



“Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

(Matt. 19:14)

Holy Family Catholic Church



A Ministry Handbook For Catechists

Including:

PREP—Children’s Catechesis (Preschool –Grade 8)

REAL Faith (for those with special needs)

RCIC/RCIT (for those out of sequence in regard to sacraments)

1st and 2nd Year Confirmation Preparation

HSPREP (for those in Grades 9-12)

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Message from the Pastor

The law of the Church stipulates that the obligation of insuring the religious formation of youth in a parish falls upon the pastor. As the majority of our formation programs are conducted on Sundays, my hands are often full and my availability is limited. So I gratefully rely on our DRE and the many catechists and volunteers who sacrifice their time and share their talents in making sure we do not drop the ball. The work we do can sometimes be frustrating, but we can give hope to each other as we pursue this important task. Too often critics blame teachers and catechists for the failings of youth. The truth be said, it is often an uphill struggle that requires both collaboration and the movement of the Holy Spirit to make a positive difference. Here are some of the hurdles we face:



- The language of the Archdiocesan Standards and that used in the textbooks is often quite different and hard to understand.
- We are competing with overwhelming secular messages from movies, television, radio (music), and the internet.
- A growing negative peer pressure draws the youth from faith and parades before them the seven deadly sins.
- Certain families inhibit the transmission of faith where they should be collaborating with us through Christian instruction, witnessing virtue and responsibility in their general discipleship, and participating in prayer and the worship of the Church.

CATECHIST'S PRAYER

Lord God, you are the source of all love,
truth, and goodness.

You are the source of my being
And your Word is the true path for my journey.

Grant to me the courage
to live according to your Word.
Instill in me, through the gift of your Holy Spirit,
the desire and the wisdom to share
Your love, your truth, your goodness
with my students.

Help me to use my time
to better prepare myself
for this sacred responsibility.

For I so need to offer myself in your service
with all of the patience, perseverance and love
that you have first shown to me.

I ask no more than this, Lord,
In the name of your Son
and my Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Jack McBride

- Quietly take the students to the designated exit.
- If you are the last one out, close the door.
- Once outside, line up the students.
- Count the students again.
- The students should be quiet at all times so they can hear instructions.
- Return to the classroom after the clear signal has been given.
- Recount the students once you are back in the classroom.

MISCELLANEOUS

Supplies should be requested one week prior to the time you need them. We stock a variety of colored paper, crayons, markers, scissors and other craft items.

Copy Machine—Ideally copies should *be requested during the week prior to class*. During class time is not the ideal time to make copies, it means that instruction is being held up and often there is more than one person waiting to use the machine. Should a child forget his/her text it is alright to make a copy of the needed pages.

CATECHIST RESOURCES

1. Books and videos are available in the Resource Room. (small classroom). You may check them out at any time. Please be prompt to return any borrowed material.
2. Your Teachers' manual provides you with substantial information for your grade level. Grades K-8 have a Black-line Master binder with quizzes, tests and additional activities. Visit the publisher's website listed on your guide.

I will do what I can to hold our families accountable. The Church tells us that parents are the primary educators of their children. That means that no matter how busy their lives become, nothing— not sports, not vacations, not concerts, nothing should displace religious formation and their participation at Sunday Mass. As catechists, always remember to invite the parents into the process. We have the children for an hour or so a week, but the parents have their young people each day. We need this partnership with the parents. We need them to be courageous and pro-active in living the faith. If parents are struggling with their own lack of proper formation, and need help, we have informative booklets on the faith, free rosaries and discount paperback bibles.

As your pastor, all I can ask is that each of us does the best he or she can to witness and transmit the faith. The weekly class should cap off a week where parents have taken their families to Sunday Mass, assisted the children with daily prayer, reviewed catechetical lessons and helped with assignments, and sought opportunities for Christian service, etc. While they need to come to church for worship and the hall for PREP; they should also transform their homes into places for the abiding presence of Jesus and the grace of God. Every year we have children entering the primary grades who do not know the Lord's Prayer or Hail Mary. This means that such children are not praying at home. We have got to get our people into living and real relationships with the Lord. Ultimately, you and I are struggling to save souls.

I know you join me in gratitude for the sacrifices and efforts that many good families have made. We need their numbers to grow. Together, we can work with God's grace in opening windows and doors to holiness, both for ourselves and for our children.

God bless you!—*Father Joe Jenkins*



WHO IS A CATECHIST?

