

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES AND POLICIES for Parish Catechetical Programs

Part A

ADMINISTRATION, SAFETY & CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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This document is simply a broad overview of the Diocese's *Guidelines and Policies for Parish Faith Formation Programs* and provides the section introductions and content headers. Refer to the complete *Guidelines and Policies on the Diocesan Intranet* under "Office of Catholic Faith Formation Services".



Part B

FORMATION & CERTIFICATION

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OVERVIEW of

OCFFS' Guidelines & Policies

for Parish Faith Formation, Catechetical & Youth Ministry Programs

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PART A – Administration, Safety & Crisis Management Guidelines & Policies

ADMINISTRATION

Section 1

Effective Parish Faith Formation Programs for Children & Adolescents

“The more the Church ...gives catechesis priority over other works and undertakings the result of which would be more spectacular, the more she finds in catechesis a strengthening of her internal life, as a community of believers and of her external activity as a missionary Church...the Church is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith.” (*Catechesi Tradendae* , Catechesis in Our Time, Pope John Paul II).

Can. 773 It is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people so that the living faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life

Can. 776 By virtue of his function, a pastor is bound to take care of the catechetical formation of adults, youth, and children, to which purpose he is to use the help of the clerics attached to the parish, of members of institutes of consecrated life and of societies of apostolic life, taking into account the character of each institute, and of lay members of the Christian faithful, especially of catechists. None of these are to refuse to offer their help willingly unless they are legitimately impeded. The pastor is to promote and foster the function of parents in the family catechesis mentioned in Can. 774, §2.

- 1a. Different Models of Faith Formation for Children & Adolescents
- 1b. Catechesis
- 1c. Components of effective catechetical & youth ministry programs
- 1d. Responsibilities of the Parish
- 1e. Program Fees
- 1f. Home Based Catechesis

Appendix: Creating a Family/Parish Partnership in Faith Formation

ADMINISTRATION

Section 2

Catechetical Leadership & Staffing Considerations

In *The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium* the Bishops of New York State note that:

In *Catechesis in Our Times*, John Paul II reminds priests of the important role they play in catechesis: “The Church expects you to neglect nothing with a view to a well-organized and well-oriented catechetical effort.” Pastors are the Bishops’ “closest collaborators in ensuring that the goals of the diocesan catechetical mission are achieved.” To assist them in this ministry, pastors frequently appoint a catechetical leader to collaborate with them in the effective implementation of a comprehensive catechetical plan. All catechetical leaders, pastors and those appointed to assist them must be well-trained to serve in the role to which they have been called and to meet the complex challenges of an evolving catechetical ministry.

... The Church in New York State, having journeyed already one decade in this century, needs a renewed commitment to the call, recruitment, formation and affirmation of women and men of faith as parish catechetical leaders. The Bishops of the United States noted in the *National Directory for Catechesis*: “The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader.”

The actual scope of the leadership position can range from responsibility for the total program to responsibility for a particular portion of it, such as the task of serving as the coordinator for first Eucharist preparation or for a junior high school program. In *Maintaining Professional Balance* (part of “The Effective DRE: A Skills Development Series” (Loyola Press, 1998), Dr. Charlotte Prather observes that a catechetical leader’s work looks different from each person’s perspective. For the catechetical leader, it looks different every day of the week, every liturgical season, with every new pastor, every new change of staff – sometimes every hour. We are teachers, and teachers of teachers, but also counselors, advocates for social change, spiritual directors, Scripture scholars, and theologians. We may find ourselves in the role of liturgical choreographers, leaders of song and games, mediators, and even cooks. Sometimes we pick up trash and weed gardens on our rounds of the parish. We are often expected to be experts on canon law, sacramental guidelines, Catholic social teaching, principles of pedagogy, group dynamics, and budgets. We are expected to keep abreast of the latest publications, as well as with music and video materials for a great variety of educational needs. We should be acquainted with the people and programs of the pastoral offices of our dioceses, avail ourselves of educational opportunities, provide our volunteers with opportunities for spiritual nurture and continuing education, and maintain a network of connections with our colleagues at other parishes. We must be able to address the whole parish on occasion and to listen with quiet compassion to each person who crosses our threshold. None of us do all of the above all the time. None of us do all of the above equally well, nor with equal enthusiasm. But none of the above remains totally outside the experience of any catechetical leader for very long.

