



*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..., teaching them
to observe all that I have commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*
(Mt. 28:19a, 20)

**Catechist Certification Guidelines
For the Diocese of Arlington
Revised 2008**

Section 1:

“And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and up-builds itself in love.”

(Ephesians 4: 11-16)

Catechetical Ministry

The catechist plays an integral role in the ministry of the Church at the service of the Word of God. “At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, ‘the only Son from the Father...full of grace and truth,’ who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. It is Jesus who is ‘the way, and the truth, and the life,’ and Christian living consists in following Christ” (Catechesi Tradendae, 5). Catechists teach the faith, pointing always to Christ and His Truth, and form their students in knowledge and practice of our religion, through which we worship God.

“Catechesis is that particular form of the ministry of the word which matures initial conversion to make it into a living, explicit and fruitful confession of faith” (National Directory for Catechesis, p. 54).

Catechesis comprises six (6) fundamental tasks to achieve its objective of formation of disciples of Jesus Christ:

1. It promotes knowledge of the faith;
2. It promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the Sacraments;
3. It promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ;
4. It teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ;
5. It prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate in the life and mission of the Church;
6. It promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society (National Directory for Catechesis, pp. 60-63).

The Church, the community of believers, continues the mission of Jesus to bring about God’s kingdom. This mission proclaims and teaches God’s word, celebrates the sacred mysteries, and serves the people of the world (National Catechetical Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, #30).

The proclamation and teaching of God's word are present in evangelization, catechesis, liturgy, and theology in a manner appropriate to each. Catechetical ministry is a form of the ministry of the word, which proclaims and teaches. It leads to and flows from the ministry of worship, which sanctifies through prayer and sacrament, and supports the ministry of service, which is linked to efforts to achieve social justice. The purpose of catechesis is to make a person's "faith become living, conscious, and active, through the light of instruction" (National Catechetical Directory, #32). While aiming to enrich the faith life of individuals at their particular stages of development, every form of catechesis is oriented in some way to the catechesis of adults, who are capable of a full response to God's word. Catechesis is a lifelong process for the individual and a constant and concerted activity of the Christian community.

Catechesis takes place in many settings, including parish and school, and "in a variety of ways – liturgical celebrations, community building endeavors, outreach programs, and educational programs. Each baptized Catholic is called to minister – to heal, teach, serve and affirm others in Jesus' name. Some are called as catechists to minister by proclaiming and teaching God's word" (Forward in Faith).

Section 2:

"A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher."

(Luke 6:40)

Personal Qualities of a Catechist

The faith of the community is nourished through the living example and through the instruction of catechists. Therefore, catechists need certain personal qualities, in addition to preparation and study, for their important ministry (Forward in Faith).

Every teacher of the faith must follow the example of Christ Himself, the Good Teacher (cf. Mark 10:17, Luke 18:18). We are called to proclaim Christ to our students, to witness Christ to our students, to share the teachings of Christ with our students, and to guide our students to union with Christ. To be effective in the catechetical ministry, the catechist must:

1. Be a Catholic in good standing, called by Christ to this ministry;
2. Believe deeply in Jesus and the teachings of the Catholic Church, and desire to share that belief with others;
3. Strive always to grow in holiness, receiving frequently the Sacraments, devoting time to prayer and to the ministry of catechesis;
4. Commit themselves to their own religious education, growing in their knowledge of the Faith, teaching methods, Scriptures, and teachings of the Catholic Church;

5. Commit themselves to the teaching ministry of the Church;
6. Give active witness to their faith in word and deed both inside and outside the classroom;
7. Have a love for and sensitivity toward the students they desire to catechize;
8. Have the ability to communicate effectively with those they catechize;
9. Be willing to spend the necessary time for training, lesson preparation and the teaching of classes;
10. Be willing to teach the required curriculum (utilizing the Religious Education Guidelines of the Diocese of Arlington), under the direction of the pastor.

Section 3:

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

(Romans 2:21a)

Catechist Formation

The Bishop, as the chief catechist in the diocese, is responsible for seeing that effective catechesis is provided for all people in the diocese. Pastors and parochial vicars exercise a uniquely important role and have a special responsibility for the success of the catechetical ministry. Parish ministers/directors of religious education, school principals and catechists assist parents in their unique role as educators of their children.

Besides the necessary personal qualities, catechists should seek to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate the Gospel message effectively. They must have a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship, familiarity with Scripture, communication skills, and the ability to use various methodologies, understanding how people grow and mature, and how persons of different ages and circumstances learn.

To learn the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities for the catechetical ministry, catechists need a certain amount of formation and study for competency in their role. This certification process is offered to guide the development of catechists in parishes and schools in the Diocese of Arlington.

