysteries of the faith, where they will encounter and know Jesus Christ, is the ultimate goal we share in this call to catechize.

I urge you to join me in carrying out this teaching mission of the Church by embracing the multiple opportunities within your grasp as a catechetical leader. Christ Himself empowered the Church to continue His mission of making disciples of all nations. This program of formation and certification is your path to becoming an effective and believable “echo” of God’s divine plan made visible for us in Christ Jesus.

Thank you for your generous services and joining me in making the “echo” of the gospel alive.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Bishop of Grand Rapids

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What is Catechesis?

“Catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways.”¹

Christian catechesis is the memory of the Church about the story of humankind- created in love by God and called to life with him; freely choosing to separate from God (sin); redeemed, reconciled, and made whole by Christ (creation-sin-redemption).

Jesus empowered the Church to continue His mission when he said, “Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; 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.” (Mt 28:19-20)

This great commission has been handed to women and men, whom God has called, to proclaim the Good News. This ministry of teaching and forming has traditionally been referred to as catechesis.

The name of *catechesis* was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God... and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ.²

The word *catechesis* comes from the Greek meaning “to echo the teaching” meaning that catechesis or the teaching of the faith is an interactive process in which the Word of God resounds between and among the proclaimer, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit! Catechesis is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Through word, worship, service and community, it seeks to lead all God’s people to an ever deepening relationship with God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catechesis takes many forms and includes the initiation of adults, youth and children as well as the intentional and systematic effort to enable all to grow in faith and discipleship.

“The source of catechesis is the Word of God revealed by Jesus Christ. All catechesis draws its content from this living source, transmitted in Scripture and Tradition. Together, they make the revelation of Christ present, active and fruitful in the Church.”³ It is celebrated and expressed in liturgical worship; shines forth in the witness of the saints; deepened by prayer and actions promoting social justice; and made manifest in the daily witness of an authentic Christian life.

¹ *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) #105.

² *Catechesi Tradendae*, On Catechesis in Our Time (CT) Pope John Paul II, 1979 #1.

³ Summary of the *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 9.

The Gospel is the Word of the Church. “The aim of catechesis is to lead believers to a deeper knowledge and love of Christ and the Church and a firm commitment to follow him. Jesus Christ is at the heart of all catechesis. It is in communion with Jesus that all believers share in the mystery of the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”⁴

The message of Christian catechesis is an ecclesial one handed on by all the Church; thus the catechetical act is ecclesial, not private. It is an act of the whole Church; the apostles who received it as the eyewitnesses of Christ and the Christ event; the martyrs who gave it witness by their blood; the saints who live it profoundly; the Fathers and doctors of the Church who teach it and make it clear; the missionaries who proclaim it anew in every land; and the bishops who conserve it and give it doctrinal force by authentically interpreting it. It is this ecclesial teaching which is lived out daily by the faithful and taught by the catechist.⁵

Catechesis is an integral and essential activity for carrying out the mission of the Church; and it is the responsibility of the entire Christian community.⁶ The Bishops are “heralds of the faith” and its “authentic teachers”.⁷ Through Episcopal ordination they have received the “charism of truth”⁸ and are therefore “beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis and catechists par excellence”.⁹ The universal law of the Church states this responsibility clearly:

There is a proper and serious duty, especially on the part of pastors of souls, to provide for the catechesis of the Christian people so that the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living.¹⁰

The priest is also intimately involved in the catechesis of the local Church. “In catechesis the sacrament of Holy Orders constitutes priests as ‘educators of the faith’. They work, therefore, to see that the faithful are properly formed and reach true Christian maturity {...and} foster the vocation of catechists and assist them”.¹¹

Focus on Jesus

The three inter-locking means, formation and doctrine and the experience of Christian living, strive to achieve the goal of a living, explicit and productive FAITH. This faith is faith in Jesus Christ.

⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁵ Cf. GDC #105.

⁶ GDC #220.

⁷ *Lumen Gentium*: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican Council II. 1964, #25.

⁸ *Dei Verbum*: The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II, November 18, 1965 #8.

⁹ CT #63.

¹⁰ The Code of Canon Law #773.

¹¹ GDC #224.

At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father....To catechize is to reveal in the Person of Christ, the whole of God's design reaching fulfillment in that Person...Catechesis aims at putting people...in communion with Jesus Christ.¹²

He is the center of catechesis because revelation and the Father's plan for our salvation culminate in him. It is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that sin and death are conquered, that the Father's saving love is revealed, and that the Spirit is sent to lead the Church to the Kingdom.

Parents of children receive in Matrimony the grace and ministry of the Christian education of their children.¹³ "Family catechesis precedes...accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis".¹⁴ Along with parents there should be in a diocese a certain number of religious and laity publicly recognized and permanently dedicated to catechesis who, in communion with the priests and the Bishop, give to this diocesan service that ecclesial form which is proper to it.¹⁵ Catechists find the source of their vocation in Baptism and Confirmation. They answer the call to bring the Gospel into the secular culture that it might be transformed by the grace of Christ.

Integrity of the Gospel message. The message must be maintained in its "integrity and purity".¹⁶ Christ has made known to us all that he has heard from the Father (Jn 15:15), and the apostles have handed on to the Church all that they received from Christ (1 Cor 15:3). Catechesis must present the whole Gospel of Christ without distortion or partial presentation. "[The] person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive the words of faith, not in mutilated, falsified, or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor".¹⁷ Catechesis must be true to the Word of God, neither "reducing demands for fear of rejection [nor] imposing heavy burdens which it does not impose".¹⁸

As "Jesus Christ the incarnate Word of God, conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, became man –a particular man in space and time and with a specific culture."¹⁹ To be faithful to the Gospel and properly introduce it, it is necessary to have a process of inculturation. "It will happen when the Gospel penetrates the heart of cultural experience and shows how Christ gives new meaning to authentic human values." The inculturation of the Gospel message is an urgent mission "because it correlates faith and life, it seeks to dispose

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC)#426.

¹³ *Christifideles Laici: The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World.* Pope John Paul II, 1988.

¹⁴ CT #68.

¹⁵ GDC #228.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* #111.

¹⁷ CT #30.

¹⁸ GDC #112.

¹⁹ *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) USCCB, 2005, #25.

people who live in a multicultural and pluralistic society such as ours to receive Christ in every dimension of our life.²⁰

The Gospel is a hierarchical message. The full integrity of the Gospel distinguishes the so-called “hierarchy of truths”. The hierarchy of truths “does not mean that some truths pertain to faith itself less than others, but that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority and are illumined by them”.²¹ The General Directory for Catechesis specifies this hierarchy as follows:

- (1) the story of salvation with Christ and the Christ event at the center: the Father’s creation, the Old Testament preparation for the coming of Christ, Christ as the fullness of revelation, the Spirit and the mission of the Church, eschatology and the final things;
- (2) the Apostles’ Creed: synthesis of and key to all the Church’s doctrine;
- (3) the sacraments centered around the Eucharist: the life-giving forces which spring from the Paschal Mystery;
- (4) the moral message centered on the Great Commandment of love of God and love of neighbor and lived out in the Beatitudes: the expression of the hierarchy of values;
- (5) the Lord’s Prayer: the prayer which teaches a child-like trust in God.

