

Essential Catechist Formation

Program Overview

Essential Catechist Formation is a comprehensive, Christ-centered formation pathway designed to prepare catechists for the Church's evangelizing mission in today's apostolic age. Rooted in the four pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—Profession of Faith, Celebration of the Christian Mystery, Life in Christ, and Christian Prayer—this formation moves beyond a purely instructional model toward an integrated vision of evangelizing catechesis. Throughout the twelve courses, catechists are formed not only in what the Church believes and teaches, but in how faith is encountered, celebrated, lived, and proclaimed. Emphasizing conversion, accompaniment, and missionary discipleship, Essential Catechist Formation invites catechists to see themselves as witnesses and companions who help children, families, and adults grow in intimacy with Jesus Christ and active participation in the life and mission of the Church. This formation reflects the Church's call, articulated in the *Directory for Catechesis*, to place the kerygma, the Word of God, and lived discipleship at the heart of all catechetical ministry.

Evangelization & Catechesis

- **The Catechist: Agents of Evangelization**
- **Sharing the Kerygma: Our Faith Story**
- **Pedagogy: Leading the Learner**
- **Tasks of Catechesis**

Expressions of Faith

- **Spirituality and Prayer**
- **Morality and Social Justice**
- **Sacraments and Liturgy**

Scripture & Tradition

- **Scriptural Foundations**
- **Old Testament**
- **New Testament**
- **Creed, Councils and Church**

Capstone: Methods & Models

- **Lesson Planning: From beginning to end**
- **Independent Final Project: Lesson Plan & Reflection**

“Formation sets as its goal, in the first place, making catechists aware that as baptized persons they are true missionary disciples, meaning active participants in evangelization, and on this basis are enabled by the Church to communicate the Gospel and to accompany and educate believers in the faith. The formation of catechists therefore helps to develop the skills needed to communicate the faith and to accompany others in their growth.”
— *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 132

Together, these twelve formation courses provide a coherent and intentional pathway for the formation of catechists in the Diocese, integrating evangelization, Scripture and Tradition, lived faith, and practical application. Each course is designed for a session of approximately 2 to 2.5 hours and engages catechists through prayer, reflection, dialogue, and experiential learning. While the courses are recommended to be taken in sequence to support a gradual and integrated formation process, catechists may participate in the sessions in a different order as scheduling needs require. The formation moves beyond the simple transmission of content to foster encounter with Christ, growth in discipleship, and the ability to accompany children, families, and adults in their faith journey. The sequence as a whole guides catechists from identity and mission, through theological and spiritual foundations, toward practical methods that support effective, Christ-centered catechetical ministry.

Evangelization and Catechesis

Catechists: Agents of Evangelization

This foundational course introduces catechists to their vocation as *agents of evangelization*, rooted in Baptism and exercised in service to the Church’s mission of forming disciples. Participants explore catechesis not merely as religious instruction, but as an ecclesial ministry that proclaims the Good News and leads others into communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ. Through Scripture, prayer, reflection on personal call, and engagement with key Church documents, catechists are invited to deepen their spiritual identity as witnesses, teachers, and companions on the journey of faith. The session emphasizes the spirituality of the catechist—abiding in Christ, growing in holiness, and embodying the missionary mindset—while clarifying the definitive aim of catechesis as articulated in *Catechesi Tradendae* and the *Directory for Catechesis*. By grounding catechists in the Church’s evangelizing vision and the rich tradition that informs catechetical ministry, this course establishes a shared understanding of catechesis as a dynamic process that forms both the heart and the mind, equipping catechists to accompany others toward a living, transformative relationship with Christ.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand catechesis as a ministry of evangelization within the Church’s mission
- Recognize one’s own call to being a catechist as a vocation to serve the Church’s mission
- Reflect on the spirituality of the catechist and what it means to abide in Christ
- Appreciate the development of catechetical documents and the importance of their content in regards to the ministry of evangelization and discipleship
- Identify the definitive aim of catechesis as intimacy with Jesus Christ
- Recognize the catechist as witness, teacher, and accompanier

Sharing the Kerygma: Our Faith Story

This course invites catechists into a prayerful and reflective encounter with the *kerygma*—the core proclamation of the Gospel—experienced not only as content to be taught, but as a living reality that shapes one’s personal faith story. Through Scripture, sacred music, guided meditation, journaling, and silence, catechists prayerfully journey through the movements of God’s saving love: creation, sin, redemption in Jesus Christ, personal response, and life in the Holy Spirit. Drawing on the *Directory for Catechesis* and contemporary models of evangelization, the session helps catechists distinguish and integrate evangelization and catechesis, recognizing the kerygma as the first and ongoing proclamation that must continually resound in the life of the Church. By encountering Christ anew and reflecting on how Jesus has transformed their own lives, catechists are formed to witness authentically, share their faith story with humility and confidence, and proclaim the Gospel in ways appropriate to the age, readiness, and lived experience of those they serve. This retreat-like experience grounds catechists in a Christ-centered approach that prioritizes encounter before instruction and prepares them to accompany children and families toward deeper conversion and discipleship.

