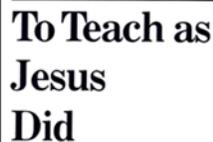


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Catechist Formation & Certification

Some Background Reading for BAMOFF Participants



To Teach as Jesus Did

A Pastoral Message on
Catholic Education
November 1972
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

TO TEACH AS JESUS DID *A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education*

from the Catholic Bishops of the United States
November, 1972

Religious Education outside of Catholic School, No. 91:

Despite their achievements and bright hopes, [pastoral programs of religious education] face serious problems which should concern the entire Catholic community. These programs do not reach large numbers of Catholic young people not in Catholic schools. Many of them may simply not be accessible or receptive to any systematic, organized program of religious education now available to the Church. There are many reasons for this: parental indifference; problems of scheduling; pressures of time; demands on and appeals to their loyalty by other communities of which they are members; **the inadequacy of some religious education programs, an inadequacy often due to insufficient financing and reliance on personnel who have not had proper training and support....**



SHARING THE LIGHT OF FAITH

National Catechetical Directory
for
Catholics of the United States

SHARING THE LIGHT OF FAITH *National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*

Text approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 14-17, 1977 & by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, October 30, 1978.
Published & released by the US Catholic Conference, 1979.

Chapter IX – Catechetical Personnel
No. 204 - Introduction:

In this NCD the term catechist is used in a broad sense to designate anyone who participates formally or informally in catechetical ministry. All members of a community of believers are called to share in this ministry by being witnesses to the faith. Some, however, are called to more specific catechetical roles. Parents, teachers, and principals in Catholic schools, parish catechists, coordinators or directors of religious education, those who work in diocesan and national catechetical offices, deacons, priests, and bishops – are all catechists with distinct roles. Here we shall describe ideal qualities, for which all catechists should strive, and discuss the various roles and the educational preparation required for them.

Chapter IX – Catechetical Personnel, Part A: Ideal Qualities of Catechists
Nos. 205-211:

Ideal Qualities of Catechists:

- Must receive & respond to a ministerial call.
- Must be fully committed to Jesus Christ & must have a “living, ever-deepening relationship with the Lord.
- Must be committed to the Church and must remain true to Christ’s message which he or she is called to proclaim.
- Must foster community and cooperate in making the parish a focal point of community in the Church.
- Must be committed to serving the Christian community.
- Must have a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship, familiarity with scripture, communication skills, the ability to use various methodologies, understanding of how people grow and mature and of how persons of different ages and circumstances learn.

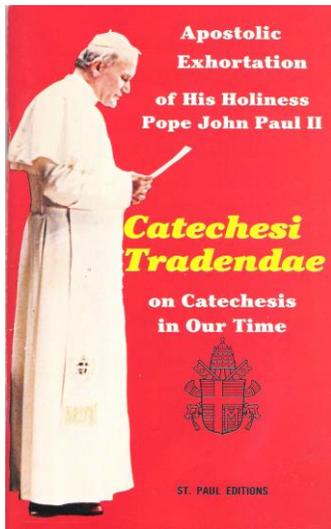
Chapter IX – Catechetical Personnel, Part B: Catechetical Roles & Preparation No. 213 – Parish Catechists

Parish catechists, many of whom are volunteers, may be engaged in catechizing adults, young people, children, or those with special needs. Theirs is a particular way of carrying out the promise which the Church makes at every Baptism: to support, pray for, and instruct the baptized and foster their growth in faith.

Because catechists approach their task with varying degrees of competence, programs should be designed to help individuals acquire the particular knowledge and skills they need. Catechists typically participate in a variety of teaching and learning programs, liturgical experiences, classes, retreats, service programs, study clubs and similar activities. They carry on their ministry in parish catechetical programs, Catholic schools and other settings. Their training should equip them to make effective use of the resources available for catechesis and to adapt materials to the age, capacity, and culture of those they seek to reach.

Men and women from all walks of life volunteer for parish catechetical programs. Parish and diocesan programs for the preparation and in-service training of volunteers should include the following elements:

- Basic orientation and preparation, including instruction in theology, scripture, psychology, and catechetical techniques. They should be shown how to identify goals and achieve them in their particular circumstances.
- Opportunities for liturgical celebrations, prayer, retreats and other experiences of Christian community with others engaged in this ministry.
- Continuing in-service educational opportunities.
- Regular assistance, from more experienced persons, in planning and evaluating their performance.
- Opportunities to evaluate not only their performance but the programs in which they are involved.
- More specialized training for those who will work with physically or mentally handicapped persons.
- Cultivation of a sense of community among the catechists during the entire formation process.
- Some form of commissioning ceremony which expresses the faith community’s call and the catechists’ dedicated response.



