

**CATECHIST CERTIFICATION: CHALLENGES OF
ON-GOING FAITH FORMATION
DIOCESE OF PATERSON, NEW JERSEY**

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DEDICATION

To my husband Jim, who provided support and encouragement.
You are my partner on the journey.

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INTRODUCTION

Like all Christians, catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation. The catechist should continue his or her own spiritual formation through frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, through spiritual direction, and through continued study of faith. The catechist should be provided with opportunities for spiritual growth such as retreats, conferences, etc. In addition to spiritual formation, the catechist is also in need of pedagogical formation, especially as society, teaching methods, and culture change.¹

It is the responsibility of the Bishop and the Diocese to provide guidance in the catechesis of its people. As part of the responsibility for the faith formation of young people, the Paterson Diocese Parish Life Secretariat has prepared a plan for the on-going faith formation and certification of those adults involved in the instruction of young people in the Catholic faith, otherwise known as catechesis. The *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy* (January 6, 2008) in Appendix 1 provides formation guidelines in Spirituality, Theology, and Catechetical Methodology. Based on parish level self-reported data, it is estimated approximately 30% of the catechists in the diocese are certified at this time. The expectation was catechists would become familiar with the *Catechist Formation and Certification* policy and attend seminars, retreats and courses to become certified as catechists.

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 C.

From my personal experience over the last 28 years, there have been catechists who functioned more as babysitters who talked about religion than individuals dedicated to forming faith in young people. There have also been many catechists who inspired young people in their faith and encouraged a relationship with God. “Catechists do not merely instruct their students about Christ, they lead them to him.”² Those who appeared successful as catechists were actively involved in their personal faith and spiritual formation. These catechists regularly attended Mass, received the sacraments and participated in retreats/seminars/missions offered by their parish. The catechists were invested in catechesis and were not religious by-standers. Catechists who were most successful in dealing with the real world, complex questions were those who were involved in developing a strong personal faith. People actively involved in their own formation and pursuing advanced knowledge regarding their faith tend to be more articulate and able to discuss and defend their faith. These people live their faith actively in their daily lives and teach by word as well as example. Catechists who are committed to on-going formation and are knowledgeable concerning the position of the church on social and theological issues are in a better position to respond to questions during lessons or discussions of the Catholic faith.

Over the years, each course or retreat I completed provided useful information when young people exploring their personal faith asked a question. Questioning faith traditions is part of the faith development process. By questioning aspects of faith, and

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 E.

understanding how faith relates on a personal level, the individual internalizes the concept and it becomes his/her own. James Fowler, the American theologian, calls this stage the Individuative-Reflective stage, where the individual starts to critically examine their faith beliefs and may become disillusioned with the faith of their childhood. Failure to obtain relevant feedback during this may result with the young person becoming non-religious and remain in that state permanently.³ Through the examination and critical questioning of the faith of their childhood the young person adopts the faith traditions as their own.

It is important for the catechist and all those involved in faith formation to have the ability to confidently discuss the tenets of faith and facilitate the personal development of those with whom they catechize. The response “you must have faith” is not relevant or a sufficient explanation for young people. In some cases, this type of response may lead to a stunted faith development. I have encountered adults in their 60s and 70s who fell away from the church due to not having their questions answered in an apologetic⁴ manner when they were in their teens.

Catechist certification is one method used to guide a course of study, a curriculum, to form catechists who are confident and prepared to effectively lead those they catechize to a relationship with God. Certification provides a type of accreditation

³ “James Fowler’s Stages of Faith,” Psychology Charts, accessed July 17, 2018, <http://www.psychologycharts.com/james-fowler-stages-of-faith.html>.

⁴ Apologetics in this situation refers to the ability to explain, refute, or defend the faith. See Glossary of Terms for full definition.

which signifies the individual has the knowledge and background to form others in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church.

The goal of this project is to examine the level of certified catechists in the parish catechetical programs and determine the benefits and challenges of certification from the Parish Catechetical Leaders and catechists point of view. By identifying challenges, it is anticipated that additional resources and support may be provided by the diocese and the parish to assist more catechists to continue their personal faith formation and work towards certification.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIOCESAN ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE

Almost every parish in the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey has a dedicated Parish Catechetical program for youth who attend the public school system, or are in the final preparation stages for the Sacrament of Confirmation. In the diocese, Religious Education is offered for Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade as either one program or primary grades Pre-K through 5 and a separate Junior High program, defined as grades 6-8. The two-year Confirmation preparation takes place in high school, typically in grades 9 and 10. A few parishes have joined with a neighboring parish for their Religious Education programs due to low enrollment or as an attempt to be cost-effective.

In the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson New Jersey, the 2017 diocesan census reported 106 parishes with between 120 and 3000 families in each parish. Based on the self-reported Catechetical Census, there are approximately 2,900 catechists supporting the parish catechetical programs for grades Pre-Kindergarten through High School and Confirmation programs.

The information in Table 1.1 presents the percent of catechists certified in the parish, based on the 2017 self-reported parish catechetical census. The results, based on 106 parishes, show a wide variance of catechist certification.

- 13% of parishes reported none of their catechists were certified.
- 19% reported between 26% and 50% of catechists completed the certification program.
- 11% of the parishes had between 51% and 75% catechists certified.
- 17% of the parishes reported between 75 percent and 100% of the catechists were certified.

Table 1.1. Parishes Reporting Certified Catechists

Percent of Certified Catechists in the Parish						
<u>None</u>	<u>1-10%</u>	<u>11-25%</u>	<u>26-50%</u>	<u>51-75%</u>	<u>75-100%</u>	<u>No response</u>
13%	13%	17%	19%	11%	17%	10%

Source: Diocese of Paterson Catechetical Census – 2017

On-going faith formation is important for all, but especially for those involved in the catechesis of our young people, due to the changing nature of society and their environment. Also to assist young people in questioning faith and his/her place in the faith community.

Activities are generally piecemeal and depend on the priority given at the diocesan or parish level. In some years, the diocese provides the actual courses or faith formation opportunities and encourages the catechist to attend. The diocese or parish may

provide a listing of appropriate faith formation activities and encourage attendance.

Parishes may offer seminars or retreats, which may or may not be published as opportunities which apply toward certification requirements. Some parishes appear to be very involved in the formation of catechists – others leave it to catechists to pursue – or not.

“The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communications involving the recruitment of catechists.”¹ The reality is, with the difficulty of recruiting catechists for parish catechetical programs, there may be less focus on having qualified catechists and more focus on best efforts to recruit persons who will follow the published program for the classes as selected by the Parish Catechetical Leader/Director of Religious Education or pastor. Becoming a catechist may be viewed as a daunting undertaking and parishes may downplay the responsibility and requirements in order to attract catechists. Volunteer catechists may not have the time or the inclination to pursue a somewhat intimidating course of study in order to become certified. Parishes vary on their knowledge of the certification program and their support for catechist certification.

With the age appropriate published program, volunteer catechists may be disseminating the standard message to young people concerning the teachings of the church. Simply presenting the message of the printed material is not sufficient to the development and formation of faith. The application of the message to everyday

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 B.

situations in the community and the world may raise questions concerning the Church's teachings. Gone are the days of the *Baltimore Catechism*, with its question and answer format to be memorized and not questioned. Volunteer catechists may not feel qualified to explain the teachings of the church when responding to these questions.

Volunteer catechists are being stretched by time commitments from work, family, and other secular responsibilities. In our area, schedules for sports, band and dance keep parents busy transporting their children to practice and events. Ancillary to the main focus of this study may be a description of how the volunteer catechist defines his/her role and responsibility in regard to catechesis. With the present difficulty enlisting volunteer catechists, the question is whether the parish's expectations of catechists are being modified or lowered? Catechists may understand the extent of their responsibility as presenting the selected published material as it is written and all other issues should be responded to by the clergy. This may not coincide with the parish or diocesan understanding of the responsibilities of the catechist. Are the two synchronized or going in two different directions?

If the Diocesan policy requires catechists to either be certified or be in the process of certification, why are there so many who are not participating in the certification program? What are the challenges which inhibit participation?

THE CASE FOR CONTINUED FAITH FORMATION

1 Corinthians 13:11

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.”

As children, many of us were taught by memorizing the prayers, the life of Jesus in the bible and the rules and commandments. Very little, if any attention was focused on the “why” of the commandments and the logic behind all of the “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not.” In today’s society, people look for relevance – the why of the church’s teaching and position on world affairs.

In his teachings, Jesus took the common societal rules and the directives of the Ten Commandments and developed them to a more mature adult understanding. When he discussed thou shalt not kill, he expanded people’s understanding to include extreme anger against another, acting out of anger, hurting the reputation or spreading falsehoods about another person was also to “kill” thy neighbor. Thou shalt not commit adultery became not only the physical act, but to not think lustfully about a member of the opposite sex or to fanaticize about the other person. He preached a wider perspective on the commandments, not the simple understanding of the child.

In the mid-1600s, the church compiled *The Roman Catechism* or the official body of teaching of the Catholic Church as a comprehensive source for the fundamental beliefs of what it means to be a Catholic Christian. Some of our parents and grandparents learned about their faith by memorizing a later version of the catechism from the United States Conference of Baltimore - *The Baltimore Catechism*. The pendulum appears to have

moved in the opposite direction. In the interest of speaking to the people in understandable, appropriate terms, the revisions resulting from Vatican Council II may have led to homogenizing/secularizing the concepts, watering down to what can be accepted by everyone.

Many people identify as Catholic as a result of being baptized, most likely as a child. The question becomes are they involved in their faith and how much knowledge do they have of their catholic faith? What faith traditions are they following simply because the family has always celebrated in this fashion or do they really know why the historical, religious based reason behind the tradition? Celebrating the sacraments of Baptism or First Eucharist have become reason to have a party, with little attention to the religious significance behind the celebrations of Baptism of the infant or First Eucharist. The party and social gathering becomes the focus, not the sacrament.

The catechist is in the position to not only form the faith of the young person, but also to develop or deepen the faith of parents and other adults in the community. This opportunity requires more than surface instruction on the Sacraments and the life of the church. The deeper faith dimension of the catechist, with the catechist as a role model in faith, leads to a more in-depth level of faith in the young person and the family.

DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL SUPPORT

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 in Christ.²

In 2013, the course *Introduction to Catechesis* became mandatory in the Paterson Diocese for all catechists. The three hour program provides the history of catechesis, the beliefs and teachings of the church as they relate to the Sacraments of Baptism, First Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation, as well as a familiarity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy* provides subject area guidelines for enhancing personal faith and improving knowledge of the faith tradition. At the present time, there are many catechists who do not participate in the certification process. Based on these observations, this project will examine the certification process, reviewing the benefits and challenges from the perspective of the Parish Catechetical Leaders and the volunteer catechists with whom they work.

Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCL), those responsible for managing the catechetical activities of the parish, meet several times during the catechetical year.

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 A.

Typical meetings include presentations regarding various topics appropriate to the leadership and mentoring role of the PCL.

Coordinators of Religious Education (CRE) meetings and training sessions are provided to help the CREs understand diocesan requirements for catechetical program, time and program management, how to select an appropriate catechetical from a list of approved catechetical program publishers, and other pertinent skills. The CRE meetings are scheduled for evenings a few times during the catechetical year. The CRE courses are offered periodically, over a number of sessions.

Throughout the year, Saint Paul Inside the Walls, The Catholic Center for Evangelization at Bayley-Ellard, offers a variety of seminars and programs which address the spirituality of the faithful. The Salesian Sisters offer a series of evening courses for adult faith formation for individual faith formation or may be applied to catechist certification. The diocese provides links to “My Catholic Faith Delivered” courses and “Keep the Faith” resources, including downloadable talks by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

If on-going faith formation for catechists is a priority for the Diocese of Paterson, and the diocese is providing opportunities for continued faith formation, the question becomes why aren't more catechists taking advantage of the opportunities? What are the challenges and circumstances contributing to a lower than expected number of catechists attaining certification status which should be identified and addressed? It is beneficial to the Diocese to uncover the reality of the catechetical situation in the parishes and develop plans to address on-going faith formation of lay catechists.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following terms refer to definitions which may not be commonly known. The definition or explanation provided relates to its use in the remainder of the text.

Apologetics - commonly refers to the discipline concerned with the defense or explanation of the faith. It may also refer to a general grouping of approaches or systems developed for defending the faith or the practice of defending the faith—as the activity of presenting an apology or apologies in defense of the faith.³ For the purpose of this study, apologetics refer to the ability to explain the tenets or beliefs of the faith to others - forming faith.

Catechesis/Catechist – According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, quoting from Catechesi Tradendae no. 18, “Catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teachings of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.”⁴ For the purpose of this study, catechesis is the function of passing on the Catholic faith and practices to others in a formal or informal program or manner. It is teaching others “how to be Catholic” in the community. By extension, a catechist is an individual involved in the function of passing on the faith to others.

³ “What is Apologetics?” Bible.org, 2018, accessed July 17, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-what-apologetics>.

⁴ United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) Libreria Editrice Vaticana, (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett Ginn, 1994), no. 5.

Certification – In this study, certification refers to the *Catechist Formation and Certification Policy, Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey* (January 6, 2008), which provides the requirements for the continuing faith formation and catechetical pedagogy for those communicating the Catholic faith and practices to others.

Heresy – “Any belief that stands opposed to orthodoxy, or sound doctrine, that which correctly reflects in summary form all that Scripture affirms about any particular doctrine and which the church is bound to believe. Heresy, then, is any belief which contradicts essential teaching.”⁵

Homoousios – “In regard to Christology, an affirmation that the Son is of the same nature as the Father and thus fully divine.”⁶ In the early church, various groups had a difficult time understanding how Jesus was God/Divine and also possessed the human nature as they experienced.

⁵ Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 98.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

CHAPTER TWO:

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

THE BIBLICAL MISSION – GO FORTH

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.¹

The responsibility to instruct young people in their faith and relationship with God has early roots in the book of Deuteronomy. At Mount Horeb, before crossing into the Promised Land, Moses instructed the people to pass along to their children all they had experienced in the desert and the covenant with God. The people assembled were to reflect on their experiences in the land of Egypt, the events since the time they left Egypt and the time spent wandering in the desert. They were to reflect on the way God intervened in their lives, the times they were in compliance with God's commands as well as the times they were off-course with the directives from God. God made a covenant with the people – directing them how they were to live and the favor they would receive if they were faithful to the covenant. As the people of God, it was important for future generations to know their story – the story of the exile in the desert, the events of challenging God's faithfulness, God's covenant with the people and the eventual arrival at the Promised Land.

¹ *The Catholic Prayer Bible: Lectio Divina Edition NRSV*, (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), Deuteronomy 4:9.

You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and your gates.²

Deuteronomy 11:18-20 instructs parents, and by extension those in the community, to teach their children through example and the way they conduct themselves. In this passage, Moses is instructing parents to teach by the way they live. The word “talking“ refers to both verbal and non-verbal communication, communicating by actions as well as word. Children learn by the example of the adults in the community, in the way the adults conduct themselves at home and in public places; in their waking hours and their thoughts as they go to sleep. By inscribing the words (statutes of God) on their doorpost they are announcing to others in the community their awe of God and their obedience to the statutes and ordinances given by God. The words on the doorpost act as a reminder every time they pass through the doorway of their commitment to God and to His teachings. Being a people of God is a way of life and encompasses all parts of their being. Passing faith to future generation becomes living by example and word – professing faith verbally, in life choices or decisions, and in the way life is lived in the home and community.

² *The Catholic Prayer Bible: Lectio Divina Edition NRSV*, (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), Deuteronomy 11:18-20.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from our children; we will tell them to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.³

Psalm 78 recounts the events of Israel's captivity in Egypt and God's response to Pharaoh, resulting in the Israelites leaving Egypt. The Psalm goes on to tell of how the Israelites, God's people, alternated between following the commandments of God and at other times showing their ingratitude by challenging and testing God. Verses 1-4 tells how the people should listen to the words and learn from the mistakes of those wandering in the desert, testing and being unfaithful to God. They should teach their children of the consequences if they do not follow God's commandments.

The Psalm is meant to bring to mind the covenant with God, the faithfulness of God to his people and the times the people rebelled against God. It is meant for all coming generations to learn from the past and not to repeat the indiscretions made by the Israelites in their relationship with God.

Passing faith traditions to others and subsequent generations is additionally referenced in the words of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20, to teach and make disciples of all nations. Catechesis and conversion were linked, learning about the person of Jesus Christ led to the desire for conversion to Christianity. In the early church, those

³ *The Catholic Prayer Bible: Lectio Divina Edition NRSV*, (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), Psalm 78:1-4.

who had been converted subsequently received additional catechesis through the *Didache* or “the teaching of the Twelve Apostles”.⁴ Looking at these words from a literary perspective, Jesus was telling the Apostles to teach what they had learned from him and to make disciples of them. From a wider perspectives, the directive applies to all future generations, to make disciples of all nations and teach others as he had taught the disciples. Teaching others was a way of life for Jesus during his time of public ministry. When he was in need of a renewal of faith he went off to the desert to pray and communicate with the Father. Continual faith formation was a regular part of Jesus’ life and ministry.

As Christians, all have been given the responsibility to go out and make disciples of all people. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus said to the Apostles, “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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

⁴ Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz, S.T.D., “The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine,” (Catholic Exchange: September 17, 2007), accessed May 13, 2017, <https://catholicexchange.com/the-confraternity-of-christian-doctrine>.