Levels of Certification

The catechist, with assistance from the local and diocesan personnel, achieves first a **basic certification (50 hours)**, then either an **advanced certification (100 hours = Basic Certification + 50 hours)** or a **renewal** of their certification (**10 hours**).

Local and diocesan courses, workshops, institutes, conferences and online (internet-based) classes will be offered to assist catechists in attaining certification. Courses and workshops should ideally take place in a community atmosphere with other catechists, so learning becomes experiential, and leads to a deeper personal spirituality. Through modern technological advances, other educational opportunities can be offered to meet the various needs of catechists, allowing for group experiences and interactive learning opportunities. Catechists should strive to attain Diocesan certification in a timely manner, in order to grow in their faith and best serve in their ministry.

All catechetical employees, e.g. Principals, teachers of religion in Diocesan schools or Directors of Religious Education, **must work towards certification from the time they begin their employment**. During the first year of employment, new personnel must acquire 10 hours towards Basic Certification, starting with an online course, either “*CAT 101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*”, offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com) or “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” offered by The Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu). During the second and third years of employment, another 20 hours each year must be acquired (see Syllabus for Certification, on page 6, for course requirements). **Every catechetical employee has three years to attain Basic Certification.**

When first applying for **Basic Certification**, up to twenty-five hours may be counted from a catechist’s previous 5 years of formation. Once Basic Certification is acquired, **teachers are encouraged to work towards Advanced Certification**, at a rate of 10 hours during the fourth year of employment, and then 20 hours each for the fifth and sixth years of employment (see Syllabus for Certification, on pages 6 and 7, for course requirements). Hours are not carried from one certificate to the next (the 50 Advanced Certification hours must be new hours attained from the time of the completion of the Basic Certification).

Once certification is acquired, **renewal of certification is achieved with an additional 10 hours of instruction every three years** (see Syllabus for Certification, pages 6 and 7 for course requirements). All hours are transferable between places of employment (e.g. from one school/parish to the next) and certification requirements are not negated with transfer of employment (e.g. if you change schools in your second year, you still need to acquire Basic Certification within three years from your first year of employment in a Diocesan School). All certification records are maintained by the Diocese of Arlington, and will transfer with your personnel file.

Syllabus for Certification

(Note: Catechetics classes should include training in Methods, Scripture and Theology.)

Basic Certification (50 Hours* divided as follows):

10 Hours – “*CAT101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*” offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com)

or

10 Hours – “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” offered by the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu)

plus:

10 Hours – The Creed

10 Hours – The Sacraments

10 Hours – The Moral Life

10 Hours – The Life of Prayer

***Each “hour” is a “clock hour”.**

Basic Certification – an Overview:

- Year 1: “*CAT 101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*” an online course offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC, approved by the Diocese of Arlington for Catechist Certification (www.catholiceducationcenter.com)
or “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” an online course offered by the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu)
- Year 2: 2 Additional Courses either from the Catholic Education Center, LLC, or the Catholic Distance University **or** 20 hours* from other approved sources.
- Year 3: 2 Additional Courses either from the Catholic Education Center, LLC, or the Catholic Distance University **or** 20 hours* from other approved sources.

***Each “hour” is a “clock hour”.**

The Diocese of Arlington is willing to subsidize online courses both through the Catholic Education Center, LLC or through the Catholic Distance University. Please speak to your Principal or Director of Religious Education for more information.

**Advanced Certification (100 Hours* = Basic Certification + 50 Hours*)
Classes will vary, but suggested topics include):**

Topics you are responsible for teaching in your curriculum

Ministry Formation
Catholic Spiritualities
Old Testament
New Testament
Apologetics
Theology of the Body
Science/Faith Issues
Bioethics
Ecumenism/World Religions
Social Justice
Church Documents
Church History
Catholicism in Current Events/Living the Faith in Society
Catholic Culture and Tradition
Catholic Literature

***Each “hour” is a “clock hour”.**

Advanced Certification – an Overview:

Year 4: 1 Additional Course either from the Catholic Education Center, LLC, or the Catholic Distance University **or** 10 hours* from other approved sources.
Year 5: 2 Additional Courses either from the Catholic Education Center, LLC, or the Catholic Distance University **or** 20 hours* from other approved sources.
Year 6: 2 Additional Courses either from the Catholic Education Center, LLC, or the Catholic Distance University **or** 20 hours* from other approved sources.

***Each “hour” is a “clock hour”.**

Renewal of Certification (Basic or Advanced) – an Overview:

Every Three Years: 1 Additional Course either from the Catholic Education Center, LLC, or the Catholic Distance University **or** 10 hours* from other approved sources beginning with classes in the Basic Certification Syllabus, then using other classes as suggested in the Advanced Certification Syllabus.