CATECHESI TRADENDAE (“On Catechesis in our Time”)

Apostolic Exhortation by Pope John Paul II,
October 16, 1979.

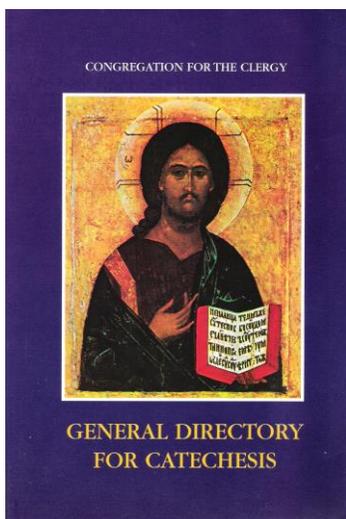
No. 45. Diversified & complementary forms of catechesis:

Catechesis is therefore for adults of every age, including the elderly... no less than for children, adolescents and the young.... It is important also that catechesis of children and young people, permanent catechesis, and the catechesis of adults should not be separate watertight compartments. It is even more important that there should be no break between them. On the contrary, their perfect complementarity must be fostered: adults have much to give to young people and children in the field of catechesis, but they can also receive much from them for the growth of their own Christian lives.

It must be restated that nobody in the Church of Jesus Christ should feel excused from receiving catechesis....

No. 66. Lay catechesis:

I am anxious to give thanks in the Church’s name to all of you, lay teachers of catechesis in the parishes, the men and the still more numerous women throughout the world, who are devoting yourselves to the religious education of many generations. Your work is often lowly and hidden but it is carried out with ardent and generous zeal, and it is an eminent form of the lay apostolate, a form that is particularly important where for various reasons children and young people do not receive suitable religious training in the home....



GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS

Issued by the Congregation for the Clergy, August 15, 1997

Published in the United States by the US Catholic Conference, January, 1998

Part Five: Catechesis in the Particular Church

Chapter 1. The ministry of catechesis in the particular Churches and its agents

Nos. 220 & 221 – The Christian community & responsibility for catechesis:

Catechesis is a responsibility of the entire Christian community. Christian initiation, indeed, “should not be the work of catechists and priests alone, but of the whole community of the faithful.” Continuing education in the faith is a question which concerns the whole community; catechesis, therefore, is an educational activity which arises from the particular responsibility of every member of the community....

... Yet, **while the entire Christian community is responsible for Christian catechesis and all of its members bear witness to the faith**, only some receive ecclesial mandate to be catechists. Together with the primordial mission which parents have in relation to their children, **the Church confers the delicate task of organically transmitting the faith within the community on particular, specifically called members of the people of God.**

No. 223 – The Bishop has primary responsibility for catechesis in his diocese:

This concern for catechetical activity will lead the Bishop to assume “the overall direction of catechesis” in the particular Church, which implies among other things:

- that he ensures effective priority for an active and fruitful catechesis in his Church “putting into operation the necessary personnel, means and equipment, and also financial resources”;

- that he exercise solicitude for catechesis by direct intervention in the transmission of the Gospel to the faithful, and that he be vigilant with regard to the authenticity of the faith as well as with regard to the quality of texts and instruments being used in catechesis;
- “that he bring about and maintain... a real passion for catechesis, a passion embodied in a pertinent and effective organization,” out of a profound conviction of the importance of catechesis for the Christian life of the diocese;
- that he ensure “that catechists are adequately prepared for their task, being well instructed in the doctrine of the Church and possessing both a practical and theoretical knowledge of the laws of psychology and educational method;
- that he establish an articulated, coherent and global program in the Diocese in order to respond to the true needs of the faithful: it should be integrated into the diocesan pastoral plan and coordinated with the programs of the Episcopal Conference.

