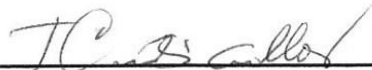


**GUIDELINES FOR  
PARISH CATECHIST FORMATION**  
**OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS**  
**DIOCESE OF BEAUMONT**

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Approved for Implementation in the Diocese of Beaumont



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**Most Reverend Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D, D.D.**  
**Bishop of the Diocese of Beaumont**

# I. Introduction

## The Ministry of Catechesis

The ministry of catechesis is vital to enabling the Church to carry out the task that Jesus gave when he challenged his followers to “make disciples of all the nations” and “teach them to carry out all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20) This task is accomplished today in our parishes, missions and Catholic schools through programs of religious formation/ education. According to the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1998), the fundamental tasks for catechesis are enabling people “to know, to celebrate and to contemplate the mystery of Christ,” and “initiation and education in community life and to mission.” (Nos. 85, 86.)

## The Ministry of the Catechist

A catechist is a person who responds to a call by God to share his or her faith with others in a formal setting, whether that is the religious education program in a parish or mission or the religion program in a Catholic school. “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’.” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 231.)

The response to this call includes a willingness to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for this ministry. This **Catechist Formation Process** is designed for all catechists who minister in our parishes and missions, whether in early childhood, primary, intermediate, early/late adolescent and adult formation programs, including the adult initiation process – the RCIA. (The formation requirements for those catechists who teach religion in Catholic schools is determined by the Office of Catholic Schools, which bases its policy on the program set by the Texas Catholic Conference – Department of Education.)

## The Purpose of Catechist Formation

The purpose of catechist formation is threefold:

- To increase the catechist’s theological knowledge
- To expand the teaching skills of the catechist
- To provide for the spiritual growth of the catechist.

Together, these three elements will enable the men and women of our parishes and missions “to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ.” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 235.)

The Texas Catholic Conference - Religious Education Department (TCC-RE) developed guidelines to provide for the formation of Parish Catechists. These guidelines from the TCC-RE assist (arch) dioceses in planning for local certification programs.

The Bishops recommended that the guidelines for the formation of Parish Catechists:

- provide a strong Catholic Intellectual, Human, Apostolic and Spiritual foundation
- develop skills in catechetical methodology

The following framework for these guidelines is based on *The General Directory for Catechesis*, *The National Directory for Catechesis* and *The National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, as created by the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial ministers.

### **STANDARD ONE – Human**

A Parish Catechist “demonstrates the qualities of human maturity needed for fruitful ministry with the people of God” (National Certification Standard 1, 1.0).

#### **Core Competencies**

- Discerns one’s own gifts and talents
- Keeps ministry, family, and personal life balanced
- Respects one’s own and other’s uniqueness, culture, background
- Engages in lifelong personal growth and ministerial formation
- Exhibits psychological health, marked by integrity, appropriate interpersonal boundaries, and the ability to honor and safeguard confidentiality
- Believes in the gospel (and) a living, ever- deepening relationship with (God) that makes sharing faith and witnessing to the gospel possible and credible
- Commits to the Church...to whom the Word has been entrusted
- Willing to foster community, and to cooperate with other parish leaders in making the parish a focal point of community in the church
- Commits to service of others that goes beyond responding to needs when asked, (and) takes initiative in addressing the needs of individuals and communities.

### **STANDARD TWO – Spiritual**

A Parish Catechist, “sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized...demonstrates Christian spirituality as foundational to ministry, integrated in service with the people of God, and possessing a sacramental view of the world that recognizes the world can be a vessel of God’s presence and God’s transforming grace” (Standard 2, 2.0).

#### **Core Competencies**

- Models ministry rooted in Baptism – being a person of prayer and sacrament
- Models the spirit of Jesus in one’s life and identity
- Fosters relationships based on Gospel values

- Accepts and articulate one's vocation as coming from God and confirmed by the Church
- Understands one's personal call in relation to the larger global mission of the Church
- Possesses a sensitivity to the spirituality of diversity
- Displays openness to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, prayer, work, and practices
- Integrates prayer and Scripture into one's everyday reality
- Develops spiritual growth through on- going community, self-reflection, scripture, and theological reflection.

### **STANDARD THREE – Intellectual**

A catechist, “demonstrates understanding of the breadth of Catholic theological, methodological and catechetical as well as the intellectual skill, to use that knowledge in ministry with God's people from diverse populations and cultures” (Standard 3, 3.0).

