



F.I.R.E.

Fan the Flame! Inspiration through Religious Enrichment



F.I.R.E. and Introduction

F.I.R.E.—*Fan the Flame Inspiration through Religious Enrichment* is a systematic catechist formation program that has been aligned with the *National Certification Standards for Pastoral Ministers* approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The title of the program F.I.R.E. was chosen because as Catholics we are to constantly feed the flame of faith that was ignited within us at our Baptism. It is by the feeding of our minds and souls with the truth of His Church, and by His grace, that we learn our Faith.

“Some opportunities for catechist formation are more appropriately provided by the diocese. Institutes, workshops, and seminars for those with the responsibility for catechesis in parishes, schools, cluster 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.” (*National Directory for Catechesis* #55, E) The diocesan program F.I.R.E. fulfills this directive. **Appendix 1**

The Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana has developed this plan of study to aid catechists in their formation process. It is a comprehensive plan of study that encompasses Spiritual, Human, Pastoral, Intellectual, and Leadership Formation. F.I.R.E. certification, an overall systematic faith formation program, gives direction to catechists and is easy to obtain. **Appendix 10**

According to Blessed John Paul II, writing in *Catechesi Tradendae*, October 16, 1979, “The Church has always considered catechesis one of the primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command - to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded...The world, in which the young are called to live and to give witness to the faith which catechesis seeks to deepen and strengthen, is governed by adults. The faith of these adults too should continually be enlightened, stimulated and renewed, so that it may pervade the temporal realities in their charge.”

“Bishops are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechist par excellence. As chief catechists in the diocese, the bishop is responsible for the total catechetical mission of the local church.” (*NDC*, #54)

“In addition to devoting himself personally to the proclamation of the Gospel and the ministry of catechesis, the bishop is also to supervise the catechetical mission in the diocese. He is to ensure that the ministry of catechesis receives the support of competent personnel, effective means, and adequate financial resources. He is to make certain that the texts and other instruments used in catechesis transmit the Catholic faith completely and authentically. He is to ensure “that catechists are adequately prepared for their task, being well-instructed in the doctrine of the Church and possessing both a practical and theoretical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of educational method.” (*NDC*, #54)

Catechist Formation

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (*Matthew* 28:19-20)

“Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church’s efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #4)

Catechesis is comprised of an education in the faith, in the teaching of Christian doctrine, to children, youth, and adults in an organic and systematic manner. The goal is to initiate those being catechized into the Christian life in all its fullness. (*CCC* #5)

Men and women of all backgrounds and education are called to the ministry of catechesis. Because of the diverse background and education that catechists bring to their ministry, “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.” (*NDC* #55, A)

The knowledge and skills that comprise a good catechist can be learned. Those in formation to be catechists are to be enrolled in the diocesan catechist formation program F.I.R.E. which provides an opportunity for learning and growth in the areas of Spiritual, Human, Pastoral and Intellectual formation.

When we speak of catechist formation, it is helpful to distinguish different aspects of it.

Orientation

This is the formation provided for all catechists, new and experienced, to prepare them to begin a particular catechetical season or program (e.g. the start of a new school year). The catechist learns how the catechetical program functions, such as the program goals, philosophy, administrative details, and procedures. Additionally, they

learn how to build community, socialize, pray together, and are encouraged to seek professional in-service training or updating.

Initial and Ongoing Formation

“Since effective catechesis depends on virtuous and skilled catechists, their ongoing formation should enhance the human, spiritual, and apostolic qualities and catechetical skills they bring to their ministry. The pastoral care of catechists is an essential aspect of the diocese’s overall catechetical plan. ‘Diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the formation of lay catechists.’ ” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, #234)

Encouragement in the ministry of catechesis, the provision of competent and professional directors and coordinators of catechesis, the recruitment of catechists, the balanced distribution of catechists, the provision of training in both the diocese and parish, the adequate formation of catechists, attention to the personal and spiritual need of the catechist, and the coordination of catechetical efforts and adequate funding are all the responsibility of diocesan offices.” (*NDC # 55, E*) Ongoing formation occurs consistently throughout the whole catechetical cycle or program, providing regular opportunities both for personal, spiritual, and professional growth, and for dealing with matters of concern as they arise.