No. 231 – Lay catechists:

The vocation of the laity to catechesis springs from the sacrament of Baptism. It is strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation they participate in the “priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ.” In addition to the common vocation of the apostolate, some lay people feel called interiorly by God to assume the service of catechist. The Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechize. The Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow him... At times the catechist can collaborate in the service of catechesis over a limited period or purely on an occasional basis, but it is always a valuable service and a worthy collaboration. The importance of the ministry of catechesis, however, would suggest that 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.

Chapter II. Formation for the service of catechesis

No. 233 – Pastoral care of catechists in a particular Church

To ensure the working of the catechetical ministry in a local Church, it is fundamental to have adequate pastoral care of catechists. Several elements must be kept in mind in this respect. Indeed efforts must be made:

- to encourage in parishes and Christian communities vocations for catechesis. Today, because the needs of catechesis are so varied, it is necessary to promote different kinds of catechists. “There is therefore a special need for specialized catechists.” (GMC, 5) In this respect selection criteria must be established;
- to try to provide a certain number of full-time catechists so that these can devote their time intensely and in a more stable way to catechesis, in addition to fostering part-time catechists who are likely to be more numerous in the ordinary course of events;
- to organize a more balanced distribution of catechists, among the various groups who require catechesis. Awareness of the needs of adult catechesis and catechesis for young people, for example, can help to establish a greater balance in relation to the number of catechists who work with children and adolescents;
- to foster animators of catechetical activity with responsibility at diocesan level, in regions and in parishes; (cf, GMC, 5)
- to organize adequately the formation of catechists, both in relation to basic training and continuing formation;
- to attend to the personal and spiritual needs of catechists as well as to the group of catechists as such. This activity is principally and fundamentally the responsibility of the priests of the respective Christian communities;
- to coordinate catechists with other pastoral workers in Christian communities, so

that the entire work of evangelization will be consistent and to ensure that catechists will not be isolated form or unrelated to the life of the community.

No. 234 – Importance of the formation of catechists:

All of these tasks are born of the conviction that **the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel**. The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists. Thus the adequate formation of catechists cannot be overlooked by concerns such as the updating of texts and the reorganization of catechesis.

Nos. 235 & 236 – Nature and purpose of the formation of catechists:

Formation seeks to enable catechists to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ. **The purpose of formation, therefore, is to make the catechist capable of communicating:** “The summit and center of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate **the Gospel message.**”

By virtue of the fact that formation seeks to make the catechist capable of transmitting the Gospel in the name of the Church, all formation has an ecclesial nature.... This truly ecclesial quality of the transmission of the Gospel permeates the entire formation of catechists and gives to that formation its true nature.

No. 238 – The dimensions of formation: being, knowing and savoir-faire:

The formation of catechists is made up of different dimensions. The deepest dimension refers to the very being of the catechist, to his human and Christian dimension. Formation, above all else, must help him to mature as a person, a believer and as an apostle. This is what the catechist must know so as to be able to fulfill his responsibilities well. This dimension is permeated by the double commitment he has to the message and to man. It requires the catechist to have a sufficient knowledge of the message that he transmits and of those to whom he transmits the message and of the social context in which they live. This then is the dimension of savoir-faire, of knowing how to transmit the message, so that it is an act of communication. The formation of the catechist tends to make of him an “educator of man and of the life of man.”

No. 240 – The biblico-theological formation of the catechist:

Besides being a witness, the catechist must also be a teacher who teaches the faith. A biblico-theological formation should afford the catechist an organic awareness of the Christian message, structured around the central mystery of the faith, Jesus Christ. The context of this doctrinal formation should be drawn from the various areas that constitute every catechetical program:

- the three great eras in the history of Salvation: the Old Testament, the life of Christ and the history of the Church;
- the great nuclei of the Christian message: the Creed, the Liturgy, the moral life and prayer;

In its own level of theological instruction, the doctrinal content of the formation of a catechist is that which the catechist must transmit. For its part, “Sacred Scripture should be the very soul of this formation”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church remains the fundamental doctrinal reference point together with the catechism proper to the particular Church.

No. 242 – The human sciences and the formation of catechists:

... The social sciences provide an awareness of the socio-cultural context in which man lives and by which he is strongly influenced. It is therefore necessary that in the

formation of catechists that there take place “an analysis of the religious situation as well as of the sociological, cultural and economic conditions to the extent that these facts of collective life can greatly influence the success of evangelization.” In addition to these sciences, explicitly recommended by the Second Vatican Council, other human sciences should be used in one way or another in the formation of catechists, particularly the sciences of education and communication.

