

FORMATION: CATECHIST, MASTER CATECHIST, PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERSHIP

Catechesis needs to announce the essential mysteries of Christianity, promoting the Trinitarian experience of life in Christ as the center of the life of faith; (GDC 33) The ministry of catechesis appears, then, as a fundamental ecclesial service for the realization of the missionary mandate of Jesus. (GDC 59)

PHILOSOPHY

1. At the heart of Catechesis is the person of Jesus Christ. (cf CT 5)
2. The formation process serves the community of believers by:
 - a) Deepening a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who draws us ever deeper into life with the Father and the Spirit. (CCC 426; GDC 33)
 - b) Preparing those who are responding to the prophetic call of their Baptism to proclaim Christ, to “evangelize,” and to lead others to the “yes” of faith in Jesus Christ through participation in catechetical centers. (CCC 428-9)
 - c) Insuring that ministers, both catechetical and liturgical, are nurtured and fed first in an adult fashion in their own faith and are then able to minister more effectively.
3. All catechesis - both content and method - must be adapted to the culture, age, and social conditions of the learners. (CCC 24) Every local Church, by analyzing her own cultural and religious situation, will discover her own needs and will realistically foster those kinds of catechists which she needs. The organization and orientation of the formation of catechists is a fundamental responsibility. (GDC 232)

GOALS

- 1) To develop the participant as a proclaimer of the message of Jesus Christ through his Church by developing the catechist’s human, spiritual and apostolic qualities. (NDC 55.D)
- 2) All catechists should obtain Archdiocesan certification
- 3) To enable participants to respond to the gift of God through prayer, participation in the sacraments, the Liturgy, ecclesial and social commitment, works of charity and promotion of human values such as liberty and the protection of creation.
- 4) To enable participants to demonstrate competency in handing on the faith in the following areas:

- a) The ability to express their faith to others using the language of the Faith Tradition.
 - b) The ability to lead people in prayer
 - c) A mature understanding of the basic concepts of the Faith
 - d) Making the Catechist aware of the social, cultural, ethnic, demographic, and religious circumstances of the people he or she will serve, so that the catechist can bring the Gospel message to them. (NDC 55.D)
- 5) To foster throughout the Archdiocese, effective religious education and faith formation. (Gathered and Sent, 2003) Inter and intra-generational programs will be developed using the vision of WCC (Whole Community Catechesis).
- 6) This section is designed for parish coordinators and directors of religious education as a guide and resource. It will also assist Parish Leadership as they select qualified leaders for their particular parish catechetical needs.

Basic Ministry Formation

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles provides formation in compliance with the guidelines of the Bishops of the California Catholic Conference revised in 2009. This certification is valid in the state of California.

The formation course is structured so that:

1. The various elements of the Christian faith are presented in harmony with each other by means of an organic vision that respects the "hierarchy of truths." (*Unitatis Redintegratio* 11)
2. This synthesis of faith should be such as to help the catechist to mature in his [/her] own faith and enable him [/her] to offer an explanation for the present hope in this time of mission: "The situation today points to an ever-increasing urgency for doctrinal formation of the lay faithful, not simply for a better understanding which is natural to faith's dynamism, but also in enabling them to 'give a reason for their hope' in view of the world and its grave and complex problems". (ChL, *Christifideles Laici* in GDC 241b)
3. It must be a theological formation that is close to human experience and capable of correlating the various aspects of the Christian message with the concrete life of [a person] "both to inspire it and to judge it in the light of the Gospel. While remaining theological it must in some fashion adopt a catechetical style." (GDC 241c)
4. It must be such that the catechist "will be able not only to communicate the Gospel accurately, but also able to make those being taught capable of receiving

it actively and of discerning what in their spiritual journey agrees with the faith."
(GDC 241d)

The **Theology Phase** of Basic Ministry Formation and Catechist certification in the Archdiocese is extensive. It requires a time commitment of not less than 40 hours. The Theology Phase includes but is not limited to sessions covering:

1. God's Self Revelation
2. The Trinity
3. Christology
4. Ecclesiology
5. Liturgy
6. Sacramental Theology
7. Missionary Spirit
8. Moral Formation
9. Prayer and Spirituality (CA Guidelines, 16-17)

The **Application/Specialization Phase** develops the foundational skills of a catechist. These include the practical areas of session planning, prayer experiences, the Nature and Purpose of Catechesis, Methodology, the use of media and technology and other learning activities.

The **Practicum Phase** includes a) two written evaluations of the candidate by certified catechists in a catechetical setting and b) two written observations by the candidate of two other certified catechists. Once completed, the catechist is eligible to be certified by the Archdiocesan Office of Religious Education. A final interview concludes the process. Before certification, one-year of teaching experience is necessary.

