

# THE DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON



## CATECHIST CERTIFICATION

For Youth Ministry and RCIA Team Members, Teachers in Parish Religious Education Programs and Catholic Schools, and All Those Engaged in Faith Formation at Any Level

### TEACHING THE FAITH

People come into the Church in a variety of ways. For some, there is an adult experience of conversion and a commitment to Christ after months of instruction and participation in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. For most Catholics, however, the immersion in the life of grace and membership in the Catholic Church begins in infancy, when they are brought to baptism by their parents. The newly initiated Catholic adult takes on as his or her responsibility ongoing spiritual and religious formation. Parishes, deaneries, and diocesan events all provide opportunities for adult growth in faith in a variety of ways. For the Catholic baptized in infancy, parents are held responsible for conscientious catechesis—the religious instruction of their children. While much formation in faith happens in the home, it has long been the case that systematic religious instruction is typically delegated by parents to trained catechists, those who teach the faith in parishes, mission churches, and schools, and those who take the lead in youth ministry.



Because so much responsibility for clear and faithful imparting of the truths and practices of our faith is given to our catechists, the formation of catechists is a vitally important part of Catholic life. It is, in fact, an essential function of the Church's mission of evangelization. The task of catechists is the spread of the Gospel, the communication of the wisdom and riches of our tradition of faith, and the offering of their own prayerful, loving lives as an example of that "life to the full" which the Lord wills for believers (John 10:10).

Like so many things in our spiritual-religious lives, Christian formation demands continual renewal. Christian formation is the means by which we come to know and grow in our faith over a lifetime. Throughout the past decade, catechists have received training in the passing on of our faith in a variety of ways—in our schools, parishes, deaneries, and in diocesan conferences and institutes. At this point, under the direction of our bishop, the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation, the Catholic Schools Office, and the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry are setting forth a renewed program of catechist formation and certification whereby we can train a new generation of catechists and also acknowledge the ongoing effectiveness of those who have long been faithfully assisting the Church's mission of evangelization.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR *BASIC CERTIFICATION*

Basic certification may be attained by the completion of 30 hours of catechetical formation. Core requirements may be completed in a variety of ways:

- participation in a variety of diocesan, deanery, or parish based workshops;
- completion of Echoes of Faith (currently in Echoes Plus edition), with the proviso that areas of theology, scripture, ministry be included, with adjustments to or waiving of methodology units for those with degrees in education and recent updating;
- attendance at interstate or national catechetical conferences covering basic content;
- joining catechist formation days in the dioceses of Savannah or Charlotte or in the Archdiocese of Atlanta;
- auditing or taking for credit undergraduate college courses on the same topics.

**Retroactive certification** can be granted to those who have been certified under previous diocesan programs and have continued to attend parish, deanery, diocesan, or other workshops. Those who participated in Echoes or Catechist Formation days in very recent years can be credited by providing appropriate documentation of participation (ordinarily certified by a pastor, director of religious education, or principal active in this or another diocese).

## **CORE COURSES FOR BASIC CERTIFICATION**

**Overall requirement: 30 hours of formation, with a minimum of 6 hours to be attained each year.**

**Duration of Sessions: 90 minutes of content (120 minutes including prayer and break)**

### **Theology**

The Creed  
Basic Doctrine: God and Creation  
The Church/Ecclesiology  
The Sacraments and Sacred Liturgy  
Catholic Moral Teaching  
Social Justice and the Gospel of Life  
The Blessed Mother and the Saints

### **The Catechist and Ecclesial Ministry**

Who Jesus Is and How He Taught  
The Human Person  
Lay and Ordained Ministry  
The Role of the Catechist  
Prayer and the Devout Life

### **Sacred Scripture**

Overview of the Old Testament  
The Synoptic Gospels  
The Gospel and Letters of St. John  
The Acts of the Apostles and the Church

### **Methodology**

The Many Ways We Learn  
Classroom Techniques  
Teaching Methods (various levels)  
Human Development and Faith Formation

**This core is compatible with programs offered in Savannah, Charlotte, Atlanta and the Echoes of Faith (or Echoes of Faith Plus) Program created by RCL Benziger. There are also a number of DVD programs and online courses available which cover the content of many of the core workshops.**