No. 244 – Pedagogical formation:

Together with those dimensions which refer to being and knowledge, the formation of catechists must also cultivate technique.... The catechist is prepared or formed so as to facilitate a growth in the experience of faith, which he himself has not implanted for it is God who has sown it in the heart of man. The responsibility of the catechist is merely to cultivate this gift by nourishing it and by helping it to grow. **Formation seeks to mature an educational capacity in the catechist** which implies: an ability to be attentive to people, an ability to interpret or respond to educational tasks or initiatives in organizing learning activities and the ability of leading a human group toward maturity. As with any other art the most important factor is that the catechist should acquire his own style of imparting catechesis by adapting the general principles of catechetical pedagogy to his own personality.



THE CATECHIST IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: Call, Mission and Formation

The NYS Roman Catholic Bishops in consultation with the NYS Diocesan Directors for Religious Education;

Issued by the NYS Catholic Conference, January, 1998.

III. Who is the Catechist?:

The Call of the Catechist

The call and response to become a catechist is recognized in the local Church by the bishop. The response to this call includes willingness to give one's time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one's own growth and understanding of the faith.

Qualities and Characteristics of the Catechist

To be an effective minister of the Word, the catechist must already have or show the potential for developing certain characteristics specifically significant to that ministry. One must understand and care for the community with whom she or he ministers – adults, youth, and children. One must demonstrate patience, flexibility, openness and ability to listen. **Those called to the ministry of catechesis should be generous with their time and talent, open to deepening their understanding of the theology and methodology necessary for teaching, and be able to communicate faith and knowledge effectively in both word and deed.**

Responsibilities of the Catechist

A catechist must be willing to accept and fulfill to the best of his or her ability the following responsibilities associated with the catechetical ministry:

- to be a model of Catholic Christian faith and lifestyle;
- to participate in the spiritual, theological and methodological training provided by parish, Catholic school, and diocesan formation and certification programs;
- to know and abide by the parish, Catholic school, and/or diocesan guidelines and

policies promoting effective catechesis;

- to give sufficient preparation time for the catechetical task;
- to contribute to and support, by one's presence, a spirit of community with other catechists, and the people whom one catechizes.

It is the responsibility of the pastor and those in parish/school leadership to invite catechists to understand and take ownership of their responsibilities and to hold catechists accountable for them.

IV. Selection, Formation and Ongoing Training of Catechists:

The Selection of Catechists and their Formation

“The fundamental tasks of catechists are to proclaim Christ’s message, to participate in efforts to develop community, to lead people to worship and prayer, and to motivate them to serve others.” Therefore, the careful selection of women and men called to be catechists and their initial and on-going formation are the greatest factors in assuring the quality of catechesis in the parish, school, and diocese. Formation will help the catechist to grow in maturity as an adult, a believer and an apostle. **Catechists must have sufficient knowledge and background to carry out their ministry effectively.** They are charged with bringing others to a fuller understanding of the challenge of the Gospel message and the Church’s living out of that message. To do that well, **they must be formed themselves.**

Orientation

Prior to the beginning of his/her ministry, each catechist should participate in an introductory formation program that will:

- introduce this ministry as a vocation;
- introduce the curriculum;
- teach age-appropriate faith formation processes;
- introduce ways to maintain an effective catechetical environment;
- introduce lesson planning skills;
- acquaint the catechist with resources;
- review the policies and procedures for catechesis in the parish, Catholic school or diocese;
- introduce the process for continuing catechist formation and certification in the diocese.

Ongoing Formation and Training

Catechists need not only introductory, but also ongoing formation in theology, catechetical methodology, and spirituality for this ministry. They are expected to comply with diocesan certification policies, and, even after completing certification, to continue with annual ongoing formation....

The curricula for the formation of catechists in the *General Directory for Catechesis* includes background in the Old Testament, the life of Jesus, the history of the Church, a deepened understanding of the Creed, the moral life, liturgy and prayer. “... Sacred Scripture should be the very soul of this formation.”

In addition, catechists need to be familiar with the Catechism of the Catholic Church as an important compendium of Church teaching and as a rich resource for their ministry.