#### **Core Competencies**

- Scripture and Revelation- A Catholic understanding of Revelation as embodied in scripture, tradition and creation.
- Dogmatic theology- Familiarity with the Church's teaching in the areas of Trinitarian theology, Christology, pneumatology, missiology, Christian anthropology, and ecclesiology.
- Church History- A foundational understanding of the major events in the history of the Church, with special attention to the Second Vatican Council, and the perspective those events provide on the life of the Church today.
- Liturgical and Sacramental Theology- An understanding of liturgy, worship, and sacraments in the life of the Church.
- Morality and Catholic Social Teaching- Articulation of the principles of Catholic morality including Catholic social teaching.
- Spirituality- Knowledge of the history and theology of Catholic spirituality and prayer.
- Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue- Knowledge the Church's teaching on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.
- Social sciences and humanities- Foundational understanding of the social sciences and humanities and their integration into catechetical practice
- Canon law- Basic understanding of Canon Law
- Culture and language studies- Understanding the meaning of inculturation and Evangelization of culture.
- Technology- Basic technological skills that can enhance the method of Evangelization and Catechesis.

#### **STANDARD FOUR – Apostolic**

A Parish catechist, “demonstrates apostolic skills needed for functioning effectively in ministry” (NDC 55E).

#### **Core Competencies**

- Develops apostolic zeal
- Engages in apostolic activity that promotes evangelization, faith formation, building community
- Proclaims the truth of Jesus Christ boldly and enthusiastically, using all means of communication
- Is an agent of the new evangelization
- Devotes self to the missionary apostolate
- Follows all (arch)diocesan safe environment guidelines and regulations
- Is in communion with the local and universal Church
- Uses appropriate methodological techniques for diverse audiences.

## **II. Requirements for Being a Catechist in the Diocese of Beaumont**

To be a lead catechist, who is the person responsible for teaching a specific class in a parish catechetical program, one must

1. be an active Catholic in good standing with the Church;
2. have reached the age of 21 years;
3. have completed the *Protecting God’s Children* training;
4. have successfully passed the background checks;
5. have completed or is enrolled in the diocesan catechist formation program and is working towards certification.

Young adults 18-21 years old may serve as assistants to a lead catechist in a parish catechetical program only after they have completed the *Protecting God’s Children* training and have successfully passed the background checks. Any minor below the age of 18 may assist a lead catechist in a parish catechetical program after completing the Safe Environment Training provided by their parish catechetical program or Catholic school.

### III. General Guidelines for Catechist Formation

- A. To ensure that teaching is faithful to our Catholic heritage and is effectively communicated, all catechists (for early childhood, primary, intermediate, early and later adolescent, and adult, including the adult initiation) are expected to be certified, and if they are not, to enroll in the **Catechist Formation Process** and actively pursue certification by attending classes.
- B. All catechists “must have a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship; familiarity with Scripture; communication skills; the ability to use various methodologies; understanding how people grow and mature and of how persons of different ages and circumstances learn.” (*National Catechetical Directory, No. 211.*)
- C. Pastors and Parish Catechetical Leaders are to assist catechists by encouraging participation in the **Catechist Formation Process** sponsored by the Diocese of Beaumont.
- D. The Office of Evangelization and Catechesis will provide easy accessibility to the courses it sponsors by offering a variety of scheduling opportunities throughout the diocese.
- E. Classes or learning experiences, other than those offered through the diocese, may be appropriate in specific circumstances, but must be approved by the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, and can count for up to one quarter of the required hours for each level of formation. NOTE: Interaction with other catechists in a group setting must be part of this learning.
- F. Catechists come to us with a variety of experiences and with different academic backgrounds; therefore, it is occasionally necessary to waive or substitute some requirements. Please consult with the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for this situation.
- G. A catechist who has previously participated in this diocese’s certification sessions may receive credit for that work only when there is documentation of the participation. A catechist who received certification in another diocese should present verification of that certification to the Office Evangelization and Catechesis.
- H. Pastors and Parish Catechetical Leaders who choose to offer courses in catechist formation are to follow these guidelines. Course curricula are available through the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.
- I. Upon completion of each year (10 sessions of Into the Fields or 2 courses from the University of Dayton, VLCFF), a Certificate will be presented to the catechist.

# IV. Specifics of the Catechist Formation Process

## Option 1

### *Into the Fields*

*Into the Fields* is a comprehensive series by Twenty Third (23<sup>rd</sup>) Publications for Catechist and Teacher Formation. It was produced in partnership with Loyola Pastoral Life Center at the Loyola Institute for Ministry (Loyola University New Orleans). It consists of 30 sessions of which 10 per year are held. Each session is an integration of **Spiritual Exercises, Growing Faith, and Tools for Teaching**. There is also a music CD included for each year.