Jesus commanded the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them as I have taught you.⁵ Jesus did not say go and be nice to people and if they like you, maybe they will join our faith. Jesus did not have the “whatever” attitude. Jesus was not always “nice” when dealing with circumstances which went against the law of God. Jesus was involved in his relationship with the Father and felt and acted strongly concerning his faith. Jesus was extremely direct when he gave this mandate to his disciples.

THE CHURCH RESPONDS

From the early days of the Church, the priority of catechesis was to teach people how to be Christian. Catechesis was intrinsically linked to the mission of the church – making disciples of people from all nations. Disseminating a singular message to the people was fairly easy during the time of the early church when the message was communicated through the Apostles and Disciples. Once the church spread to other areas and early disciples attempted to communicate the message to people from other cultures, the approach and the way of understanding became a more complex process. People heard and understood the message based on their culture and experiences.

⁵ *The Catholic Prayer Bible: Lectio Divina Edition NRSV*, (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), Matthew 28:19-20.

THE MESSAGE OR “I/WE BELIEVE...”

The early church was instructed by the *Didache or The Teaching of the Apostles* which was the first book assembled of the teachings of Jesus. It was very similar in content and structure to the Hebrew books, based on the background of the authors. “The fundamental ideas of the "Didache" are indisputably Jewish. ... Evidently the original "Didache" contained a systematic exposition of the Ten Commandments, whereas the "Didache" in its present shape has preserved only fragments, and these in great disorder.”⁶

A later form of the teachings to be transmitted to the people included the *Didascalía*. “A Greek work, in eight books, containing regulations of Church life, better known under the name of "Apostolic Constitutions," the full title being "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles [composed] by Clemens, Bishop and Citizen of Rome—Catholic Didascalía." Claiming to have been written by the Apostles, the work proves on closer examination to be based, like the *Didache*, upon an original Jewish work, transformed by extensive interpolations and slight alterations into a Christian document of great authority.”⁷ The *Didascalía* went into more detail in the instruction of the faithful, but very like the *Didache* was based on the Jewish teachings.

⁶ Solomon Schechter and Kaufmann Kohler, s.v. “Didache, or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” – from the Jewish Encyclopedia, (Jewish Encyclopedia.com, 1906), accessed July 17, 2018, <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5181-didache>.

⁷ Kaufmann Kohler, s.v. “Didascalía” – from the Jewish Encyclopedia, (Jewish Encyclopedia.com, 1906), accessed July 17, 2018, <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5183-didascalía>.

Issues of virgin birth, the divinity/humanity of Jesus, the Resurrection were all difficult to reconcile through human knowledge and understanding. Various sub-cultures of Christianity developed. Many groups, in an effort to understand the concepts conveyed to them, added their own interpretation of early church doctrine. With little consensus regarding the divinity of Jesus, Mary as the virgin Mother of Jesus and other pillars of faith, people were open to explain and believe what seemed personally logical at the time based on their culture and their human experience. This resulted in fragmentation of church doctrine and the formation of the early heresies of faith. The early church held various councils to bring the faithful back to a single understanding of the Christian faith and to communicate a single message.

The Council of Nicaea, 325, was one such council and resulted in a concise creed or set of beliefs for all to follow. The Council of Nicaea, 325, communicated an enhanced creed in response to heresies regarding the divinity of Jesus. Jesus was of one substance with the Father *homoousios*, not created. Previously, the Apostle's Creed was used as the statement of faith.⁸

The Council of Trent, further identified the need for a uniform and comprehensive manual which would provide the parish priest an official book for the instruction of children and the uninstructed adults. The primary purpose was to provide information for beginners in the faith and to prepare them to for further education and to live a faithful Christian life. The proposal started in 1562, with several members of the clergy adding

⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Council of Nicaea," <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Nicaea-Christianity-325>.

sections and revisions, finally finished under the direction of Pope Pius V in 1566.⁹ The Roman Catechism explained the doctrine of salvation through the concepts contained in the Apostle's Creed, The Sacraments, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.¹⁰

While the catechisms addressed what was to be the beliefs and principles communicated and a concise view of the deposit of catholic faith, in modern times the *General Directory of Catechesis* (GDC), *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC), *Sharing the Light of Faith*, and publications from the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* addressed a description of the qualities of effective catechists and provided guidelines on the catechetical process. In each of the subsequent directories and writings, the church sought to define and refine the concepts, clearing up ambiguities. The directories refined previous aspects regarding the life of the church, faith and documents which may not have been clear to the clerical and non-clerical people. In various areas of content, catechist qualities and methodology, the directories provide guidance and best practices for effective catechesis.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* describes the catechist as a mediator between the faith message and the lived experiences. The Inductive methodology for the transmission of faith presents the facts of faith – the biblical events, liturgical acts and the events in the life of the church. The inductive method leads to the deductive mythology,

⁹ John A. McHugh, O.P and Charles J. Callan, O.P trans., *The Roman Catechism: Catechism of the Council of Trent*, accessed July 16, 2018, <http://catholicsociety.com/>, 3-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

which explains and describes the facts and their application in the environment.¹¹ “It is the task of the catechist to make people more aware of their most basic experiences, to help them to judge in the light of the Gospel the questions and needs that spring from them, as well as to educate them in a new way of life.”¹² The catechist is the person who demonstrates for those being catechized the way of life according to the faith, living the faith in everyday situations. “Catechists do not merely instruct their students about Christ; they lead them to him.”¹³

The ministry of communicating the faith to others is of such an importance that it cannot be dealt with in a subordinate manner compared to other ministries of the church. “The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communication involving the recruitment of catechists.”¹⁴ The *National Directory for Catechesis* goes into depth outlining the best practices for the selection and formation of those who catechize as a ministerial function. The NDC stresses the importance of the areas to be addressed in the formation of catechists. Attention to the preparation of the catechist in terms of spiritual development, prayer, attaining an understanding of the goals of catechesis and on-going study of the scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic

¹¹ Congregation For the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), no. 150.

¹² Congregation For the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), no. 152 a.

¹³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 E.

¹⁴ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 B.

Church is advised. These qualities are developed under the direction of the diocese, the local parish or a spiritual director. The catechists cannot be left on their own to develop these assets.¹⁵ Catechists should experience an on-going relationship with the Gospel through the reception of the sacraments, scripture and prayer - modeling the faith for those they catechize. The effective catechist is articulate regarding their faith, with the ability to communicate the faith tradition to others.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) publish on their website a set of worksheets which address the development and assessment of successful catechetical programs. The worksheets provide guidance and opportunities for self-reflection and assessment of the parish programs for all levels of catechesis from childhood to adult catechesis.¹⁶

Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry from the Committee on the Laity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was published in 2005. The document provides guidelines for the selection and formation of lay ecclesial ministers, including catechetical leaders.¹⁷

¹⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 D.

¹⁶ See USCCB website *Evangelization and Catechesis, National Directory for Catechesis Worksheets*, <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/index.cfm>.

¹⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on the Laity, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, (Washington, D.C: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), accessed October 14, 2018.

Faith which is not renewed or continually formed may tend to become stale, lifeless or stagnant. “When we cease to learn, our faith can die, if only from boredom at the hands of our own “teaching”.”¹⁸

Periodically, the papacy addressed the renewal of faith, echoing the sentiments of the earlier councils. In his Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II discussed the need to deliver the message of Jesus Christ in appropriate language and methods to ensure the message is relevant to the people being catechized. The foundational content remains the same, while the means need to be refreshed according to the culture and society of the people. Faith cannot be allowed to become routine.

Routine leads to stagnation, lethargy and eventual paralysis. Improvisation begets confusion on the part of those being given catechesis and, when these are children, on the part of their parents; it also begets all kinds of deviations, and the fracturing and eventually the complete destruction of unity.¹⁹

People interpret the world and find meaning as the events or language reflect their personal experiences and history. “No “meaning” is entirely to human consciousness but is always indirect or mediated to us symbolically, if only through language.”²⁰ “Beliefs should never be simply conveyed and received as what Whitehead called “inert ideas” –

¹⁸ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*, (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 449.

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of Pope John Paul II on Catechesis in Our Time*, (Vatican City State: The Holy See, 1979), http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html, accessed July 4, 2018, no. 17.

²⁰ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*, (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 223.

that is to say that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations.”²¹ Each social environment has understandings of culture of its people and societal relationships particular to the setting. Methods of communication successful in one setting may be completely ineffective in another, based on the spiritual, socio-economic, educational and cultural composition of the individuals in the setting.²²

“In addition to spiritual formation, the catechist is also in need of pedagogical formation, especially as society, teaching methods, and culture change.”²³ The way the faith message is communicated should be specifically tailored to the audience. It is important that the catechist be able to speak in the terms and format appropriate to the educational and cultural level of those being catechized.

The faith tradition message and truths are universal, the medium should be specific to the person receiving the message. In the secular world, it is described as know your audience and talk in terms suitable to the audience. When Jesus spoke to the people he focused the message and the way it was delivered specific to the people to whom he was speaking. To people on the street or those he met in their homes, he addressed subjects and situations in their everyday lives. To the temple leaders, he spoke of the law and used quotes from scriptures to make his point.

²¹ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*, (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 19.

²² Congregation For the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), no. 154.

²³ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 C.

The events of Pentecost reflect the same situation, speaking to people in a language they understand and appropriate to their culture. In Acts 2:1-11, the Apostles spoke to the people gathered in both the dialect of the various groups and in relatable terms. They were articulate, speaking with confidence and conviction. These are the same qualities which need to be developed in catechists, to be articulate in communicating their faith to others. The message does not have the same effect if it is delivered as words being mechanically delivered from a book. The message needs to resonate with those being catechized, it needs the personal conviction of the catechist. Published programs used in the parish catechetical programs provide the concepts, it is the catechist who takes the concepts and translates them into personal faith experiences.

Being articulate about faith comes from having personal faith and relationship with God. God's message of love and redemption cannot be effectively delivered unless the individual truly believes in the message. Effective teaching comes from knowing the subject and being able to communicate the concepts to others. It is the same with faith traditions, you cannot lead others to Jesus if you do not have the personal relationship with Him.

The degree to which our young people are involved in their faith depends in part on the degree to which their catechists are involved or engaged in the formation and care of their own faith. A faithful and articulate young person cannot be formed or mentored in faith by a person who is a religious by-stander, one who conveys the words of faith but does not live the faith through a personal relationship with God.

CHAPTER THREE:
CHALLENGES TO ON-GOING FAITH FORMATION

The formation of catechists continues to be a high priority for most dioceses and parishes in the United States. Many dioceses directly provide a systematic program of training and formation for catechists. Others work closely with Catholic colleges, universities, and other institutes of higher education to offer programs of formation and certification for catechists and catechetical leaders. On the national level, the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation has approved a series of standards for the certification of parish youth ministry and catechetical leaders and lay ecclesial leaders.¹

When the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey launched the *Catechist Formation and Certification Program* in 2008, they were responding to catechetical formation directives from the *National Directory for Catechesis* (no. 55 C) and Statute 28E of the Paterson Diocesan Synod of 1971. NDC no. 55 C states that catechists should be provided with opportunities for on-going spiritual and pedagogical formation through courses of study, retreats and conferences.² The Synod of 1971 counsels the Parish Life Secretariat to require and provide for certification of all catechists.³

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 3.

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Education, *National Directory for Catechesis*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 55 C.

³ Diocese of Paterson, NJ, “Catechist Formation and Certification Policy”, (Paterson, NJ: 2008).

Basic Catechist Certification requires a total of 52 hours of study over a three year period. The course of study consists of thirty hours in Scripture and Theology, sixteen hours in Catechetics and Methodology, and six hours in Spiritual Formation. After the initial certification, on-going formation consists of an additional fourteen hours each year, with six hours in Scripture and Theology, six hours in Catechetics and Methodology, and two hours in Spiritual Formation.

The response from the Parish Catechetical Leaders and catechists to the certification policy has been less than anticipated or desired.

The purpose of this research was to identify the challenges faced by Parish Catechetical Leaders and catechists associated with catechist on-going faith formation and in completing the requirements as described in the *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy*. The diocese welcomed the opportunity for an objective study of the benefits and challenges of certification from the Parish Catechetical Leader and catechist's perspective. The results were presented to the Diocesan representatives to inform possible clarification/modification of the policy or to identify additional resources required to improve catechist certification rates. A presentation of results were presented to the Diocesan Catechetical Board and written results submitted in partial fulfillment for the Drew Theological School Doctor of Ministry degree.

SCOPE

The project examined the catechetical environment in parishes with high number of certified catechists as compared parishes with midrange or low catechist certification. Questions to be explored included: What are the true certification rates in the parishes? What are the circumstances and attitudes which contribute to or inhibit high certification rates? What are the parish catechetical leaders' and catechists' perception of the certification policy? What are the challenges which hinder catechist certification in parish catechetical programs? What additional assistance or resources are required from the Parish Catechetical Leaders or the parishes to support catechist certification? Based on the results of this investigation, the Diocese would be able to clarify/modify the certification program or assist the parishes to encourage and support catechists in completing the requirements for certification.

The study focused on the issues surrounding the benefits and challenges for catechists regarding the certification process. It did not address the societal issues surrounding conflicting secular priorities, such as sports, dance and social activities and religious responsibilities to model and mentor young people in the faith.

An online survey was conducted with the Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs), Directors of Religious Education (DREs) and Coordinators of Religious Education (CREs) of parishes in the Diocese. A separate online survey was conducted with the catechists who have completed the 3-hour *Introduction to Catechesis* course or other recent courses offered by the Diocese. The online surveys were confidential and offer anonymity to encourage open and candid discussion of challenges. An opportunity to

provide contact information was made available for respondents who wish to discuss challenges with me on a one-to-one basis.

Participants were invited from a pool of approximately 250 Parish Catechetical Leaders/Directors of Religious Education and approximately 3,000 catechists. All prospective participants were adults and none were from identifiable protected populations.

A list of the email addresses for the Parish Catechetical Leaders, sometimes known as Directors of Religious Education or Coordinators of Religious Education, and catechists who completed the 3-hour *Introduction to Catechesis* course or other recent courses was provided by the Diocesan Office of Catechesis. An email of introduction was sent by the diocese to the prospective participants supporting the project and requesting their assistance. A subsequent follow-up email provided a more detailed explanation of the project, the link to the *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy* referenced in the survey and the link to the online survey. Consent was implied through the act of opening the questionnaire document and submitting the responses. Selection criteria determined which questions were presented to the participant. Position in the catechetical program was the only required response and was used to determine which set of questions would be asked, those for catechetical leaders or catechists. The participants were not compensated for their responses. Only completed surveys were tabulated for the study and participants could end their participation at any time during the course of completing the questionnaire by simply exiting the program.

The questionnaire included sections on demographics of the catechetical setting, personal knowledge of Diocesan policies, knowledge of *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy*, and opinions concerning challenges experienced by catechists in regard to on-going faith formation and catechist certification. No aspects of the research were intended to be kept secret from the participants. The invitations were be sent as a broadcast email, with no names associated with the email addresses. Email addresses and names were not to be collected during the study and were not associated with the responses. The exception is where the participant volunteered to discuss the study in-person or during a phone discussion.

A separate debriefing form was not provided. The debriefing information was incorporated in the introduction and wrap-up of the survey instrument. The questionnaire introduction provided information on the purpose of the study and confidential nature of the survey. The contact information of the principal investigator was provided in the introduction and at the end of the survey.

The research was primarily attitudinal, providing a forum for participant's views and opinions regarding catechist certification. There were no discernable risks associated with the research, other than taking an online survey. The participants may have felt some slight anxiety regarding the questions contained in the survey. The researcher believed that the confidential nature of the study alleviated any temporary anxiety.

By informing the Diocese of Paterson of challenges faced by catechists in attaining certification, it was anticipated the information would be used to clarify or modify the policy for certification or to identify additional resources which could assist the catechists to participate in on-going faith formation and complete the certification program.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

An on-line questionnaire (Appendix 2) was designed in Google Forms to be sent to emails provided by the Diocesan catechetical office. The survey instrument was designed to query the attitudes surrounding the certification policy and the catechist's general faith formation activities. The questionnaire considered six areas of focus:

- Respondent position in the catechetical program
- Familiarity with the *Catechist Formation and Certification Policy* of the Diocese
- Perceived benefits of catechist certification
- Perceived challenges of attaining certification
- Present faith formation activities
- Recommendations

The respondent's position in the catechetical program determined which track or set of questions were most appropriate to the individual. The Parish Catechetical Leader, DRE or CRE would be asked a set of questions particular to their perceptions and perceptions relayed to them by the catechists whom they manage. There was no distinction made between full-time, part-time, paid or unpaid PCLs, DREs, or CREs. The catechist track examined the attitudes regarding on-going faith formation and catechist certification from the perspective of the volunteer catechist.

Background demographic questions were asked of the PCL, DRE, and CRE regarding the number of parish families, young people in the catechetical program, total number of catechists, and number of the catechetical program's catechists were certified, as well as the certification status of the catechetical leader. All catechist respondents were asked if they completed the three hour *Introduction to Catechesis* course.