Catechist is not a new term and has its very roots in the Church. It comes from a Greek word meaning, “To teach” or to “inform.” In the times of St. Augustine, the word took on the meaning to resound, to echo, to sing out.

“Next to home and family, the witness of the catechist may be pivotal in every phase of the catechetical process. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, catechists powerfully influence those being catechized by their faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the transparent example of their Christian lives. For catechesis to be effective, the catechist must be fully committed to Jesus Christ. They must firmly believe in his Gospel and its power to transform lives.”

National Directory for Catechesis, page 101

DISCERNING THE CALL TO BE A CATECHIST

Individuals interested in becoming a catechist must satisfy the following pre-requisites:

- Be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church;
- Participate faithfully in the sacramental life of the Church, and

PROGRESS REPORTS

Education Standards from the Archdiocese call for specific teachings, doctrine and prayers at each grade level and are available in the Religious Education Office. We adhere to these guidelines and issue Progress Reports so that parents can determine how their child is doing. If a child has been a problem in class, do not use the Progress Report to inform the parent. Inform parents of behavior issues as they occur. Progress Report may be used to tell parents of improved behavior.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Student Illness or Injury

If a student becomes sick or injured during class, bring her/him to the office or send a note to the office and someone will come to get the child and the parents will be notified. Do not under any circumstances dispense medication to the child even if you know the child and the parent.

The office will not dispense medication for the parents. If a student requires medication during class time; the parent must come to the office to administer the medication.

Fire Drill Procedure

A plan for an emergency exit is posted in your classroom. Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself and your class with the specifics. When a fire drill will be conducted you will be given advance notice.

- Stay calm— students will follow your cue.
- Count students before you leave and take the class list kept in your folder.

- Discuss any holy days or saint's feast days for the coming week.

HOMEWORK

Homework is a must. New to this year, suggested assignments are included in the syllabus. For the majority it will be the chapter assessment at the end of each lesson that is assigned. Homework should be collected at the beginning of class, and turned in with your attendance sheet.

DISMISSAL

- End your class with the prayer "Act of Contrition."
- Straighten room, pick up trash and turn off lights (if applicable).
- Return the catechist folder with all the papers removed except completed

ATTITUDE IN THE CLASSROOM

It is our policy to discipline with love and understanding. Do not allow a behavior problem to continue, immediately speak to the student about their behavior and, if necessary, inform the DRE who will call the parent. The DRE can allow you to make this call.

SUBSTITUTE CATECHIST PROCEDURE

The catechist should inform the Office as soon as they realize that they cannot be in class. The catechist is responsible to submit their lesson plan for the class. It is the responsibility of the Catechist to find a substitute and provide a lesson plan. Only the DRE or Pastor can cancel a class.

- Lead a life that is doctrinally and morally consistent with the person of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.
- Believe deeply in Jesus, the teachings of the Catholic Church and desire to share that belief with others.
- Be a positive person, alive with the joy that comes from living the Gospel message.
- Be committed to the teaching mission of the Church.
- Have a love for and be sensitive toward the age group they desire to catechize.
- Be open to growth by participating in activities that provide personal and
- spiritual growth especially Sunday Eucharist.
- Special devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist, source of spiritual nourishment for Catholics.

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.

Jesus' most common title was teacher. In the four gospels, Jesus is addressed or referred to as "teacher" almost fifty times. Jesus communicated the Good News by teaching in the synagogues and by sharing his message wherever groups gathered around him. How

did Jesus teach? He told stories or parables. He used examples from the experiences of the people he was with and taught them by the way he lived. Jesus used these teaching methods in his day to communicate his message.

As a Catechist, you are following in the footsteps of Jesus, the master teacher. Use his teaching methods.

Also a Catechist should be:

- A practicing model Catholic. We are not perfect but we do make efforts towards holiness.
- Willing to live and share faith, not just teach in formation. This type of witness is lived out in the context of a parish. Catechists should be a visible sign to all through worship and daily living at their registered parish.
- Prepared for class every week and follow the curriculum/syllabus.
- Dress appropriately and arrive at least *15 minutes* before class begins. For those who catechize on Sundays and attend the 9:30 AM Mass, you should arrive 15 minutes before Mass begins, to your classroom, to make sure that all is in readiness.
- Respectful of the students and expect the same from them.
- In compliance with the ADW's Child Protection Policy which includes a volunteer application, Background Check with fingerprinting and VIRTUS Seminar all must be completed prior to working with children.