OBJECTIVES:

- Distinguish evangelization from catechesis while recognizing their unity
- Experience the kerygma as the heart of evangelization and catechesis
- Reflect on the movements of kerygmatic catechesis
- Recognize the role of sharing kerygma as the first proclamation in the thresholds to conversion
- Recognize how kerygmatic catechesis is implemented in catechetical settings
- Reflect on personal faith story and encounter with Christ
- Realize that there are many ways to share the kerygma, depending on the age and where the recipient is on their journey
- Grow in confidence to witness and share faith appropriately

Five Tasks of Catechesis

This course equips catechists with a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the *Five Tasks of Catechesis* as articulated in the *Directory for Catechesis (2020)*, emphasizing their role in forming missionary disciples through the totality of the Church’s catechetical mission. Catechists explore how the tasks—leading to knowledge of the faith, initiating into the celebration of the mystery, forming for life in Christ, teaching prayer, and introducing to community life—work together to nurture a living, holistic faith centered on a relationship with Jesus Christ. Through experiential learning, reflection, and practical application, catechists move beyond theory to actively engage each task in ways that are age-appropriate, relational, and responsive to the lived experience of those they serve. The course highlights accompaniment as the heart of catechesis, calling catechists to recognize God’s action already present in the lives of children and families and to walk with them toward deeper conversion and discipleship. By grounding lesson planning and classroom practice in the Five Tasks, this session forms catechists to teach with intention, balance, and missionary purpose, ensuring that catechesis remains Christ-centered, communal, and oriented toward lifelong faith formation.

OBJECTIVES

- Refer back to the catechetical documents to identify and deepen understanding of the importance of the Five Tasks of Catechesis
- Recognize that the Five Tasks of Catechesis enable the totality of our efforts to make disciples
- Apply knowledge of the Five Tasks of Catechesis to their catechetical sessions
- Understand how the tasks function together in holistic faith formation
- Apply the Five Tasks to lesson planning and catechetical practice
- Recognize accompaniment as central to catechetical ministry

Pedagogy: Leading the Learner

This course forms catechists in the Church’s understanding of *pedagogy*—the sacred art of “leading the learner”—by helping them recognize how faith is shaped through human development, relationships, culture, and lived experience. Drawing from Scripture, Church teaching, and key developmental theories, catechists learn to thoughtfully attend where children, parents, and families are cognitively, socially,

morally, and spiritually on their faith journey. The session emphasizes that catechesis begins with the human experience and unfolds through accompaniment, as catechists learn to meet learners where they are and gently guide them toward deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. By exploring stages of cognitive, moral, psychosocial, and faith development—alongside learning styles, multiple intelligences, and generational influences—catechists gain insight into how people learn and grow at different ages and stages of life. Equally important, catechists reflect on their own learning preferences and teaching tendencies, fostering greater intentionality and flexibility in their ministry. Grounded in the pedagogy of God revealed in Christ, this course equips catechists to teach with reverence for the dignity of each learner, to accompany families with compassion and wisdom, and to form faith in ways that are responsive, relational, and oriented toward lifelong discipleship.

OBJECTIVES

- Recognize that learning begins with the human experience
- Understand human and faith development across the lifespan
- Recognize the cognitive development of the learner
- Recognize the stages of faith and moral development of the learner
- Understand the Psychosocial aspect of learning
- Review or introduce the *Diocesan Thresholds and Discipleship Chart* and see the connections between these and developmental stages
- Recognize the importance of meeting individual learning styles
- Determine your own learning style preference and determine how that may influence your teaching style
- Recognize cultural and generational influences that have impacted learning styles in catechesis
- Reflect on one’s own learning and teaching tendencies
- Apply learner-centered pedagogy in catechetical settings



Scripture and Tradition

Scriptural Foundations

This course forms catechists in a Catholic understanding of Sacred Scripture as the living Word of God revealed through human history and faithfully handed on through the Tradition of the Church. Participants explore how Scripture emerges from real human experiences—events, oral tradition, written texts, and the formation of the canon—guided by divine inspiration and ordered toward salvation. Drawing from *Dei Verbum* and the Church’s teaching on revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy, the course clarifies how Catholics approach the Bible with both faith and reason. Catechists are introduced to historical-critical and literary approaches to Scripture, enabling them to recognize the importance of context, audience, and genre in interpreting biblical texts responsibly and prayerfully. Through engagement with the breadth of biblical literature and the overarching narrative of God’s saving love, catechists grow in confidence and competence in using Scripture within catechetical settings. This course equips catechists not only to teach Scripture accurately but to proclaim it as a living word that forms disciples, nourishes faith, and invites children and families into an ongoing encounter with God.