The Gospel is Christocentric. The person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian catechesis. He is the fullness of revelation, the Word of God himself. Thus he is the message: he is the center of the work of salvation history; he is the end toward which all things converge. “Christocentricity obliges catechesis to transmit what Jesus teaches about God, man, happiness, the moral life, death, etc. without in any way changing his thought”.²²

The Gospel message is the message of salvation and the Kingdom. Jesus preached the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom. This is a message of liberation “from all those things by which man is possessed, but especially liberation from sin and from the domination of the evil one, a liberation which incorporates that gladness enjoyed by every man who knows God and is known by him, who sees God and who surrenders himself trustingly to him”.²³ Salvation in Christ and liberation for the Kingdom imply God’s special love for mankind created in his image, his victory over sin and death, the fraternity and communion of mankind with God and itself, and our earthly responsibilities with regard to the human role in the making of the Kingdom – the work of peace, justice and love for the poor in spirit. The message of liberation is integral, but primarily implies spiritual liberation from sin and death; it cannot be reduced to any “restricted sphere whether it be economic, political, social or doctrinal”.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid. #21C.

²¹ GDC #43.

²² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: On Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI, 1975, #15.

²³ Ibid.,#9.

²⁴ GDC #103.

Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and the *National Directory for Catechesis* are distinct yet complementary instruments that serve the Church's catechetical activity.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* provides "the basic principles of pastoral theology taken from the Magisterium of the Church, and in a special way from the Second Vatican Council, by which pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be more fittingly directed and governed."²⁵ The GDC is "an official aid for the transmission of the Gospel message and for the whole of catechetical activity"²⁶

The *National Directory for Catechesis* contains the general guidelines for catechesis in the United States and has been prepared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* holds a central place in catechesis. It is "a point of reference for the authentic presentation of the content of the faith"... [It is] an act of the Magisterium of the Pope, by which, in our times, in virtue of Apostolic Authority, he synthesizes normatively the totality of the Catholic faith".²⁷ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a "sure norm for teaching the faith"²⁸ and "aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition".²⁹

Catechesis helps adults, youth and children to come to know Jesus and to develop a personal relationship, a friendship, with the Lord. "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). Nurturing this relationship is a life-long responsibility – no one ever "graduates" from the need to nourish and deepen one's relationship with the Lord.

It must be restated that nobody in the Church of Jesus Christ should feel excused from receiving catechesis. This is true even of young seminarians and young religious, and of all those called to the task of being pastors and catechists. They will fulfill this task all the better if they are humble pupils of the Church, the great giver as well as the great receiver of Catechesis.³⁰

Tasks of Catechesis

Jesus formed his disciples by making known to them the various dimensions of the Kingdom of God. He entrusted to them "the mysteries of the kingdom; he taught them to pray...he opened

²⁵ Ibid. #120.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ GDC #128.

²⁹ Ibid. #121.

³⁰ CT, #45.

his heart to them...he sent them ahead of him to visit towns where he would go. “The fundamental task of catechesis is to achieve this same objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus instructed his disciples; he prayed with them; he showed them how to live; and he gave them his mission.”³¹ Catechesis comprises six fundamental tasks, each of which is related to an aspect of faith in Christ.

- (1) **Proclaim the Christian message and promote knowledge of the faith.** Love of Christ cannot be separated from knowledge of Christ. Thus, catechesis must introduce the disciple to the knowledge of Scripture and Tradition so that he may nourish the life of faith and be able to explain his faith to the world.
- (2) **Prepare for prayer and worship.** Catechesis must prepare the disciple for meaningful and active participation in the liturgical life of the Church in the sacraments and especially in the Eucharist. The disciple must learn to pray and contemplate God in daily life.
- (3) **Instruct for moral formation and motivate Christian living and service.** Catechesis must teach and inspire the disciple to follow Jesus. He must be spiritually transformed to his image and made perfect in Christ. He must live the life of the Beatitudes and seek to meet the social demands of the Gospel through a life of service.
- (4) **Teach the Christian how to pray with Christ.** Conversion to Christ leads one to adopt his disposition of prayer and reflection. Christ’s entire life was an offering to his Father, his prayer was always directed to the Father.
- (5) **Build a sense of community and understand the Church as communal life.** Catechesis must prepare the disciple to live the faith in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
- (6) **Foster a missionary initiative.** Catechesis must equip disciples to be holy witnesses in society, leading others to Christ and promoting the Kingdom. It should prepare them for genuine and charitable inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue.³²

Introduction to Catechist Formation and Certification

A New Millennium, Renewed Passion for Catechesis

“As the Church embarks upon a new millennium of life in Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit invigorates her universal mission to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ boldly and to bear witness to him courageously throughout the whole world. His promise to accompany his disciples ‘until

³¹ NCD # 20.

³² Ibid.

the end of the age’ propels our journey in faith, gives us reason for the hope that is in us, and ensures the fulfillment of our mission”.³³

The U.S. Bishops affirm that the burning conviction to proclaim Christ “reawakens in the hearts of the faithful the zeal to share their encounter with Christ. No one who meets Christ and no one who knows Christ can keep that knowledge secret. We must proclaim him openly and confidently testify to his transforming presence in our lives...such genuine passion sets the hearts of catechists on fire with the love of Christ and the desire to lead others to his light.”³⁴

The first and essential object of catechesis is the Person of Jesus of Nazareth which must be revealed. It follows that the concern of catechesis is to transmit, through the teaching and behavior of catechists the doctrine and life of Christ. We must say that “in catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught – everything else is taught with reference to him – and it is Christ alone who teaches – anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips”.³⁵

Guiding Principles for Catechist Formation

The *General Directory for Catechesis* lists being, knowing, and savoir-faire as the dimensions of catechist formation. The being of a catechist refers to his or her human and Christian dimension. “Formation must help [the catechist] to mature as a person, a believer, and as an apostle.”³⁶

On an intellectual level, catechist formation helps to develop the catechist’s understanding of Church doctrine and to be firmly rooted in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. This addresses the dimension of knowing which “requires the catechist to have sufficient knowledge of the message that he [or she] transmits.”³⁷

The dimension of savoir-faire has to do with the skills of the catechist “knowing how to transmit the message, so that it is an act of communication.”³⁸ Catechist formation enables the catechist to make effective use of resources and to “adapt materials to the age, capacity, and culture of those they seek to catechize.”³⁹

Catechist Formation is Essential for Effective Catechetical Ministry

In order to transmit the Person of Christ, the mode of being and of working of the catechist should depend entirely on that of Christ. They should be Christocentric, that is, built upon a deep intimacy with Christ and with the Father through the Holy Spirit. “Christocentricity in catechesis also means the intention to transmit not one’s own teaching or that of some other

³³ NCD #72.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. #6.