Each session is no more than 3 hours (depending on the time allotted for group discussions). The completion of *Into the Fields* will satisfy the requirements for full catechist certification.

These sessions can be scheduled flexibly in order to encourage full participation by catechists. However, one session per month (10 per year) may help build a nurturing community of catechists throughout most of the year. Each parish community will need to assess their own potential schedule for the series. We believe this to be a very rewarding series for the Catechist Formation Process.

The following is the outline for the Into the Fields sessions:

#### **Year 1- Basic Catechetical Skills and Attitudes**

<b>Session 1</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	So Great Our Hunger Hunger for God The Call to Be a Catechist or Teacher
<b>Session 2</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	The Story of God in My Life God's Plan for Us Preparing a Learning Space
<b>Session 3</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Teach Me to Be Generous Faith is Response; Faith, Hope, Love Planning the Learning Session
<b>Session 4</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	The Beauty of God Trinity & Liturgy Liturgy as a Teaching Moment

<b>Session 5</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Found by Love The One True God Applying Principles of Development
<b>Session 6</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Nothing is Impossible for God Revelation; Holy Scripture Engaging Scripture Effectively
<b>Session 7</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Walking in God's Presence The Trinity; Social Justice Building a Community of Love
<b>Session 8</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Prepare the Way God, the Creator; Creation Teaching Others as God Teaches Us
<b>Session 9</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	God with Us Sin and Grace; Made for God Moving from Experience to Faith
<b>Session 10</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Companions in Christ The Lord's Prayer Summing Up

## Year 2 – Styles of Teaching and Learning

<b>Session 11</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Walking with Jesus Mystery and Marks of the Church Teaching within the Whole Community
<b>Session 12</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Temptations in the Desert The Christian Family Teaching within the Christian Family
<b>Session 13</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	The Harvest is Plenty Encountering God; Prayer Forms Teaching through Apprenticeship
<b>Session 14</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	We Want to See Jesus Ways to Pray Teaching with Faith Sharing



<b>Session 15</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Lord, Make Me Whole Prayer Source; A Life of Grace Mentoring Others in Prayer
<b>Session 16</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Glad Tidings for the Poor Jesus the Messiah Teaching with Stories
<b>Session 17</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Mercy for All The Passion and the Resurrection Making Your Lessons Visual and Active
<b>Session 18</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Community of Love People of the Church Using Technology in Teaching
<b>Session 19</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Recognizing God's Voice Baptism and Confirmation Teaching about Christian Initiation
<b>Session 20</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Love One Another Holy Orders and Matrimony Summing Up

### **Year 3 – Teaching Specific Catholic Topics**

<b>Session 21</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Faith That Does Justice Mary Our Mother <i>plus</i> The Reign of God Teaching About the Church
<b>Session 22</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	God's Word of Hope The Eucharist Teaching about the Sacraments
<b>Session 23</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Faithful to Our Calling Conscience <i>plus</i> Sin Moral Decision Making
<b>Session 24</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	The Feast of Heaven The Holy Spirit The Works of the Spirit

<b>Session 25</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	God So Loved the World Life after Death <i>plus</i> The Magisterium of the Church The Communion of Saints
<b>Session 26</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Waiting with Mary No Strange Gods Before Me <i>plus</i> Keeping Sunday Holy The Commandments and Beatitudes
<b>Session 27</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Daring to Dance Reconciliation <i>plus</i> Anointing The Practice of Virtue
<b>Session 28</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Feed My Sheep Defending Life & Avoiding War The Works of Mercy
<b>Session 29</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	Living in the Spirit Possessions, Greed & Generosity <i>plus</i> Telling the Truth Sharing Catholic Social Teaching
<b>Session 30</b>	Spiritual Exercises: Growing Faith: Tools for Teaching:	The Path Before Us The Lifelong Call to Love & Chastity Summing Up

## Option 2

### ***University of Dayton – VLCFF***

(Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation)

There is second way for catechists who cannot attend their parish *Into the Fields* sessions to be certified. **The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)** offers adult religious education and faith formation anytime and anywhere via the internet. We have chosen the courses listed below because they contain material found in *Into the Fields*, and the time needed to complete them is similar to the time required to complete the three years of *Into the Fields*. To be certified, a catechist must complete 6 of the 8 courses from the following online courses from University of Dayton - VLCFF. Where there are two choices for a topic for a topic you can choose one **or** the other, but all 6 topics should be covered.

1. Overview of GDC & NDC
2. Catholic Beliefs
3. Introduction to Sacraments of Initiation **or** Sacraments
4. Images of Jesus
5. Bible Basics **or** Introduction to Scripture
6. Introduction to Christian Morality