- 2a. The Catechetical Leader
- 2b. Youth Ministry Leaders
- 2c. Guidelines for hiring and placement of catechetical & youth ministry personnel
- 2d. Some General Principles

Appendix: Initial History of Catechetical/Youth Ministry Leader (Form)

- 2e. Leadership Certification

Appendix: Leadership Certification Requirements for Catechetical/Youth Ministry Leaders

Supplemental Resource: "The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium"

Supplemental Resource: "Comprehensive Plan for the Formation of Catechetical Leaders in the Third Millennium"

- 2f. Catechetical Leader's role in the formation & certification of their catechists
- 2g. Gatekeeper(s)

ADMINISTRATION

Section 3

Catechists & Youth Ministers

All members of a community of believer are called to share in this ministry by being witnesses to the faith. Some, however, are called to more specific catechetical roles. Parents, teachers, and principals in Catholic schools, parish catechists, coordinators or directors of religious education, those who work in diocesan and national catechetical offices, deacons, priests, and bishops – are all catechists with distinct roles.

Catechists are defined as those who minister through teaching, witness, prayer, service, and building community to and with adults, youth and children in parish faith formation programs, Catholic schools, youth ministry programs, sacramental preparation, Christian initiation, family programs, and ministry formation programs. Parish catechists, many of whom are volunteers, may be engaged in catechizing adults, young people, children or those with special needs. Theirs is a particular way of carrying out the promise the Church makes at every Baptism: to support, pray for, and instruct the baptized and foster their growth in faith.

The Bishops of the State of New York in *The Catechist in the Third Millennium* write of the qualities and characteristics that a catechist should have. They said that...

- To serve effectively as a catechist in the Church, a person must possess and exhibit qualities or characteristics to give credible witness to the Gospel. Human qualities of compassion and kindness, common sense, a sense of humor, an open and understanding heart, and a sense of one's own self-worth are among the basic requirements for this pastoral ministry.
- Beyond these basic human qualities, a catechist must exhibit a real and vital Catholic Christian faith based on a personal relationship with Christ that is nourished in and through the Church.....

- Those called to the ministry of catechist should be generous with their time and talent, open to deepening their understanding of the theology and methodology necessary for teaching and be able to communicate faith and knowledge effectively in both word and deed. (Section III, B)

Even before the US Bishops Conference's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, those engaged in catechetical ministry in the Albany Diocese were expected to be interviewed and screened prior to engaging in this ministry. Today these volunteers or staff members are to meet all the requirements set down by the Albany Diocese for the implementation of the Charter including undergoing a background check, taking part in Virtus training, and agreeing to the terms and conditions contained in the Code of Conduct among other requirements.

It is important to realize that catechetical and youth ministry volunteer ministers are representatives of the church when they are officially carrying out their responsibilities. As such the parish – and diocese – may be liable for their actions. The accompanying guidelines have been developed and issued based on that understanding.

- 3a. Those engaged in Catechetical Ministry
- 3b. Qualities of a Catechist or Youth Minister
- 3c. Responsibilities of the Catechist & Youth Minister
- 3d. Adolescents as Catechists or Youth Ministers
- 3e. Discernment of the Call to Catechize
- 3f. Interviewing the Potential Volunteer Minister
- 3g. Volunteer Applications
Appendix: OCFFS Volunteer Application for use in Parish Catechetical/YM Programs
Supplemental Resource: Diocesan Volunteer Application
- 3h. Background Check
Appendix: Diocesan Authorization Consent for Personal/Professional Background Check
- 3i. Virtus Training
- 3j. Standard Code of Conduct
Appendix: Guidelines & Professional Conduct & Adult Code of Conduct
Appendix: Diocesan Code of Conduct for Youth Volunteers
- 3k. Technology & Social Media Policies
Appendix: Diocesan Technology Policy for users of diocesan or parish computers
Appendix: Diocesan Social Media Policy
- 3l. Formation & Certification of Catechists, Youth Ministers & Catholic School Teachers
Appendix 23B: Certification Transcripts
- 3m. Some General Principles regarding catechists, youth ministers and other volunteers
- 3n. Substitute Catechists & Youth Ministers

Section 4

Record Keeping: Catechetical & Youth Ministry Records

All catechetical and youth ministry records are confidential. Records are privileged information, used only for parish purposes and by parish personnel: pastor, parish life director, catechetical and youth ministry leaders, catechists and youth ministers. All persons except appropriate parish program authorities are to be denied access without written parental permission or a court order. Custodial parents have a right to inspect any and all of their child's records.