Theological formation of catechists should include the following topics:

- Evangelization
- Catechism of the Catholic Church

- God and Trinity
- Scripture and Revelation
- Christology
- Ecclesiology
- Eastern Catholic Churches
- Sacraments
- The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
- Morality
- Social Mission of the Church
- Prayer and Liturgy
- Vatican II
- Mary and the Saints
- The Christian Vision of Human Sexuality
- Ecumenism and relationship with other Faith Communities

Catechetical methodology should include:

- Creating the Climate for Catechesis
- Catechetical Methods for different age groups and abilities
- Psychology of the Learner
- Learning Styles
- Psychological, Moral & Faith Development
- Introduction to Catechetical Documents & Resources
- Family Perspective
- Multicultural Perspective
- Use of Media Resources

Opportunities for spiritual growth for catechists might include:

- Retreats
- Days or Evenings of Reflection
- Prayer and Reflection on Scripture
- Eucharistic Celebrations

V. Partnerships in Catechesis:

Catechesis is not accomplished in isolation but requires the collaboration and partnership of many people and ministries who provide invaluable support. It is a responsibility of the entire Christian community. It arises from the particular context of relationships so that all who are catechized are welcomed into the life of the community and can live as fully as possible what they have learned.

B. The Parish Community

The parish makes catechesis real by ensuring that the commitment to and the resources for catechesis are a priority. The parish calls members of the community to be catechists and provides for the environment and support needed for people of all ages to grow in faith. **The parish needs to assist the catechist in developing the knowledge and skills for catechesis.**

D. The Parish/School Catechetical Leader

The parish/school catechetical leader is responsible for planning and directing the formation process of catechists in cooperation with the pastor and in accordance with diocesan guidelines. He or she realizes that although the quality of the parish/school faith formation is determined by many factors, **it is the training and support of the catechist that is the ultimate key to the effectiveness of the entire mission and ministry.** Because many who respond to the call to become catechists do not have knowledge and skills adequate for this ministry, the formation of catechists becomes the prime responsibility of the parish/school catechetical leader and must always be a priority.

The General Directory for Catechesis strongly reminds us that "... the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel." Therefore with the support of the parish and community, the parish/school catechetical leader provides for the recruitment and selection of potential catechists, an orientation process and initial training. To provide for on-going formation and training, the parish/school catechetical leader plans regular in-service formation opportunities which comply with diocesan standards and certification policies....

E. The Diocesan Office

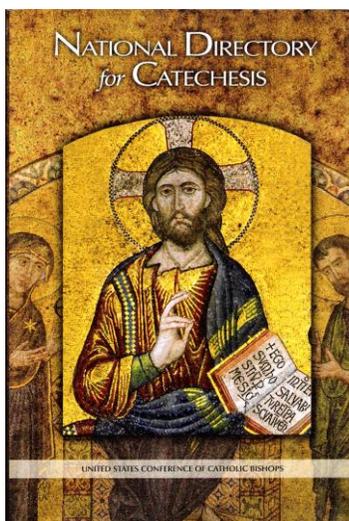
The diocesan catechetical office is "... the means which the Bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all the catechetical activities of the diocese." Catechesis is so basic to the life of every particular Church, that "no diocese can be without its own catechetical office." Diocesan Offices and programs "... must give absolute priority to the formation of lay catechists." Assisting the Bishop and serving parish/school catechetical programs, the diocesan catechetical office helps to form and articulate the diocesan vision of catechesis.

Diocesan offices have the following responsibilities:

- encouraging and motivating all involved in the catechetical ministry;
- discerning the catechetical needs of the diocese;
- establishing criteria for effective catechetical programs;
- providing guidelines for comprehensive catechist formation;
- offering training opportunities for leaders and volunteers;
- establishing certification standards for catechetical leaders and catechists in parishes and Catholic schools;
- offering alternative models for programming and training;
- recommending curricula and resources;
- keeping catechetical personnel current on initiatives and Church documents which pertain to catechesis;
- collaborating with Liturgical Offices in areas of initiatory catechesis and other offices in areas of social justice, ministry development, formation and pastoral planning;
- collaborating with colleges, universities and institutes; of pastoral formation to provide opportunities for further study;
- advocating for a multi-cultural and family perspective in catechesis;
- insuring that all children, youth, adults and persons with disabilities or special needs receive quality and comprehensive catechetical formation;
- providing assistance in the planning, implementation and evaluation of catechetical programs;
- overseeing accountability that the vision and policies of the bishop and diocese are understood and implemented.

