

## **Archdiocesan Catechist and Religion Teacher Certification Program**

Parish and school catechists of adults, youth and children teach the faith in service of the Church's mission to pass on the faith to all generations. Knowledge of the faith is essential to the New Evangelization, for only faith that is known can be lived with confidence and shared with others. These revised certification requirements apply to all archdiocesan catechists, including elementary school religion teachers and parish religious education program catechists. Special information is found on page 3 for those previously in the certification process. These revisions do not affect catechists who have already been certified.

### **Discernment of the Call to be a Catechist**

In light of the privileged role of catechists, careful consideration must be given to the formation and certification of all those who assist pastors in their teaching ministry. This process begins with discernment of the call to catechize. The National Directory for Catechesis states:

*The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communication involving the recruitment of catechists. In consultation with the parish catechetical leader, the pastor should assist the candidate in the discernment of the vocation to be a catechist (NDC, 55b).*

Individuals interested in becoming a catechist must satisfy the following prerequisites:

- Be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church;
- Participate faithfully in the sacramental life of the Church, and
- Lead a life that is doctrinally and morally consistent with the person of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

Following the discernment of a call to catechize, the catechist must receive the necessary formation to know the faith, live it and be able to teach it to others. The three-fold purpose of catechist formation is:

1. Increase knowledge of the faith;
2. Provide for spiritual growth, particularly through participating in the sacramental life of the Church, and
3. Continually enhance and expand methodological practices to meet social and cultural conditions and effectively pass on the faith.

### **Catechist Certification**

The strength of our parish and school catechetical efforts is dependent on the strength of our catechists. The Office for Catechesis provides excellent and accessible courses for catechists to gain the necessary knowledge to fully implement the archdiocesan religion curriculum guide, *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization*, as well as required training in catechetical methodology. Online and in-parish courses are available in both English and Spanish. Online courses are fully accessible.

**To be Certified a Catechist Must:**

- Take part in an initial interview with pastor or catechetical leader;
- Complete all appropriate steps including background checks and child protection training as outlined in the Archdiocese of Washington Child Protection Policy;
- Complete Living Catholic – preferably within a blended program (gathered community and online) at the parish where the catechist will serve;
- Complete the five core courses of Faith Foundations online through My Catholic Faith Delivered or in-parish from an archdiocesan approved teacher;
- Complete the catechist formation course Catechesis 101 online through My Catholic Faith Delivered or in-parish from an archdiocesan approved teacher, and
- Participate in a one-day Archdiocese of Washington catechist formation retreat, offered throughout the year in regional locations by the Office for Catechesis.

**Certification Program Details:**

**Living Catholic:** An accelerated, online formation program for all Catholics, Living Catholic draws on the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and focuses on deepening one's relationship with Jesus Christ in the context of prayer, learning, and the New Evangelization.

**Faith Foundations:** Available both online and in-parish, Faith Foundations effectively teaches the faith to adults so they can live it with greater confidence and share it with others as part of the New Evangelization. These five courses also provide the theological content necessary for catechists to teach the faith to others. Faith Foundations draws upon and correlates to the current certification courses: Creed, Sacraments, Christian Morality, Prayer and Scripture. Approximately 50 hours are needed to complete all five theological content courses.

**Catechesis 101:** Available both online and in-parish, Catechesis 101 trains catechists in methodology so they can more effectively teach others. This course provides a solid overview of the Church's vision of catechesis, methods of learning and practical catechetical methodology that can be incorporated in the classroom. Approximately 10 hours are needed to complete the course.

**Formation Retreat:** A vital element of catechetical methodology is witness within the Christian community. Upon completion of the theological and methodological requirements (Living Catholic, Faith Foundations and Catechesis 101), catechists will attend a Catechist Formation Retreat (5 hours); this shared experience of prayer and reflection is the final component of the certification process. All theological and methodological coursework must be complete no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled retreat in order for catechists to participate in the retreat. The retreat will be hosted by the Office for Catechesis and held in regional locations throughout the archdiocese over the course of the year.