By their nature, some records are needed to be kept on file for longer periods of time than others. Records should not be discarded, securely or otherwise, without taking into consideration the diocesan retention schedule for these items.

- 4a. Computer Records
- 4b. Record Retention
- 4c. Records associated with Children & Youth (attendance, permanent records, release-time, photo release, field trip permissions, and medication)
Appendix: Permanent Record Card for Students (sample)
- 4d. Records associated with Catechist/Youth Ministers (volunteer applications, certification transcript, code of conduct, background check release, etc.)
- 4e. Records associated with a parish-based Program (annual parish survey, Compliance Audit, etc.)
Appendix: Annual Parish Faith Formation Survey (sample)
Supplemental Resource: OEC Volunteer Registry Form (sample)

Section 5

Participants in Parish Programs

Can. 217 Since they are called by baptism to lead a life in keeping with the teaching of the gospel, the Christian faithful have the right to a Christian education by which they are to be instructed properly to strive for the maturity of the human person and at the same time to know and live the mystery of salvation.

Can. 774 §1. Under the direction of legitimate ecclesiastical authority, solicitude for catechesis belongs to all members of the Church according to each one's role.

§2. Parents above others are obliged to form their children by word and example in faith and in the practice of Christian life; sponsors and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equal obligation.

Can. 777 Attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop, a pastor is to take care in a

special way:

- 1/ that suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments;
- 2/ that through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time children are prepared properly for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and the Most Holy Eucharist and for the sacrament of confirmation;
- 3/ that having received first communion, these children are enriched more fully and deeply through catechetical formation;
- 4/ that catechetical instruction is given also to those who are physically or mentally impeded, insofar as their condition permits;
- 5/ that the faith of youth and adults is strengthened, enlightened, and developed through various means and endeavors.

All are welcome to participate in parish catechetical and youth ministry programs, given the existence of adequate space and sufficient volunteer ministers. If space/volunteer ministers are not adequate, alternatives shall be offered. It is expected that all participants are registered in the parish.

Children and youth who are not fully initiated are welcome and invited, with their families, to participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), if appropriate.

- 5a. Children of Separated/Divorced Parents
- 5b. Children in Foster Care
- 5c. Children & Youth with special needs
- 5d. Conduct of Children/Youth Participation
- 5e. Parents
- 5f. Registered Sex Offenders

ADMINISTRATION

Section 6 Protection of Children & Youth

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* is a comprehensive set of procedures established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The *Charter* also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse.

Supplemental Resource: "The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People"

- 6a. Implementing the *Charter* in the Albany Diocese
Appendix: Compliance Audit Form (sample)
- 6b. Allegations against clergy, diocesan employees, parish staff or volunteers
Appendix: Reporting Procedures, Allegations of Abuse

- 6c. Allegations against the child's family or others
- 6d. Clarifying definitions, categories & distinctions (abuse, maltreatment)

ADMINISTRATION

Section 7

Supervision

As Church we receive the children and young persons involved in our programs as a sacred trust. We are morally responsible for their safety and well being. This is the premise upon which the following guidelines are built. The parish is morally and legally responsible for the children and youth in its care. The parish has an obligation to make sure all parish buildings and grounds are safe and that the children and youth using them are supervised at all times by responsible adults.

The best defense for a catechetical/youth ministry leader, as well as all volunteer ministers, is to make reasonable attempts to provide for the safety of all through appropriate rules, regulations, and supervision. All activities should be carefully monitored and supervised, and all hazards should be eliminated. All staff, both paid and volunteer including chaperones, should receive thorough and ongoing orientation and training.