***Each “hour” is a “clock hour”.**

The Diocese of Arlington is willing to subsidize online courses both through the Catholic Education Center, LLC or through the Catholic Distance University. Please speak to your Principal or Director of Religious Education for more information.

Applying for Certification

Each year, the catechist completes the necessary hours of coursework, and the **Catechist Certification Application Form***, submitting it to the parish Director of Religious Education or school Principal for signature. The signed form is then forwarded to the appropriate diocesan office for recording. **Please be sure to attach transcripts from any coursework.** Certificates are issued by the Diocese of Arlington, and will be sent to local personnel for distribution to their catechists (e.g. sent to the Principal or Director of Religious Education). The catechists are thus affirmed for their continued growth and competency as they further the mission for the Church in the Arlington Diocese.

Before completing the **Catechist Certification Application Form***, applicants should consult with their local Director of Religious Education, Principal or Chairperson, Religion Department. **Applications will be processed by the Diocesan Religious Education Office or the Diocesan School Office upon receipt of completed certification requirements. Submissions may be made year-round.**

*** Catechist Certification Application Forms (Basic and Advanced) are available online at www.arlingtondiocese.org/offices/livingfaith/catechist_cert.html.**

Renewal of Basic or Advanced Certification may be submitted in a letter, identifying topics and hours, signed by the School Principal (for Elementary School Teachers), Parish Director of Religious Education (for Parish Catechists) or High School Religion Department Chairperson (for High School Teachers). Please be sure to attach transcripts from any coursework.

Hours may be attained from:

- ✓ School/Parish organized Retreats;
- ✓ Lectures and classes at Diocesan Institutes/In-services;
- ✓ Deanery Days of Reflection;
- ✓ Diocesan-recognized Catholic Institution of higher education (college, university, etc.);
- ✓ and Diocesan recognized online classes.

Talks and Scripture studies, including those given in parishes, may be utilized if documented with dates, speakers, topics and a written one-page summary of each event to be submitted to the Director of Religious Education or Principal/Chairperson for approval.

Prior Certification Equivalence

Catechists holding Diocesan Catechist Certification attained before July 2008 (based on the Forward in Faith Guidelines) will be “grand-fathered” into the new “Go Therefore...” Catechist Certification Guidelines (as noted below):

A Preliminary Certificate will be converted to a Basic Certificate following completion of “*CAT 101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*” offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com) or “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” offered by the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu).

A Basic Certificate will be equivalent to a Basic Certificate in the revised guidelines.

An Advanced Certificate will be equivalent to Advanced Certificate in the revised guidelines.

In Addition:

Graduation from the **Arlington Diocese Master Catechist Program** satisfies the requirement for an Advanced Certificate.

Catechists holding a **college, university or advanced degree in Catechetics or Theology** issued at any time, plus satisfactory completion of either “*CAT 101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*” offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com) or “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” offered by the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu) fulfill the requirements for Advanced Certification. Those holding such degrees can seek a waiver from the requirement of the above-named courses from the Office of Catechetics.

Certification from another diocese plus the satisfactory the completion of either “*CAT 101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*” offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com) or “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” offered by the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu) fulfill the requirements for Advanced Certification.

Religious beginning their service in the Diocese of Arlington as of Fall 2008 may apply for Basic or Advanced Certification on the **basis of their prior religious formation**. Religious are encouraged to continue their formation through the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com) or the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu) and other approved resources.

Renewal of Catechist Certification must comply with the new “Go Therefore...” Catechist Certification Guidelines (10 hours every three years), beginning with classes in the Basic Certification Syllabus, then using other classes as suggested in the Advanced Certification Syllabus. **All catechists who have not completed either “*CAT 101: Catholic Education: What Every Teacher Needs to Know*” offered by the Catholic Education Center, LLC (www.catholiceducationcenter.com) or “*116-0800: Fundamentals of Catholic Doctrine*” offered by the Catholic Distance University (www.cdu.edu), must do so.**

For clarification of the new Guidelines and information on applying for certification, please contact the Office of Religious Education or the Office of Catholic Schools.

Section 4:

“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.”

(John 7:16b)

Christ called his apostles, who followed him, lived with him, ministered with him and learned from him for three years, during Christ’s public ministry. They witnessed His miracles, heard His parables, embraced His teaching and loved the Teacher. Jesus established His Church (see Mt. 16:16-18), and He continues His work through His Church. Catechists are called by Christ to assist with His work, following His teaching and example as passed down through the apostles. We teach His words, we proclaim His message, we lead others to encounter Christ, and witness His love. Teaching is a gift from God, a sacred ministry of the word. Christ Himself said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Mt 28: 17b-20).

May “Christ dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.”

(Ephesians 3:17-19)