Certification certificates will be distributed at the conclusion of the retreat. Catechetical Leaders and Principals interested in hosting a formation retreat should contact the Director for Catechesis at 301- 853-5368. This retreat can be tailored to include all faculty and/or a large group of catechists in addition to those seeking certification.

**Information for those who have already begun the certification process:**

- If you have already received certification as a catechist, that certification remains valid. Please consult the archdiocesan website for ongoing formation opportunities.
- Catechists who have begun the certification process will retain credit for all courses already completed. If a catechist isn't sure which courses they have taken, please contact Doug Lawrence at 301-853-5385 or lawrenced@adw.org to request a record of certification check.
- Catechists who have successfully completed at least three Hearts Aflame courses by December 31, 2012 are not required (but are still encouraged) to take Living Catholic or attend a formation retreat in order to complete their certification; they will, however, have to complete their remaining core courses and Catechesis 101 as appropriate.
- Equivalencies within the Faith Foundations curriculum will be available for those seeking to complete certification. For example, if you have taken Creed, Sacraments and Prayer in Hearts Aflame, then you need to complete Christian Morality and Scripture in the new Foundations series. Please contact the Office for Catechesis at 301-853-5385 or the Events Office at 301-853- 5334 with any questions.
- As of January 1, 2013, the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) will not be a certification option, with the exception of the Special Needs Ministry Study group that is working in conjunction with VLCFF.

**Cost:**

- Living Catholic costs \$9.99 per person
- Each of the five Faith Foundations courses costs the adult learner \$29; however,
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The Office for Catechesis will provide a \$9 per course subsidy for those catechists and religion teachers seeking certification with the support of the pastor, catechetical leader or principal. o

Group discounts and scholarships are available; contact My Catholic Faith Delivered at 1-866-981-8964 for further details.

- In-parish live courses cost \$29 per person. The Office for Catechesis will provide a \$9 per course subsidy for those catechists and religion teachers seeking certification with the support of the pastor, catechetical leader and or principal. Contact Kately Javier at 301.853.5384 or at javierk@adw.org for more information.

**Certification Assessments:**

Certification assessments for the Faith Foundations program are available for catechists to earn course credit by demonstrating sufficient knowledge of course material. These assessments will each include 50 multiple choice questions drawn from the content of the particular Faith Foundations course. Catechists receiving a score of 80% or higher on the assessment will receive certification credit for the course.

The assessment will be offered through two proctored options:

- Regional assessment
- Regional Assessments will be made available at schools/parishes throughout the Archdiocese - with no less than 6 regional assessment opportunities available each calendar year. The regional assessments will take place at previously scheduled locations and times.
- Archdiocesan Pastoral Center assessment
- Archdiocesan Pastoral Center assessments will be available Monday –Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for any individual who would like to take the assessment outside the regional assessment schedule. Any catechist who would like to pursue this option must contact the Office for Catechesis staff (301-853-5385) at least 2 business days prior to the desired assessment date to ensure that staff will be available to administer the assessment.

Catechists may take each core Faith Foundations course assessment for certification credit one time only. If a score of 80% or higher is not received, the individual must take the course either online or in- parish. No certification assessment option is available for Catechesis 101.

**Exemption from Core Courses:**

In some circumstances, individuals may apply for exemption from Faith Foundations courses. Course exemptions are granted based on academic documentation that indicates a substantive Faith Foundations course equivalency. All exemption requests should be submitted to the Office for Catechesis for consideration and should include:

- A cover letter of introduction;
- The name of the Faith Foundations course(s) from which the individual is seeking exemption, and
- A copy of the relevant academic documents.

Questions: For information on the certification process contact Sara Blauvelt 301-853-5368 or [blauvelts@adw.org](mailto:blauvelts@adw.org) For information on certification status contact Doug Lawrence at 301-853-5385 or [lawrenced@adw.org](mailto:lawrenced@adw.org) To schedule a Faith Foundations course contact Kately Javier at 301-853-5384 or [javierk@adw.org](mailto:javierk@adw.org)