## **WHO CERTIFIES?**

Since there are a variety of ways whereby people can participate in catechist formation programs, we need to be clear about roles and responsibilities:

- 1) The responsibility of the Diocese of Charleston is to provide programs and resources for the effective formation of catechists and to provide guidance for programs offered on the local or deanery level.**
- 2) The Office of Catechesis will retain lists (not individual records) of attendees at diocesan, deanery, parish, or school formation days in the form of event lists when these are forwarded by pastor, principal, or DRE. The office will work with the Office of Youth Ministry and the Catholic Schools Office in maintaining up to date records.**
- 3) The Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation provides a certificate endorsed by an official seal or stamp when an individual has satisfactorily completed all requirements for basic certification. Documentation of successful completion and recommendation for certification must be presented by the respective pastor, DRE, principal, or other authorized individual.**
- 3) Pastors, principals, DRE's, youth ministers, and RCIA leaders verify individuals' attendance at or participation in formation sessions. At each of these, two signed certificates of attendance should be completed—one for local office purposes, the other for the attendee. Files for each individual catechist (teacher, team member, etc.) should be kept on the local level.**
- 4) Individual catechists are to be given a certificate of attendance or participation only for sessions and events which they attend in their entirety. No credit is given for fractions of sessions attended.**
- 5) Individuals who move from parish to parish or from one catechetical ministry to another should present copies of attendance from their previous place of service when they relocate or change roles.**
- 6) The ultimate determination of what fulfills the requirement for each topic is reserved to the diocesan directors (Catechesis, Youth Ministry, Catholic Schools) who work collaboratively.**

**7) The diocese reserves the right to require oral or written examinations or other surveys to determine that content of catechist formation topics has been comprehended and retained.**



## **PRESENTERS**

**Those who conduct workshops in basic certification courses or courses which contribute to ongoing formation of catechists, teachers, and parish ministers may include parish priests, deacons with expertise in various fields, religious or laity with advanced degrees in theology, Sacred Scripture, education, or pastoral ministry. They are expected to have experience in the field in which they present. Presenters must be willing to provide references from bishops, pastors, educational leaders, or publishing companies, as appropriate to the occasion. Ultimate approval is reserved to the bishop, who may delegate responsibility to the appropriate diocesan office or advisory board. In both formal presentations and informal exchanges, presenters must maintain fidelity to the Catholic magisterial tradition.**



## ONGOING FORMATION FOR CATECHISTS, YOUTH MINISTERS, AND PARENTS

It is customary throughout the diocese that catechists and catechetical leaders have days for renewal conducted on the deanery level. Parishes throughout the diocese offer Bible study, adult education programs, parish missions, and retreats. The directors of religious education in each deanery sponsor not only days of catechist formation but also days of recollection for catechists. The diocese also hosts the biennial Fire at the Beach adult formation weekend, seasonal days of retreat and catechist formation, and adult education days. Whether or not each of these counts as foundational course work, every catechist and indeed every Catholic parent is urged to participate in these formative events as a way of broadening and deepening his or her life of faith and prayer.

The Diocese of Charleston will be developing criteria for *intermediate certification, advanced certification, and master catechist certification* pending the release of new national criteria. At present a joint effort is underway by the National Conference of Catechetical Leaders (NCCL), the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministers (NFCYM), the National Association for Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM), the National Association for Lay Ministers (NALM), and the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) to present new criteria for lay ecclesial ministers' certification. These are slated to be presented to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2011 for their review and approval. Until such time as new criteria are released, parishes and schools are asked to keep records of attendance at faith formation events which contribute to knowledge of theology, Sacred Scripture, ministry, and methodology for their volunteers and staff.



## **TRANSFERABILITY OF CERTIFICATION**

Those who move from parish to parish within the diocese take their certification with them. The Diocese of Charleston also honors certification gained in other dioceses, when presented with documentation .

## **RETENTION OF RECORDS**

Directors of religious education, principals, and youth ministers should see to it that records of attendance at catechetical formation days should be kept for all employees and volunteers who participate in these programs. It is beneficial to have three copies of records: first, a certificate given to the participant at the conclusion of each formation event or class; a list of participants or a copy of the certificate which is kept in parish files and duly noted in the individual's file; a list of participants in formation events which is sent to the diocese, with an indication of the content of the event and the date on which it occurred. Appropriate forms will be provided to DRE's, principals, and youth ministers by the Office of Catechesis and Christian Initiation.