³⁶ GCD, #238.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ NDC #55E.

master, but the teaching of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰ To be able to educate others in the faith, catechists should themselves have a deep spiritual life. This is the most important aspect of their person and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation. Their spiritual life should be based on a communion of faith and love with the person of Jesus, who calls them and sends them on his mission.⁴¹

The Christian faith through which a person says their “Yes” to Jesus Christ has two aspects; first, it is an adherence to a God who reveals himself, this movement is given under the influence of grace. Here faith consists in believing the Word of God and personally committing oneself to it (*fides qua*); and second it is the content of faith found in Revelation and the Gospel message. It is faith expressed in its endeavor to understand better the mystery of the Word (*fides quae*). Neither aspect can be separated; maturation and growth in faith require the development of both.⁴²

Formation of catechists must precede the beginning of their ministry and can employ different methodologies. “Whether the training is done at a diocesan catechetical level or in the parish, it should be adapted as much as possible to the specific needs of the individual catechist.”⁴³

“Whoever is called ‘to teach Christ’ must first seek ‘the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus’; he must suffer ‘the loss of all things...’ in order to ‘gain Christ and be found in him’ ...From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to ‘evangelize’ and to lead others to the ‘yes’ of faith in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴

The *National Directory for Catechists* indicates aspects to be considered in the initial formation of catechists:

- Help them develop an understanding of the nature and goals of catechesis
- Familiarize them with the resources available to them
- State that the catechist needs to be a Catholic who is a model of Christian virtue and a courageous witness of the Catholic Faith
- Provide thorough formation in the knowledge and understanding of our Catholic faith and practice, making the catechist aware of the social, cultural, ethnic, demographic, and religious circumstances of the people he or she will serve, so that the catechist can bring the Gospel message to them
- Encourage and foster among new catechists the importance of ongoing study, especially within Scripture and the *Catechism*
- Guide the new catechist in a deeper daily practice of prayer

⁴⁰ CT #6.

⁴¹ *Guide for Catechists*, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, #22.

⁴² GDC #92.

⁴³ NCD, #55 D.

⁴⁴ CCC # 428.

- Respect the new catechist’s time constraints without compromising the full formation necessary
- Develop the human, spiritual, and apostolic qualities of the new catechist
- Promote a continuous dialogue of prayer between the new catechist and God as well as open communication between the catechist, those providing the formation, and the local church
- Encourage new catechists to consider seeking out a spiritual director as ideal to growth in ministry
- Remain within the context of the community of faith where all authentic apostolic education occurs.⁴⁵

“Since effective catechesis depends on virtuous and skilled catechists, their ongoing formation should enhance the human, spiritual and apostolic qualities and catechetical skills they bring to their ministry”.⁴⁶

Ongoing Formation of Catechists

The *National Directory for Catechesis* again gives a view of what the on-going formation of catechists is to include:

On the human level:

- Help them to develop natural virtues and necessary knowledge: honesty; integrity; enthusiasm; perseverance; knowledge of social, cultural, and ethnic conditions; ability to communicate; willingness to work with others; ability to dialogue with those of other Christian communities and other religions; leadership ability; good judgment; openness of mind; flexibility; sensitivity; and hopefulness
- Include reflection on real-life human situations so that catechists will be able to relate the various aspects of the Christian message to the concrete experiences of their lives

On the spiritual level, the catechists’ ongoing formation is to:

- Help them develop their spiritual lives – their communion of faith and love with the person of Jesus Christ – by promoting, as much as possible, an intense sacramental and prayer life. Especially through frequent reception of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, recitation of Morning and Evening Prayer in union with the whole Church, daily meditation, Marian devotion, participation in prayer groups, days of renewal, and spiritual retreats
- Encourage them to seek a spiritual director

⁴⁵ NCD #55 D.

⁴⁶ NCD #55E.

- Help them see the development of their spiritual lives as essentially bound to the life of the Church

On the intellectual level, their ongoing formation is to:

- Help them develop their understanding of the Church's doctrine and be firmly rooted in Sacred Scripture and Tradition
- Present the various elements of the Christian faith 'in a well structured way and in harmony with each other by means of an organic vision that respects the 'hierarchy of truths''
- Reflect the Christ-centered and ecclesial nature of catechesis and equip them to lead those being catechized into the mystery of Christ, his life, his role in salvation history, and his transforming presence in the sacraments
- Equip them to transmit the authentic faith of the Church by adapting the message of Christ 'to all cultures, ages, and situations'
- Depend on the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as the sure norm for teaching the faith
- Help them mature in their own faith and enable them to offer a convincing explanation for their faith and hope

Because catechists are witnesses to Jesus Christ in the Church and in the world, their ongoing formation is to:

- Help them develop an apostolic zeal
- Encourage them to become evangelizers
- Equip them to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ boldly and enthusiastically
- Help them introduce those whom they catechize into the mystery of salvation and the religious, liturgical, moral and community life of the Body of Christ
- Show them how to build a community of faith
- Encourage them to devote themselves to the missionary apostolate
- Encourage them to carry out their apostolic activity in communion with the local and universal Church
- Know and respect the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture of the persons to whom it is addressed.⁴⁷

In order to integrate these dimensions of their role, ongoing formation for catechists is to:

- Help them harmonize the human, spiritual, doctrinal, and apostolic dimensions of their apostolate
- Keep them abreast of the life of the Church – its needs, new documents, and so on – and of changing social, cultural, ethnic and religious circumstances
- Help them overcome discouragement and burnout⁴⁸

⁴⁷ NDC #21C.

⁴⁸ NDC #55E.

Who are “Catechists” and “Catechetical Leaders”?

In this document the word “catechist” refers to those Catholics who help others grow in their knowledge and practice of Catholic faith through planned, intentional catechetical programs sponsored by appropriate pastoral leadership (e.g., diocesan offices, Catholic parishes, Catholic schools, Catholic universities or institutes).

The term includes volunteer or paid parish catechists of adults, youth and/or children. Their ministry may be quite diverse, involving parish religious education programs, catechetical efforts in youth ministry, vacation bible school, adult bible study or other adult faith formation efforts, RCIA ministry, sacramental preparation, catechesis in small faith communities, etc.

The term “catechist” includes Catholic elementary and high school religion teachers as well as any teacher who teaches in a Catholic school.

It includes Catholic parents who not only conscientiously raise their children in the practice of the faith, as all Catholic parents are responsible to do, but also lead them through an approved and appropriate catechetical curriculum (e.g., parents who “home school” their children in religious education).

At the Advanced and Master Catechist level, it also includes those who supervise the catechists already named.

In this document the term “catechetical leader” refers to the person who organizes and directs the program of lifelong faith formation for all parishioners under the supervision of the pastor and in collaboration with the pastoral staff, this also includes Youth Ministers who are responsible for developing a pastoral ministry with youth. They all act as lead agents in parish or school catechetical ministry; among other responsibilities, they supervise catechists. The catechetical leader may be, for example (and these titles may vary from parish to parish), a parish Director of Religious Education (DRE), a Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL), a Director of Youth Ministry with responsibility for youth catechesis, a Campus Minister, a Pastoral Associate or Director of Adult Faith Formation with responsibility for RCIA or sacrament preparation, a Catholic elementary school principal, or a Catholic high school religion department chairperson.⁴⁹

Pastoral Care of Catechists

Catechetical leaders relate with catechists and support them in their ministry in a variety of ways.