- 7a. Negligence
- 7b. Sexual Harassment
- 7c. Harassment & Bullying
- 7d. Supervision of Children & Youth
- 7e. Safety Inspection & Audit of Facilities used by Catechetical/YM Programs

ADMINISTRATION

Section 8

Field Trips & Chaperones

Any parish/cluster/deanery/diocesan sponsored catechetical and/or youth ministry event which is held off premises of the parish(es) or Pastoral Center is considered to be a field trip. Field trips and off-site excursions must be directly related to the program and catechetical/youth ministry curricula or goals and objectives and must have adequate supervision as well as be appropriate to the catechetical and youth ministry programs.

At the end of the event, the catechetical/youth ministry/group leader must remain until all participants have safely departed.

- 8a. Preparation for Field Trips
- 8b. Permission Forms

Appendix: Activity/Program Permission & Medical Consent Form (aka "Field Trip Permission Form")

- 8c. Chaperones
- 8d. Field Trip Transportation Policy

Appendix: OCFFS' Driver Identification/Registration Form

ADMINISTRATION

Section 9

Maintaining Order

Teachers understand discipline to mean classroom order. Volunteer catechists may wonder if they will ever be able to achieve order among their charges. Some catechist ignore discipline, thinking that it should not need to be part of a noble activity such as faith formation, while others follow the old dictate, "Don't smile until Christmas," hoping to intimidate the children or youth in front of them into appropriate behavior.

Coming from the same root as the word, "disciple," meaning "to learn," discipline is associated with orderly conduct, self-control, and efficiency. It is most certainly an important part of faith formation.

- 9a. Attendance Policies
- Appendix: OCFFS' Generic Attendance Register (Sample)*

- 9b. Policies for Visitors
- 9c. Policies for Unauthorized Visitors
- 9d. Discipline Policies
- 9e. Parish Handbooks
- 9f. Photos & Videos (of participants)

Appendix: OCFFS' Permission for Photographic/Videotapes/Film Release Form

- 9g. Guest Speakers & Media Resources (including presentations on sexuality & Respect Life)

ADMINISTRATION

Section 10

Other Legal Issues

One cannot simply ask, "Can I legally do this?" as a gauge for the rightness and wrongness of actions. Rather, one must ask, "Looking at what the law requires and the Gospel demands, what should I do? What would Jesus do?" The latter are far more difficult questions than the first one and yet leaders and catechetical/youth ministry volunteers cannot simply consult legal texts or call lawyers for answers. Instead, all must search their hearts and consciences for the "right" answers and act accordingly.

Not only must Catholic ministers search for the "right" solutions to difficulties, they must search

their motivations as well. For it is only when one is honest with one's self, that one can know the true peace of a decision well made.

Many crises do not fit into "textbook solutions." Civil law may allow one action but conscience may prescribe another path, one that is not simply legal but is also right. Just because the law allows an action does not mean the action is the right one to take. Decisions should not be made precipitously by one who is attempting to teach as Jesus did. Jesus did not shield persons from the consequences of their actions but did show mercy, an important point to remember when one is tempted to give up on an individual or situation.

Adapted from Religious Education, Parish and Youth Ministry: Legal Issues for Catechetical & Youth Ministry Leaders, by Sr. Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, J.D.,PhD (© 2006, National Catholic Education Association).

- 10a. Confidentiality
- 10b. Copyright
- 10c. Automobile Insurance
- 10d. Use of a Private Home
- 10e. Use of other, non-parish sites for catechetical purposes

ADMINISTRATION

Section 11

Working with Catholic & Public Schools

Parish faith formation programs and their leaders should strive to for good cooperation between themselves and any Catholic school in their parish or community. Additionally, parish catechetical and youth ministry leaders should maintain a good, professional relationship with the public and other schools that feed into their programs.

The catechetical/youth ministry leader should keep lines of communication open with the public school officials in the local school districts. Attendance at district meetings and participation in programs which can benefit the students in the religious education programs are encouraged.

Visits to the local public school to meet with the principal are encouraged as is the sharing of the program's annual calendar and schedule with the local public school.