Growth Areas

“The on-going formation of catechists is to include all aspects of the catechist’s life. On the human level, formation is to:

- Help them to develop natural virtues and necessary knowledge: honesty; integrity; enthusiasm; perseverance; knowledge of social, cultural, and ethnic conditions; ability to communicate; willingness to work with others; ability to dialogue with those of other Christian communities and other religions; leadership ability; good judgment; openness of mind; flexibility; sensitivity; and hopefulness and
- Include reflection on real-life human situations so that catechists will be able to relate the various aspects of the Christian message to the concrete experiences of their lives.” (*NDC, # 55, E*)

“On the spiritual level, the catechists’ ongoing formation is to:

- Help them develop their spiritual lives, their communion of faith and love with the person of Jesus Christ, by promoting, as much as possible, an intense sacramental and prayer life, especially through frequent reception of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, recitation of Morning and Evening Prayer in union with the whole Church, daily meditation, Marian devotion, participation in prayer groups, days of renewal, and spiritual retreats;

- Encourage them to seek a spiritual director; and
- Help them see the development of their spiritual lives as essentially bound to the life of the Church". (NDC, # 55, E)

“On the intellectual level, their ongoing formation is to:

- Help them develop their understanding of the Church’s doctrine and be firmly rooted in Sacred Scripture and Tradition;
- Present the various elements of the Christian faith in a well structured way and in harmony with each other by means of an organic vision that respects the ‘hierarchy of truths’;
- Reflect the Christ-centered and ecclesial nature of catechesis and equip them to lead those being catechized into the mystery of Christ, his life, his role in salvation history, and his transforming presence in the sacraments;
- Equip them to transmit the authentic faith of the Church by adapting the message of Christ “to all cultures, ages, and situations”;
- Depend on the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as the sure norm for teaching the faith; and
- Help them mature in their own faith and enable them to offer a convincing explanation for their faith and hope.” (NDC, # 55, E)

“Because catechists are witnesses to Jesus Christ in the Church and in the world, their ongoing formation is to:

- Help them develop an apostolic zeal;
- Encourage them to become evangelizers;
- Equip them to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ boldly and enthusiastically;
- Help them to introduce those whom they catechize into the mystery of salvation and the religious, liturgical, moral, and community life of the Body of Christ;
- Show them how to build a community of faith;
- Encourage them to devote themselves to the missionary apostolate; and
- Encourage them to carry out their apostolic activity in communion with the local and universal Church.” (NDC, # 55,E)

“In order to integrate these dimensions of their role, ongoing formation for catechists is to:

- Help them to harmonize the human, spiritual, doctrinal, and apostolic dimensions of their apostolate;
- Keep them abreast of the life of the Church - its needs, new documents, and so on - and of changing social, cultural, ethnic, and religious circumstances; and
- Help them overcome discouragement and burnout.” (NDC, # 55,E)

Catechists are given the sacred duty of nourishing the faith of the community in a formal way. It is very important for them to investigate and respond to opportunities for personal growth, deeper understanding of their students and continued appreciation of the process and message of catechesis.

Catechist Certification

It is the responsibility of the Bishop to see to it that his catechists are properly prepared to fulfill their role effectively and that continuing formation is available for them (Canon 780). To fulfill this responsibility, the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana established in 2008 regulations for the certification of those who serve as catechists in the parishes and schools of our diocese. The regulations in this handbook have been approved and are published by the Pastoral Office for Catechesis, which is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Catechist Certification (there are four levels in the diocese) is the official recognition by the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana, administered through the Pastoral Office for Catechesis, that a person has participated in an approved formation experience intended to enhance one's knowledge and skills as a catechist. The responsibility to establish norms for the certification of catechists and to approve programs and workshops through which persons can be certified is with the Pastoral Office for Catechesis. (*NCD*, #54)

F.I.R.E.—Fan the Flame: Inspiration through Religious Enrichment was developed as the plan of study through which certification within the diocese can be achieved. FIRE is based on the guidelines from the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)*, and the *National Directory of Catechesis (NDC)*, and the standards from the *National Certification Standards for Pastoral Ministers*.

These Catechist Certification Guidelines are intended for all catechists who are involved in the parishes and Catholic Schools that are under the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. Areas in which catechists minister include, but are not limited to, Religious Education, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, Adult Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, and Young Adult Ministry. The Catholic school principals and teachers are also required to earn minimally their Basic Catechist Certification. Each catechist must complete a F.I.R.E. Application at the beginning of their parish ministry. **Appendix 2**

Levels and Expectations for Certification

In the F.I.R.E. catechist formation program, four levels of catechist certification are offered:

Basic Catechist Certification

Basic Catechist Certification requires a total of 15 prescribed F.I.R.E. formation courses that include three courses each in the areas of spiritual, human and pastoral formation and six courses in intellectual formation. **Appendix 3A**

It is expected that all parish and school catechists achieve the Basic level of certification within three years of beginning their service as catechists. This is a minimum expectation and the catechist is encouraged to go beyond this level if possible within this timeframe. Once Basic Certification is achieved it is advised that the catechist continue their formation and strive to complete the Specialized Catechist Certification.