Recruitment. “The Church entrusts the ministry of catechesis to exemplary followers of Christ with unquestioned personal integrity and moral character”⁵⁰ Parish catechetical leaders invite and encourage people of faith to become catechists to serve adults, youth, or children. Catholic

⁴⁹ *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, USCCB 2003, p.xviii.

⁵⁰ NCD #55 B.

school principals hire faculty who can provide classroom religious instruction as well as hand on a living faith through all dimensions of the school community.

Training and formation, both initial and ongoing. Catechetical leaders discern with catechists their specific needs or interests, mutually develop a formational growth plan to help them develop their skills for ministry, and make it possible for them to follow and fulfill that growth plan by providing catechist formation opportunities within the parish and/or connecting them with opportunities elsewhere.

Evaluation. Catechetical leaders evaluate catechists to affirm their gifts and strengths in this ministry, to identify and address any area needing improvement, and to review and revise their personal formational growth plans.

Support and recognition. Catechetical leaders give catechists recognition and attention – making it financially possible for them to take part in formation, showing appreciation, and saying “thank you” both while they are actively serving and when they decide to leave this ministry.

All these elements are important. This document focuses specifically on catechist formation and the recognition of varying levels of formation through various levels of diocesan catechist certification.

A Timely On-Going Initiative

Catechist formation and certification has been part of the pastoral life of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, and the present document sets forth the provisions of formation as discussed in first *The General Directory for Catechesis* published in 1997 by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy and *The National Directory for Catechesis* published in 2005 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The U.S. Bishops clearly state why on-going formation is so important in the catechetical ministry.

Jesus Christ is the energizing center of evangelization and the heart of catechesis. Christ, the first evangelizer, is himself the Good News who proclaims the Kingdom of God and accomplishes the salvation of all by his redemptive suffering, death, and Resurrection. Catechesis unfolds the fullness of God’s eternal plan entirely in the person of Jesus Christ. He is “the way and the truth and the life.” Jesus Christ is once the message, the messenger, the purpose of the message, and the consummation of the message. Only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Holy Spirit and invite us to share the life of the Holy Trinity. The work of evangelization and catechesis is always “through [Christ]...in the Spirit to the Father.”⁵¹

⁵¹ NCD #1.

To be Certified as a Catechist or a Parish Catechetical Leader in the Diocese of Grand Rapids

Requirements

It is expected that catechists and catechetical leaders who serve in the Diocese of Grand Rapids will be certified.

To achieve catechist certification, a person will:

- Verify, through submission of the appropriate signed forms,
- that she or he has participated actively and fruitfully
- in approved catechist formation opportunities,
- totaling the required number of hours of formation for a given level of catechist certification,
- including the minimum number of hours required in each of four dimensions of formation.

The following sections explain these elements in further detail.

The Four Dimensions of Formation

As persons called to nourish the faith of the community in a formal way, catechists themselves investigate and respond to opportunities for their personal growth, deeper understanding of the children and adults they teach, and continued appreciation of the process and message of catechesis. Catechists are to receive a balanced formation in each of the following areas of growth:

Area A – Catechist as a Person of Faith – the Spirituality of the Catechist

This area refers to those experiences which foster the catechist's personal growth as an adult believer. Examples of formation topics include: understanding and use of Scripture for prayerful reflection, growth in prayer, and reflection on one's faith-life, personal spirituality and communication/listening skills. In addition to these and related topics, retreats and days of recollection are two ways to experience formation in this area.

Area B – Understanding the Person Being Catechized, the Learner

This area refers to those experiences which assist the catechist in understanding the children, youth or adults they teach in their on-going development as a whole person. This includes the stages of one's spiritual, moral, intellectual, psychological, social,

emotional and physical development; multiple learning intelligences; various learning styles; and the impact of family, society, and culture.

Area C – Context and Process of Catechesis - Method

This area refers to those learning experiences which assist the catechist in understanding and using catechetical skills, e.g., learning environment, catechetical methodologies, group/classroom management skills, lesson planning, use of media and resources in catechesis, the use of technology for both home and classroom. This also includes an understanding of the catechetical documents that give meaning and direction to catechesis along with an acknowledgement of the role of the church, family and parish community in the catechetical process.

Area D – Message or Content of Catechesis

This area of growth refers to those learning experiences which provide knowledge and understanding of the elements of the Christian message according to the *Documents of Vatican Council II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the General and National Directory for Catechesis*. Some specific topics are: doctrine, creed, liturgy, sacraments, the content of Scripture, study of the church, church history, moral living, social justice, Mary and the saints and the various methods and types of prayer and spirituality.

The Levels of Certification and Required Hours of Formation

Levels of Certification, with Differing Hours of Formation Required for Each Level

To recognize the extent of formation opportunities in which a catechist has participated, there are several levels of certification. There are two independent strands that a Catechetical Leader from a particular parish may choose to use. An overview of these two (2) strands is given here. (Strand A is for those parishes who wish to maintain parish level certification until the catechist reaches 50 hours of formation and can receive diocesan certification; Strand B is for those parishes who want to have various levels of diocesan certification from the beginning. Either Strand may be chosen.)

Strand A	Cumulative hours	Strand B	Cumulative hours
<i>Local Parish gives Provisional certification recognition</i>		<i>Diocesan Office gives certification Level recognition</i>	
First year catechist prerequisite	8 hrs	First year catechist prerequisite Level 1 – 8 hrs	8 hrs
Provisional Catechist Recognition at Parish level	25 hrs	Level 2 – 16 hrs (8+16=24)	24 hrs
		Level 3 – 16 hrs (24+16=40)	40 hrs
<i>From this point there is no difference in the Catechetical Certification All must be submitted to the Office for Catechesis</i>			
Diocesan Catechetical Certification (25+25=50) or (40+10=50)			50 hrs
Advanced Catechetical Certification (50+30=80)			80 hrs
Master Catechist Certification 80+18 Academic cr. hrs in Theology			1 credit= 12 hrs

Following the chart above there are 5 types of certification

Provisional Certification (Strand A) – 25 hours – Certification given by the parish

Basic Certification (Strand B) – Level I – 8 hours; Level II – 16 additional hours; Level III – 16 additional hours – Certification given by the diocese at each level.

Diocesan Catechetical Certification – 50 cumulative hours – Certification given by diocese

Advanced Catechetical Certification – 80 cumulative hours – Certification given by diocese

Master Catechist Certification – An Advanced certification with 18 Academic credit hours – Certification given by diocese

The following section explains in more detail the levels of certification.

✠ First Year Catechist

- A **total of eight (8) clock hours** of formation is required before beginning to serve as a catechist.
- These eight (8) clock hours consist in two (2) clock hours in each of the four dimensions of catechist formation (4x2=8 hours)
- Protecting God’s Children **MUST** be taken. This is not part of the eight (8) hours.

