

# The Institute for Catechesis and Formation

## Course Outline for Students



### CAT II – Classroom Applications for Catechists

The history of Christianity – of the Catholic Church – is one of encounter with Christ, practice of the Faith, and a Tradition that has been passed on through the generations. The Gospel itself was first preached before any words were written. Now we have the richness of Scripture, Church teaching, and a deposit of Faith that nourishes us and draws us closer to God. Our Faith continues to be passed on through word and example in our families, our worship, and in through the efforts and dedication of catechists. This course will define the role of the catechist and provide him/her with the tools necessary to continue the tradition of handing on the Faith to our children. The course will address expectations and methods of communication; how to approach curriculum and the Diocesan guidelines for what is taught at each grade level; and practical experience in lesson planning, using the textbook, and presenting the material in a developmentally and age appropriate manner.

**Texts:** Handouts provided

#### Supplemental Reading/Additional Resources:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):  
<http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>

The Bible: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>

*Catechesi tradendae*, Catechesis in our time, Bl. Pope John Paul II (CT)  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html)

## **Week 1: The Catechist's role in handing on the Faith – and getting started**

### **The Role of the Catechist**

What is *catechesis*? (CCC 4-7)

Through *catechesis* we hand on the Faith, but it is more than imparting *intellectual knowledge*. Catechesis must include a *genuine love for and seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ*.

### **Who is a *catechist*?**

Becoming a catechist – taking on the shared responsibility of teaching children about the Faith – is a response to a call: from the pastor, who has identified you as someone with whom to entrust the spiritual care of children; and from God, who calls each one of us to be witnesses to Him and to the Faith, *by virtue of our baptism*. (CCC 1533, 2145)

### **Basic roles of a catechist –**

- Be a committed witness to the Faith and participant in the life of the Church (Liturgy, Sacraments, acts of charity, etc.)
- Be a Christ-like example
- Teach the precepts of the Catholic Faith
- Communicate the message of the Gospel
- Be present to the children being taught and treat them with love, respecting their personal dignity, and encouraging their childlike wonder in contemplating God's love for them (cf. Mt 19:13-14)
- Engage parents and invite them into greater participation in catechizing their children. Be an example of Christ's love for them and encourage them to grow in their own faith
- Increase knowledge of the faith through personal study, faith formation opportunities (at the parish or courses offered by the Diocese), and recognizing the pastor as a teacher and resource
- To pray, participate in the Sacraments (especially Reconciliation and Eucharist), and do what is necessary to grow in a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ

### **Faith and Prayer Development and the Catechist**

In order to hand on the Faith as a catechist, it is important to not only maintain one's own spiritual life, but continue to grow in relationship with Christ. If you have a relationship with

Christ that is *nourished* by prayer and the Sacraments, and developed with *intention* and *perseverance*, you will convey Christ's love and an enthusiasm for Him among your students.

- Attend Mass weekly – and more often, if possible – to be fed by God's Word and His Body and Blood
- Pray – daily. Use the acronym ACTS as a reminder: **A**doration, **C**ontrition, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication
- Engage in acts of charity and hospitality
- Pray for your students and their families, that God will open their hearts to Him and that they will be transformed by His love

## Communication and the Catechist

In your role as catechist *communication* is very important.

- The catechist communicates the Good News of Jesus Christ
- The catechist communicates with the parents of his/her students
- The catechist communicates with the pastor and Director of Religious Education

## Encouraging parental involvement

*Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.* Declaration on Christian Education, Pope Paul VI

Suggestions for inviting parents' participation in religious education

- Write a letter of introduction to parents at the beginning of the year.
- Send weekly notes home
- Share positive experiences
- Encourage the students to share what they have learned in class with their family

## Faith Development

### An introduction to the Religious Education Guidelines

In 2009 the Diocese of Allentown introduced Religious Education Guidelines for elementary schools and parish religious education programs. These Guidelines were designed to help

religious education instructors in developing lessons appropriate to the age and developmental capabilities of each grade level. The Guidelines are a valuable resource to be used in conjunction with the particular text used in the parish.

## **Looking at the Guidelines** – Grade levels 1-8

Priority topics

Standards – Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and prayer

Catechism and Scripture references

- *Suggestions for faith development at each grade level are found in the Appendix*

## **Applying the Guidelines**

### **Definitions**

Cognitive

Affective

Behavioral

## **Faith Journey – drawing children into an encounter with Christ, and opportunities to grow in faith**

Suggestions for faith development at each grade level – see Appendix

### **Homework –**

Bring a copy of the teacher’s edition of the textbook used in your parish to the next class. Also, bring a practical classroom idea to share with the group (ex. a prayer activity, game, music activity, etc.) as well as a sample lesson plan.

## **Week 2: Planning lessons, engaging students and communicating the Faith**

The second half of this course is a “working session” to give you practical experience working with the Diocesan Guidelines, learning how to approach the textbook, and developing lesson plans.

### **Designing instruction**

Planning and preparation –

- Catechist knows the subject he/she is teaching
- Catechist knows the typical patterns of student learning
- Catechist sets appropriate learning expectations
- Catechist knows where to find resources and how to utilize them
- Catechist plans lessons that are organized
- Catechist engages in fair and meaningful evaluation of students

### **Lesson Planning**

1. Determine the Objectives
2. Consider the parts of the lesson
3. Self-evaluation

### **Classroom Management**

*For the first step toward Wisdom is an earnest desire for discipline. Ws 6:17*

- Expectations
- Be consistent
- Model behavior
- Respect and love
- Avoid angry responses.
- Focus on *behavior*
- No ridicule
- Understanding, yet firm
- Know when to ask for help

Helpful resources: [http://www.catholicteacher.com/archive/articles\\_view.php?article\\_id=2282](http://www.catholicteacher.com/archive/articles_view.php?article_id=2282)

**Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... Mt 28:19**

As we have seen, the role of the catechist is to provide a place of encounter with Christ by teaching children about who God is, how each of them is made in His image and likeness, and that we are all called to love each other as His children. As a catechist, you share the Faith (the teachings of the Church **and** your own personal relationship with Christ) with each child you encounter. You also share Christ with parents – through your interactions with their children, the respect you show them as primary educators of their children, and by making an effort to bring Christ’s love to them in every interaction with them.

*Thank you for giving your “yes” to God, your parish,  
and to every child who meets Christ in you!*

*Then children were brought to him that he might  
lay his hands on them and pray.*

*The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, “Let the  
children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the  
kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*

*Mt 19:13-14*