Each type of respondent was asked about their familiarity with the Diocesan Certification Policy. A link to the policy was provided for those who had not been exposed to the policy or who wished to refresh their memory regarding the requirements and process for obtaining certification. It was important to establish that the research was related to catechist certification requirements as stated in the policy. This was to distinguish the separate natures of the three hour *Introduction to Catechesis* course and the Diocesan *Catechists Formation and Certification Policy* and to dispel any confusion regarding the three hour *Introduction to Catechesis* as not being the complete basis for certification.

The PCL, DRE, CREs were questioned regarding their personal perceptions concerning the benefit and challenges of catechist certification, as well as the comments and perceptions which had been relayed to them by their catechists. Catechists were asked to comment regarding their personal views regarding certification, benefits and challenges they experience in terms of participating on on-going faith formation activities.

Separate from the status of the catechist as certified or in the process of certification, the area of recent on-going faith formation activities was addressed. This area explored the involvement and attention of the individual to personally focusing on their faith formation by attending seminars, retreats, parish activities which support personal faith commitment.

All respondents were asked for recommendations regarding ways the diocese or the parish could support their personal faith formation and enhance their ability to catechize others.

STUDY FINDINGS

There were 124 respondents who completed the online questionnaire. Table 3.1 shows the breakdown of those involved in a catechetical leadership role versus those in a catechist or other role in the parish catechetical program. Forty-four catechetical leaders provided their views and comments concerning on-going faith formation, benefits and challenges related to catechist certification. Eighty catechists or others in the catechetical program provided their experience with on-going faith formation, benefits, and challenges. Both groups were asked for their recommendations concerning how on-going faith formation and catechist certification could be supported at the diocesan or parish level. Responses to open-ended questions were summarized based on the main thought or issue described in the response.

Table 3.1. Respondent Sample

<u>Title</u>	<u>Number Responding</u>
Parish Catechetical Leaders, Directors of Religious Education, Coordinator of Religious Education	44
Catechist or Other Position	80

Q: How would you best describe your position in the catechetical program?

The parish catechetical leaders represented forty-four parishes of various sizes from very small parishes with 25 families to those with approximately 2,700 families. The number of families with children in the catechetical program ranged from sixteen families in a program of three catechists to over one thousand families with children in the catechetical program of approximately one hundred fifty catechists.

Table 3.2. Parish/Catechetical Demographics

<u>Description</u>	<u>Range</u>
Families in parish	25 - ~2,700
Families with children in catechetical program	16 - 1,100+
Number of catechists	3 - ~150
Youth in catechetical program	50 - 1,800

Q: Approximately how many total families are in the parish?
 Q: Approximately how many families have children in the Catechetical or Religious Education program?
 Q: Approximately how many catechists are in the full catechetical program?
 Q: Approximately how many students in grades pre-K – 5th, 6 – 8, 9 – 12?

The majority of the catechetical leaders were themselves either certified, held an advanced degree, or were in the process of becoming certified. Advanced degrees cited included Masters in Religious Education, Theology or Divinity. Approximately 42% of the catechists responding were either certified or in the process of certification according to the diocesan policy. Catechists in the “Not sure” category were not sure if their studies were applicable to the certification requirements.

Table 3.3. Catechetical Certification Levels

<u>Current Certification Levels</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
PCL/DRE/CRE	
Certified or hold advanced degrees	86%
Catechists	
Certified	27%
In process of certification	15%
Not sure	5%
No	51%

Q: Have you completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for certification?
 Q: Have you completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for catechist certification according to the diocesan policy?

Catechetical leaders and catechists were questioned regarding sources they depend on for the information they need for their catechetical program. The focus of this question was to determine the major sources of catechetical information – the key information leaders/sources. The majority of the parish catechetical leaders look to the Catechetical Leaders Association (CLA) meetings and the internet as their major sources for information to help them manage their programs. Other sources mentioned by the

catechetical leaders included catechetical magazines, text books, email, the pastor, Vatican website and parish secretary.

The majority of the catechists (49%) depend on their local catechetical leader (the PCL, DRE or CRE) for the information they need to provide effective program for those they catechize. Other sources mentioned by the catechists include the diocese, publisher's websites, other religious based websites, other books/reference material, the bible and other catechists.

Table 3.4. Catechetical Information Sources

<u>Information Sources</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Catechetical Leaders	
CLA meetings	37%
Internet	24%
Diocese	21%
Publisher's websites	18%
USCCB	15%
Catechists	
PCL/DRE/CRE	49%
Internet	25%
Pastor or parish	18%
Book	12%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: Other than accessing the diocesan website, how do you obtain the information you need for your catechetical program?

Of the 42 parish catechetical leaders who responded to the question regarding the benefits of on-going faith formation, there were two benefits mentioned most often, an enhanced personal faith and an increased knowledge of their faith. The benefit of enhanced personal faith or spirituality and increased knowledge lead to a more engaged and articulate catechist, one who is better equipped to catechize, with an improved ability to communicate the faith to others through their words and as a model of their faith.

Table 3.5. PCL/DRE/CRE Perceptions - On-going Faith Formation Benefits

<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Enhance personal faith formation or spirituality	40%
Increase knowledge	38%
Better equipped to catechize or teach	21%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: In general, what do you see as the benefits of continued catechist formation?

From a technical perspective, when queried regarding the benefits of certification, the mentions were less clustered around central theme. Thirty-five of the forty-four respondents had a positive view of certification, with varying degrees of agreement with the necessity or importance of certification. With increased knowledge and a deeper understanding of faith, the certified catechist was seen as better equipped to catechize. It was mentioned as important to be consistently formed in faith, communicating a standard message and as benefiting those who may not be as well versed in teaching or in their faith.

Six of the forty-four respondents had a definite negative view of certification. A few catechetical leaders mentioned certification as merely a piece of paper, a check in a box, and as unrealistic for volunteer catechists. The focus mentioned most often was that the catechist's commitment to on-going faith formation for the sake of personal enrichment and strengthening relationship with God was more important than the piece of paper. Engagement with their faith should be the main emphasis, both from an education and knowledge perspective and personal spiritual formation perspective. Another sentiment expressed was that information specific to the parish and the program, as presented by the catechetical leader would be more appropriate.

Table 3.6. PCL/DRE/CRE Perceptions - Certification Benefits

<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Better equipped to catechize or teach	26%
Increase knowledge	21%
Certification as a goal or accomplishment	18%
Deeper understanding	15%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: What do you see as the benefits of catechist certification?

The most often challenge mentioned by the parish catechetical leaders concerning certification is time. There are many different aspects which can be summarized to the challenge of time. Included is time to attend classes, the travel time to arrive at the class location, the time scheduling of the classes, the amount of time required for the classes and the amount of time within which the classes must be taken.

In many parishes, catechists have children in the program. They are already stretched to the limit between their employment, the family's schedule and being involved in the parish as a catechist. To require additional classes for the parents is viewed as being too much of a burden on an already hectic schedule.

The Diocese of Paterson spans three counties in Northern New Jersey. Most classes offered by the diocese are at a central location, in either Madison or Clifton New Jersey. For catechists located in Sussex County, it could be over an hour to the class location – for an hour long class. Many of the classes are scheduled during the week, which makes it difficult for working parents. Some of the catechetical leaders mentioned catechists would like to participate in additional classes, but the location and travel time becomes too overwhelming.

Table 3.7. PCL/DRE/CRE Perceptions - Certification Challenges

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Time	82%
Travel/location	26%
Information not pertinent	13%
Requirements too stringent	8%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: Please describe any challenges for catechist certification either you have experienced or your catechists have communicated to you.

The last set of time challenges relates to completing 50 hours of study over a three year period. Coupled with all of the other time commitments, this seems to be overwhelming for parents with young children. There were few solidly identifiable benefits to warrant taking on the aggressive schedule for certification according to the policy.

Travel to central class locations and stringent requirements for certification were also mentioned by some catechetical leaders as separate challenges communicated by the catechists when discussing on-going faith formation activities and catechist certification.

While describing the challenges, many catechetical leaders also provided suggestions to alleviate or minimize some of the challenges. The suggestions will be discussed in more detail in the recommendations section.

Seventy catechists provided responses to the questions related to benefits of on-going faith formation and certification. Overwhelmingly, knowledge, understanding and spiritual growth were cited by catechists as benefits to continued faith formation.

Looking specifically at catechists who were either certified or working towards certification, a few who mentioned on-going faith formation as being beneficial to the catechist and those being catechized. “Faith must be continually nurtured to survive.”⁴ “It [continued faith formation] benefits the catechist by continually strengthening and renewing their personal faith, and it also benefits their students, because a catechist cannot share what they do not possess.”⁵

Table 3.8. Catechist Perceptions

<u>On-going Faith Formation Benefits</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
More knowledgeable, qualified	56%
Consistent understanding of faith, church	29%
<u>Certification Benefits</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Deeper understanding, spiritual growth	50%
More knowledgeable	30%
Role model or witness	6%
Increased confidence	6%
Provide tools for teaching	6%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: In general, what do you see as the benefits of continued faith formation?

Q: What do you see as the benefits of catechist certification?

⁴ Catechist response, Respondent #79, 2/7/18, *Catechist On-going Faith Formation*.

⁵ Ibid., #83, 2/8/18.

Other comments mentioned on-going faith formation as being beneficial to the catechist to become more comfortable and articulate in discussing their faith. Continued study helps to keep the catechist current with the teachings and focus of the church. Meeting with others and sharing faith stories strengthens the individual in their faith.

Sixty-two catechists responded with challenges they experience concerning catechist certification. Echoing the sentiments mentioned by the parish catechetical leaders, the catechists mentioned the same concerns with time, travel and the locations of the classes. With other family and work related commitments, time is precious and at a premium. Other challenges mentioned were certification was too demanding for volunteers, courses were not relevant, lack of flexibility, parish does not communicate requirements or opportunities and the number of hours required was over what could be expected from a volunteer.

Table 3.9. Catechists Perceptions - Certification Challenges

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Time	34%
Travel/location	18%
Availability	11%
None	18%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: Please describe any challenges for catechist certification you have experienced.

Ninety-one percent of the parish catechetical leaders reported being involved in faith related activities over the past five years. Many of them mentioned attending multiple faith formation events on a yearly basis. Retreats and seminars or conferences were mentioned most often, sometimes going outside the diocese for conferences organized by retreat houses or other dioceses.

Of those parish catechetical leaders who are not currently certified or actively seeking certification, all of them are very involved in their personal faith formation through retreats, seminars, Bible study, CLA meetings and parish speakers.

Table 3.10. PCL/DRE/CRE Faith Related Activities

<u>Faith Related Activity</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Retreats	56%
Other conferences	39%
Seminars	32%
Diocesan conferences	22%
Parish programs	15%
Bible Study	15%
St. Paul inside the Wall programs	10%
Webinars/online classes	10%
Other classes	10%
Speaker presentation	7%
Personal study/reading	5%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: Please describe any faith related activities you have participated in, such as retreats, seminars, convocations, etc. in the past 5 years.

The parish catechetical leaders appear to take their personal faith formation seriously attending events as well as personal reading and study. Two of the three people who did not answer the question have either a Masters in Divinity or are certified through another diocese.

Sixty-eight of eighty respondents provided examples of faith formation related activities they have participated in over the last five years. Echoing the same basic list as that of the parish catechetical leaders; retreats, seminars, conferences and classes are mentioned most often as the faith formation activities in which the catechists participate. Many of the activities mentioned addressed personal faith formation, such as Cornerstone and silent retreats, other activities mentioned focused on theology and the Bible.

Table 3.11. Catechists Faith Related Activities

<u>Faith Related Activity</u>	<u>Percent of Mentions*</u>
Retreats	46%
Seminars	40%
Conferences	15%
Classes	15%
Bible Study	12%
Online Programs	6%
Women's Groups	4%
Lectures	3%
Mass	3%

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: Please describe any faith related activities you have participated in, such as retreats, seminars, convocations, etc. in the past 5 years.

The majority of catechists are engaged and participate in multiple faith related activities on a yearly basis. Only four respondents cited no participation in any faith related activities in the recent past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With more catechists attaining certification as the goal, the parish catechetical leaders were asked for recommendations. Many of the recommendation directly addressed the challenges mentioned by the parish catechetical leaders. Selected unedited verbatim responses regarding recommendations from the catechetical leaders and the catechists can be found in Appendix 3.

The top two recommendations were to offer more local training, which related to travel challenges, and web/online opportunities which addressed the time challenge. Other recommendations which related to time and location challenges were to offer varied formats/dates/times for classes, and having the DRE or CRE conduct training at the parish level and also to network parishes for training.

Table 3.12. PCL/DRE/CRE Recommendations

Recommendations for Certification Support *

Offer local training (19)
 Web/online opportunities (17)
 DRE/CRE conduct training (4)
 Provide more guidance – reading list/approved courses (5)
 Varied formats/dates/times
 Network parishes for training
 Offer challenging/relevant topics
 More focused basic certification requirements
 Explain the importance of faith formation
 Offer a stipend to attend courses

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

Other recommendations from the catechetical leaders addressed more focused support for those who are interested in certification – providing guidance concerning courses which would apply toward certification requirements, offering challenging and relevant topics, explaining the importance of certification and devising a plan for more focused certification requirements for parish catechetical leaders versus catechists. One catechetical leader suggested offering a stipend for those who attend classes as an extra incentive for a volunteer to go the extra steps toward certification.

Table 3.13. Catechist Recommendations

Recommendations for Certification Support *

Flexible locations/opportunities (35%)
 Flexible time (29%)
 Online courses (21%)
 Communicate more with catechists (12%)
 More relevant courses (11%)
 More defined, applicable courses
 Spanish courses
 Pastor support
 Less expensive

*Multiple responses allowed per respondent

Q: If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

The recommendations mentioned most often by the catechists also related to the main challenges of time and travel/location - offering flexible locations and opportunities, offering flexible times and online or web-based opportunities. Just over 20% of the catechists suggested using online or web-based courses as a means of presenting material in a manner where the catechist could access the material and complete the course during

their free time. Online courses offer the flexibility of fitting the session into their schedule early in the morning, late in the evening or whenever there is available time during the day or during the week.

Other recommendations addressed the issues of guidance in identifying or offering relevant courses, offering courses in Spanish and communicating opportunities to the catechists. Pastor support and making classes less expensive for the volunteer catechist were also mentioned as ways the parish and diocese could encourage more catechists to participate in the certification process.

The responses from the catechetical leaders and the catechists highlighted the strengths and challenges of the *Catechist Formation and Certification Policy*. The majority of the catechetical leaders and catechists recognize that on-going attention to their personal faith formation through prayer, courses, seminars and retreats help them to effectively pass along the faith to others. And the majority of catechetical leaders and catechists attend events which help them to become more effective mentors in faith. The main challenge arises from the scheduling and travel time required to attend faith formation events.

Flexibility is a key component to encouraging and supporting the catechists and their leaders. The respondents voiced a desire to pursue additional faith formation activities, but the demands from their employment and family obligations hinders their ability to attend formation events. The use of web-based platforms for online webinars and courses was often mentioned in the recommendations for catechetical support. Personal reading which can be fit into their schedule was also mentioned. The time catechists have available may be during off-hours in the evening or early in the morning, which are not typical times when courses are scheduled.

CHAPTER FOUR:
LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE
CONCLUSION

There was a self-selecting component to the study. The participants were either catechetical leaders in the parish program or catechists who attended the three hour *Introduction to Catechesis* course, or other various diocesan programs. They are people who were interested in the study, and therefore to an extent, engaged in the subject of faith formation. There are over one hundred catechetical leaders in the parishes and according to the 2017 census and over 2,900 catechists who are involved in the faith education of our young people. It was anticipated that responses provided by the leaders and catechists would echo the sentiments of those who did not participate in the study.

There are a few basic themes which resonated throughout the responses from the parish catechetical leaders and catechists:

- Parish catechetical leaders and catechists are involved in their personal faith formation and become more knowledgeable concerning their faith through the events they attend.
- The benefits include being more comfortable speaking about faith, having a more personal relationship with God, and being more knowledgeable about their faith.
- The main challenges are time and location of faith formation opportunities.

The majority of the people who responded to the study are engaged with their faith. Over 90% of parish catechetical leaders and 50% of catechists mentioned multiple

events in which they participated over the last five years. When possible, they attend retreats, conferences, seminars and local events related to their faith. The events mentioned span the Diocese of Paterson and the Archdiocese of Newark, as well as some events outside of the state. Faith is important to these people who are part of our catechetical programs and when possible, they take time to nurture that faith.

The participants recognize there are benefits to attending seminars, conferences and faith formation events. Catechists spoke of how the additional knowledge or faith experience helped them in the class to discuss their faith. Meeting with others and sharing or discussing their faith during a formation event helped the catechists to become more articulate about their faith and improved their ability to model the faith for others.

Being involved in the faith formation of youth is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege in that the individual is carrying on the evangelizing work as Jesus commissioned. “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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”¹

Many parishes have difficulty recruiting volunteer catechists due to the time commitment and the perceived level of knowledge of the Catholic faith that is required. The on-going faith formation requirements may be downplayed in efforts to attract volunteers. A process of discernment should include the full disclosure of all requirements for the position and requisites which are optional for volunteer catechists.

¹ *The Catholic Prayer Bible: Lectio Divina Edition NRSV*, (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), Matthew 28:19-20.