The First Year Catechist Prerequisite requires new catechists to have at least 8 clock hours of formation (or equivalent prior experience or preparation) before beginning their ministry. No matter how pressing our need to fill a catechist position may be, we do a disservice to the catechist, to those they catechize, and to the Church, when we put unprepared persons into a catechetical role.

For those using Strand A there is a parish recognition given.

For those using Strand B there is a Level I certification given from the Office for Catechesis.

Note: A beginning catechist with at least some prior formation or experience, or demonstrated skill, in each of the four dimensions of formation may have already thereby fulfilled the prerequisite. The catechetical leader will discern this readiness. Beginning catechists who are discerned to have reached this level of formation do not need additional formation before serving as catechists.

Following Strand A

✠ Provisional Catechist Recognition

- Cumulative total of **25 clock hours** of formation (“cumulative” here means: the eight(8) clock hours required for the First Year Catechist Prerequisite, plus 17 additional hours, for a cumulative total of 25 hours).
- These 25 cumulative hours include a minimum of four (4) clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation (4x4=16 clock hours), plus nine (9) additional clock hours in any of the four dimensions of formation (17+8=25 hours)

The Provisional Catechist Recognition acknowledges a catechist’s progress, at the half-way mark toward achieving Diocesan Catechist Certification. This recognition is made at the parish level.

Following Strand B

Basic Catechetical Certification

✠ Level II

- A cumulative total of **24 clock hours** of formation
- This cumulative total of 24 hours includes a minimum of five (5) hours in each of the four dimensions of formation plus four (4) hours in any of the four dimensions.
- Cumulative means 16 hours beyond the first year prerequisite of eight (8) hours.

The Level II Basic Certification recognizes that the catechist has gained 16 more hours since the initial 8 hours of formation. This Level II Basic Certification is acknowledged by the diocesan office upon the submission of the application for Level II certification.

✠ Level III

- A cumulative total of **40 clock hours** of formation
- This cumulative total of 40 clock hours includes a minimum of eight (8) hours in each of the four dimensions of formation plus eight (8) hours in any of the four dimensions.
- Cumulative means 16 clock hours beyond Level II.

The Level III Basic Certification recognizes that the catechist has gained 16 more hours since Level II certification. This Level III Basic Certification is acknowledged by the diocesan office upon the submission of the application for Level III certification.

Formal Diocesan Certification

✠ Diocesan Catechist Certification

- Cumulative total of **50 clock hours** of formation.
- These 50 clock hours include a minimum of 10 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation ($4 \times 10 = 40$ clock hours), plus 10 additional clock hours in any of the four dimensions of formation ($40 + 10 = 50$ clock hours).
- This is the first level of certification that is approved for Catholic school teachers. There is no previous certification that is available to them.

The Diocesan Catechist Certification is the first level of diocesan certification for those parishes following Strand A. It is the next level of certification for those following Strand B. Achieving this level of certification is the basic goal and expectation for every catechist in the diocese. It is awarded by the diocesan catechetical office, and is signed by diocesan catechetical leaders.

✠ Advanced Catechist Certification

- Cumulative total of **80 clock hours** of formation
- These 80 clock hours include a minimum of 15 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation ($4 \times 15 = 60$), plus 20 additional clock hours in any of the four dimensions of formation ($60 + 20 = 80$ clock hours).

The Advanced Catechist Certification is the second level of professional diocesan certification, recognizing formation beyond the Diocesan Catechist Certificate. It is awarded by the diocesan catechetical office, and is signed by diocesan catechetical leaders.

It is expected that every Parish Catechetical Leader attain at least the Advanced Catechist Certification.

✠ Master Catechist Certification

- Must have the Advanced Catechist Certification
- Plus 18 academic credits, with a minimum of 12 academic credits in theology, and an additional 6 academic credits in theology or other subjects relevant to catechetical ministry.

The Master Catechist Certification is a third level of professional diocesan certification, recognizing significant formation for catechetical ministry, especially those that will allow her/him to properly understand the diverse cultural groups and the need to use their signs, symbols and language. It is awarded by the diocesan catechetical office, and is signed by the Bishop of the diocese and the diocesan catechetical leaders.

It is expected that every parish or school catechetical leader, responsible for directing, coordinating or administering catechetical programs, will work towards this level of certification as a minimum preparation for their role of catechetical leadership.

Renewal of Certification and Ongoing Formation

The Necessity of Ongoing Formation

Catechists and Parish Catechetical Leaders need ongoing formation to maintain and strengthen their knowledge, skills, and spirituality for catechetical ministry. The *Guide for Catechists* of the Congregation for the Evangelization of People expresses this well:

The fact that persons should never stop growing interiorly, the dynamic nature of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the process of continual conversion and growth in apostolic love, changes in culture, the evolution of society and constant updating of teaching methods, all mean that catechists should keep themselves in a process of ongoing formation during the whole course of their service. It should include human, spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic formation, and they should be helped in this and not merely left to their own devices.⁵²

⁵² *Guide for Catechists* #29.

Accordingly, in recognition of the necessity of ongoing formation, all levels of catechist certification are valid for a specified period of time, and require additional formation to maintain validity. Without additional hours of continuing formation, catechist certification expires.

✠ Renewal of Level II and Level III Basic Catechetical Certification

The Basic Catechetical Level II and Level III Certifications are valid for two years. They are renewed for another two year period through participation in 10 clock hours of approved formation, with a minimum of two clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation. This means that 5 hours a year must be earned to maintain certification.

✠ Renewal of Diocesan Catechist Certification and Advanced Catechist Certification

The Diocesan Catechist Certification and Advanced Catechist Certification are valid for a period of three years. They are each renewed for another three year period through participation in 15 clock hours of approved formation, with a minimum of 3 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation. This means that five (5) hours a year must be earned to maintain certification.

✠ Renewal of Master Catechist Certification

The Master Catechist Certificate is valid for a period of five years. It is renewed for another five year period through participation in 25 clock hours of approved formation, with a minimum of five (5) clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation. Additional academic coursework will also be considered. This means that five (5) hours a year must be earned to maintain certification.

These requirements set minimum expectations. Catechists in parish and school settings are encouraged to participate, as they are able, in additional formation beyond the minimum, for the sake of their personal and ministerial growth. Master Catechists are encouraged, if possible, to take additional academic coursework, including earning relevant academic degrees and certificates.

Approving Catechist Formation Opportunities for Catechist Certification

Approval of Catechist Formation Opportunities

Catechist formation opportunities will count toward diocesan certification upon approval of the diocesan catechetical coordinator. Forms suitable for use in requesting approval are available on the diocesan web-site www.dioceseofgrandrapids.org

A Variety of Formats

A wide variety of catechist formation opportunities may, upon approval, count toward certification. Many learning formats or providers are possible, including but not limited to the following:

- Catechist formation opportunities provided by the diocese through conferences, institutes and other workshops.
- An individual parish or school's regular catechist orientation or in-service training sessions.
- Several catechists in a given parish or school meeting together in a small group for a guided learning experience using an approved resource.
- A cluster of parishes or schools, or a deanery or region of the diocese, joining together for a catechist formation event or program.
- Parish adult faith formation opportunities, when the topic, method, and presenter/facilitator are appropriate.
- Opportunities offered by other Diocesan Ministries.
- Opportunities offered by other formation agencies, inside or outside the diocese (e.g., the MANS conference, regional or national conferences of catechetical organizations such as NCCL or NCEA/NPCD, etc.) Documentation of the workshops attended must be kept.
- Academic institutions such as Aquinas College, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College, as well as accredited distance learning programs (e.g., University of Dayton – VLCFF; Catholic Distance University CDU; Loyola University, etc.)
- Individualized directed study.