Specialized Catechist Certification

Specialized Catechist Certification requires the completion of the Basic Catechist Certification (although courses do not have to be taken in sequence) plus an additional 15 prescribed F.I.R.E. courses. Three courses in spiritual formation, three in human formation, three in pastoral formation, and six in intellectual formation. The Specialized Catechist Certification is geared toward the experienced parish or school catechist. **Appendix 3B**

Once Specialized Catechist Certification is achieved the catechist may continue their formation to complete the Advanced Catechist Certification.

Advanced Catechist Certification

Advanced Catechist Certification requires the completion of the Basic Certification, Specialized Certification and the completion of 18 workshops. These workshops cover the areas of spiritual, human, pastoral, intellectual, and leadership formation. **Appendix C**

Persons aspiring to catechetical leadership positions are expected to achieve this level of certification.

Master Catechist Certification

Master Catechist Certification requires a total of 18 prescribed academic credits (beyond Advanced Catechist Certification) with a minimum of three prescribed academic credits in each area of spiritual, human, pastoral and leadership Formation and six academic credits in intellectual formation. Academic credit hours, degrees, and certificates are granted by colleges and universities and can be evaluated by the Pastoral Office for Catechesis upon submission of a transcript. **Appendix 3D**

The Master Catechist Certification is geared toward those in catechetical leadership positions.

(Please note: The Master Catechist Certification does not replace the Ecclesial Lay Ministry Program (ELM) requirement for all of the above ministers. The F.I.R.E. program is designed so that Catechist Certification and ELM can be done concurrently.)

Approval for Catechetical Formation and Equivalency for F.I.R.E. Courses

F.I.R.E. courses and academic credits to be applied to certification can be gained in a variety of ways. In order to receive equivalency credit, individuals should send a F.I.R.E. Catechist Application and documentation of completion to the Pastoral Office for Catechesis. *Echoes of Faith*, education degrees, the *Ecclesial Lay Ministry Program* and the *Spiritual Director's Formation Program* have all been evaluated and are included here as **Appendices 4 A-D**

Programs such as the *Youth Ministry Certificate*, *Stephen Ministry*, *Stephen Ministry Training* and the *Principals' Institute* have been reviewed by the Equivalency Board for the Ecclesial Lay Ministry Program and those same equivalencies would apply toward catechist certification. Please call the Associate Director of Faith Formation if you have any questions.

Diocesan Programs

Institutes, programs, and workshops offered by the Pastoral Office for Catechesis or other diocesan offices or agencies and which are designed for catechist formation will indicate the specific course content that will be credited for certification.

Parish and School Catechist Formation Programs

Programs of catechist formation offered by individual parishes or schools may be counted toward catechist certification if the program covers all the content that is offered in the diocesan FIRE workshop.

Regional and National Programs

Regional and national institutes, congresses, or workshops related to catechetical ministry may be counted toward certification if they follow the FIRE plan of study.

College Credit and Degrees

Academic credits earned from Catholic colleges or universities may be counted toward certification. Applications of persons who have earned a bachelor or graduate degree in Religious Education or Theology should include transcripts. Teachers may also include transcripts.

Certificates from Other Dioceses

Certificates that individuals have gained from other dioceses will be evaluated on an individual basis in accord with the criteria described in areas of growth and the level of certification sought.

Applying for the F.I.R.E. Program

As indicated throughout this document, catechists need to be properly formed in order to hand on the faith to those they are catechizing. The diocesan catechists' formation program, F.I.R.E., provides for this. In order for catechists to receive credit for the F.I.R.E. workshops taken, they must complete a F.I.R.E. Application Form, **Appendix 2**.

Once received and processed by the Pastoral Office for Catechesis, the catechist record of formation will be tracked. The person at the parish or school, (designated by the pastor or principal) charged with overseeing catechist formation (e.g. Adult Faith Formation Director, Director of Religious Education, Pastoral Associate, Campus Minister, etc.) will be the main contact person for the Pastoral Office for Catechesis. All completed F.I.R.E. Applications, etc., must be processed through this designated individual. They will forward the completed applications to the Pastoral Office for Catechesis and continue to monitor the catechetical formation of catechists in their parish or school.