Specific training is required for many other volunteer positions. In the State of New Jersey in both volunteer and paid fire service, a fire fighter is required to acquire the basic knowledge of firefighting. In Scouting, there are required procedure and safety courses required of adults who work with young people. Being a practicing Catholic is not enough to effectively educate young people in the Catholic faith tradition. Advanced knowledge of the Church, its beliefs and position on world concerns is important in understanding the Catholic stance on social issues. A knowledgeable catechist is better prepared to effectively handle many of the questions and situations which arise in the catechetical sessions.

OPTIONS

Based on the recommendations from the catechetical leaders and catechists, there are many options for the parish and the diocese to support the continued faith formation of the people involved in catechesis. The responses to the question regarding other faith formation events the catechists have attended demonstrates they are engaged with their faith. Based on the responses to the questions of challenges, it is more a matter of fitting their personal faith formation activities into the already tight schedule of family obligations.

The focus should be to develop and transition to more catechist centered flexible options which take into account the busy schedules of the people who catechize.

Flexibility is the key concept to supporting faith formation. This includes the flexibility to identify, develop and schedule faith formation opportunities which are of interest to the catechist and support their catechetical situation.

Providing a list to those involved in catechesis of online and in-class courses, reading materials and webinars which have been identified as being applicable to on-going faith formation, would help the catechist to readily determine opportunities for participation. At times, it is difficult to determine if an opportunity would apply towards certification and under which area the opportunity falls in the certification requirements.

Table 4.1. Options for Catechetical Faith Formation Support

Option

- Provide a list of approved/applicable webinars, online courses
 - Offer online classes
 - Offer targeted online seminars
 - Offer three hour *Introduction to Catechesis* as recorded webinar
 - Multiple locations for courses/seminars
 - Multiple dates/times for courses/seminars
 - Offer two focused tracks of certification
 - Parish Catechetical Leader
 - Catechist
-

The option to generate or partner with a school of higher learning to offer online classes would assist the catechist to foster their faith and their catechetical abilities. These opportunities could focus on a faith-related degree, certificate or catechist certification. For example, the Archdiocese of Newark has partnered with University of Dayton (OH) to offer online courses to the catechists, with the emphasis on certification.

For courses which are required by the diocese for all catechists, such as the three hour *Introduction to Catechesis*, offering the course as a three phase webinar would allow more catechists to be exposed to the material in a timely manner. The course may also be beneficial to long-time catechists who were involved in the catechetical programs before the course became a requirement. Discussion questions which address the course content would confirm the catechist viewed and understood the complete webinar.

If a course or seminar must be face to face or interactive, offering a variety of times and locations would make it possible for more people to attend. Many catechists have active families and full-time employment, making it difficult to attend events in the evening. It is approximately one hour to drive from the farthest areas of the diocese to the diocesan center or St. Paul Inside the Wall. Using online conferencing platforms, such as Skype, GoToMeeting or Zoom, would allow catechists to attend the presentation and participate from remote locations.

A more complex option to address catechist certification would be to break the certification requirements into two tracks – one for catechetical leaders, defined as the local mentors for the catechists, and a separate track for catechists. Almost 50% of catechists who responded to the study said they depended on their PCL/DRE/CRE for the information they needed to function in the catechetical program. The catechetical leader has the leadership role and responsibility for the catechists in their program and function as the in-house mentors and first-line experts for the catechists. The catechetical leaders should have a deeper knowledge of Scripture, Theology, and Catechetical Methodology as the resource person to guide the catechists in their ministry. The catechetical leaders

are the inspiration and role-models for the catechists and, as such, they should be more faith centered and knowledgeable on the principles of faith.

The catechist track would focus more on personal spirituality, prayer, stages of moral/cognitive development, theology and classroom management as it applies to the grade level they catechize. Not only are the concepts of catechesis communicated at each grade level different, but may require a variety of ways the information is presented. Based on differences in learning styles and abilities, students within the same class may or may not understand the material if presented in only one format.

The previous recommendations comprise a short list of suggestions to make the certification process more accessible to a greater number of catechists and to support their faith formation activities. The focus of any catechist faith formation program should provide guidance, relevant courses based on the needs of catechists, and flexibility and respect for the already over-scheduled catechist.

There are a variety of reasons why catechists pursue on-going study of their faith, from personal enrichment to attaining a faith-related degree. Offerings should mirror the aspirations of the individual catechists. College credit course options support the catechist working towards a degree, while auditing a course or a non-credit course provides more focused options more appropriate for those who simply want to delve deeper into their faith. The college credit-bearing classes require a longer time commitment and are usually more expensive. The personal enrichment options usually require a shorter time commitment and a nominal cost. Faith formation options should also provide opportunities for self-study, as well as guided study individually or in groups.

It is advisable for the diocese to offer a wide variety of on-going faith formation opportunities from which the catechists may choose based on their personal faith formation objectives and the time and study method most appropriate for their lifestyle. The wider the range of opportunities, the more people will be able to take advantage of the experiences and grow in faith. The goal is ultimately for catechists to pursue some type of on-going faith formation to enrich their personal faith and support their catechetical efforts. A responsibility of the diocese is to provide guidance to the catechists and offer support in their faith formation journey.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DIOCESAN ACTIONS ON STUDY RESULTS

In April 2018, the results of the study were presented to the Diocesan Catechetical Advisory Board using the PowerPoint presentation in Appendix 4. The presentation was well received by the Board and prompted almost immediate discussion of next steps. It was mentioned during the discussion following the presentation the diocese was in the process of assembling a list of courses and reading materials to support the catechist formation activity. The list was one of the recommendations mentioned by the catechetical leaders and the catechists – providing a listing of websites and reference materials which applied to the certification requirements. It was encouraging to hear that the diocesan Catechetical Advisory Board already had the directory in process.

During the few months following the presentation to the Advisory Board, the Diocese of Paterson partnered with Sadlier Publishers to offer a set of three webinars in support of catechesis. The webinars were announced in *The Beacon*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Paterson, NJ. The announcement, in Appendix 5, outlined the offering of the Summer Catechist Formation Series as online courses for catechists which apply toward the catechist certification program. The article mentioned, at the time of publication, more than 260 catechists from more than 40 parishes in the Diocese had already registered for the webinar courses. This was exceptional since the typical attendance for on-site classes was much less.

The subjects of the webinars included – “Effective Catechesis: Instruction and Management”, “Spirituality of the Catechist” and “Family: Foundation of Faith”. “Technology and Planning and Their Importance in the Success of the Presentation of a Catechetical Lesson” was also offered for Spanish-speaking catechists.¹ Approximately 50 catechists registered for the Spanish- speaking webinar.

A “Save the Dates” email, in Appendix 6, was sent to all parish catechetical leaders to announce the webinar series and to offer suggestions of how the webinars viewed be used by the catechists in the parish as a group or individually. The catechetical leaders were advised to send the promotional materials to their catechists and, if possible, arrange for meetings at the parish for catechists to view the webinars as a group and discuss the materials. The process for registering for the webinars was outlined in the initial email. Detailed promotional materials were sent in a later email to the catechetical leaders. The description of the individual webinars and the questions to be completed by those viewing the webinars can be found in Appendix 7. The questions following the webinar were sent to the diocesan catechetical office and a certificate of completion was issued.

¹ The Beacon, *Diocesan first: Summer catechist formation series offered as online courses*, August 23, 2018, Catholicbeacon@patersondiocese.org.

Catechist comments reported after the announcement of the courses included the webinar offering was fantastic and they appreciated this new way of staying connected with the diocese. The offering pinpointed a more effective way of working together and serving the catechists where they are in terms of flexible times to view the courses and locations for the viewing.

I attended the taping of two of the webinars and was encouraged by the depth of the information provided pinpointing real situations faced by the catechists and offering suggestions. During the group viewing of one webinar I attended, the webinar served as a starting point for additional discussion and sharing among the catechist in attendance.

The Diocesan Office of Catechesis reported approximately 300 catechists from 49 parishes registered for the webinars. About two-thirds, or 200 catechists completed the documentation and submitted the documents to the office for the certificate of completion. This is compared to the approximately 50 people who registered and attended summer program offered by the diocese in past years. The Office of Catechesis commented that offering the webinars connected some catechists to the Office of Catechesis where, previously, they were unaware of the faith formation support from the diocese. The Office of Catechesis was now on the catechists' radar as a resource. They are receiving more inquiries from the catechetical leaders and catechists as a result of the webinar offering.

The Catechist Resource page on the St. Paul Inside the Walls website provides links and short descriptions of faith formation offerings from Assumption College for Sisters, *Symbolon*, *My Catholic Faith Delivered*, and *Keep the Faith*. Some options, for example Assumption College courses, require registration, and a semester term commitment to coursework. Coursework is applicable to a higher education degree/certificate or may be taken as a non-degree credit, audited course. *My Catholic Faith Delivered* subscription courses combine text and online course work to be completed within a year. *Keep the Faith* offers a variety of downloads which are fairly inexpensive and self-paced.

Between 2015- 2016, Felician University proposed the Felician Institute, a series of 4-week online personal faith enhancement courses. The courses focused on subjects such as *Prayer & Spirituality*, *Jesus: the Man and the Mission*, *the Creed*, *Catholic Social Teaching*, *the Eucharist*, *Sacraments*, *Morality*, *Scripture*, *the Church*, *Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue*, and *Parents Raising Children in the Catholic Faith*. The Institute was designed for people who wanted to focus on targeted areas of faith formation. The courses were designed to help catechists comply with the requirements for catechist certification. The Institute has been temporarily placed on hold and may be re-launched in the future.

This project was undertaken with the cooperation of the Diocese of Paterson for the benefit of the diocese and the catechists of the diocese. The project provided a forum for parish catechetical leaders and catechists to communicate their thoughts on the benefits and challenges they face regarding catechist certification and on-going faith formation. One person voicing a concern does not carry the validity or influence as the conscientious view of many people voicing the same concern.

During the initial meeting with the Office of Catechesis there was agreement by the attendees regarding the benefits of on-going catechist faith formation and catechist certification. Previous attempts by the diocese to provide faith formation opportunities were not as well attended as the diocese had anticipated. Some faith formation opportunities have been discontinued due to lack of interest. It was my hope that by going directly to the catechists and asking them their thoughts on continuing faith formation, the benefits and challenges they face attending to their faith, we could identify new opportunities to support the catechists.

Within a matter of months, the Office of Catechesis and the Catechetical Advisory Board implemented a few of the study recommendations. The webinars developed with Sadlier publishing and the listing of faith formation options on the St. Paul Inside the Walls website were suggestions made by the study respondents. The response to the webinars was higher than many of the previous summer faith formation opportunities. Recent conversations with the Office for Catechesis are encouraging, with more recommended options in the planning stage. I am optimistic the diocese will continue to implement more flexible, catechist centered opportunities in the future to encourage and assist catechists in their faith journey.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 – *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy*
(January 6, 2008)

APPENDIX 2 – *Catechist Certification and On-going Faith Formation - Questionnaire*

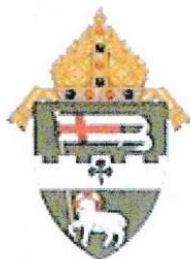
APPENDIX 3 – Selected Verbatim Responses

APPENDIX 4 – *Catechist Certification: Challenges of On-going Faith Formation - Presentation*

APPENDIX 5 – Beacon Announcement – *Diocesan first: Summer catechist formation series offered as online courses*

APPENDIX 6 – Catechist “Save the Dates” email announcement

APPENDIX 7 – Diocese of Paterson Catechist Certification 2018-19 webinars and question sheets



DIOCESE OF PATERSON

**CATECHIST FORMATION AND
CERTIFICATION POLICY**

January 6, 2008

CATECHIST FORMATION AND CERTIFICATION POLICY
DIOCESE OF PATERSON, NEW JERSEY
January 6, 2008

The apostolic work of the catechist springs from the Sacrament of Baptism through which all believers come to share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. The call to the ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit. Catechists need to be practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church and who have been prepared for their apostolate by appropriate catechetical training.
 (NDC #54-B.8)

The ***National Directory for Catechesis***, published in 2005, acknowledges the irreplaceable service of lay catechists and the need to provide for their preparation and ongoing formation: "Men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds are called to share in the Church's mission. Most are volunteers. 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 in Christ."

(NDC, #55-A)

The ***General Directory for Catechesis*** states: "The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists. Consequently, diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the formation of lay catechists."
 (GDC, #234)

Both of the above documents outline the essential elements of catechist formation. This formation must address: the Christian discipleship and the spiritual growth of catechists, their deeper knowledge of the faith and their love for the Lord and His Church, and their understanding of the nature and purpose of catechesis in the Church's evangelizing mission.

Formation must also help them to grow in their understanding of the socio-cultural context in which they minister, and the particular needs and characteristics of those they are catechizing. Spirituality (Being), Theology (Knowing the message), and Catechetical Methodology (Knowing the persons to whom the message is being transmitted and knowing how to transmit it effectively) are equally important to the catechetical process (cf. GDC, #234-252 and NDC # 55-56).

Catechists seek to carry out the six tasks of catechesis identified by both the *GDC* (#85-87) and the *NDC* (#20). The following tasks have one aim: to form a person as a disciple of Christ:

- 1) Promoting knowledge of the faith;
- 2) Educating people for liturgy;
- 3) Promoting moral formation;
- 4) Educating people in prayer;
- 5) Preparing people to live in a community of faith and to be active participants;
- 6) Promoting a missionary spirit that demonstrates how Christians are to live in society.

To this end, catechists need both initial and ongoing formation so that they may minister effectively.

The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided. The call to the ministry of catechesis should be understood within the parameters of the *NDC* #55 Sections B through E: Discernment of the Call to Catechize; the Need for Formation; and the Initial and Ongoing Formation of Catechists.

The following positive qualities should be identifiable in candidates for the ministry of catechesis:

- Faith in the Lord that manifests itself in their piety and daily life;
- Love for the Church and communion with its pastors;
- Apostolic spirit and missionary zeal;
- Love for their brothers and sisters and a willingness to give generous service;
- Sufficient education;
- The respect of the community;
- The human, moral and technical qualities necessary for the work of a catechist.

Statute 28E of the Paterson Diocesan Synod of 1971 states that the Parish Life Secretariat "... (shall) require and provide for the certification of all catechists." Based on this statute and the above criteria, the Diocese of Paterson has established the following policy for the certification and ongoing formation of catechists who minister in varied ways and at different levels, in the parishes and schools of the diocese.

A. Initial Formation toward Basic Certification

A beginning catechist must complete a total of fifty-two (52) hours over a three-year period:

Thirty (30) hours of study in Scripture and Theology
 Sixteen (16) hours of study in Catechetics and Methodology
 Six (6) hours of Spiritual Formation

* See section C for ways to acquire certification hours and section D for a listing of required course areas

B. Ongoing Formation and Validation of Basic Certification

A certified catechist must keep his/her certificate valid by acquiring an additional 14 hours each year:

Six (6) hours of study in Scripture and Theology
 Six (6) hours of study in Catechetics and Methodology
 Two (2) hours of Spiritual Formation

* See section C for ways to acquire certification hours and section D for a listing of required course areas

C. Ways to Acquire Hours for Initial and/or Ongoing Certification

1. Catechists who have degrees or are working toward degrees, or who have taken non-degree courses at an accredited college or university, whether graduate or undergraduate, may count course hours as long as they fulfill the following requirements:
 - a. The courses are in the required areas of study with a reasonable balance among the theological/catechetical areas.
 - b. The courses were taken within ten (10) years prior to the date of application for Basic Catechist Certification.
 - c. The applicant has training in catechetical methodology.

2. Catechists applying for Basic Certification or Ongoing Formation credit may count any Diocesan or parish sponsored institute, workshop, or program toward certification as long as it meets the following criteria:
 - a. The institute, workshop, or program dealt with one or more of the required areas of study.
 - b. The applicant attended the institute, workshop, or program within five years prior to the date of application for Basic Catechist Certification.

3. Catechists unable to attend courses or programs may choose to do self-study as long as it fulfills the following requirements:
 - a. CD's, Video's, DVDs, online resources, books or other printed materials in the required areas must be approved by the Diocesan office.
 - b. Reflection sheets should be completed and presented to the DRE in order to have hours credited toward certification or validation of a current certificate.
 - c. Lists of approved resources and the reflection sheets can be found on the Diocesan website.
4. Catechists may be credited with a maximum of six (6) hours for actual classroom experience if they have taught and have been observed by the DRE or his/her representative during the period of applying for basic certification. In addition, certified catechists may receive two (2) credit hours for actual classroom experience in Catechetical Methodology (out of the required 6).
5. If the pastor or his representative believes a candidate is active in the Spiritual Formation areas listed in Section D1 below, then the catechist shall be credited with the appropriate number of hours in the area of spirituality towards their initial certification (maximum of 6 credit hours) and/or towards their ongoing formation and validation of their basic certification (maximum of 2 hours).

D. Required Areas of Catechetical Formation

1. Spiritual Formation

"Preach the Gospel in everything that you do; if necessary, use words."
-- St. Francis of Assisi

Like all disciples of Jesus the Christ, catechists are called to holiness. Catechists should be exemplary followers of Jesus with unquestioned personal integrity and moral character, and a life that is in conformity to the teaching of the Church.