- 11a. Catholic Schools
- 11b. Days of Religious Observance
- 11c. Released Time Instruction

Appendix: NYS Release Time Card (sample)

Supplemental Resource: "NYS Education Department Procedure to be followed in Obtaining Regents Credit"

- 11d. Equal Access Act
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Section 12

The Crisis Management Plan

Recent experiences of violence in our society and the tragedies in schools call diocesan and parish leadership to form policies and guidelines to insure the safety of our children, youth and adults who participate in our parish catechetical and youth ministry programs. While Catholic schools and parishes have been spared the agony of recent school tragedies, our parish buildings and the settings in which we minister, are no more secure or safe than any other public building. The fact that our programs are administered in a variety of settings and take place late in the afternoons, evenings and weekends means that we must have a plan to insure safety and to respond to crises. Emergency situations can happen anywhere and anytime. It is also of paramount importance for us to be aware that the consequences of such a situation will have long lasting effects; psychological, physiological, and spiritual, on our people – individually and communally.

All parishes who administer catechetical/youth ministry programs in parish settings are directed to develop guidelines in the following areas:

1. Prevention: Formation and institution of policies which insure that facilities, and those using them, are safe; that violence is not tolerated; that staff and volunteers are trained; that communication is maintained with parents, community safety personnel, and the diocese. An on-going commitment is made to address and correct anything that might compromise the safety and security of our children, youth, and adults.
2. Response: Formation of a concrete and detailed plan of response to any crisis - natural disaster, weather, fire, accident, threat or act of violence. This would include the training of staff and volunteers to respond appropriately in diverse situations to both the immediate and longer-term needs of those affected.

Each parish in our diocese is unique and therefore each prevention and response plan will be unique and individualized to that parish. The information, guidelines, and forms referenced in “Part B” of our Administrative Guidelines and Policies will give you the basic material that you need to form a plan for both safety and response in your parish or cluster.

- 12a. Parish Safety & the Crisis Management Committee
- 12b. Training, Identification & Access of Supervisory Personnel
- 12c. Responding to Emergencies
- 12d. Participant Information
- 12e. Preparation of, and access to, the Parish Safety & Crisis Management Plan

Appendix: Parish/Program Crisis Management Plan (Template)

- 12f. Resources available from the Diocese
- 12g. Aftercare
- 12h. Where is God in This?

ADMINISTRATION

Section 13

Safety, Illness & Injury of Program Participants

Accidents happen. Someone chokes on an ice cube or gets stung by a bee. They cut their finger on a piece of broken glass or someone has just fainted for no apparent reason. There could be a fire in a classroom or a suspicious character lurking around outside the building at night. Emergency situations can occur at any time. In an emergency you should keep your head and proceed cautiously, yet firmly. Others will be looking to you for cues as to how to react.

It's important to know when to call 911 or when it's something that can be handled with in house treatment. The knowledge of first aid, when properly applied, can mean the difference between temporary or permanent injury, rapid recovery or long-term disability, and the difference between life and death.

It is important that catechetical and youth ministry volunteers, in addition to the leaders and gatekeeper(s) be aware of the proper procedures – and evacuation route(s) – to follow in the event of an emergency.

- 13a. Physical Safety
Appendix: Diocesan Injury/Accident Report (Form)
- 13b. The “Fire Drill” Response
Appendix: Checklist for Emergency – Fire or Explosion
- 13c. Illness & Medical Emergencies
Appendix: Checklist for Emergency – Medical or Injury
- 13d. H1N1 and Similar Illnesses
- 13e. Physical Injuries and First Aid
- 13f. Blood borne Pathogens
- 13g. Food & Allergies
- 13h. Medicine
Appendix: OCFSS’ Self-Directed Medication Permission Form
- 13i. Personal Safety – Tips for Catechetical & Youth Ministry Leaders

ADMINISTRATION

Section 14

Storms, Material Spills and Other Natural & Un-Natural Disasters & Hazards

Natural disasters can be especially traumatic for children and youth. Experiencing a dangerous or violent flood, storm, wildfire, or earthquake is frightening even for adults, and the devastation to the familiar environment (i.e., home and community) can be long lasting and distressing. Often an entire community is impacted, further undermining a child's sense of security and normalcy. These factors present a variety of unique issues and coping challenges, including issues associated with specific types of natural disasters, the need to relocate when home and/or community have been destroyed, the role of the family in lessening or exacerbating the trauma, emotional reactions, and coping techniques.