OBJECTIVES

- Recognize and understand the entirety of Sacred Scripture as the human experiences in which God was revealed
- Understand Catholic teachings of tradition, revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy
- Review the various approaches to biblical exegesis as principles for interpreting Scripture
- Explore the various types of literature in Scripture
- Appreciate the whole story of Sacred Scripture that reveals the free gift of God’s constant and saving love.
- Explore practical application in catechetical settings. (Pedagogy)
- Use Scripture confidently and prayerfully in catechesis

Old Testament

This course introduces catechists to the Old Testament as the foundational love story of God and God’s chosen people, revealing a faithful God who remains present and active throughout human history. Catechists explore the structure of the Old Testament, with particular attention to the Pentateuch, and engage the four central biblical themes of creation, covenant, exodus, and exile as lenses through which God’s saving action is revealed. Through prayer, Scripture study, and guided reflection, participants come to understand covenant as the heart of Israel’s relationship with God and Exodus as a defining model of faith, liberation, and trust that continues to shape Christian belief today. The course examines the historical realities of exile and return, helping catechists recognize how suffering, displacement, and hope become places of profound revelation. Special attention is given to the role of the prophets—major and minor—as voices of fidelity, justice, and mercy, drawing clear connections between prophetic witness in Scripture and the Church’s call to social justice in the modern world. By situating the Old Testament within the broader narrative of salvation history, this course equips catechists to teach these sacred texts with theological

integrity, pastoral sensitivity, and a Christ-centered vision that prepares learners to recognize God's promises fulfilled in the New Testament.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the structure and themes of the Old Testament
- Recognize the Old Testament as a record of faith, the love story of God and God's chosen people.
- Understand the construction of the Pentateuch
- Know the four major themes of the Old Testament and how they show God's presence and activity in human life: creation, covenant, exodus and exile
- Understand the biblical theme of Covenant
- Understand Exodus as a model for Christian faith
- Understand the factors that caused the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile
- Identify and understand the meaning and the role of select "major" and "minor" prophets
- Understand the role of the prophets making the connection to social justice today

New Testament

This course invites catechists into a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh and the heart of the New Testament, as witnessed by the early Christian community. Catechists explore the New Testament as a record of faith shaped by real encounters with the risen Lord, examining how the Gospels were written for particular communities and purposes while proclaiming one saving truth. Through study of the four Gospels, participants come to appreciate their four distinctive portraits of Jesus, as well as the implications of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God for personal and communal discipleship. The course further examines the growth of the early Church through the Acts of the Apostles, the missionary journeys and pastoral letters of St. Paul, and the wider body of New Testament epistles, highlighting how faith was lived, taught, and passed on in the first Christian communities. Catechists are also introduced to the Book of Revelation as apocalyptic literature rooted in hope and perseverance amid suffering. Throughout the course, special emphasis is placed on the *kerygma*—the core proclamation of Jesus' saving love—equipping catechists to connect Scripture to catechesis in ways that foster encounter, conversion, and authentic witness in the lives of children and families.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore the Word, Jesus the Christ, the focus of the New Testament
- Understand the New Testament as a record of faith in Jesus by the early Christian people
- Identify the audience, purpose and vision of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- Explore the Implications of Jesus' preaching the Kingdom of God
- Discuss the early Christian community as expressed through Acts and Letters of the New Testament
- Examine the Book of Revelation as an example of Apocalyptic literature
- Connect the Kerygma (Salvation Story) to catechesis using a variety of differentiated methods
- Understand the role of the prophets making the connection to social justice today

Creed, Councils, and Church

This course introduces catechists to the Church's living tradition of belief as it has been prayerfully discerned, articulated, and handed on through theology, doctrine, councils, and creed. Beginning with theology as "faith seeking understanding," catechists explore how the Church responds to God's self-revelation through reflection, dialogue, and authoritative teaching. The session traces the development of core Christian doctrines—particularly the mystery of the Trinity—through the ecumenical councils of the Church, highlighting how the Creed emerged as a communal profession of faith in response to historical questions and challenges. Catechists deepen their understanding of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as both baptismal and liturgical expressions of faith rooted in Scripture and shaped by the life of the Church. The course further invites catechists to reflect on the nature of the Church itself, drawing on biblical images, the models of Church articulated by Avery Dulles, and the renewed ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. By integrating belief, worship, and mission, this course forms catechists to teach doctrine not as abstract concepts, but as living truths that shape discipleship, call the faithful into communion, and send the Church forth to witness to Christ in the world.