The catechist should continue his/her own spiritual formation through:

- a. Frequent reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation;
- b. Participation in retreat days, days of renewal, prayer, faith-sharing groups and/or other devotional activities of the local and/or diocesan church;
- c. A deeper practice of prayer (e.g. the recitation of Morning and Evening Prayer in union with the Church), daily meditation, spiritual reading, and, where possible, regular spiritual direction.

2. Biblical-Theological Formation

The following is a brief overview of the required areas of content based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* and the *NDC #23-25*.

a. Sacred Scripture

“Sacred Scripture, the Word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has as the preeminent position in the life of the Catholic Church and especially in the ministry of evangelization and catechesis” (NDC #24.B).

Catechists should become familiar with the basic elements of Salvation History and the major themes of the Old Testament in order to better understand the mystery and person of Jesus. They should understand the basic structure, meaning, and purpose of the four Gospel accounts and the rest of the New Testament writings as the basic source of our Christian faith and moral life.

b. Doctrine

“The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is the doctrinal point of reference for education in the basic tasks of catechesis” (NDC #24.C).

The plan of this catechism follows the tradition that builds catechesis on the following four pillars:

1) *The Profession of Faith (the Creed)*

The Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life and is therefore the most fundamental and essential of all teaching. While all the truths of the faith form an organic or harmonious unity, other truths are organized around these fundamental truths: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, and the mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ. Catechists should take care to teach the mysteries of the faith, e.g., the Trinity, using the proper theological language of the Church.

2) *The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (the Sacraments of Faith – Liturgical Life)*

Faith and worship are closely related: faith gathers the community for worship, and worship renews the faith of the community. In the Liturgy, the official public worship of the Church celebrates what

she professes and lives: above all, the Paschal Mystery by which Christ accomplished the work of our salvation. The liturgical life of the Church revolves around the seven sacraments, with central emphasis on the Eucharist.

3) *Life in Christ (the Commandments – Morality)*

All Christian moral life is rooted in the dignity derived from God's creation of us in his image and likeness. In Christ God reveals how human beings are to live.

The Church has the responsibility to form its members in light of the Gospel and to teach them how to apply Christian moral principles to contemporary problems in specific and practical ways. The Ten Commandments (Decalogue) and the Beatitudes are the primary reference points for the application of Christian moral principles.

Followers of Christ have the responsibility to apply Christian values to social systems, structures and institutions in an effort to root out injustice.

Secularism, materialism, and ethical relativism erode moral reference points and thereby diminish people's ability to make moral decisions.

4) *Prayer of the Believer (the "Our Father")*

Prayer nurtures our vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. Personal prayer is God's initiative, and the response to that gift is prompted by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the "Our Father" we find the model of prayer taught to us by Jesus himself and the sum total of all the good things we hope for and that our heavenly Father wants to give us. The Church's rich tradition includes many forms and expressions of prayer.

3. Formation in Catechetical Methodology

Formation should also include training in catechetical methodology. This formation should help catechists grow in their capacity as genuine teachers of the truth, keenly aware of both the authentic Gospel message and the circumstances of those for whom the message is intended (NDC #55-E). Catechists are to identify and create "suitable conditions which are necessary for the Christian message to be sought, accepted, and more profoundly investigated" for each of the various groups they serve. 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” (NDC, #54-B.8).

The following areas should be understood by catechists.

- a. The Nature and Goal of Catechesis in the Church
 - 1) Historical development of catechesis in the Church
 - 2) Catechesis in the Church’s mission of evangelization
 - 3) Forming disciples as the goal of all catechesis
 - 4) The elements of the catechetical process (cf. GDC, #60-76; NDC, #19-20)

- b. The Socio-Cultural Context for Catechesis
 - 1) General characteristics of our American culture
 - 2) Diversity in U.S. culture
 - 3) Profile of American Catholics
 - 4) Challenges to catechetical ministry in the U.S. (cf. NDC, #4-A, B, C)

- c. Catechetical Methodology
 - 1) The nature of learning and of the learner
 - 2) Forming disciples: information, formation, transformation
 - 3) Effective communication and use of resources
 - 4) Methods of catechesis for various age levels (cf. GDC, #137-162; NDC, #55)

E. Required Record-Keeping of Catechetical Formation at the Parish

We suggest each catechist keep his/her own record of accumulated hours toward certification/validation and that the parish appoint a local certification moderator who will be responsible for keeping records of certification hours of their catechists. Forms may be downloaded from the Diocesan website (www.patersondiocese.org).

The following information should be maintained in the parish office of religious education/faith formation:

- a. Catechist’s name;
- b. Catechist’s address and phone;
- c. Year Catechetical Ministry began;
- d. Date of basic certification;
- e. Year of validated basic certification;
- f. Record of courses attended and hours acquired:
 - i. Title of course or program
 - ii. Location of program
 - iii. Date attended
 - iv. Hours acquired

v. Validation of course completion

On an annual basis, the parish office should send a master list to the Diocesan office indicating the names of catechists and the hours accumulated toward certification/validation. Also, parishes should forward to the Diocese the names of certified catechists who have completed their 3rd, 5th, 10th and subsequent 5 year milestones of catechetical ministry.

The on-going adult journey in the life of faith as disciples of Jesus Christ is the backdrop against which these formation and certification experiences have their truest expressions. Parishes must commit themselves to forming and cultivating a catechetical community where the love of Christ and His Church and the zeal and joy for teaching and evangelizing are prevalent and nourished.

Catechist Certification and On-going Faith Formation

The following questionnaire and its related study are being conducted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Ministry from Drew University. The independent study is sanctioned by the Diocese of Paterson, but is not being conducted by the Diocese. All responses are confidential; email addresses and parishes will not be associated with the responses.

* Required

Introduction

In January 2009, the Diocese of Paterson launched the Catechist Formation and Certification Policy. This policy is accessible through the link in the invitation to participate. Since its launch, assorted challenges for catechists with regard to the certification process have been mentioned in an off-handed manner. This study seeks to identify the challenges and inform the Diocese with the expectation of making ongoing faith formation and certification more accessible through clarification or modification to the policy or by identifying additional resources needed from the parishes or the diocese to assist catechists in continuing faith formation.

Your participation in this on-line survey is requested to assist in this endeavor on a strictly volunteer basis. Catechetical setting demographics may be requested. All responses are either to the best of your knowledge/ability or your opinion on various topics. The full survey may take anywhere from 10-15 minutes, depending on your position in the catechetical program. Once you start the survey, you must complete it in one sitting. Since we are not collecting email address or any identifying information, it is impossible for you to stop the survey and resume at a later time. It is hoped your responses will be candid and complete. A response to the first question (your position in the catechetical program) is the only required question. You may decline to answer any question which makes you uncomfortable or may be too personal.

Consent to participate is implied by clicking on the link to this survey. You may complete the survey or end this session. Completion of the survey implies your consent to your opinions being used for the study. Your name or email address will not be associated with the data unless you specifically provide your name at the end of the survey. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with your parish or the diocese.

If you have any questions either before you begin or after you have completed the survey, you may contact the principle researcher at jponnwitz@drew.edu.

Thank you for your anticipated participation.

1. **How would you best describe your position in the catechetical program? Please select the most appropriate response from the following. This question is required to participate in the study. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Parish Catechetical Leader or Director of Religious Education *Skip to question 2.*
- Coordinator of Religious Education *Skip to question 2.*
- Catechist *Skip to question 24.*
- Other position *Skip to question 24.*

Parish Catechetical Leader/DRE/CRE

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Keep in mind, responses are not associated with your name or email address.

The questions refer to the parish catechetical setting where you serve, which may not be the parish you belong to as an individual or as a family.

We would like to start with some background information regarding the catechetical setting where you serve.

2. **Approximately how many total families are in the parish?**

3. **Approximately how many families have children in the Catechetical or Religious Education program?**

4. **About how many students are in Pre-K through 5th grade?**

5. **How many students are in grades 6 through 8?**

6. **How many students are in grades 9 through 12?**

7. **Approximately how many children will be receiving First Reconciliation and First Eucharist during the current year?**

8. **Approximately how many catechists are in the full catechetical program?**

The next section refers to the Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy as referenced in the previous email. Please be as candid as possible and use the following scale of 1 to 5 for the responses, with 1 being unfamiliar and 5 being very familiar.

9. **On a scale of 1 - 5, how familiar are you with the Diocesan Sacramental Policies regarding First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation?**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. **On the scale of 1 - 5, before today, how familiar were you with the "Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy"?**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. **How familiar are you with the diocesan website and where to find diocesan policies?**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 12. **Other than accessing the diocesan website, how do you obtain the information you need for your catechetical program?**

.....

The following questions specifically reference the "Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy" and the 3-hour "Introduction to Catechesis" series provided by the diocese.

- 13. **Approximately how many catechists in your catechetical program completed the 3-hour "Introduction to Catechesis" program?**

.....

- 14. **Approximately how many catechists in your program completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for catechist certification according to the diocesan policy?**

.....

- 15. **Approximately how many are working towards certification?**

.....

- 16. **Have you completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for certification? Please describe your personal experience with the 50 hour course of study for certification.**

.....
.....
.....
.....

17. **Please describe any faith related activities you have participated in, such as retreats, seminars, convocations, etc. in the past 5 years.**

18. **In general, what do you see as the benefits of continued catechists' formation?**

19. **What do you see as the benefits of catechist certification?**

20. **Please describe any challenges for catechists' certification either you have experienced or your catechists have communicated to you.**

21.

If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

22.

Please provide any other comments you have on the topic.

Thank you -

Thank you for participating in this study. As mentioned earlier, your responses are confidential and will not be linked to your individual email or the parish where you serve. We have taken all reasonable measures to protect your identity and responses. IP addresses are not collected. However, e-mail and the internet are not 100% secure, so it is also suggested that you clear the computer's cache and browser history to protect your privacy after completing the survey.

Full information regarding catechist certification may be found in the document "Diocese of Paterson Diocesan Catechist Formation and Certification Policy". The policy references the "General Directory of Catechesis" (Congregation for Clergy) and the "National Directory of Catechesis" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

If you have any questions or concerns and would like to discuss this study further, you may contact Joanne Ponnwitz, jponnwitz@drew.edu or Dr. Donna Ciangio, Donna.Ciangio@gmail.com.

23.

If you would like to continue the discussion as an in-person or phone conversation, please provide your name and contact information.

Skip to "Thank you -"

Catechist

The following questions refer to your knowledge of the diocesan policies and resources available on the diocesan website. Please be as candid as possible and use the following scale of 1 to 5 for the responses, with 1 being unfamiliar and 5 being very familiar.

24. **On a scale of 1 – 5, before today, how familiar were you with the Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy?**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. **On the scales of 1 – 5, how familiar are you with the diocesan website and where to find diocesan policies?**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. **Other than accessing the diocesan website, how do you obtain the information you need for your catechetical program?**

27. **Please describe your position in the catechetical program.**

The next section refers to the Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy as referenced in the previous email. Please be as candid as possible.

The following questions specifically reference the "Diocesan Catechist Formation and

Certification Policy" as referenced in the previous email and the 3-hour "Introduction to Catechesis" series provided by the diocese.

28. **Have you completed the 3-hour Introduction to Catechesis program?**

.....

29. **Have you completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for catechist certification according to the diocesan policy? If not, are you working towards certification?**

.....
.....
.....
.....

30. **Please describe your personal experience with the 50 hour course of study for certification.**

.....
.....
.....
.....

31. **In general, what do you see as the benefits of continued faith formation?**

.....
.....
.....
.....

36. **Please provide any other comments you have on the topic.**

Thank you -

Thank you for participating in this study. As mentioned earlier, your responses are confidential and will not be linked to your individual email or the parish where you serve. We have taken all reasonable measures to protect your identity and responses. IP addresses are not collected. However, e-mail and the internet are not 100% secure, so it is also suggested that you clear the computer's cache and browser history to protect your privacy after completing the survey.

Full information regarding catechist certification may be found in the document "Diocese of Paterson Diocesan Catechist Formation and Certification Policy". The policy references the "General Directory of Catechesis" (Congregation for Clergy) and the "National Directory of Catechesis" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

If you have any questions or concerns and would like to discuss this study further, you may contact Joanne Ponnwitz, jponnwitz@drew.edu or Dr. Donna Ciangio, Donna.Ciangio@gmail.com.

37. **If you would like to continue the discussion as an in-person or phone conversation, please provide your name and contact information.**

Skip to "Thank you -."

Thank you -

Thank you again for participating in this study. Blessings -

Stop filling out this form.

Untitled Section

Selected Verbatim Responses

The following represent unedited responses from Catechetical Leaders and catechists who provided recommendations and overall comments regarding how to encourage more catechists to continue their faith formation activities, with certification as the objective and how to improve our catechetical faith formation programs. Responses which did not address the question are not included. The responses have been taken directly from the online responses to the survey and reflect the full thoughts of respondents. Other than removing identifiable information, responses have not been edited in terms of content or grammar.

Recommendations for Catechetical Faith Formation Support

A. Catechetical Leaders

Q: If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

Pay them a stipend for each year they teach. (PCL/DRE, #1, 1/23/18)

Diocesan trained people that would come to parishes for training. On-line training, reading list for catechists where they can earning certification hours for books read with on-line questions prepared by the diocese. A book in this category might be Forming Intentional Disciples. (PCL/DRE, #2, 2/2/18)

allow DRE/CRE, etc to present the Intro to Cat. to their staff, put it online, everyone is strapped for time. Catechists are giving of themselves in lesson prep and teaching time, plus attending parish sacrament events. Most are working parents with other obligations. Too many demands on them and the program will implode (PCL/DRE, #3, 2/2/18)

We need to stop "maintenance" as usual and spend time making "intentional disciples" for the role of catechist. Only when someone has truly encountered Christ and are passionate about sharing Him will they be inspired and willing to work towards certification. (PCL/DRE, #86, 2/8/18)

online courses!!!! lessen requirements - need to be practical for the busy lifestyles of today. Need to show a value for the certifications. Certifications need to deal with subjects that are important to catechists, i.e. classroom management, engaging students, dealing with special needs, incorporating all the different learning styles in a lesson plan.

the catechists are "re-learning" about their faith as they prepare the lesson at a level that is very comfortable so having that 3hour course was just over the head and really not applicable to real life in the classroom (PCL/DRE, #93, 2/12/18)

the location of the classes require travel time especially if you live in a rural parish. (PCL/DRE, #102, 2/14/18)

make it less restrictive to get and maintain, offer more programs cost free, closer to Parishes, make programs more open, most feel they are being treated like young students rather than adults willing to give of themselves. (CRE, #45, 2/5/18)

To have their teaching hours apply to the certification and be grandfathered in after a certain amount of years. (CRE, #54, 2/5/18)

I believe we need to have training tools that are offered both online, and in a format of short videos and questions/answers/ discussions on topics...that can be facilitated at the parish by the DRE/CRE. Train the DRE/CRE on how to facilitate these workshops in-house. In a perfect world - these take place during the time frame of Religious Ed at various points in the year. This would require some team teaching efforts- to free up a group of catechists to leave class and attend the workshop while the other catechists group together for an activity - then swapping out the participants the following week. This takes away traditional class time but it's more realistic because the catechists that are busy have already worked it into their schedule to be at the parish on that date and time. Asking them to devote time outside of that window - gets complicated and it diminishes the chances people will do it. (CRE, #66, 2/6/18)

I would make the certification requirements basic and easy to achieve. (CRE, #87, 2/9/18)

Give DRE resources, online if possible, that they can pick and choose from depending on what fits the parish, grade level and catechist needs and abilities. Give guidelines, not mandates that show the diocese has goals/standards but understands parish limitations. Be more realistic as to what is expected from a time commitment. Do not ask/expect catechists to travel to an offsite location for any required training. If we feel goals are attainable, step by step, then we may be more likely to try. At the moment, we know it's impossible here so we just move on to the next task at hand. (CRE, #101, 2/14/18)

Provide on line training modules they can complete at their convenience. (CRE, #105, 2/14/18)

B. Catechists

Q: If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

Offer programs in a "course" format; support for catechists in a structured format. Currently there is nothing in place such as monthly meetings to support each other. (Catechist, #5, 2/4/18) Ensure that timing is flexible. Many volunteers are parents with hectic schedules. (Catechist, #6, 2/4/18)

Have shortened hours of study (Catechist, #8, 2/4/18)

Provide teachers with weekly or monthly assignments that can be completed along with their weekly classroom preparation. Tie the certification into a lesson on how to evangelize and teach our faith in the classroom. (Catechist, #9, 2/4/18)

more opportunities within various parishes and suggestions to bring people together to learn about the Catholic faith (Catechist, #11, 2/4/18)

Have local presentations (Catechist, #13, 2/4/18)

Online opportunities (Catechist, #14, 2/4/18)

Allow individual parishes to offer qualifying class hours (Catechist, #15, 2/4/18)

Most do not have time to go to courses and the one I went to was boring and not relevant to what we teach. (Catechist, #17, 2/4/18)

online, self-paced programs would work best (Catechist, #19, 2/4/18)

Make classes easily accessible, FREE, interesting. Actually offer a training class on how to teach to certain age groups most effectively. Never charge for training or classes as I bet everyone is an unpaid volunteer doing it either to pass on the faith or to have their child(ren) attend class at a discount. Cut back on the continuing ed. hours per year. It may take 5 years to get certification but at least it can be done. People are time challenged. My classes routinely took 4-6 hours a week to prep, plus the 2 hours for class, 24 weeks a year. That has to come first as that IS BEING a catechist. Add to this the fingerprinting

and the mandatory seminar on child abuse prevention and it is quite a commitment. And I wonder how many people woke up one day and said "Gee, I'd like to be a catechist!" More than likely, they were shanghaied or guilted into teaching first, were ashamed to say "no" and then decided AFTER that this was worthwhile and they liked it and they wanted to get better at it and know more about their faith to answer questions. It's the reality of the situation. So the DRE gets a warm body to teach that class, answers a few questions, pumps up the new teacher's confidence, gets the teacher fingerprinted and oriented, and hopes for the best. If that DRE then goes and says you have to work toward certification and it means so many hours and classes a year for so many years, that new warm body will bolt or resist. In a perfect world, we would be trained first and there would be many of us willing and able to do this. Or the Catholic Church would make more of an effort to train all to do this, like the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, with that incentive that it must be done by all in the church as part of witnessing our faith. But the Catholic Church does not.