It contains important information that may affect your class.

Ideally, we would like to always have what is referred to as two-deep leadership. This would include either a Catechist's helper or another catechist (if it is a shared situation) . There are many advantages to this as it gives extra support, continuity in case of the absence of one of the catechists, and a more safe environment for catechist and student.

When Class Begins

• Take attendance and record it on the attendance sheet in your folder using the following notations:

P - Present

A- Absent

T - Tardy (also record the time of the student's arrival to class)

TA – Tardy Absent this is used when a student arrives 20 or more minutes late. Again record the time of arrival to class.

Attendance will be collected by our office volunteers. Please do not send your assistant or classroom aide.

OPENING PRAYER

- Quiet students and ask them to place themselves in the presence of God.

LESSON FOR THE DAY

- Briefly review last week's lessons and concepts.
- Follow the lesson plan for the week.
- While lessons should be creative and occasionally be separate from the textbook, not exclusive of the text.

The Attitude of the Catechist toward the Student

- Be sympathetic and understanding of each student. Make each one feel important and a part of the group.
- Learn to listen to what each student says, verbally and non-verbally, before, during and after class.
- Be fair and treat each student alike during class. Do not “pick favorites.”
- Try to discover each individual’s needs and work from there.
- Keeps the class moving? Be prepared and have alternate activities ready if you finish early.

LESSON PLANNING

Each Catechist is given a Lesson Planner created specifically for the text. It contains the syllabus, calendar, and key vocabulary for the year and we ask that you try to stay on schedule.

Our texts are in accordance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and approved for use by the Archdiocese of Washington. If you skip or omit lessons, the children miss the faith and doctrine that is to be taught in each grade level.

Remember, everything in our faith is important. If you do not feel qualified to teach about a particular aspect of the faith, or have difficulty understanding what the lesson plan is trying to communicate, do not skip over the lesson. Instead, please contact the DRE for support.

Prior to each class, check your folder at the front table or in the office and immediately read the Weekly Reminder.

You will not be able to volunteer until all paperwork is completed, submitted and approved. You must also attend a VIRTUS Seminar within six months of the start of classes. Please go to www.virtus.org to view dates, locations and to register on line.

CATECHIST CERTIFICATION

The strength of our parish catechetical efforts is dependent on the strength of our catechists. Ideally a catechist would attain certification within 3 years of start of ministry.

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:

- 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 cat-

echist formation retreat, offered throughout the year in regional locations by the Office for Catechesis.

ROLE OF THE CATECHETICAL LEADER

It is the responsibility of the Catechetical Leader to provide the basic materials that will aid in the success of the Catechist. This would include (but not limited to):

- An annual planner
- A printed copy of the ADW's Faith Knowledge Indicators
- Program Calendar
- Syllabus
- Teaching Guide
- Class Roster
- Attendance Sheets
- Student Accommodation Sheet (if needed) – this is an informal document much like the accommodations page of a public school's I.E.P. (Individual Education Profile). This information should be treated with privacy and respect.
- Safe Environment Education Curriculum for the annual required class.

During the time classes meet the Catechetical Leader should be available to oversee the entire program therefore it is not ideal for the Catechetical Leader to substitute in the classroom for the catechist.

PREPARATION FOR CATECHESIS

Besides the necessary personal qualities, a catechist should seek to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities needed to communicate the gospel message effectively. You

should have a solid grasp of Catholic culture, doctrine and worship, familiarity with Scripture, communication skills and the ability to use various methodologies and understand how people grow, mature and learn.

ADDITIONAL DATES TO REMEMBER

- Catechist Meetings (there are 2 options)
- Commissioning (on Catechetical Sunday in September)
- Luncheons (at Christmas and End-of-Year)
- Family Event—February 29, 2020

CATECHIST WEEKLY PROCEDURES

Preparation for the Catechist

- In order for the catechist to communicate to their class, they must know their material well.
- Pray regularly for guidance from the Holy Spirit for you and your students.
- Be present for class each week. The students need contact with the catechist to build up their trust and to appreciate the importance of religion class.

The Attitude of the Catechist toward the Class

- Be confident, yet have a humble sense of your mission to speak the Good News.
- Be realistic about your abilities, your responsibilities and your limitations as a catechist.
- Be enthusiastic, interested, cheerful and unafraid to show a sense of humor.
- Be open to learn and to grow in your faith from experiences in the classroom and from your students.
- Use pleasant speech and conversational tone.