### **APPENDICES**

- **Form for Certificate of Attendance**
- **Course Descriptions**

## Diocese of Charleston Certificate of Attendance



Name of Attendee \_\_\_\_\_

Topic(s) of Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Session (Check one)

Workshop \_\_\_\_\_ Webinar \_\_\_\_\_

In-service \_\_\_\_\_ DVD \_\_\_\_\_

Conference session \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

Site of Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Attended \_\_\_\_\_

Time Devoted to Topic(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Person Certifying Attendance

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

## **BASIC CERTIFICATION COURSES**

### **Theology**

#### **The Creed**

The first part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is devoted to the classic profession of faith, the Apostles' Creed. In this session, the general topic of faith is explored and attention given to the basic articles of the Christian faith. This topic includes consideration of how creeds have been formed and how they have been used throughout the Church's history.

#### **Basic Doctrine: God and Creation**

The concept of Revelation is explored in this session with a focus on how we understand who God is and who we are in relation to the Creator of the universe. Among topics dealt with in this session are: general and special revelation, the Trinity, basic beliefs about the creation of the universe and of planet Earth, and our understanding of what it is to be a human being. Time is also devoted to how and why Catholic responses to scientific theories differ from responses offered by fundamentalists.

#### **The Church/Ecclesiology**

The Church's threefold mission of *kerygma* (preaching), *koinonia* (community/communion), and *diakonia* (service) is explored. The "marks" of the Church—one, holy, catholic, apostolic—are discussed in terms of their implications up to and including the present day. The institutional structure of the Church, its missionary activity, and the call of all the baptized are among the themes treated in this session.

#### **The Sacraments and Sacred Liturgy**

The second part of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is devoted to the way in which the Church celebrates the Christian mysteries—in the seven sacraments and particularly in the Holy Eucharist, which is "the source and summit" of the Christian life. The sacraments of Christian initiation, healing, and vocation are examined here in terms of their core meaning and celebration. The session includes an overview of the Church's determination of what sacraments are, what they do, how they are numbered, and how the Catholic understanding of sacraments differs from that of many other Christians.

### **Catholic Moral Teaching**

The third major section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church deals with “Life in Christ.” The focus is the call of discipleship and the believer’s conduct of life. Highlighted in this session are discussions of the human vocation, personal freedom, right and wrong, good and evil, sin and grace, conscience, conversion, virtue and vice, the Commandments and Beatitudes.

### **Social Justice and the Gospel of Life**

Human dignity and the built-in human desire to live good lives in society dictate that the follower of Christ pursues justice, human solidarity, and the common good. Guidelines from the teaching of Christ and the Church’s developed social justice tradition are explored here with a special emphasis on the extensive treatment of life issues by Pope John Paul II in *‘Evangelium Vitae.’*

### **The Blessed Mother and the Saints**

Catholic beliefs about Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, are traced from their Biblical origins. Liturgical celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary, varied devotions to Mary, images and titles of Mary, and controversies and misunderstandings throughout the years are examined. This session also takes a close look at the communion of saints, discusses patron saints, images of saints, traditions about saints, and prayers to saints.

### **Sacred Scripture**

#### **Overview of the Old Testament**

A broad overview of divine revelation, how Scripture is interpreted and how literary genres and historical circumstances illumine our understanding of Scripture are all introduced in this session. The division of the Old Testament into the law, writings, and prophets is clarified as current English translations are examined. An explanation of why the deuterocanonical books (a.k.a. “apocrypha”) are in Catholic Bibles but not in others is offered.

#### **The Synoptic Gospels**

The gospels are, as the Church has said, “the heart of all the Scriptures.” This session examines the three synoptic gospels—the ones which look from a similar stance and with similar vision—at the life and teaching of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The development of key beliefs about Jesus, the content of his parables, his miracles, and the fulfillment of his mission with its climax in his death and resurrection are examined.