By the way, I went to parochial school K-8 (with nuns) then 4 years of CCD through high school. And I was a good student. I know my faith fairly well and that basis is still what I most use in preparing and teaching my lessons. It is also what is so sorely lacking in younger teachers who themselves only had CCD and sporadic Mass attendance to instruct them. (Catechist, #21, 2/4/18)

If you are having work shops then not doctrine that we don't understand. We need to reach the children. We need to reach them in 45 minutes. You need a guide book that you can open and say ok this is the lesson it relates to the gospel the time of year and all that is recommended (Catechist, #23, 2/4/18)

On-line classes and reviews (Catechist, #24, 2/4/18)

More frequent offerings of sessions, advertised more visibly, at a variety of locations around the diocese; information/discussion on church documents about more current moral issues, not just the same review of the Creed, etc. I did not realize there is an authorized list of approved study materials for personal hours toward certification. I will have to check it out. I fear it will be small and narrow. Perhaps this list should be advertised more visibly throughout the year. And if I wished to be awarded credit for something not on the list, then how would I submit for diocesan approval and then what structure should the reflection sheet take? (Catechist, #25, 2/4/18)

Offer online studies, and Friday/ Saturday courses (Catechist, #26, 2/4/18)

Ask if this is what the catechists wants. I support the class on adults and children-the adult doing anything to make the child uncomfortable. However teaching and being with the children continues to grow my faith. Growing up and going to Catholic grammar school, high school and college I feel things have been forced on me. This is why I go to [parish name]. It is warm and welcoming and has so many wonderful things to offer. (Catechist, #28, 2/4/18)

Just to keep at it. (Catechist, #29, 2/5/18)

50 hours is a lot.. internet study (Catechist, #30, 2/5/18)

Location and availability (Catechist, #34, 2/5/18)

Make it obtainable perhaps an online option (Catechist, #35, 2/5/18)

It should be more clear that it is mandatory. (Catechist, #40, 2/5/18)

Ease of availability of classes via location or online courses. (Catechist, #41, 2/5/18)

More availability of time scheduling & location of classes. (Catechist, #42, 2/5/18)

We have to evangelize the evangelizers here, get them excited about their faith. Also practical course offerings, and possibly targeted at the most common catechetical volunteer - mothers- would be helpful (such as scripture for mothers looking at Mary, or practical teaching as above; catechists sharing 'trade secrets'). If this is offered at one parish, it could be more broadly advertised and clearly advertised to be a cross-parish, joint effort. Babysitters during the course would probably help too. (Catechist, #43, 2/5/18)

participation in Cornerstone Retreat and at least occasional attendance at weekday Mass (Catechist, #46, 2/5/18)

Maybe online classes/videos can also be helpful for those us that have a busier work schedule outside of the Church. (Catechist, #46, 2/5/18)

have short term workshops available at thier home parishes (Catechist, #47, 2/5/18)

The certification classes need to be well presented and the classes easy to get to.
(Catechist, #49, 2/5/18)

The emails from St. Paul inside the Walls regarding seminars and continuing education are helpful as well as information from my parish. (Catechist, #49, 2/5/18)

The Great Adventure old testament bible study series was the most enlightening.
(Catechist, #50, 2/5/18)

We need more information in Spanish , most of the catechists do not speak English
(Catechist,
#51, 2/5/18)

Have certification offered in more than one venue. (Catechist, #52, 2/5/18)

I think the process is all right (Catechist, #53, 2/5/18)

Online training, bible study meetings. (Catechist, #56, 2/5/18)

I volunteer my time. I work full time and additional 50 hours would be hard. I think it's a lot to require from a volunteer. (Catechist, #58, 2/5/18)

Online courses that can be done in spare time like nights and weekends. (Catechist, #60, 2/5/18)

make it more down to earth and relevant (Catechist, #62, 2/6/18)

Make the process more accessible in the home parishes like videos and questions, articles already ready to read and reflect on (unless these things are already supplied) (Catechist, #63, 2/6/18)

Provide local training at convenient times (Catechist, #64, 2/6/18)

it must be understood that many if not most catechists in our parish have full time jobs, raise families, and teach - time to devote to studies is limited (Catechist, #68, 2/6/18)

I'm not sure. (Catechist, #70, 2/6/18)

more options. (Catechist, #71, 2/6/18)

Although I realize time is a factor, I feel it is essential to read scripture on a daily basis. People will find they have more time than they think. (Catechist, #72, 2/7/18)

Train the Head of individual FF certification in house to do so. I probably am trained but it's not documented. (Catechist, #73, 2/7/18)

Need incentives to entice participation. Need to make it very accessible by offering many locations, times, and online opportunities. Need to show gratitude to people who will take time to participate. Need to make some of it entertaining. (Catechist, #74, 2/7/18)

Offer workshops locally. (Catechist, #75, 2/7/18)

Personal spiritual reading, etc. (Catechist, #77, 2/7/18)

Have those workshop/retreat days for catechists, at LEAST twice a year in case of a schedule commitment/conflict. And make the cost low or free. like being able to opt out for the lame lunch and save the money. (Catechist, #79, 2/7/18)

become more involved and more aware of what is available to us (Catechist, #81, 2/8/18)

When I talk about it, most of my fellow catechists have never heard of the certification program.

I believe there should be more outreach and encouragement to become certified.
(Catechist, #83,
2/8/18)

Each parish should be able to offer flexible classes for beginners through already certified/continuing learning. Also, the materials should be modernized meaning either electronic form so laptops or ipad or phones could store the information presented and the catechists could take good notes right on their own devices. (Catechist, #84, 2/8/18)

Have more courses at the diocese level throughout the school year. (Catechist, #85,
2/8/18)

Online study tools (Catechist, #89, 2/10/18)

Make it convenient for people to take the classes. (Catechist, #90, 2/10/18)

I know its not possible but some what of a reward system either gift cards ,or materials such as dvds for the teachers CCD class. Also, offer summer classes with lunches that is attractive and fits into busy peoples schedules. (Catechist, #91, 2/11/18)

I think that more needs to be done at the Parish level. Catechist are volunteers. I am not going to pay money to attend a class or another appropriate program when I am already putting in time preparing for class and teaching. I am also not going to travel. It would be great to have someone from the Diocese who could travel to different Parishes (or one meeting with a few nearby Parishes - 10 minutes apart). Another idea would be for the Diocese to have a list of suggested (free) webinars on the St. Paul Inside the Walls website, along with other free on-line sources that would help fulfill the requirements. (Catechist, #92, 2/12/18)

I believe that leadership needs to come from the top, our priests, who are told by the bishop that they need to personally find good Catholics and encourage them to teach and become certified, and that it would be a great benefit to the Parish, the kids, and the Church, and that they would be working towards their own salvation by performing this work of mercy. It is hard to turn your pastor down if he asks. They can make time for this important task. (Catechist, #95, 2/13/18) Notify us when and where is it, Give all of the requirements for the certification like a course (all together) in a class (could be couple of classes). Can use a pamphlet o folder with reading material to do some ours. Please some of the information need to be in Spanish also. (Catechist, #112, 2/21/18)

announce & publicize provided opportunities more (Catechist, #113, 2/21/18)

it helps with conducting class from education and organization sides (Catechist, #114, 2/23/18)

I think that there are two parts to this question - the first is the actual continuation of faith formation and the second is its documentation. To address the second part first, have certificates available for catechists at the time a course, Bible study, etc. is attended that fits catechist certification criteria. If a certificate is not given, the catechist needs to complete a reaction paper to receive the appropriate hours. To me, the reaction paper needs to be revised, especially the last question. That question implies that if the program, book, etc. does not apply to my RelEd class, it is not acceptable toward

certification. Also, there is no guidance on the number of hours given to the material. Should a book that might take 20 hours to read/study be given the same number of credit-hours as a 90-minute webinar?

To have a catechist continue their faith formation, it would be helpful to know where/when courses, presentations, etc. are being offered. I suggest having a central site where any program open to all people (catechists) in the diocese is advertised. The description of the program should be thorough, including the certification category. This is particularly true for St. Paul Inside the Walls, which seems to be the diocese's center for catechist formation. Their website needs some work on being both more user friendly and giving explanations of its courses. (An aside, St. Paul Inside the Walls recently added an "all events" link that is very helpful.)

Bring back the Catechetical Formation Day the diocese used to host. (Catechist, #116, 2/26/18) Other Comments Concerning Catechetical Faith Formation

A. Catechetical Leaders

Q: Please provide any other comments you have on the topic.

It is a wonderful concept, however it cannot be enforced with volunteers. Enforcing it will lead to the demise of parish Catechetical programs. (PCL/DRE, #1, 1/23/18)

Many of our catechist do not teach for 5 years in a row and do not look at their ministry as something they will be doing long term. Maybe we should not have a five year time period for certification but ask our catechist to complete a yearly certification of a number of hours (not sure 12 is the right number). I also think it gets difficult with the different areas of certification - scripture, methodology, etc. We should look to have one area and each year we focus on a DIFFERENT. (PCL/DRE, #2, 2/2/18)

most catechists do it while their child is in the program, not as a vocation to want to share their love of the Lord. As a CCD program that is in a parish with a school it would be nice if the teachers would be required to assist with the program, esp if CCD classes are held after school. They are trained, and it is the information they are already familiar with. (PCL/DRE, #3, 2/2/18)

We should help everyone understand that this is a special calling and not just a task. We need to stop plugging warm bodies into role of catechist. We need to inform, coach, and empower parents to be the primary educators of the faith for their own children. (PCL/DRE, #86, 2/8/18)

Honestly - certification is a waste of time the way it is being implemented (PCL/DRE, #102,

2/14/18)

I would much rather see programs given by parish catechetical leaders to their own program volunteers (PCL/DRE, #102, 2/14/18)

A general requirement is understandable, however the specific needs and size of Parish & program must be taken into consideration. we are a small parish and many volunteers with a deep faith & understanding are unable to travel long distances for training. Allow Coordinators or Pastor to give classes within the Parish, to meet certification requirements. (CRE, #45, 2/5/18)

A lot of our volunteer catechists are busy parents and do not have the time to pursue formal Catechist Formation Certification. I also think if they take the time to find programs that meet the requirements they should be formally acknowledged and appreciated by the diocese. Thank you for inquiring and we hope to see new opportunities for formation in the future. (CRE, #54, 2/5/18)

It's terribly important to try to expand on our Catechists knowledge, personal faith and devotion so that they have more to share. We need to realistically create a plan for this based on TODAY'S average catechist- who is often a mother of several children of her own, that juggles schedules, and often another job outside the home. It's difficult to recruit catechists- and that task becomes even more difficult as the children progress to the higher grades. We need catechists that are faith-filled, well-versed and confident but it's a tough job to find them. Giving the people that coordinate the programs effective-easy to use tools such as online resources, and short films (many wonderful ones are already available online) and encouraging them to do these during the time frames that the catechist is already committing to be there will be a huge help. When people get a taste of expanded knowledge and a more robust faith life, they often seek more of it on their own- and they experience a growth that is bound to be passed on to their students. (CRE, #66, 2/6/18)

Again, the ideal is to have certified catechists to be teaching our children, however, we do choose our catechists based upon their active participation at regular Mass, involvement in other church ministries, and volunteers who continue to demonstrate a strong foundation and commitment to their Catholic faith. (CRE, #87, 2/9/18)

Be sure all DREs are well trained so they can create good programs for the catechists who may not be. I believe more time helping DREs with realistic information and support that can be tailored to their parish needs will make for better programs. Mandating Certification such as it stands now feels like the diocese is very out of touch with the overwhelming work that is done by one DRE and many volunteer catechists. This feeling is further aggravated by policies like the ACRE which has no practical use but takes valuable time and funds and the Teaching Touching Safety which is not helpful to the children and asks a lot of untrained teachers to administer. Lastly a diocese that does not have a full time person to coordinate/support Religious Formation across the parishes implies that this is an important function. This means we get requests like ACRE, TTS and lists of questions from the Bishop for Confirmation that are contradicting and implemented by different people. I pray we can realign some resources as teaching our faith to all ages is so very important and we as a Catholic faith are not as good at it as other Christian religions. I know, work with and love many of the part time, hard working people at the diocesan and parish level who are trying to improve Faith Formation. My comments/feelings are in no way a reflection on them and their work. Merely a suggestion as to how we can be more productive/helpful in our shared goals. Thanks. (CRE, #101, 2/14/18)

Expectations for certification are too high and demanding. Catechists are juggling raising a family, working and volunteering. There is not much time left to take on a volunteer course workload. While it is important our catechists are trained and informed, the certification requirements are difficult and unrealistic to achieve. An overhaul of the certification program that is relevant, flexible and easily attainable is my recommendation. (CRE, #105, 2/14/18)

More workshops should be provided free of charge and during the summer when we don't have a crazy schedule. (CRE, #120, 3/3/18)

B. Catechists

Q: Please provide any other comments you have on the topic.

Please continue to provide ongoing support for catechists. Currently once we join and other than a holiday party (which is much appreciated!) there is little group support. We can reach out to our DRE's but other than that there is nothing for us. (Catechist, #5, 2/4/18)

It's hard to get catechists much less expect them to be certified. (Catechist, #13, 2/4/18)

I do not think the diocese understands nor does the Church in general the challenges associated with Religious Formation for non Catholic school children. Their expectations are unrealistic. They also do not understand how difficult it is to find volunteers let alone train them. Also there is very little support and information from the diocese (Catechist, #17, 2/4/18)

My focus as a catechist was predominantly teaching CCD to elementary school students in the 10-12 year old range. It was an eye opener to find that most of them knew VERY little about their faith or the Bible. Most of them rarely went to Mass. Most of them refused to do any homework so whatever I taught them in class for 60-90 minutes was all they were going to get. Whatever they learned in order to make First Holy Communion (in second grade) had developed holes by 6th grade (like fasting rules, like the Holy Trinity, that there was only ONE GOD) and had to be retaught. I give their parents credit for making sure that they went for religious ed, but many of those same parents were lacking the very basics of their faith and could not teach it or reinforce what I was teaching to their own children. And in our public school district, apparently they are teaching comparative religion in the 6th grade, which is appalling and inappropriate! The intent is probably to teach tolerance and understanding for other people's faiths but the actual result, for this age group, is to make them think that all religions are equal or (even worse) that all religion is fables like the Greek and Roman pantheons. I bet that most parents are unaware of what is being taught. This is material for high school or college students, not impressionable preteens who are still forming their belief systems. It is making them agnostics/atheists and in one hour a week it is hard to counteract.

Another eye opener has been the number of students who come from homes where one parent wants them in CCD and the other does not. These kids may come every other week (depending on the custodial parent in divorce cases) and that is the best that they can do so they get half an education per grade.

Despite this, the kids are mostly great and by the end of the year most have absorbed something just by virtue of being in class with someone who cares.

I have to say that I am disheartened by every Catholic school closing because CCD is just not enough to make up for that loss. Even if we made First Communion wait until third grade (by the way, when I made it many years ago) with a mandatory 3 year prep for it, it would help but not close the gap. Keeping them in Catholic school through the 4th grade would be monumental in establishing their faith, knowledge of the Ten Commandments and basic Bible stories.

We use the Sadler series in our parish. Fifth grade covers the sacraments and is boring as dirt.

Sixth grade covers the history of the Bible and presumes that the children are familiar with basic Bible stories. On the whole, they are unaware of Adam and Eve, Noah, and even Jesus. Since most of my students do not go to weekly Mass when school is not in session (our classes are on Sundays) they do not even encounter these Bible stories during Mass. We need books that are interesting and teach Bible stories first in fifth grade to captivate them because at 10-11 they still want stories, not theory on sacraments. The history of the Bible can be sixth grade. Sacraments and church teachings can be seventh grade when they are better able to grasp more esoteric subjects.