F. The Bishop

The bishop is the chief catechist in the diocese and is responsible for providing sound catechesis to all. Bishops are "... beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis..." He is responsible for choosing qualified leaders for catechetical ministry, for assuring catechesis "... that catechists are adequately prepared for their work..." and that continuing formation is made available to them. It is the responsibility of the Bishop to ensure that catechists are ... duly prepared to fulfill their task correctly, namely, that continuing formation is made available to them, that they acquire a proper knowledge of the Church's teaching, and that they learn in theory and practice the norms proper to the pedagogical disciples.



THE NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS (NDC)

Developed by the Committee on Education and the Committee on Catechesis of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops;
Approved by the U.S. Catholic Bishops at their June 2003 General Meeting & received the *recognitio* of the Holy See

First printing, May 2005

Chapter 8 – Those Who Catechize

53. Introduction:

All members of the community of believers in Jesus Christ participate in the Church's catechetical mission. Some are called to more specific catechetical roles. Parents, parish catechists, teachers, Catholic school principals, parish catechetical leaders for adults and children, youth ministry leaders, those who work in diocesan and national catechetical offices, deacons, consecrated religious, priests, and bishops are all catechists with distinctive roles. From the earliest days of the Church, immediately following the apostles' acceptance of Christ's missionary mandate, catechists have made and continue to make "an outstanding and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and the church by their great work."

54. Differing Roles of Those Who Catechize:

A. The Bishop and Diocesan Staff: A Shared Responsibility

In addition to devoting himself personally to the proclamation of the Gospel and the ministry of catechesis, the bishop is also to supervise the catechetical mission in the diocese. He is to ensure that the ministry of catechesis receives the support of competent personnel, effective means, and adequate financial resources. He is to make certain that the texts and other instruments used in catechesis transmit the Catholic faith completely and authentically. **He is to ensure "that catechists are adequately prepared for their task, being well-instructed in the doctrine of the Church and possessing both a practical and theoretical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of educational method."**

B. Pastors and Parish Leadership

5. Parish Catechetical Leaders

The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader. Depending on the size and scope of the parish catechetical program, parishes should allocate their resources so that they are able to acquire the services of a competent and qualified catechetical leader (or someone in the process of becoming qualified and competent) or to share those services with another parish....

Ordinarily, under the direction of the pastor, the main responsibilities of this position are as follows:

- Overall direction of the parish catechetical programs for adults, youth and children;
- Planning, implementation, and evaluation of the parish catechetical programs;
- **Recruitment, formation, ongoing development, and evaluation of catechists;**
- **Implementation of diocesan and parish catechetical policies and guidelines, including the areas of catechist certification** and supervision and administrative policies related to negligence, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and the safety and protection of minors;
- Collaboration with the pastor, other parish ministers, and appropriate committees, boards and councils;
- Assist in liturgical planning;
- Attention to their own personal, spiritual and professional development.

Training for youth ministry should be as comprehensive as the responsibilities are and should employ all the principles of sound adult faith formation. Adequate training in the Church's mission of evangelization and catechesis in general and youth ministry in particular should be a minimum requirement for all youth ministers.....

8. Catechists

... It is clear that, **in order to present the Catholic faith in its fullness and in a way that is attractive to each group, those who catechize need preparation and ongoing formation** specific to the conditions of those to whom they proclaim the Gospel message. To this end, **catechist formation programs cooperatively developed by parishes and dioceses must ensure that catechists receive assistance in developing their knowledge of the faith and the Gospel message as well as** "the dimension of savoir-faire, or **knowing how to transmit the message, so that it is an act of communication.**" (GDC, no. 238) Faith is the result of the initiative of God's grace and the cooperation of human freedom. Catechists should humbly acknowledge, with St. Paul, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth." (1 Cor 3:6)

55. Preparation and Ongoing Formation of Catechists:

A. The Ministry of Catechesis

Men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds are called to share in the Church's catechetical mission. Most are volunteers. They bring a wide variety of talents and abilities to their task. They have widely divergent levels of experience and competence in catechesis. **Programs of formation should be designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples of Christ.**