OBJECTIVES

- Define theology
- Understand the difference between Doctrine and Dogma
- Recognize the development of Doctrine through the Councils of the Church
- Recognize how the doctrine of the Trinity informs our discipleship
- Trace the development of Creed through the Church Councils
- Identify the different models of church and how each is needed in the mission of the church



Expressions of Faith

Spirituality and Prayer

This course invites catechists to deepen their personal relationship with God by exploring the foundations of Catholic spirituality and prayer as the wellspring of all catechetical ministry. Catechists reflect on their own image of God and learn to recognize how both their spiritual perceptions and those of their learners shape faith formation and the experience of prayer. The course highlights the intimate connection between spirituality and the sacramental life of the Church, emphasizing how regular participation in the sacraments nourishes faith and strengthens catechetical witness. Drawing from the rich tradition of the Church, catechists are introduced to diverse schools of spirituality, helping them appreciate the variety of ways the Holy Spirit draws people toward holiness across cultures, personalities, and stages of life. Through experiential engagement, catechists explore the major expressions and forms of prayer—vocal, meditative, and contemplative—and deepen their understanding of the Lord’s Prayer as the heart of Christian prayer. Attention is also given to popular devotions, Marian spirituality, and the gift of piety as authentic expressions of faith when rooted in the life of the Church. By forming catechists as people of prayer who listen, discern, and respond to God’s presence, this course equips them to foster prayerful, Spirit-led catechetical environments that invite children and families into a living, trusting relationship with God.

OBJECTIVES

- Reflect on personal spirituality and Identify your image of God
- Recognize how the learners image of God affects the pedagogy of catechesis
- Discern the fruits of participation in the sacraments for a vibrant Catholic spirituality
- Explore how the saints help us live our Catholic spirituality
- Discover the three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative
- Identify the five basic forms of prayer revealed through the Sacred Tradition
- Explain the reasons why the Lord’s Prayer is at the core of Christian spirituality
- Understanding “piety” as an expression of faith
- Understanding the history and practice of popular devotions in relation to personal and communal forms of prayer
- Integrate prayer into catechetical ministry

Morality and Social Justice

This course forms catechists to understand Christian morality as a lived response to God’s love, rooted in human dignity and sustained by grace. Beginning with the foundational truth that every person is created in the image and likeness of God, catechists explore how the moral life flows from a covenant relationship with God and is guided by love, law, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The course examines the Ten Commandments and Jesus’ Law of Love in the Beatitudes, presenting them as paths to freedom and happiness rather than mere rules. Catechists deepen their understanding of sin, mercy, and reconciliation, learning how the Church distinguishes serious and less serious sin and how conscience is formed and exercised within the Catholic moral tradition. Attention is given to the role of virtue in shaping moral character, including the human and theological virtues and their relationship to habitual moral action.

Building on this foundation, the course introduces Catholic social teaching as a scriptural and theological mandate, tracing its development through Church documents and highlighting the principles of human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and care for creation. By integrating morality, virtue, and social justice, this course equips catechists to help learners of all ages connect faith with everyday choices and to live the Gospel through compassionate action, responsibility, and a commitment to justice in the world.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a working knowledge of key moral teachings from Church documents on how we are called to live in Christ
- Review the Ten Commandments and Jesus' Law of Love (Beatitudes)
- Determine the human and theological virtues and vices
- Define the nature of sin, mercy, and God's grace
- Understand the criteria used to distinguish serious sin (mortal) from less serious sin (venial)
- Discuss the nature of conscience and the formation of one's conscience and how it's exercised in the Catholic moral life
- Understand the development of social justice doctrine through an overview of Catholic Social Teaching found in the encyclicals and pastoral letters
- Understand the development of Church social teachings as a scriptural mandate based on the dignity of the human person and the common good of all
- Identify the Seven Social Justice Teachings of the Catholic Church
- Compare and contrast charity and justice

Sacraments and Liturgy

This course forms catechists in a sacramental vision of faith, helping them understand how God reveals and communicates divine life through visible signs, ritual action, and the communal worship of the Church. Catechists explore the sacramental principle as the foundation for understanding the seven sacraments, recognizing creation itself as a means through which God's grace is made known and celebrated. The course deepens catechists' understanding of grace—sanctifying and sacramental—as God's free and transforming gift that heals, nourishes, and strengthens believers throughout their journey of faith. Drawing upon the catechumenal model of catechesis, the session emphasizes that faith formation is a lifelong process of proclamation, conversion, celebration, and mystagogical reflection, rooted in Scripture, community, and sacramental life. Catechists examine the intrinsic relationship between catechesis and liturgy, learning how catechesis both prepares for and flows from liturgical celebration. Special attention is given to the structure and meaning of the Mass, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the rhythm of the liturgical year as a formative path through the mysteries of Christ's life. By grounding catechesis in sacramental participation and liturgical prayer, this course equips catechists to foster reverence, active participation, and a deeper encounter with Christ in the life of the Church.