The emphasis has been that CCD supplements the teaching at home, but more and more there is no teaching at home. How do we better teach to that reality? (Catechist, #21, 2/4/18)

I enjoy being a part of the program. In today's world children need to know they have faith and they can count on it in every part of their life (Catechist, #23, 2/4/18)

Catechists must have an very good understanding of Catholic teachings (Catechist, #24, 2/4/18)

Keep our FAITH alive. (Catechist, #29, 2/5/18)

The 2 seminars I took I felt were not relevent to 'teaching'. I thought they were going to be more tools and tips on classroom management and making learning more fun instead it was more theological information. (Catechist, #41, 2/5/18)

In presenting instruction for the Faith Formation classes, I would like a whole group presentation utilizing technology and then break into small groups to extend the lesson. More technology is needed to keep up with the current trends of today. I think rote memorization may be fine but without the "why" questions, students of today will be turned off. (Catechist, #48, 2/5/18)

We need more classes in Spanish (Bible Studies, ...) in our parish. The main we page in Inside the Walls, Dioceses and the Beacon have to have more information in Spanish or another version in Spanish. (Catechist, #51, 2/5/18)

Great program, would like to attend. (Catechist, #52, 2/5/18)

I don't feel certification is necessary to be a great catechist teacher. These men and women are giving their time to educate our children. (Catechist, #57, 2/5/18)

Parents need to be more involved in faith formation and teaching. They are the child's first teacher of faith. (Catechist, #60, 2/5/18)

I didn't like the large group meeting and lectures. As always, the Bible was hardly discussed and I felt it was more theory than reality. Which is why people are leaving the Catholic religion, especially young people. (Catechist, #62, 2/6/18)

Provide a better curriculum than those offered by the various publishers (Catechist, #64, 2/6/18) I love the idea of furthering our own faith formation! I think that the children seeing that their teachers are also learning is great motivation for them. It shows we are ever evolving in our relationship with God. To require a set number of hours seems a little excessive but I also understand it makes one accountable. I would like to see more options for those that are catechists. We already are donating our time to teach/ help, etc. To allow us options that better suit our schedules would be wonderful. I don't know how many people are in my same situation of being a work from home parent but those are the hours I'd love to be able to do something more. (Catechist, #71, 2/6/18)

Parents need to be more involved in their child's religious education (Catechist, #72, 2/7/18)

I also learn a lot from listening to EWTN radio and reading the National Catholic Register (Catechist, #74, 2/7/18)

I think our CCD programs are in big trouble. Catholic schools are closing and we don't have a source of knowledgeable CCD teachers. Mass attendance is down, parents are all working and running the kids to numerous sports and activities, and children are not learning their religion from their parents — the primary teachers. Our CCD program runs fewer than 20 hours a year and most students attend only half the classes. The current pool of potential teachers is largely ignorant of the tenets of our faith but doesn't have the time or desire to attend hours and hours of classes. Paid teachers might be a solution, but I know our parish can definitely not afford to pay them. The church might want to put more money & effort into educating the youth (our future!) instead of the social services which the government can take care of. The government is certainly not going to spread the Word of God. That's our job! (Catechist, #75, 2/7/18)

Thanks for taking our children's future more seriously - I hope we change the tide of them disappearing at confirmation. That's what we really need to address the most!

And to feed the rest of the parishioner's too - a (less than) 10 minute weekly homily (as Pope Frances just demanded today in his address), is not going to "feed the sheep." The

Church's future is bleak if all the sheep get is less than 10 minutes weekly in formation/faith nurturing... : (Catechist, #79, 2/7/18)

Certification should not be seen as a burden imposed on catechists, it should be encouraged as a path to deepen one's faith, and to a greater encounter with Christ, for the catechist and their students. (Catechist, #83, 2/8/18)

I am thankful the Catholic Church is seeking ways to improve the Religious Education Programs in our Parishes. I think it's needed now more than ever to ensure in such busy times, our future, the children, can make the most of the 1 hour classes every Sunday. This is only possible if we have qualified, informed and capable catechists running the classes. (Catechist, #84, 2/8/18)

I am humble at the opportunity to serve (Catechist, #89, 2/10/18)

50 hours is a lot of time for busy parents, lay people perhaps a fast track of say 40 hours with credit for teaching CCD that week might be more enticing. The parish should also pay all expenses and make it very close to home with fun sides like a tricky tray at each class and lunch . (Catechist, #91, 2/11/18)

We are facing a massive loss of the Faith. Studies by pewsitter and Matthew Kelly support this.

The numbers of regular mass attendees are dwindling, Catholic Parishes and schools are closing. Very few of my 8th grade families attend Sunday mass. The ones that do attend do not understand or believe in the teachings of the church, and most Churches, not all, are not trying to catechize their adults who never learned the Faith in the first place due to the massive failure of our schools and priests over the past 50 years or so. Many women in the pews have had abortions, and ALL practice contraception. Most Catholics believe that same sex sex and marriage or fine, and that the Church discriminates against gays. Massive numbers of Catholics that do attend mass are receiving Our Lord in a state of mortal sin. Almost no one believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. We need a miracle to turn this around, but Proper catechesis can only help. Thank you to Bishop Serratelli for trying to turn this around. (Catechist, #95, 2/13/18)

This certification should be free for active catechist because our work is voluntary. (Catechist, #112, 2/21/18)

thank you for offering these classes I find them very helpful (Catechist, #114, 2/23/18)

With the advances in technology that have taken place since the Certification Policy was put in place, it would be advantageous for catechists to have a DB to record their courses/hours. It would make it so much easier to keep track of their progress or lack thereof. The DB could be accessed by the parish DRE, so it would be easier for the progress of all parish catechists to be tracked. Automatic reminders could be programmed so that the certification would have more prominence. (Catechist, #118, 2/26/18)

CATECHIST CERTIFICATION

Challenges of Ongoing Faith Formation

April 17, 2018
Joanne Ponnwitz

AGENDA

- Introduction
- Theological Stance
- 2017 Catechetical Census
- *Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy* (January 6, 2008)
- Doctor of Ministry Project
 - Purpose/Scope
 - Catechetical Environment
 - Current Certification
 - Benefits of Certification/Ongoing Faith Formation
 - Challenges to Certification/Ongoing Faith Formation
 - Recommendations/Options



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

- Personal History
 - 28 years in the parish catechetical program
 - Master of Arts in Religious Education
- Catechist Faith Formation
 - Benefits
 - Confidence
 - Knowledge
 - Positive role model
 - Challenges
 - Time
 - Location

THEOLOGICAL STANCE

THEOLOGICAL STANCE

- Deuteronomy 4:9
 - "But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life, make them known to your children and your children's children."
- Matthew 28:19-20
 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" ... "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."
- National Directory for Catechesis 55C
 - "The catechist should continue his or her own spiritual formation through frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, through spiritual direction, and through continued study of faith."

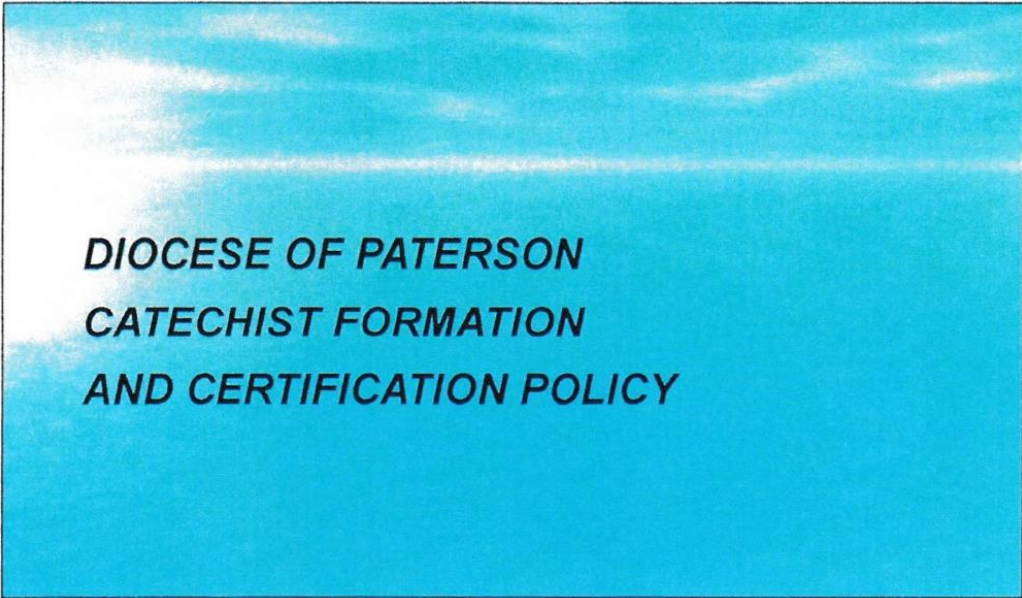
2017 CATECHETICAL CENSUS

2017 CATECHETICAL CENSUS

- According to the 2017 Parish Census
 - 106 Parishes
 - ~3,000 Catechists
 - Approximately 30% certified

Parish Percent of Catechists Certified						
None	1-10%	11-25%	26-50%	51-75%	75-100%	No response
13%	13%	17%	19%	11%	17%	10%

(Diocese of Paterson Catechetical Census – 2017)



***DIOCESE OF PATERSON
CATECHIST FORMATION
AND CERTIFICATION POLICY***



***DIOCESE OF PATERSON
CATECHIST FORMATION
AND CERTIFICATION POLICY***

- Importance of Formation
 - "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 in Christ." NDC 55A
- Catechist I
 - 52 hours of study, 5 years
 - Scripture/Theology – 30 hrs
 - Catechetics/Methodology – 16 hrs
 - Spiritual Formation – 6 hrs

DIOCESE OF PATERSON CATECHIST FORMATION AND CERTIFICATION POLICY

- Ongoing Formation
 - 14 hours each year
 - Scripture/Theology – 6 hrs.
 - Catechetics/Methodology – 6 hrs.
 - Spiritual Formation – 2 hrs.

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

- Purpose
 - Examine Catechetical Environment
 - Perception of *Faith Formation and Catechist Certification Policy*
 - Certification Rate Related to Benefits/Challenges
 - Resources/Assistance/Recommendations
- Scope
 - Confidential Online Survey
 - Parish Catechetical Leaders/Directors of Religious Education/Coordinators of Religious Education
 - Catechists

ONLINE SURVEY

- Respondent Sample
 - 44 Parish Catechetical Leaders/Directors of Religious Education/Coordinators of Religious Education
 - 80 Catechists or other positions involved in their parish catechetical program
- Parish/Catechetical Demographics
 - Families in parish: 250 to approximately 2,700
 - Families with children in catechetical program: 16 to over 1,100
 - Number of catechists: 3 to approximately 150
 - Number of youth in catechetical program: 50 - 1,800

CATECHETICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Current Certification Levels
 - Parish Catechetical Leaders/Directors of Religious Education/Coordinators of Religious Education
 - 86% either certified, held advanced degrees or in the process of certification
 - Catechists
 - Certified – 27%
 - In process – 15%
 - Not sure – 5%
 - No – 51%

Q: Have you completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for certification?

Q: Have you completed the 50 hours of study and documentation for catechist certification according to the diocesan policy?

CATECHETICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Information Sources
 - Catechetical Leaders
 - CLA meetings – 37%
 - Internet – 24%
 - Diocese – 21%
 - Catechists
 - PCL/DRE/CRE - 49%
 - Internet – 25%
 - Pastor/parish – 18%

Q: Other than accessing the diocesan website, how do you obtain the information you need for your catechetical program?

PCL/DRE/CRE PERCEPTIONS

- Ongoing Faith Formation Benefits
 - Enhance personal faith formation/spirituality – 40%
 - Increase knowledge – 38%
 - Better equipped to catechize/teach – 21%
 - Other – witness faith, confidence, deeper understanding, relationship with Jesus

Q: In general, what do you see as the benefits of continued catechist formation?

PCL/DRE/CRE PERCEPTIONS

- Certification Benefits
 - Better equipped to catechize/teach – 26%
 - Increase knowledge – 21%
 - Goal/accomplishment – 18%
 - Deeper understanding – 15%
 - Other – form/enhance faith, witness faith, accountability, stay current, standardize, none (15%)

Q: What do you see as the benefits of catechist certification?

PCL/DRE/CRE PERCEPTIONS

- Challenges
 - Time – 82%
 - Travel/location – 26%
 - Information not pertinent – 13%
 - Requirements too stringent – 8%
 - Other – not interested, burden for volunteers

Q: Please describe any challenges for catechist certification either you have experienced or your catechists have communicated to you.

CATECHIST PERCEPTIONS

- Ongoing Faith Formation Benefits
 - More knowledgeable/qualified – 56%
 - Consistent understanding of faith/church – 29%
 - Other – deeper relationship with Jesus, none
- Certification Benefits
 - Deeper understanding/spiritual growth – 50%
 - More knowledgeable – 30%
 - Role model/witness – 6%
 - Confidence – 6%
 - Tools for teaching – 6%

Q: In general, what do you see as the benefits of continued faith formation?

Q: What do you see as the benefits of catechist certification?

CATECHIST PERCEPTIONS

- Challenges
 - Time – 34%
 - Travel/location – 18%
 - Availability - 11%
 - None – 18%
 - Other – too demanding for volunteers, not relevant, flexibility, parish does not communicate requirements/opportunities, number of hours required

Q: Please describe any challenges for catechist certification you have experienced

Faith Related Activities

PCL/DRE/CRE ACTIVITIES

- Retreats (56%)
- Other conferences (39%)
- Seminars (32%)
- Diocesan conferences (22%)
- Parish programs (15%)
- Bible Study (15%)
- St. Paul Inside the Wall programs (10%)
- Webinars/online classes (10%)
- Other classes (10%)
- Speaker presentations (7%)
- Personal study/reading (5%)

Q: Please describe any faith related activities you have participated in, such as retreats, seminars, convocations, etc. in the past 5 years.

CATECHIST ACTIVITIES

- Retreats (46%)
- Seminars (40%)
- Conferences (15%)
- Classes (15%)
- Bible Study (12%)
- Online Programs (6%)
- Women's Groups (4%)
- Lectures (3%)
- Mass (3%)

Q: Please describe any faith related activities you have participated in, such as retreats, seminars, convocations, etc. in the past 5 years.

Recommendations/Options

PCL/DRE/CRE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Offer local training (19)
- Web/online opportunities (17)
- DRE/CRE conduct training (4)
- Provide more guidance – reading list/approved courses (5)
- Varied formats/dates/times
- Network parishes for training
- Offer challenging/relevant topics
- More focused basic certification requirements
- Explain the importance of faith formation
- Offer a stipend to attend courses

Q: If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

CATECHIST RECOMMENDATIONS

- Flexible locations/opportunities (35%)
- Flexible time (29%)
- Online courses (21%)
- Communicate more with catechists (12%)
- More relevant courses (11%)
- More defined, applicable courses
- Spanish courses
- Pastor support
- Less expensive

Q. If the goal is to have catechists continue their faith formation and work towards certification, what suggestions would you have to attain that goal for more catechists?

OPTIONS

- List of approved/applicable webinars, online courses
- Offer online classes
- Offer targeted online seminars
- Offer 3 hour *Introduction to Catechesis* course as a recorded webinar
- Multiple locations for courses/seminars
- Multiple dates/times for courses/seminars
- Offer two focused tracks of certification
 - Catechist
 - Parish Catechetical Leader

Diocesan first: Summer catechist formation series offered as online courses

MADISON For the first time, the diocesan Office of Catechesis offered its Summer Catechist Formation Series as online courses for those catechists who have been seeking to satisfy their requirements for basic training as religious educators. Already, the series — which replaced live classes that the Diocese had held in past years — has proven popular with more than 260 catechists registered from 40 parishes in the Diocese.

Earlier this month, catechists were able to sign up to watch three two-hour-long webinars — live video of seminars streamed on the internet — which were released once each week on Monday afternoons. Sponsored and hosted by William Sadlier, Inc., a publishing company in New York City, the series explored the following topics: “Effective Catechesis: Instruction and Management” by John Collins, Sadlier’s national religion consultant; “Spirituality of the

Catechist” and “Family: Foundation of Faith” by Kathy Hendricks, Sadlier’s national religious consultant; and “Technology and Planning and Their Importance in the Success of the Presentation of a Catechesis Lesson” for Spanish-speakers by Dulce Jimenez Abreu, a program director at Sadlier. Catechists can continue to sign up to watch the videos with the Go to Meeting app on their cell phones or computers or by calling Ivannia Vega-McTighe, coordinator of the diocesan Office of Catechesis.

Before watching the sessions, catechists read instructions about accessing them along with some homework. After each session, religious educators answer questions to demonstrate that they understand the material that was presented. Then, they submit those completed forms to the directors of religious formation of their parishes to receive credit for their basic training or two hours of credit for further certification, Vega-

McTighe said.

Origins for the online series started two years ago, when Joanne Ponnwiz of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Pompton Plains, approached the staff at St. Paul Inside the Walls: the Diocesan Center for Evangelization at Bayley-Ellard in Madison, which houses the Office of Catechesis, to conduct a survey of catechesis in the Diocese. The survey, which she conducted for her graduate studies at Drew University, also in Madison, showed the local catechists asked for more on-line formation opportunities. St. Paul’s made contact with Debbie Chrzanowski, a senior marketing manager at Sadlier, which offered to absorb the costs for the entire series. In past years, attendance of live classroom sessions averaged 50 people, Vega-McTighe said.

[Information: Ivannia Vega-McTighe at (973) 377-1004, ext. 418.]

Save the Dates!

Dear DRE/CRE,

You asked, and we responded.

Earlier this season, you kindly participated in a survey that focused on catechist certification. Overwhelmingly, you asked for ways to provide enrichment and training for yourself and for your catechists, accommodating your busy schedules.

With this letter, I am pleased to announce this summer's program! Beginning in August, the Diocese of Paterson and Sadlier Religion are co-sponsoring an online catechist certification series. [Sadlier](#), a family-owned and family-managed company since 1832, provides catechetical and sacrament preparation programs in print and digital format, in English and Bilingual (Spanish/English).