Please note well: since the Church is a community of faith, since learning is often enhanced through interaction with and learning from others, and since catechesis itself involves interpersonal and group communication, then catechist formation is to take place predominantly in group settings with an active learning process in which catechists share their faith with one another. Individualized learning is an available option, but cannot be the only or the primary option used. In any case, in developing a catechist's personal growth plan, keep in mind the benefit of using several different formats rather than just one.

Some Criteria

In reviewing descriptions of catechist formation opportunities and requests for approval of those opportunities to count toward diocesan certification, the diocesan catechetical director will consider such criteria as these:

- It addresses one or more of the four dimensions for formation: A the catechist; B the learner; C the methods and D the content.
- It draws on and/or is faithful to the sources for this ministry, principally scripture and tradition as presented under the guidance of the magisterium, as well as the liturgy, the life of the Church, theological research and genuine religious and moral values in society and cultures.
- It prepares the catechist to understand the content of their faith more comprehensively and/or prepares them with skills useable in religious instruction.
- It helps catechists to develop “a deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity; as well as a great social sensitivity” (GDC #237).
- It forms catechists so as to be able to transmit not only a teaching but also an integral Christian formation. Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators and witnesses of the faith.
- The formation of a catechist is made up of different dimensions. The deepest dimension refers to the very being of the catechist, to his/her human and Christian dimension. Formation must help him/her to mature as a person, a believer and as an apostle.
- The formation of a catechist must illustrate that he/she has sufficient knowledge of the message that he/she transmits and to those to whom he/she transmits the message and of the social context in which they live. This is the dimension of knowing how to transmit the message, so that it is an act of communication.

Certification for Teachers in Catholic Schools

The goal of Catholic Education is to make one’s “faith become living, conscious and active through the light of instruction.”⁵³ To have a living faith we must truly integrate it into our entire being. To have a conscious faith we must process, discern and understand. To have a truly active faith we must enter into relationships and into service. A variety of people are involved in, and a number of influences affect, our striving towards this goal.

⁵³ *Christus Dominus*: Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church, #14.

The distinctive Catholic identity and mission of the Catholic school depends on the efforts and example of the whole faculty. “The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behavior.”⁵⁴ All members of the faculty, at least by example, are an integral part of the process of religious education... Teachers’ life style and character are as important as their professional credentials.”⁵⁵ Their daily witness to the meaning of mature faith and Christian living has a profound effect on the education and formation of their students.

Teachers of religion, reinforce a Catholic school’s effectiveness as a community of faith and a center for evangelization. Who they are, what they say, and what they do should be integrated harmoniously if they are to be genuine educators in the faith. “The role of religion teachers is of first importance.”⁵⁶ Religion teachers in Catholic schools not only teach the Catholic faith as an academic subject but also bear witness to the truth of what they teach.

The religion teacher is the key, the vital component, if the educational goals of the school are to be achieved. But the effectiveness of religious instruction is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher; this witness is what brings the content of the lessons to life. Teachers of religion, therefore, must be men and women endowed with many gifts, both natural and supernatural, who are also capable of giving witness to these gifts.⁵⁷

Catechetical instruction in the Catholic school should be based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and thoroughly integrated into the curriculum and objectives of the school. It should have its proper place in the order of each day alongside other lessons. It should be coordinated with the catechetical plan of the parish to which it is connected. The Catholic school “can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis. Since its educational goals are rooted in Christian principles, the school as a whole is inserted into the evangelical function of the Church. It assists in and promotes faith education.”⁵⁸

The Catholic school affords a particularly favorable setting for catechesis with its daily opportunity for proclaiming and living the Gospel message; for learning and appreciating the teachings of our Church; for acquiring a deep understanding, reverence, and love of the Liturgy; for building community; for prayer; for proper formation of conscience; for the development of virtue; and for participating in Christian service. In addition,

⁵⁴ *The Catholic School*, # 43.

⁵⁵ *Teach Them*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, #59.

⁵⁷ *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, #96.

⁵⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, #69.

Catholic schools strive to relate all of the sciences to salvation and sanctification. Students are shown how Jesus illumines all of life – science, mathematics, history, business, biology, and so forth.⁵⁹

The school itself is called to be a faith community and precisely as such teaches Christian habits of mind, heart and work. It hands on Catholic faith and values to the young both by word and by example. Thus, the whole Church has a family interest in Catholic schools, since all the baptized are responsible for seeing that the specific mission and distinctive characteristics of Catholic schools are maintained and improved.

The aim of religious instruction is not simply one of intellectual assent to religious truths but also a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ. This commitment to Christ is intrinsically linked to the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, which the school encourages as its students discover and express their Christian identity and mission.

The entire school program is meant to be Christ-centered. The Catholic school “strives to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the life of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life, and of humankind”, as the Declaration on Christian Education states.

The Role of the Teacher Catechist

The person of the teacher/catechist is the medium in which the message of the faith is incarnated. Through your entire being you are responsible for making Christ alive for your students

No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to him [her] by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only his [her] own human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of texts and other work instruments.

The catechist is essentially a mediator. He [she] facilitates communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects amongst themselves, as well as with the community. For this reason, his [her] cultural vision, social condition and lifestyle must not be obstacles to the journey of faith. Rather, these help to create the most advantageous conditions for seeking out, welcoming and deepening the Christian message. He [she] does not forget that belief is a fruit of grace and liberty. Thus, he [she] ensures that his [her] activities always draw support from faith in the Holy Spirit and from prayer. Finally, the personal relationship of the catechist with the subject is of crucial importance.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ NDC #54 9d.

⁶⁰ GCD #156.

Your role as catechist is a holy and noble vocation. To take on such a role holds many challenges for you; thus you need to:

1. Have a faith that interpenetrates your life. Be committed members of the Catholic Church who understand their ministry as a form of participation in the Church's teaching mission.
2. Prayer. Be witnesses to Christian living, in both personal and professional life, by having developed a Christian value system that is exemplified in one's daily life.
3. Continue to actively seek growth as an adult Catholic. Perceive and actualize the need for continual personal, professional and spiritual growth, nurturing the gift of faith through specific programs, retreats and adult education.
4. Celebrate the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. Be active role models in the Catholic Church today - Participants in parish life, prayer and worship.
5. Share in the life of our parish community. Be able to understand and articulate the model of Church as servant community, striving to bring about peace and justice through service.
6. Give witness to the Gospel. Have a respect for the dignity and worth of each child, expressed in flexibility of educational approaches, sensitivity to uniqueness, and ability to discern and build on individual strengths.
7. Serve the community. Be able to elicit from students a faith response and call them to an active Christian life.
8. Be willing co-learners, in community with your students, their families and the Church. Be committed to preparing effective lessons as well as participating in regular in-service sessions.
9. Seek out relationships that will nurture you in this vocation.
10. Be committed to continual development of your skills and abilities as teachers.