D. Initial Formation of Catechists

Initial formation of catechists most profitably precedes the beginning of their ministry and can employ different methodologies. Whether the training is done at a diocesan catechetical center or in the parish, it should be adapted as much as possible to the specific needs of the individual catechist. Because the catechist has been invited by the pastor to begin initial formation, it is assumed that the individual is personally known to the pastor and the pastoral staff, especially the parish catechetical leader. Under no circumstances should the initial formation of new catechists "be improvised or left to the initiative of the candidates themselves." The initial formation of new catechists should

- 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 to the Catholic faith
- Provide through 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
- 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

Formation programs for catechists should also include a basic presentation of the social sciences, since they provide an awareness of the sociocultural contexts in which those being catechized live and by which they are strongly influenced. Catechist formation is to include study of the human sciences, especially psychology, education and communications. In this study the autonomy of the social sciences should be respected, and their value and limitations should be discerned. However, the social sciences should not be seen as ends in themselves. In the formation of catechists, social sciences are always at the service of evangelization.

E. Ongoing Formation of Catechists

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. The pastoral care of catechists is an essential aspect of the diocese's overall catechetical plan. "Diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the *formation of lay catechists*. Encouragement in the ministry of catechesis, the provision of competent and professional directors and coordinators of catechesis, the recruitment of catechists, the balanced distribution of catechists, the provision of training in both the diocese and parish, the adequate formation of catechists, attention to the personal and spiritual needs of the catechists, and the coordination of catechetical efforts and adequate funding are all the responsibility of the diocesan offices. With due consideration to the lives of the catechists and their ability to respond, great importance should be attached to the following objectives.

The ongoing formation of catechists is to include all aspects of the catechist's life.

On the human level, formation is to

- 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
- 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-centric 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 to 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

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

- Help them to 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 burnout.

Since catechists nurture the faith that was implanted by the Holy Spirit in those being catechized, their **formation should also include training in catechetical methodology**. Catechists do not merely instruct their students about Christ; they lead them to him. Consequently, their formation should be inspired by God's own original

methodology of faith: his gradual Revelation of the truth that is Christ. Their formation should help them grow in their capacity as genuine teachers of that truth, keenly aware of both the authentic Gospel message and the circumstances of those for whom the message is intended. It should help them to develop their own style of handing on the faith “by adapting the general principles of catechetical pedagogy to [their] own personalit[ies].”

In concrete terms, **catechist formation should help catechists to organize and direct educational activities.** It should provide assistance to catechetical planning, goal setting, the presentation of catechetical lessons, and the evaluation of those lessons. And it should help them decide which techniques of group dynamics to use and when. Their training should help them to make effective use of the resources available for catechesis, especially the use of media, and to adapt materials to the age, capacity, and culture of those they seek to reach. The pedagogy for catechist formation should model the pedagogy proper to the catechetical process. Catechist formation should provide specialized training for catechists of persons with disabilities. In all catechist formation, “the goal or ideal is that catechists should be the protagonists of their own learning by being creative in formation and not by just applying external rules.”

F. Possible Settings for Catechist Formation

The formation of catechists takes place most effectively within the community of faith under the direction of the local pastor. The parish is where “catechists test their own vocation and continually nourish their own apostolic awareness.” Parish-centered programs for catechists remind them that their calling as catechists come from the Church, that they are sent by the Church, and that they hand on the faith of the Church. Such programs attend to the progressive growth of catechists as believers and witnesses through the normal course of parish, educational and liturgical life as well as through specialized programs of catechist development. They provide opportunities to meet with other catechists for lesson preparation and evaluation. They provide catechists with courses in catechesis and doctrinal study based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Some opportunities for catechist formation are more appropriately provided by the diocese. Institutes, workshops and seminars for those with responsibility for catechesis in parishes, schools, clusters of parishes, deaneries or vicariates should be provided at the diocesan or interdiocesan level. Dioceses are well advised to develop comprehensive catechist formation programs that lead to a more formal certification. Some dioceses have worked closely with Catholic colleges and universities to set up training and certification programs for catechists and catechetical leaders....

Especially in dioceses without a Catholic college or university in close proximity, certification programs often make productive use of distance learning models. Such programs have the advantage of offering systematic and organic formation over a period of several years. In them, trained specialists are able to present the totality of the Christian message, a thorough knowledge of the sociocultural situation, and sound catechetical methodology to catechists from all parts of the diocese. Through its Commission on Certification and Accreditation, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirms and verifies the quality and validity of such programs.