Individuals applying to the F.I.R.E. Program are to complete the F.I.R.E. Application Form. **Appendix 2**. This form must be signed by the pastor or school principal. The signature of the pastor or principal indicates that the applicant possesses the minimum personal qualities listed in the section titled Personal Qualities of the Catechist.

Granting of Certificates

All are encouraged to receive their certificates at the diocesan Catechetical Day held annually. Those who are not able to participate in Catechetical Day should receive their certificates at a parish, school, or deanery function. In exceptional cases at the request of the pastor, principal, or coordinator of religious education, the certificate may be mailed directly to the individual catechist.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Doctor of Catechesis Award

At Catechetical Day, parishes who qualify will also be recognized with the St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Doctor of Catechesis Award. To receive this award, parishes must achieve the following:

- Facilitate six or more FIRE courses between August 1 and July 31;
- Have a representative attend the Fall and Spring Parish Professional Staff Meetings;
- Return the "Parish Profile Statistics Report" by October 31; and

- Attend the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana Catechetical Day.

Role of Parish or School

The Pastoral Office for Catechesis is charged with the task of providing support for programs and services for growth in catechetical formation. As important as this task is, however, it is a subsidiary one to the role of the local faith community in the selection and formation of catechists. Parishes or schools provide the environment for personal growth, inspiration, education, and spiritual nourishment. It remains the task of the local community to select and support the catechists they call forth.

In those rare cases in which a catechist is under the age of 18, parental consent is required. **Appendix 5**

Selection of Catechists

Certification is granted by the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. However, regardless of the level of certification a person may have been granted, the actual selection of persons to be involved in a parish or school catechetical program is the responsibility of the pastor and the parish DRE / CRE where appropriate, or pastor and school principal in parish schools, or principal in regional schools, or diocesan high schools.

The granting of certification is an indication that a person has sought to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to be more effective as a catechist. However, the reception of a certificate does not guarantee that a person will be successful as a catechist. Therefore, the decision about whether a person may serve as catechist in a particular parish or school is properly the responsibility of appropriate leaders in the parish or school as given in the preceding paragraph.

In addition to the catechist certification described in this document, each parish and school is expected to follow the diocesan *Child Protection Policy* which was promulgated May 2003, when choosing volunteers or hiring staff that would have regular contact with children.

New staff and volunteers who will have contact with children shall attend a Safe Conduct Protocol In-service and have a criminal background check before beginning their catechetical ministry. Pastors / parish administrators and diocesan directors will ensure that all personnel and volunteers required to receive training and a criminal background check do so before their first contact with a child.

Parishes, schools, and diocesan offices will retain the signed and dated Certification and Authorization Forms that are completed by attendees at the end of each training session. For those rare times when a volunteer is under the age of 18, the volunteer still must go through the Safe Conduct Protocol In-service. Once they reach the age of 18, they must have a criminal background check done. (Child Protection Policy, May 2003)

Support of Catechists

To recognize and affirm the important responsibilities catechists have, parishes and schools need to support catechists by providing:

1. Job description;
2. Adequate facilities, budget, resources, library, and media equipment for the proper implementation of catechesis;
3. Access to information regarding catechist formation opportunities;
4. Financial support to participate in opportunities for catechist certification and continuing enrichment as a catechist;
5. An accurate record of participation in catechetical formation opportunities and length of service in catechetical ministry, updated annually with reports provided by the Pastoral Office for Catechesis;
6. Encouragement and assistance in implementing the Catechist Certification Guidelines; and
7. Public recognition and affirmation by the parish or school community of the important responsibilities catechists have.

Personal Qualities of a Catechist

“The apostolic work of the catechist springs from the Sacrament of Baptism through which all believers come to share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. The call to the ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit. Catechists need to be practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church and who have been prepared for their apostolate by appropriate catechetical training.” (NDC, # 55 E)

Like all the faithful, catechists are called to holiness....The spiritual life of a catechist should be characterized by:

- A love of God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-and of Christ’s Church, our Holy Father, and God’s holy people;
- A coherence and authenticity of life that is characterized by their faithful practice of the faith in a spirit of faith, charity, hope, courage, and joy;
- Personal prayer and dedication to the evangelizing mission of the Church;
- A missionary zeal by which they are fully convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and enthusiastically proclaim it;
- Active participation in their local parish community, especially by attendance at Sunday Eucharist; and
- A devotion to Mary, the first disciple and the model of catechists, and to Eucharist, the source of nourishment for catechists.