When you are committed to accepting these challenges you will then be facilitating catechesis that is the whole process by which a Christian community informs, forms and ever transforms itself and every member in lived Christian faith.

To be a catechist means to Echo the Gospel; it is a great, wonderful, mysterious challenge that God has graced you to accept.

Parish catechists and Catholic school teachers of religion need to be theologically prepared, skilled in the methods of religious education and firmly committed to the faith of the Church. Hence catechist teachers are entitled to careful and thorough preparation for their teaching ministry.

At the core of the mission of Catholic schools is catechesis - nurturing faith within the Christian community through instruction, personal witness, prayer and example. In the Diocese of Grand Rapids catechist certification is required for all teachers in Catholic schools. All teachers must

meet this requirement in a timely manner. Each teacher is responsible for his/her own progress toward certification. It is imperative that teachers understand the requirements and work to complete their certification as well as their on-going formation and renewal.

Diocesan Catechist Certification for Teachers

- Cumulative total of 50 clock hours of effective formation
- Must hold a valid Michigan Teaching Certificate
- Must submit a transcript to show 3- 6 credits in methodology and 3-6 credits in working with students as learners
- These 50 cumulative hours include a minimum of 14 clock hours in religion content and eight (8) clock hours in personal religious/spiritual development, 12 clock hours or 3-6 credit hours in methods and 12 clock hours or 3-6 credit hours in working with students. The remaining four (4) hours may be in any dimension.

Advanced Catechist Certification for Teachers

- Cumulative total of 80 clock hours of effective formation
- There must be 30 clock hours beyond the Diocesan Catechist Certification.
- These clock hours include a minimum of eight (8) clock hours in the catechist dimensions, five (5) each in learner and method and 12 clock hours in content. These are hours over and above the Diocesan Catechist Certification.

Master Catechist Certification

- Advanced Catechist Certification (80 clock hours)
- Plus at least 18 Academic Credit hours (minimum of 12 credit hours in theology, with the other six (6) credit hours in theology or other disciplines related to catechetical ministry.

Renewal of Certification for Teachers

Renewal of Diocesan Catechist Certification

- Total of 15 clock hours of effective formation
- These 15 hours include a minimum of 3 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation, plus 3 additional clock hours in any or all of the four dimensions of formation.
- Must be completed within 3 years of achieving this level of certification. Renewal extends certification status for three additional years.

Renewal of Advanced Catechist Certification

- Total of 15 clock hours of effective formation
- These 15 hours include a minimum of three (3) clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation, plus three (3) additional clock hours in any or all of the four dimensions of formation.

- ❑ Must be completed within three (3) years of achieving this level of certification. Renewal extends certification status for three additional years.

Renewal of Master Catechist Certification

- ❑ Total of 25 clock hours of effective formation
- ❑ These 25 hours include a minimum of five (5) clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation, plus five (5) additional clock hours in any or all of the four dimensions of formation.
- ❑ Must be completed within five (5) years of achieving this level of certification. Renewal extends certification status for five additional years.

Note:

- ❑ Hours earned toward renewal of certification also count in advancement toward the next level of certification.
- ❑ If certification lapses without renewal, the person is no longer certified as a catechist.
- ❑ All teachers with a current certification will receive a discount for the annual catechetical conference.

Conclusion

An Encouragement to Active and Fruitful Participation

The best possible catechist formation programs, providers and resources will have little or no effect if the catechist is not personally and actively open to and engaged in the formation process.

Pope John Paul II's words regarding formation of laity and for clergy apply to catechists as well. He wrote that "a true and effective formation" cannot take place "if the individual [in formation] has not taken on or developed a personal responsibility for formation".⁶¹ In this sense, all formation is ultimately self-formation and each catechist is called freely, consciously and actively "to welcome the moulding action of the Spirit," in part through welcoming "the human 'mediating' forces which the Spirit employs"⁶² in the catechetical formation setting.

Active and fruitful participation, then, means being mentally and spiritually awake, alert and alive during catechist formation, fully engaged in the learning process, inquiring, seeking, questioning, eager for new learning, open to the sources of our faith and to the other persons of faith with whom one is learning, taking the learning to heart, applying it to one's life and ministry.

It calls for each catechist to pray, to think, and to be open to what the Holy Spirit, the chief agent of formation, wants to teach or even to surprise one with; it also entails a willingness to use what one learns – to grow in faith personally, and to change and improve one's catechetical ministry. New information and new ideas are good, but not enough; not until one's actual catechetical practice is newly graced and enriched has catechist formation achieved its purpose.

⁶¹ *Christifideles Laici* #63.

⁶² John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds* #69.

With eagerness and dedication, then, let us plan and take part in catechist formation, convinced that doing so is truly beneficial, and critically necessary. Let us be committed to giving our best to these efforts, asking God to bless and use us, for the “effectiveness of catechesis is and always will be a gift of God, through the operation of the Spirit of the Father and the Son”.⁶³ With confident hope in the gift and power of God, let us devote ourselves with joy to formation for this ministry that brings life to the Church and to the world.

May the Virgin Mary, “whose intercession was once responsible for strengthening the faith of the first disciples,” obtain for the Church in the United States “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as she once did for the early Church.” Through this gift, there can be a new evangelization and a revitalized catechesis in which Christ’s disciples of this new millennium can be his powerful witnesses “in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).⁶⁴

Suggested Topic Areas for Ongoing Growth

AREA A - Catechist As A Person of Faith

- Retreats given at retreat centers for spiritual development
- Participation in Parish Missions
- Learning and experiencing various prayer styles
- Growth in communication/listening skills
- Talks on Spirituality, Vocation, Living out our Christian lives
- Opportunities for reflection on one’s faith life and personal spirituality
- Personal Catholic bible study and reflection

AREA B – Person Being Catechized, i.e. the Learner

- Faith development of children
- Process of adult, young adult, adolescent and child learning
- Physical, psychological, moral and spiritual development
- Multi-Intelligences
- Right brain learning and spirituality
- Learning disabilities
- Special needs education
- Impact of family, society and culture and environment
- Culture and family life from various perspectives
- The development of conscience

AREA C – Context and Process of Catechesis (Methods)

- Church documents on catechesis
- Effective lesson development
- Learning environment
- Classroom management
- Discipline
- Use of media and resources in catechesis

⁶³ GDC #288

⁶⁴ NCD #74

- Catechetical activities for various age levels
- Understanding the role of family and community in catechesis
- Instruction on leading prayer in the classroom
- Instruction on how to prepare liturgies
- Use of technology in the classroom
- Instruction on the involvement of youth in meaningful service and outreach activities
- Instruction on Catholic social teaching
- Teaching the message
- Teaching methods for special needs
- Understanding the meaning of spiral development for faith instruction

AREA D – Message of Catechesis (Content)

- Exploring various church documents
- Study of Scripture – various books of the Bible, Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures
- Morality
- Liturgy
- Church history
- Basic Church Doctrine
- The Creed: Trinitarian and Christocentric
- Prayers of the Church
- Sacraments – Initiation, Healing and Service
- Ecclesiology
- Jesus Christ
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Mary and the Saints
- Paschal Mystery
- Liturgical Year

Examples of experiences that may not be accepted for catechetical certification include but are not limited to:

- Volunteer experiences, i.e., Eucharistic Minister, TECH retreat counselor; social justice volunteers, Youth rallies (unless there is a definite workshop given with an identifiable topic and speaker)
- Taking part in sacramental retreats with students
- Reading of magazines or books when there is no indication of how the material was discussed or how it impacted the way a person taught.