Children look to the significant adults in their lives for guidance on how to manage their reactions after the immediate threat is over. Your parish and its faith formation program can help play an important role in this process by providing a stable, familiar environment. Through the support of caring adults program personnel can help children return to normal activities and routines (to the extent possible), and provide an opportunity to transform a frightening event into a learning experience.

And then there is the possibility of being exposed to potentially hazardous materials, either accidentally or intentionally – poisons, cleaning supplies, anthrax and other biological agents – that need prompt responses by volunteers and leaders alike to ensure the well being of those exposed.

Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists's website (www.nasprresponse.org).

Appendix: Checklist for Emergency – Weather or Nature

- 14a. (Winter) Storms
- 14b. Tornado or Severe Wind Storms
- 14c. Earthquake
- 14d. Poison and Other Hazardous Substances
- 14e. Hazardous Material Spills
- 14f. Anthrax or other Biological Scare
- 14g. Transportation Disaster
- 14h. Utility Failure
- 14i. Response to Code Alerts and Heightened Security

ADMINISTRATION

Section 15

Violence or Conflict

The protection and safety of our children, youth and adults is a sacred trust and the deepest priority for me personally and for this diocese. We are each aware that trauma and crisis can touch any life and situation at any time. We live in a society where violence is too prevalent and security is often vulnerable. Sadly, the church is not immune from the dangers that are part of life today. It is the essence of love, faith, and stewardship that we maintain our parish facilities in good order, know

how to plan and respond in an emergency, and provide support and direction for those in leadership positions.

... It is my greatest hope that these Safety and Crisis Management Guidelines for Parish Catechetical and Youth Ministry Programs will help protect those who participate in our catechetical and youth ministry programs from harm and will assist those who direct our programs with guidance.

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard

Introduction to the 2000 Edition of the then Office of Evangelization & Catechesis'
Safety and Crisis Management Guidelines for Parish Catechetical and Youth Ministry Programs.

15a. Disturbances Involving Violence or the Threat of Violence

Appendix: Checklist for Emergency - Violence

15b. Bomb Threat

15c. Bullying

15d. Fighting

15e. Weapons

15f. Suicide Threat

15g. Hostage Situation

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PART B – Guidelines & Policies for the Formation & Certification of Catechists, Youth Ministers & Catholic School Teachers

FORMATION

Section 20 **Catechist Formation**

Men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds are called to share in the Church's catechetical mission. Most are volunteers. They bring a wide variety of talents and abilities to their task. They have widely divergent levels of experience and competence in catechesis. According to The National Directory for Catechesis "programs of formation should be designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples of Christ."

Catechists resound the Gospel message. They reflect the richness and vitality of the faith of the Christian community. Their ministry is not to be lightly undertaken. Development of catechists' knowledge, skill and spirituality enables them to accomplish their essential task.

It should be noted that the term "catechist" as used in Part B of these Guidelines and Policies should be understood to refer to all those engaged in catechetical ministry including: catechists of children, youth ministers, catechists of adults, intergenerational catechists and Catholic school teachers (cf. Administration Guidelines & Policies, Part A, Paragraph 3a)..

- 20a. The Purpose of Catechist Formation
- 20b. The Necessity of Catechist Formation
- 20c. Orientation or "Initial Formation" of Catechists
Supplemental Resource: "The Catechist in the Third Millennium" (Resource #3)
- 20d. Ongoing Formation and Training of Catechists

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Section 21

Formation & Certification of Catechists, Youth Ministers & Catholic School Teachers in the Diocese of Albany

The *General Directory for Catechesis*, quoting Pope St. John Paul II's *Catechesi Tradendae*, states that "the Bishops are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis and catechists par excellence". It states that the diocesan office "is the means which the bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all the catechetical activities of the diocese." (*GCD* 126). In 1988 in his pastoral letter *We are God's Priestly People*, Bishop Howard Hubbard affirmed his commitment to catechetical ministry in stating "there is no task which is more vital, critical, or urgent today than that of imparting religious truths and transmitting religious values not only to our children but to all." He called for the Diocesan Office of Evangelization, Catechesis and Family Life "to continue developing and implementing [a] comprehensive plan for catechist formation" in the diocese. This is now the responsibility of the diocese's Director of Catechist Formation.