The Basic Ministry Formation course opens the door for growth and enrichment, but equally important is the continual formation of the catechist. The catechist is certified and re-certified for three-year periods. In order to be re-certified, the catechist must take not less than 10 hours of workshops each year in the topic areas described above. Most workshops offered by the Office of Religious Education may be applied toward re-certification. The annual Religious Education Congress in Anaheim is an excellent way to experience a variety of topics and liturgies. Regional congresses are better suited for practical training in a more intimate setting. All sessions offered at the congresses, Anaheim and Regional, may be applied toward re-certification.

Qualities of Candidates for Catechist and Basic Ministry Formation should include:

1. a strong awareness of the working of God's grace in their lives and a growing faith-life in response to that grace;
2. a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, who is the center of the message;
3. a strong understanding of the mission of the Church, evidenced by a personal commitment to:
 - a) Catechize within the Roman Catholic tradition, in light of Vatican II, post-conciliar documents and according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, and the *National Directory for Catechesis*;
 - b) Participate actively and regularly in the Church's liturgical and sacramental life;
 - c) Being a Catholic who is a model of Christian virtue and a courageous witness to the Catholic faith; (NDC 55.D)
 - d) Deepen an active prayer life;
 - e) Respect the diversity of culture; and
 - f) Serve with dedication.
4. an ability to appreciate different types and stages of individual growth and development;
5. an ability to communicate effectively with the persons to be catechized;
6. a willingness to continue their own religious education and formation. (CA Guidelines 9)

Advanced Catechetical Ministry

Advanced Catechetical Ministries (**ACM**) is the formation program sponsored by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to prepare people for certification at the advanced level in accordance with the guidelines of the Bishops of the California Catholic Conference revised in 2009. The primary goal is to prepare successful candidates for leadership in catechetical ministry in parish, school and liturgical ministries.

ACM is comprised of three distinct phases which take place over a minimum of a three-year period.

- **Phase One: The Theological Phase** involves the study of scripture and the essentials of Catholic doctrine as a common basis for all those preparing for ministerial/catechetical leadership.

- **Phase Two: The Catechetical Phase** involves the study of catechesis, locating it within the context of evangelization, and helps to develop necessary skills for catechetical and ministerial leadership.
- **Phase Three: The Practicum Phase** involves a supervised practicum related to a ministerial area.

In fulfillment of the guidelines established by the Bishops of the California Catholic Conference, the themes covered in ACM include, but are not limited to: *Theological Reflection, Images of God, Revelation, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacraments, Morality, Social Justice, Christian Spirituality, Evangelization, Faith Development, Liturgy, Christian Initiation, Catechumenate as Model for Catechesis, Formation Teams & Leadership, Adult Formation, Catechesis & Media, and Foundational Skills for the Master Catechist.*

Those preparing for leadership in ministry are expected to have a degree of competency which permits them to engage formation at the advanced level. This competency is characterized by:

- an ability to study at the post-secondary level;
- an ability to communicate with adults;
- basic catechist certification or equivalent;
- record of involvement in ministry in a Catholic high school and/or parish;
- catechetical, teaching and/or liturgical ministry experience; and
- sensitivity to the cultural diversity of the people in the Archdiocese.

In addition to this basic competency, there are **additional requirements** for admission into the program pertaining to the respective fields of ministerial/catechetical leadership.

Adult Religious Education

- basic adult specialization or its equivalent
- five years experience in one or more of the following areas: catechesis, Christian Initiation, or adult education

Parish Catechetical Leader

- basic PCL Certificate or its equivalent
- five years experience in catechetical ministry, no less than two of which were served as a coordinator/chairperson

Coordinator of Confirmation/Youth Ministry

- basic confirmation/youth ministry specialization or equivalent
- recent catechetical experience

Catholic High School Religion Teacher/Campus Minister

- B.A. in Theology or Religious Studies (M.A. recommended)
- current high school teaching experience
- evidence of ongoing enrichment in the areas of theology and campus ministry

Master Catechist Program

- minimum five years catechetical experience at different levels
- evidence of ongoing enrichment in the areas of theology, catechesis and education
- recent catechetical experience.

Approval for Advanced Certification

Certification as an advanced-level catechist requires successful completion of the program of formation and the final approval of the staff of the Office of Religious Education entrusted with responsibility for oversight of the Advanced Catechetical Ministries program. This approval is forthcoming through a process of consultation with competent and experienced advanced-level catechists, a process of discernment over the period of time a candidate for certification engages in the formation process taking into account the vocational nature of the catechetical ministry.