### **The Gospel and Letters of Saint John**

The fourth gospel and the Johannine tradition are considered here. Unique episodes, the important “I am” teachings, the extended Last Supper discourse, and the theology of the Holy Spirit unfolded in John’s gospel and letters are discussed here. Some remarks on the Book of Revelation conclude this session.

### **The Acts of the Apostles and the Church**

The birth of the Church at Pentecost, the rapid missionary expansion of the Church into the Gentile world, the conversion and energetic ministry of St. Paul, the first council of the Church and the first persecutions of Christians are considered in this session. Key players in the story of the early Church and foundations for what the Church would become and remains to this day are explored here.

### **The Catechist and Ecclesial Ministry**

#### **Who Jesus Is and How He Taught**

Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, fully human and fully divine, is studied in this session. Who he was, who he is, what it means to follow Christ, and learning from the manner in which he taught are topics treated in this session. What it means to call him Savior, Redeemer, and Lord is examined in terms of doctrinal and also contemporary relevance.

#### **The Human Person**

Expanding on discussions of the human person inaugurated in sessions on God and Creation, this session considers what it means to be male and female, to be called by God, to have a free will and an intellect, to be subject to death, to have an eternal destiny. Today’s session is a short course in theological anthropology.

#### **Lay and Ordained Ministry**

In this session, the issue of roles and responsibilities in the Church is considered—from the call to holiness and the call to evangelize imparted to all the baptized to the dynamic interaction between “the common priesthood of the faithful” and the special call of holy orders. Distinctions are made concerning ordained ministers—deacons, priests, bishops; persons in consecrated life—members of religious communities, consecrated virgins, hermits; and laity called to build up the earthly city. Practical matters of authority and obedience, participation and consultation are taken up in terms of current experience and practice.

## **The Role of the Catechist**

Catechesis, the imparting of the faith, has been defined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* as having a six-fold purpose: 1) promoting a knowledge of the faith; 2) liturgical education; 3) moral formation; 4) teaching to pray; 5) education for community life; 6) missionary initiation. Who the catechist is, how she or he fits into the span of roles and responsibilities in the Church, how catechists are prepared, and what is expected of them both inside and outside of the classroom or meeting room are topics explored in this session.

## **Prayer and the Devout Life**

The fourth section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church deals specifically with the Lord's Prayer and generally with the life of prayer in the Church. Within Catholicism there are a host of prayer styles, prayer traditions, popular devotions, and also an array of sacramentals which help to deepen one's life of prayer and faith. This session considers how spiritual reading, retreats, and many common religious practices can be tapped to enrich our faith life.

## **Methodology**

### **The Many Ways We Learn**

Educators for years have been exploring learning styles, and nearly everyone knows that some people grasp and retain better if they read, others do better if they hear, still others if they role-play, others if they can use their hands and feet. Some learn more reliably in deep quiet, others amid activity and even noise. How catechists can achieve a middle ground and try to address different needs and different learning styles so that lessons are meaningful to children and youth are the topics of the day.

### **Classroom Techniques**

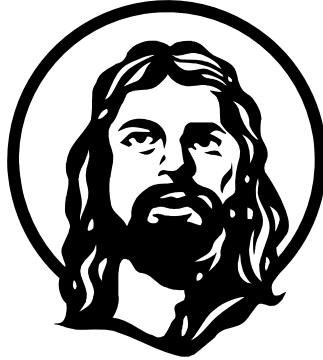
Teaching is a multi-media event. Experienced teachers offering this session show techniques that are effective in terms of classroom management and discipline, structuring time, arranging a variety of activities, inclusion of children and youth with different personalities and abilities, and communicating effectively.

### **Teaching Methods (various levels)**

Early childhood, primary grades, intermediate grades, middle school, and high school youth groups all require a good grasp of age appropriate content and activities. Sessions for various special areas and age groups explore strategies that work best at various ages and stages. These sessions on teaching methods also include special programs on sacramental preparation.

## **Human Development and Faith Formation**

Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler are classic names in the study of human personality, development, and maturing in faith. This session considers the latest insights into how people learn, mature, and grow—and how those who teach can enhance development and maturation.



Approved by Most Reverend Robert Guglielmone, Bishop  
Diocese of Charleston  
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