Since 1971 the Albany Diocese, through its Office of Evangelization, Catechesis and Family Life of the Diocese of Albany (and its predecessors the Office of Religious Education and the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis) has had a rich tradition of training, forming and supporting catechetical ministers. Our diocesan formation and certification process is built upon principles found in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, *The Catechist in the Third Millennium* and the *National Directory for Catechesis* as well as other catechetical documents.

- 21a. General Expectations of the Formation Program
- 21b. Certification Requirements
- 21c. Provisional and Basic Certification
- 21d. Intermediate Certification
- 21e. Full Certification
- 21f. Advanced Certification
- 21g. Conversion of Earlier Certifications

FORMATION

Section 22

Formation Opportunities

The formation of catechists takes place most effectively within the community of faith under the direction of the local pastor. The parish is where catechists test their own vocation and continually nourish their own apostolic awareness. Parish-centered programs for catechists remind them that their calling as catechists comes from the Church, that they are sent by the Church, and that they hand on the faith of the Church. Such programs attend to the progressive growth of catechists as believers and witnesses through the normal course of parish educational and liturgical life as well as through specialized programs of catechist development. They provide opportunities to meet with other catechists for lesson preparation and evaluation. They provide catechists with courses in catechesis and opportunities for retreats, special liturgical experiences, and systematic doctrinal study based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Some opportunities for catechist formation are more appropriately provided by the diocese. Institutes, workshops and seminars for those with responsibility for catechesis in parishes, schools, clusters of

parishes, deaneries, or vicariates should be provided at the diocesan or interdiocesan level. Dioceses are well advised to develop comprehensive catechist formation programs that lead to a more formal certification....

... certification programs often make productive use of distance learning models. Such programs have the advantage of offering systematic and organic formation over a period of several years. In them, trained specialists are able to present the totality of the Christian message, a thorough knowledge of the sociocultural situation, and sound catechetical methodology to catechists from all parts of the diocese. ... The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirms and verifies the quality and validity of such programs.

- *National Directory for Catechesis*, pp. 241-243.

- 22a. Catechist Formation and the Role of the Catechetical Leader
- 22b. Basic or Introductory Formation
- 22c. Ongoing Formation
- 22d. *The Compendium of Certification Topics*
Appendix: Sample pages from the OCFFS' "Compendium of Certification Topics"
Supplemental Resource: The Compendium of Certification Topics
- 22e. Competency Based Certification
- 22f. Formation and Certification of Parish Catechetical & Youth Ministry Leaders

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Section 23

Certification Process and Paperwork

Parishes and Catholic schools are expected to maintain a diocesan catechist/youth minister/ Catholic school religion teacher certification transcript (formerly referred to as a "certification record card") for each catechist, youth minister or religion teacher who is active in the parish or school catechetical program. When they have completed a particular level of certification for their specific track or specialization, the catechetical/youth ministry leader or school principal is to submit a *Request for Catechist, Youth Minister or Teacher Certification Form* to the Director of Catechist Formation in the Catholic School Office for review, approval and issuance of the relevant certification.

- 23a. Proof of Attendance
 - 23b. *Certification Transcripts*
Appendix (23b-1): Certification Transcript – Catechist of Children
Appendix (23b-2): Certification Transcript – Youth Minister
Appendix (23b-3): Certification Transcript – Catechist of Adults
Appendix (23b-4): Certification Transcript – Intergenerational Catechist
Appendix (23b-5): Certification Transcript – Catholic School (Religion) Teacher
 - 23c. Filling in the *Certification Transcript*
 - 23d. Figuring out where to record specific courses
Appendix: Correlation between 1990 Certification Requirements and 2010 Requirements
 - 23e. *Certification Requests*
Appendix: Request for Certification of Catechists, Youth Ministers & Catholic School Teachers (Form)
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