Facilitating F.I.R.E. Workshops

F.I.R.E. courses have been developed around the fundamental idea of providing solid formation opportunities at the parish level by qualified parish leaders. **Appendix 10** Therefore, the Basic Certification courses and the Specialized Certification courses are given to the parishes to present to adults, catechists, RCIA candidates and / or confirmation students in a manner that best fits the community life of the parish.

Parish Expectations

- Adhere to the time allotted and course material for each F.I.R.E. course.
- Recognizing that a skilled teacher or presenter will elaborate and enhance the learning experience and material by supplementing and making it their own, the Pastoral Office for Catechesis **does not** give permission for the F.I.R.E. logo or diocesan logo to be used on materials developed (i.e. Power Points, Pod Casts, additional handouts, etc.) at the parish without prior approval from the Pastoral Office for Catechesis.
- Utilize qualified presenters following the established guidelines for F.I.R.E. facilitators.
- Provide F.I.R.E. Sign-up sheets at each F.I.R.E. course for all participants to sign. **Appendix 6**
- Copy and send the F.I.R.E. sign-up sheet to:

Associate Director of Faith Formation
Catholic Pastoral Center
2300 South Ninth Street
Lafayette, IN 47909-2400

Diocesan Expectations:

- Utilize the F.I.R.E. sign-up sheets to update catechist's records in a timely fashion and e-mail parish with confirmation of receipt of sign-up sheets.
- Provide support for parishes through reports, records, updates, resources, communications, and supplemental formation opportunities.
- Provide qualified facilitators and facilitator training upon request.

Advanced Certification Courses

Advanced Certification courses will be scheduled and presented throughout the diocese by the Pastoral Office for Catechesis. Parishes may request specific workshops. The Pastoral Office for Catechesis will help coordinate and provide the qualified facilitator with the requested course material and power point.

Master Certification Courses

Master Certification courses will be coordinated throughout the diocese as part of the *Ecclesial Lay Ministry Program*. Parishes may request Master F.I.R.E. courses. These courses and workshops will be promoted through the same channels as the F.I.R.E. Basic, Specialized, and Advanced courses.

Facilitator Requirements

Facilitator requirements for the Basic Courses and the Specialized Courses are:

- Education Degree **and** Advanced F.I.R.E. Certification; or
- ELM graduate **and** Facilitator Training; or
- Bachelor or Masters Degree in Theology; or
- Master F.I.R.E. Certification **and** Facilitator Training; or
- Priest or Deacon

For the Advanced Courses and Master Courses, facilitators must be approved by the Diocese and / or Saint Joseph's College, Rensselaer.

Annual Reports

The Pastoral Office for Catechesis distributes three reports during the year. The first report is titled *Individual Progress Report Appendix 7* and is distributed in March and is sent to both parishes and schools. This report shows what courses that the Pastoral Office for Catechesis has listed that have been taken by each catechist in a parish or school. The Pastoral Office for Catechesis requests that the parish or school review the report and inform the office of any changes or corrections that are needed by April 1st.

The second report is titled *Catechetical Activity Report Appendix 8* which is sent only to parishes. The report will list the F.I.R.E. courses that the parish has hosted from August through July of that year. It will list a parish's participation in Catechetical Day, the Spring Parish Professional Staff Meeting, and the Fall Parish Professional Staff Meeting. This report will be sent out in mid-July. We request that we are informed by August 15th of any changes that need to be made.

The third report is titled *Catechist Report Appendix 9* and is sent to both the parishes and the schools. It is sent out in early September. This report lists all the catechists of record for a parish / school in catechetical ministry. If a catechist is not listed, they must complete a F.I.R.E. Application **Appendix 2** and then forward the completed application to the office by September 30th.

Conclusion

Catechists resound with a message that integrates and reflects the richness and vitality of faith within the Church and themselves. Theirs is a sacred ministry. As catechists delve deeper into the unfathomable riches of our faith, their catechetical ministry is enhanced and integrated by the constant development of their knowledge and skills.

By developing their abilities to proclaim the Word, to foster community, and to lead others to worship, sacraments, and service, catechists enrich those whom they serve. The call to catechetical service is both a challenge and a grace. It impels catechists to respond with their best efforts, talents, and gifts.

The Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana F.I.R.E. Catechist Formation Program is designed to assist catechists in their response to the call to catechetical ministry and to enhance, nurture, and develop their God-given talents and gifts to be used for His Kingdom. Catechists serve in the name of the Lord and at the discretion of their pastors and bishop. They are nourished by the life of the Holy Spirit. They open themselves up to be transformed, inspired, and empowered by God our Creator to share a living, conscious, and active Faith.