OBJECTIVES

- Explain the sacramental principle as the context for understanding the seven sacraments
- Describe the concept of grace as it relates to the sacraments
- Articulate the Catechumenal Model of Catechesis and its relevance
- Define liturgy and explain its intrinsic relationship with catechesis

- Identify and describe the main parts of the Mass
- Explore the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Explain the calendar and seasons of the Liturgical Year



Capstone: Methods and Models

Lesson Planning

This capstone course equips catechists with the practical skills needed to plan and lead faith-filled lessons that foster encounter with Christ rather than mere content delivery. Catechists are guided to understand lesson planning as a spiritual and pastoral act—one that intentionally prepares space for the Holy Spirit to awaken faith in learners. The course clarifies the distinct nature of catechesis in contrast to academic instruction, emphasizing formation of the whole person—head, heart, and hands—through relationship, witness, and lived discipleship. Catechists are introduced to the Ecclesial Method as a Christ-centered framework for planning lessons that move learners from preparation and proclamation, through understanding and application, toward celebration and mission. Bloom’s Taxonomy is revisited and reinterpreted through an evangelizing lens, helping catechists design objectives and activities that move beyond memorization toward transformation, moral discernment, and witness. Through hands-on practice, catechists learn to set clear objectives, design intentional learning experiences, assess readiness and growth, and reflect on their own effectiveness as ministers of faith. As the culmination of catechist formation, this course integrates theology, pedagogy, and spirituality, preparing catechists to plan lessons that are intentional, adaptive, and responsive to learners, and that lead children and families into deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and active participation in the life of the Church.

OBJECTIVES

- Recognize the difference between “teaching” and “formation” in terms of accompaniment towards conversion
- Understand lesson planning as a pastoral and spiritual act.
- Apply the Ecclesial Method to lesson design.
- Use Bloom’s Taxonomy through an evangelizing lens.
- Create objectives, activities, and assessments for effective catechesis.
- Develop lesson plans using the *Diocesan Framework of Evangelizing Catechesis*

Capstone Project

The Capstone Project serves as the culminating experience for catechist certification, inviting catechists to integrate and apply what they have encountered throughout the twelve formation courses. Through the creation of a single, Christ-centered lesson plan and a brief written reflection, catechists demonstrate their understanding of evangelizing catechesis, the kerygma, Scripture and Tradition, pedagogy, prayer, morality, liturgy, and accompaniment. The capstone emphasizes practical application rather than academic mastery, allowing catechists to plan a lesson appropriate to their current ministry setting and to reflect prayerfully on how the formation has shaped their identity as missionary disciples. This experience affirms the catechist’s growth in confidence, intentionality, and pastoral awareness, while honoring the vocation of catechists as volunteers called to accompany others toward a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Catechists will complete two short pieces: one lesson plan of their choice and a brief reflection on how the formation has shaped them as a catechist
- The project is meant to show how they plan catechesis with Christ at the center and how their faith and understanding has grown

This capstone is not about perfection, but about faithfulness—showing how one is growing as a catechist who accompanies others in faith.

Area	Faithfully Demonstrated	Developing
Christ-Centered Focus	The lesson clearly places Jesus Christ and the Gospel at the center of catechesis.	The lesson shows awareness of Christ-centered catechesis, with room for greater clarity or focus.
Integration of Formation Concepts	The lesson reflects key elements from formation (kerygma, Scripture, prayer, community, lived faith).	Some formation elements are present, though not fully integrated.
Pedagogy & Learner Awareness	The lesson shows thoughtful awareness of learners and uses age-appropriate, relational methods.	The lesson shows some awareness of learners, with opportunities to adapt methods more intentionally.
Reflection & Personal Growth	The reflection thoughtfully describes growth as a catechist and connection to the formation experience.	The reflection is present and sincere, though more depth or connection could be developed.
Completion & Care	The lesson plan and reflection are complete and prepared with care and intention.	Most components are complete, with minor areas needing clarification or completion.