For initial and on-going certification the catechist completes the necessary hours of coursework, and the catechist certification application form, submitting it to the Parish Catechetical Leader or School Principal for signature. The signed form is then forwarded to the Diocesan Office for Catechesis. Letters of Certification will be sent to local Catechetical Leaders/Principals for distribution to their catechists. The catechists are thus affirmed for their continued growth and competency as they further the mission for the Church in the Grand Rapids Diocese.

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The Holy Spirit, the Teacher Within

...the gaze of my heart turns to him who is the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work – the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit.

In describing the mission that this Spirit would have in the Church, Christ used the significant words: “He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”. And he added: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...he will declare to you the things that are to come.

The Spirit is thus promised to the Church and to each Christian as a Teacher within, who, in the secret of the conscience and the heart, makes one understand what one has heard but was not capable of grasping: “Even now the Holy Spirit teaches the faithful”, said Saint Augustine in this regard, “in accordance with each one’s spiritual capacity. And he sets their heart aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him love what he already knows and desire what he has yet to know.”

The Spirit’s mission is to transform the disciples into witnesses to Christ: “He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses”.

John Paul II On Catechesis in Our Time



Catechist Certification Information Guide

Levels of Certification

Strand A

Provisional Certification – Given by the Parish

- Cumulative total of 25 hours
- Those involved in a Parish certification will not take part in the Basic Catechist Certification of Levels I, II, and III found in Strand B

Strand B

Basic Catechist Certification – given by the diocese

Level 1:

- Protecting God's Children – required before the catechist begins in the classroom. The completion of Protecting God's Children should be noted on the application.
- Cumulative total of **8 clock hours** of effective formation
- These 8 hours include 2 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation
- These are required during the first year as a catechist.

Level 2:

- Cumulative total of **24 clock hours** of effective formation (8 from Level 1 and 16 for Level 2)
- These 24 hours include at least 5 clock hours in each dimension with the other 4 in any dimension
- These should be completed during the second-third year as a catechist, (understanding that for some this is not possible).

Level 3:

- Cumulative total of **40 clock hours** of formation (16 hours beyond Level 2).
- This cumulative total of 40 clock hours includes a minimum of 8 hours in each of the four dimensions of formation plus 8 hours in any of the four dimensions.

Diocesan Catechist Certification

- Cumulative total of **50 clock hours** of effective formation beyond Level 3.
- These 50 hours include at least 10 clock hours in each dimension with the other 10 in any dimension.
- When 40 hours, from Levels I, 2, and 3, have been earned an additional 10 clock hours are needed for the **Diocesan Catechist Certification**.

Advanced Catechist Certification

- Cumulative total of **80 clock hours** of formation.
- These 80 hours include a minimum of 15 hours in each of the four dimensions of formation plus 20 hours in any or all of the four dimensions of formation.
- An Advanced Catechist Certification requires 30 hours beyond the Diocesan Catechist Certification

Master Catechist Certification

- Must have an Advanced Catechist Certification of 80 clock hours
- Plus at least 18 Academic Credit hours (minimum of 12 credit hours in theology, with the other 6 credit hours in theology or other disciplines related to catechetical ministry).

Understanding Cumulative Hours

	Catechist	Learner	Method	Content	Additional	TOTAL
Level 1	2	2	2	2	PGC	8
Level 2	3	3	3	3	4	24
Level 3	3	3	3	3	4	40
Diocesan	2	2	2	2	2	50
Advanced	5	5	5	5	10	80
TOTAL	15	15	15	15	20	80

A **Master Catechist Certification** requires the 80 hours of formation plus at least 18 Academic Credit hours (minimum of 12 credit hours in theology, with the other 6 credit hours in theology or other disciplines related to catechetical ministry).

Renewal of Certification

Basic Catechist Certification – Level 1

- There may be one renewal for this level for one year.
- It is expected that all catechists have at least a Level 1 certification within the first year.

Renewal of Basic Catechist Certification- Level 2

- Ten clock hours of formation with hours split between the four dimensions of formation
- Must be completed within two years of receiving **Level 2** certification
- Renewal is good for two years

Renewal of Basic Catechist Certification – Level 3

- Ten clock hours of formation with hours split between the four dimensions of formation
- Must be completed within two years of receiving Level 3 certification.
- Renewal is good for two years.

Renewal of Diocesan Catechist Certification

- Total of 15 clock hours of effective formation.
- These 15 hours include a minimum of 3 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation plus 3 additional clock hours in any or all of the four dimensions.
- Renewal of this certification must be completed within 3 years of achieving this level of certification. Renewal extends certification status for three additional years.

Renewal of Advanced Catechist Certification

- Total of 15 clock hours of effective formation
- These 15 hours include a minimum of 3 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation, plus 3 additional clock hours in any of the four dimensions.
- Must be completed within 3 years of achieving this level of certification. Renewal extends certification status for three additional years.

Renewal of Master Catechist Certification

- Total of 25 clock hours of effective formation.
- These 25 hours include a minimum of 5 clock hours in each of the four dimensions of formation, plus 5 additional clock hours in any of the four dimensions of formation.
- Must be completed within 5 years of achieving this level of certification. Renewal extends certification status for five additional years.

NOTE:

- Hours earned toward renewal of certification also count in advancement toward the next level of certification.
- If certification lapses without renewal, the person is no longer certified as a catechist.
- All Parish Catechetical Leaders and Catechists with current certification will receive a discount for the annual catechetical conference.



CATECHIST CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Cover Sheet

Applicant Name

This is an Application for (check one)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Basic Catechist Certification – Level I
<input type="checkbox"/>	Basic Catechist Certification – Level II
<input type="checkbox"/>	Basic Catechist Certification Level III
<input type="checkbox"/>	Diocesan Catechist Certification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced Catechist Certification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Master Catechist Certification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal of Basic Certification – Level II or Level III
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal of Diocesan Certification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal of Advanced Catechist Certification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewal of Master Catechist Certification

PARISH INFORMATION	
Catechetical Leader (DRE/Principal)	
Parish/School	
Address	
City/State/Zip	
Telephone	
Fax	
E-Mail	

For Diocesan Use Only:	
Approved By:	
Date:	
Certification Level:	