How do you and your catechists participate?

Pre-webinar Preparation: Participants will be asked to read information prior to viewing the webinar. The information introduces you to various Church documents and provides information referenced during the presentation.

Webinar Viewing: As a participant, you will be sent a URL to access and view the webinar. You will have seven (7) days to view this one-hour presentation. The DRE/CRE may ask that catechists gather as a group and view the webinar together.

Post-webinar Survey: You will have questions to answer after viewing the webinar. Completed questionnaires are sent to your Director (albeit, the Parish DRE/CRE, or Diocesan Director Ivannia Vega-McTighe). The Parish DRE/CRE has the option to meet with each individual catechist and discuss the presentation.

Do we need to participate in all three sessions?

While we hope you will take advantage of this convenient, flexible series and participate in all three, you and your catechists may participate in one, two, or all the sessions.

Additional Information

Certificate of Attendance: Once the questionnaire (or conversation) is reviewed and approved, submit catechist-attendee names for each Webinar to Ivannia Vega-McTighe. Please submit all names (for each Webinar) by September 14 so a Certificate of Attendance may be issued.

The Cost: There is no charge to you for this series.

Technical Requirements: A computer or Smart Device with Internet access and audio

The Topics and the dates in which the Webinar is available to view online:

August 1-7: The Spirituality of the Catechist (Kathy Hendricks)

August 8-14: Effective Catechesis: Instruction + Management (John Collins)

August 15-21: Engaging the Multicultural Family (Kathy Hendricks)

About the Presenters:



KATHY HENDRICKS is a National Religion Consultant for William H. Sadlier, Inc. and contributing writer for their *We Believe* program and other programs. Kathy brings her audience on a profound and deeply personal journey through the heart and soul of. Her talks present clear and practical ways to recognize the presence of God catechesis in your home and life. Check out Kathy's blog, www.WeBelieveAndShare.com.



JOHN COLLINS is a National Religion Consultant for William H. Sadlier, Inc. and has been involved in religious education in various capacities since 1972. John provides quick tips, practical ideas, and strategies that will help catechists engage students as they learn more about their faith. His enlivening approach makes catechesis come alive in a simple, yet direct way filled with ideas and advice for immediate implementation.

Your Next Step: Easy as 1 ... 2 ... 3

- 1. Encourage your catechists to participate.**
- 2. Watch your Inbox for the first set of materials, including the Webinar URL.**
- 3. Submit the list of names of catechists (by Webinar) to Ivannia by September 14, 2018.**

Thank you for your ministry and serving the faith formation needs at your parish. We look forward to providing you with the support you need throughout this coming year.

Wishing you a faith-filled summer,

Ivannia Vega-McTighe



Diocese of Paterson
Office of Catechesis

Catechist Certification Program 2018-19

in conjunction with

Sadlier
PROFESSIONAL & Spiritual
DEVELOPMENT
WEBINARS



Diocese of Paterson · Office of Catechesis
CATECHIST CERTIFICATION PROGRAM 2018-19
 In conjunction with  Sadler Religion

For information and registration, please contact Ivannia Vega-McTighe imvega@patersondiocese.org

Thank you for registering for this webinar session. You will receive two (2) Catechist Certification Hours upon completion.



Join us for this summer session on
The Spirituality of the Catechist

with Kathy Hendricks

NATIONAL RELIGION CONSULTANT, SADLIER

FOR MORE ABOUT KATHY, GO TO

[HTTPS://WWW.SADLIER.COM/RELIGION/WE-BELIEVE-AND-SHARE/KATHY-HENDRICKS](https://www.sadlier.com/religion/we-believe-and-share/kathy-hendricks)

☐ **Before watching “The Spirituality of the Catechist,” please read the following materials:**

1. General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) #156-157
2. Sadler Religion: [Catechists: On the Journey of Life with Prayer](https://www.sadlier.com/religion/we-believe/catechists-on-the-journey-of-life-with-prayer) (<https://www.sadlier.com/religion/we-believe/catechists-on-the-journey-of-life-with-prayer>)

☐ **View “The Spirituality of the Catechist” online**

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[The Spirituality of the Catechist](https://global.gotomeeting.com/play/recording/hBx34r8F7EE4ssEtsf6k1z7BYW0cm)

(<https://global.gotomeeting.com/play/recording/hBx34r8F7EE4ssEtsf6k1z7BYW0cm>)

- ☐ **After watching “The Spirituality of the Catechist,” please complete the Catechist Certification Form and return it to your parish’s Director of Religious Education or Coordinator of Religious Education.**

Thank you for your participation, and for sharing your witness.

Catechists: On the Journey of Life with Prayer

By Sister Mary Lou Barba MCDP

I was sixteen years of age when I first began teaching sixth graders. I prayed very hard for perseverance with this group of twenty-five religious education students. All I knew, at that moment, was that my prayer to be a good catechist fulfilled the ideal "that every life is meant to help all lives; each one of us should live for everyone's betterment." Yet I also believed that, because of our baptism, we are all called to offer constant prayer to God for the world, the Church, the poor, and all those in need. This type of prayer was one that I grew up with, that of intercession.

Being an effective catechist requires constant prayer. As the General Directory for Catechesis reminds us, "The baptized, moved always by the Spirit, nourished by the sacraments, by prayer and by the practice of charity, and assisted by multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith, seeks to realize the desire of Christ: 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' This is the call to the fullness of perfection which is addressed to all the baptized." (GDC 56) As individuals, family members, friends, and catechists we are often asked to pray for someone or for a special intention.

It is the responsibility of families and catechists to teach others to pray. We do this through our own example and through providing prayer experiences for the students. We also help others to pray by teaching skills for speaking and for listening, and by sharing a variety of prayer forms. Some students will find praying with the Scripture gives direction to their lives; others will find the prayers of our Catholic heritage will inspire them; still others may find comfort in the spontaneous prayers which come from their hearts.

Today, as a seasoned catechist on the journey of life, I often pray this prayer attributed to St. Clement of Rome:

We beg you, Lord,
to help and defend us.

Deliver the oppressed.
Pity the insignificant.
Raise the fallen.
Show yourself to the needy.

Heal the sick.
Bring back those of your people who have gone astray.
Feed the hungry.
Lift up the weak.
Take off the prisoners' chains.

May every nation come to know
that you alone are God,
that Jesus is your Child,
that we are your people,
the sheep that you pasture.

R. Amen.

Prayer: 212 "We beg you, Lord" from *The Oxford Book of Prayer* (1985), edited by Appleton, George.
Used with permission of Oxford University Press, www.oup.com.

This prayer reminds me of the awesome vocation we share as catechists: to share the good news of Jesus with everyone, especially those most in need of his touch.

WAYS TO IMPLEMENT	
In Class	At Home
<p>Set a small tree limb in a planter or other container that is filled with sand or dirt. Arrange a small prayer table with different color pieces of paper that can hang on the tree limb with paper clips. Ask the students to select a piece a paper and write the name of the person who most needs their prayers today. They may have more than one name. After all have placed their name on the tree limb, pray together the prayer of St. Clement of Rome.</p> <p>Remind the students that we also pray in song. Ask them to think of someone they would like to pray for and then pray in song.</p>	<p>Gather around your favorite family place in your home and ask each person to share a name of someone who has asked for prayers. Say the prayer of St. Clement of Rome or a favorite class prayer together. After the prayer together, write a note to the people for whom you have prayed.</p> <p>Send a card to someone who is in need, assuring them of your prayers.</p>



Diocese of Paterson · Office of Catechesis
CATECHIST CERTIFICATION PROGRAM 2018-19
 In conjunction with  Sadlier Religion

For more information, please contact Ivannia Vega-McTighe imvega@patersondiocese.org

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Ivannia will email you your Certificate of Completion.

Thank you.

(Please print)

Your Name _____

Parish _____ City _____

Email Address _____

Date Submitted _____ Your role at your parish _____

Session: The Spirituality of the Catechist

with Kathy Hendricks

NATIONAL RELIGION CONSULTANT, SADI LER


1. How does a catechist serve as a mediator between him/herself and those he/she catechize?

2. Name one or two ways a catechist practices hospitality as a spiritual practice.

3. What is one idea you are taking away from this webinar ad into your spiritual life?

(FOR ADDITIONAL SPACE, PLEASE USE THE OTHER SIDE.)



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Join us for this summer session on

EFFECTIVE CATECHESIS: Instruction + Management

with John Collins

NATIONAL RELIGION CONSULTANT, SADLIER

FOR MORE ABOUT JOHN, GO TO www.sadlier.com/religion/consultants

⌘ Before watching "EFFECTIVE CATECHESIS: Instruction + Management," please read the following materials:

1. Diocese of Paterson Catechist Formation and Certification Policy, [p. 1-2](https://insidethewalls.org/documents/2015/7/Diocesan%20Catechist%20Formation%20and%20Certification%20Policy.pdf), specifically note Six Tasks of Catechesis.
<https://insidethewalls.org/documents/2015/7/Diocesan%20Catechist%20Formation%20and%20Certification%20Policy.pdf>

2. Six Tasks of Catechesis (*National Directory for Catechesis* - #20 – pp 59-63)

- Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith
 - Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments
 - Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ
 - Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ
 - Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church
 - Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society
- These six tasks of catechesis constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ.

3. *We Believe* Parish and School Index: *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners K-8*, [pages 2-3](#)

Although this is a resource when using Sadlier's *We Believe* and *We Live Our Faith Catholic Identity* programs, these two introductory pages contain information about how children learn in different ways. Catechists need to remember and consider this when planning instruction and choosing activities and strategies to use with students.

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

(https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/95641/docs/Religion/Downloads/WeBelieve_AdapCatechesis_Index.pdf?i=1532437056728)

⌘ View "Effective Catechesis: Instruction + Management" online

Click this link, or copy and paste this link into your browser. You'll need audio speakers or a headset to hear the presentation.

EFFECTIVE CATECHESIS: Instruction + Management

(<https://global.gotomeeting.com/play/recording/GRuZ5QI44VzK5OqBWXjifwgkzieIH>)

⌘ After watching "Effective Catechesis: Instruction + Management," please complete the Catechist Certification Form and return it to your parish's Director of Religious Education or Coordinator of Religious Education.

Thank you for your participation, and for enriching your ministry.



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Join us for this summer session on
Family: Foundation of Faith

with Kathy Hendricks

NATIONAL RELIGION CONSULTANT, SADLIER

FOR MORE ABOUT KATHY, GO TO

[HTTPS://WWW.SADLIER.COM/RELIGION/WE-BELIEVE-AND-SHARE/KATHY-HENDRICKS](https://www.sadlier.com/religion/we-believe-and-share/kathy-hendricks)

☐ **Before watching “Family: Foundation of Faith,” please read the following materials:**

1. [How Parish Catechetical Leaders Can Engage Families with Rituals of Faith by Sharing](https://www.sadlier.com/religion/we-believe-and-share/passing-on-the-faith-equipping-catholic-families-parish-catechetical-leaders-catholic-school-leaders-storytelling-rituals)
 (https://www.sadlier.com/religion/we-believe-and-share/passing-on-the-faith-equipping-catholic-families-parish-catechetical-leaders-catholic-school-leaders-storytelling-rituals)
2. (optional) *Forming Families in Faith*, Kathy Hendricks, Twenty-Third Publication

☐ **View “Family: Foundation of Faith” online**

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Family: Foundation of Faith

(<https://global.gotomeeting.com/play/recording/44b88e8279e8bf27bc7fe36d1bc4169c6cd2dad0d55299175ec1fcd9e91ae1e2>)

- ☐ **After watching “The Family: Foundation of Faith,” please complete the Catechist Certification Form and return it to your parish’s Director of Religious Education or Coordinator of Religious Education.**

Thank you for your participation, and for sharing your ministry.

The Role of Storytelling and Ritual in Passing on Faith in the Family

The Importance of Storytelling in the Home and the Church

Passing on the faith involves a process in which we make links between our personal/family stories and our Story as God's people. These encompass the joys and the agonies of life and loss, the fear and the excitement accompanying transitions, and the confusion and the clarity that co-exist in the exploration of faith. Such stories are rooted in the family.

A common type of family story links with memory, which often surface during times of transition—at weddings, funerals, family gatherings, and seasonal celebrations, or when making a move to or from a home, job, or school. Telling them generates an awareness of belonging and continuity. Memory stories are repeated over and over again, sometimes venturing into the realm of myth. In the process of retelling, we gain insight into the people and experiences that have inspired and influenced us.

The Bible is replete with stories of remembrance. For thousands of years they were passed from one generation to the next as a way to understand the relationship between God and God's people. A dominant thread in biblical stories is the constancy of God's presence, guiding humankind throughout history. They help us remember who we are and to Whom we belong. *"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"* (Jeremiah 31:33). As families tell and retell their stories, they uncover the same lesson of these biblical tales—that God dwells among them, embedded within every family experience and relationship.

For reflection or discussion –

- Name a family story that you cherish.
- What does that story tell you about belonging, love, and faithfulness in your family?
- How does your family story connect with the larger Story of God's presence, love, and mercy?

The Importance of Ritual in the Home and the Church

A ritual is a patterned way of doing something, one that is honed through repetition. The use of symbols becomes familiar through consistent use and their connection with particular days and seasons. Such repetition creates a sense of identity within our family, ethnic group, church, or society. Rituals also provide stability and comfort during times of grief or trauma. "Getting back to normal" often means that we can celebrate the way we used to with familiar rituals, symbols, and traditions.

The use of rituals is an important way that families pray together. Through them we express our spiritual and religious values. We give thanks, acknowledge our need for one another, and celebrate our blessings. There is a strong link between domestic traditions and those that take place at church. Home rituals make Sunday worship and the sacramental rituals of the Church all the more meaningful because it contains symbols that have tremendous power to convey meaning and mystery.

For reflection or discussion ~

- What rituals in the home connect with rituals of welcome and belonging in the Church particularly the Sacrament of Baptism?
- What rituals in the home connect with rituals of thanksgiving and being fed in the Church, particularly the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the celebration of the Mass?
- What rituals in the home connect with rituals of forgiveness and healing in the Church, particularly the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick?
- What rituals in the home connect with the rituals of love, commitment, and service, particularly the Sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Orders?



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Thank you.

(Please print)

Your Name _____

Parish _____ City _____

Email Address _____

Date Submitted _____ Your role at your parish _____

Session 3: Family: Foundation of Faith

with Kathy Hendricks

NATIONAL RELIGION CONSULTANT, SADLIER

1. Name three ways to foster faith within families.

2. What is one way that faith grows within the regular routine of family life?

3. What is one idea you are taking away from the webinar and into your efforts to support families?

(FOR ADDITIONAL SPACE, PLEASE USE THE OTHER SIDE.)



Diócesis de Paterson · Oficina de Catequesis

Formación Catequética 2018

Tecnología y planificación y su importancia en el éxito de la presentación de una lección de catequesis

con Dulce M. Jiménez Abreu

Director, Mercados bilingües · William H. Sadlier, Inc.

Una buena lección catequética depende de una buena planificación. Hay muchos recursos que nos pueden ayudar en la tarea de planificar nuestras lecciones. La tecnología es uno de ellos. En estas secciones vamos a presentar como podemos usar los recursos tecnológicos disponibles en la planificación de nuestras lecciones.

Dulce M. Jiménez Abreu hablará de la importancia de la planificación de la lección y como los recursos tecnológicos pueden ser usados en beneficio de esta tarea. Esta será una combinación de presentaciones electrónicas y en persona que le servirá para su certificación.

Traiga sus preguntas. Lleve respuestas e ideas que les ayudarán a planificar lecciones interesantes y amenas.

Miércoles 25 de julio

TECNOLOGÍA Y CATEQUESIS

- Recursos electrónicos
- Red mundial
- Usos en catequesis

7:30pm – 9:00pm

John Paul II Center

777 Valley Road, Clifton

Traiga su laptop, iPad o su teléfono inteligente (Android o iPhone).

* (Este día se les darán las informaciones necesarias para ver la presentación sobre **Planificación** y los materiales necesarios.)

Miércoles 1 de agosto

Online*

PLANIFICACIÓN DE LA LECCIÓN

- Por qué planificar
- Tipos de planificación
- Como planificar

Miércoles 8 de agosto

PRÁCTICA DE PLANIFICACIÓN

- En esta sección se repasará el ejercicio de planificación

7:30pm – 9:00pm

John Paul II Center

777 Valley Road, Clifton

RSVP con Ivanna Vega-McTighe no más tarde del 20 de julio.

imvega@patersondiocese.org



Sadlier Religion



DULCE M. JIMÉNEZ ABREU

Dulce es directora de mercados de religión bilingüe para William H. Sadlier, Inc. Profesora y Traductora de material religioso, ha contribuido en gran medida al desarrollo de los materiales bilingües de Sadlier. Ha participado en la preparación de materiales para la población de habla hispana de los Estados Unidos y ha presentado numerosos talleres sobre la integración de la cultura hispanohablante en la catequesis y sobre las formas prácticas de enseñar la religión a los bilingües Niños. Dulce se graduó de la Universidad del estado de Michigan con una maestría en ciencias sociales y de Lehman Colegio con un Máster en literatura española. También tiene una maestría en educación religiosa de la Universidad de Fordham.

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