

Catechetical Leader's Handbook



**OFFICE FOR EVANGELIZATION AND
FAMILY LIFE
ARCHDIOCESE OF MOBILE**

(revised January 2021)

December 2012

Dear Parish Catechetical Leader,

It is with great joy that our staff has completed this revision of the ***Parish Catechetical Leader's Handbook***. We sincerely hope you will find this resource to be a tool, both helpful and easy to use.

The mission of the Church is to bring people to Jesus Christ. Intimacy with him and with his body, the Church is our goal. There are many things we must do to make a program run smoothly, but we encourage you to never lose sight of why you are doing what you do. We also wish to thank you for what you do.

You are tasked with assisting your pastor in the mission of evangelization and catechesis. In this role you work to provide direction, coordination and administration of the catechetical program. With this handbook, we seek to assist you in this mission, and to ensure the safety of all whom you serve in Jesus' name.

One of the important duties you have is the development and/or revision of handbooks for catechists, as well as families in your program. To this end, please find included in this ***PCL Handbook*** a sample for (1) [The Handbook for Catechists](#) and (2) [The Parish Catechetical Handbook for Families](#). You may request a Microsoft Word document to customize these samples with your own parish policies, practices and expectations, and we will be happy to email it to you.

Please do not hesitate to call on our office should you need assistance in preparing or implementing these handbooks in your program. Remember: Handbooks are necessary in running a program because they enable students, parents (and catechists) to understand your expectations and their responsibilities. They also serve as a contract between the parish and those mentioned above, so it is both legally and ethically wise to update your handbooks each year.

May your mission be aided by the Advocate, whom Jesus promised and sent to be our guide to the Father!

Sincerely in Christ,

Patrick J. Arensberg
Director, Office for Evangelization and Family Life
Archdiocese of Mobile

This handbook is intended to assist catechetical leaders, especially those new to the ministry, in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Mobile.

Catechesis, as a ministry, varies widely from parish to parish. For the parish catechetical leader, an awareness of the scope and significance of this ministry in the Church today is essential.

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The Office for Evangelization and Family Life invites those we serve toward a greater intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Catechesis is an essential ministry of the Church through which the teachings of Jesus Christ have been passed on to believers throughout the ages.

The staff of the Office for Evangelization and Family Life is dedicated to supporting the parishes and Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Mobile in this essential ministry. We want you to be successful in your ministry. We will lend our support in many ways, including:

- Consultations with Pastors, Parish Catechetical Leaders, Principals and Religion Chairpersons
- St. John XXIII Certification Program
- Parish leader webinars
- Retreats and evenings of reflection
- Workshops and classes for parish catechists, religion teachers, RCIA teams, and other lay ministers which strengthen their personal relationship with Christ and enhance their professional growth
- Resource Library
- OEFL website - mobarch.org/oeft
- Textbook review assistance

As a Parish Catechetical Leader, you are tasked with following the leadership of your Pastor to develop and enhance the faith formation opportunities of your parish family. The Office for Evangelization and Family Life will support you in this task.

As we strive to help others grow in the faith, we need to be aware that faith formation includes opportunities for nurturing of the head, heart and hands of each individual. We are tasked with offering traditional catechetical instruction (which can be manifested in a variety of ways), along with occasions for prayer and spiritual growth through varied methods, and opportunities of service to others. These three parts of faith formation should not stand alone. Each augments the other to allow the individual to develop a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and to live out their Catholic faith in ways that draw others to Christ and the Church.

As you minister to your parish, we ask you to keep in mind these guidelines of the Archdiocese in regards to parish catechetical instruction:

- It is generally expected that parish members grades K-12 be offered at least 30 hours each year of catechetical instruction. Keep in mind that we are to minister to the whole person and if presented thoughtfully, a variety of religious experiences can be catechetical. We encourage parishes to offer flexible scheduling wherever possible so that the maximum amount of people can benefit from the parish offerings.

- The sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist are generally celebrated after a child has reached the age of reason (normally considered to be seven years of age). In most cases the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated prior to First Eucharist.

- It is the policy of the Archdiocese of Mobile that Confirmation is to be celebrated in the 11th grade. All parishes within the archdiocese are to adhere to this grade in establishing two-year formation programs for Confirmation.
 - o For parishes who will confirm only eleventh graders every year, the Confirmation formation process should begin no later than January of the 9th grade. The celebration of the sacrament would occur in the spring of the 11th grade.

 - o For those parishes that wish to combine two grades, the celebration of the sacrament will occur in the fall for those teens in the 11th and 12th grades. The formation program would start in the fall of their 9th and 10th grade years.

- Unbaptized children who have reached the age of reason and enter the RCIA process will prepare for full reception into the Church (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist).

This resource was developed to assist Parish Catechetical Leaders of the Archdiocese of Mobile. If you have questions or concerns regarding this resource or any portion of your parish ministry, please call any staff member of the Office for Evangelization and Family Life for assistance.

SECTION I

Documents and Resources

CATECHETICAL DOCUMENTS TO NOTE

(links are provided for those documents which can be found online)

Several notable catechetical documents have been published during the past decades. These provide information, guidance and inspiration for catechetical personnel. Leaders need to become familiar with the following resources and make them available to their catechists.

***Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), USCCB, 1974**

RCIA outlines the steps for the formation of catechumens, bringing their conversion to the faith to a greater maturity. It helps them respond more deeply to God's gracious initiative in their lives and prepares them for union with the Church community. The RCIA is a "journey of faith" that involves the whole Christian community in various ministries, i.e. witness to the Gospel, hospitality, prayers, sponsors, catechists, mentors, priests, etc. More information can be found on the [USCCB website](#).

[Catechesis in Our Times](#) (*Catechesi Tradendae*) (CT), USCCB, 1979

This Apostolic Exhortation on Catechetics by Pope John Paul II, is a powerful and inspiring document. In 1979 an international synod of Bishops focused on catechetics. Pope Paul VI was to publish his reflections on the synod, but his death prevented this. Pope John Paul II produced this excellent document in which he reminds us that catechesis is the communication of the living mystery of God. He views catechetical activity as the prime aspect of the Church's mission. He insists that all need to be catechized, especially adults.

[The Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (CCC) USCCB, revised 1994

This is a serious but gentle and joyful presentation of the Deposit of Faith. There are four major parts: (1) The Profession of Faith: our desire for God, God's Revelation and its transmission in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, and our response in the Profession of Faith (Creed); (2) The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (Sacramental Life); (3) Life in Christ (Beatitudes, Morality, Law and Grace, and the Commandments); and (4) Christian Prayer (the universal call to prayer, the Life of Prayer, and the Lord's Prayer). A compendium is also available on this document.

[Directory for Catechesis](#) (DC). USCCB, 2020

This document serves as a guide for directories to be produced by Episcopal Conferences throughout the universal Church. The new Directory seeks to highlight the close link between evangelization and catechesis. It underlines that every baptized person is a missionary called to find new ways of communicating the faith

with commitment and responsibility. In this regard, the new Directory proposes three major principles of action: Witnessing, Mercy and Dialogue.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us (OHBWU), USCCB, 1999

This pastoral plan, written by the U.S. Bishops, “. . . seeks to awaken throughout the Church in our country a passion for renewal in the ministry of adult faith formation.”

National Directory for Catechesis (NDC), USCCB, 2005

This companion to the *General Directory for Catechesis* builds on the core themes in the *DC* and serves as a reference point for forming catechists, developing resources, and providing practical tools for doing catechesis well in the United States. A *Summary* is also available for this document.

[Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#), USCCB, 2005

This document offers pastoral and theological reflections on the reality of lay ecclesial ministry, affirmation of those who serve in this way, and a synthesis of best thinking and practice.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (USCCA), USCCB, 2006

This catechism is an adaptation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), but follows the same arrangement of the content as the CCC. Each chapter gives a story or lesson of faith, official teaching of the church, suggestions on how to relate this teaching to our culture, questions for discussion, and a closing meditation and prayer.

Religious Education, Parish and Youth Ministry: Legal Issues for Catechetical and Youth Leaders, Mary Angela Shaughnessy, NCEA, 2006

Legal issues for catechetical leaders, youth ministers and volunteers are addressed in this valuable resource.

[Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age](#), USCCB, 2008

This framework was designed to offer guidance to catechetical publishers and to aid those responsible for overseeing catechetical instruction within dioceses. The framework is designed to shape a four-year, eight-semester course of catechetical instruction.

[Adaptation of Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age for Use in Parish and Youth Ministry Programs](#), USCCB, 2010

This documents provides an adaptation of the original framework for parish use.

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE FOR EVANGELIZATION AND FAMILY LIFE RESOURCES

All of the following resources may be found on our website: mobarch.org/oeft

(if the resource you need cannot be found on the site, this indicates that the document is currently being revised. If this is the case, and you need more information, please contact the OEFL)

[St. John XXIII Catechist Program](#) (Archdiocesan Certification Program)

This program is an Archdiocesan certification program for catechists, Catholic school religion teachers, parish catechetical leaders, youth ministry leaders and youth ministry core teams. All who are charged with the task of religious education ministry are considered to be catechists. Catechists are called to continue learning throughout their years of catechetical ministry so that they can best serve their learners.

The St. John XXIII Catechist Program has three components:

Theological – Attendance at 20 one-hour Apologetics lectures (The “Be Prepared Series”) and completion of reading /video assignments and assessment

Spiritual – Participation in two spiritual formation events each year

Methodological – Completion of two three-hour workshops. Additionally, PCLs and YMLs are offered three further workshops

[Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education](#) are available for Pre-K through grade 12. The Religion Curriculum Guidelines state the concepts of what should be taught on a certain grade level. The catechist/teacher uses these guidelines alongside the religion textbook and writes in the dates when the material was covered. This tracking will ensure that the catechist/teacher is meeting the expectations for that grade level. The Curriculum Guidelines include indicators that are suggested possible activities of how the student displays knowledge/understanding of the concepts. The Religion Curriculum Guidelines are followed by a religion vocabulary list, a list of prayers to be introduced, a list of prayers to be memorized and a list of prayers for student participation for each grade.

[Resource for the Sacrament Preparation of Children & Youth](#)

Resource for those responsible for sacramental preparation in parishes. This is NOT a policy booklet, but rather a resource that we hope will assist you to answer questions and facilitate excellent sacramental preparation within the parish. Each parish will need to adapt this vision to the needs of their specific parish.

Section 1 - General Principles for the Preparation and Celebration of All 4

- Sacraments
- Section 2 - Baptism
- Section 3 - Reconciliation
- Section 4 - Eucharist
- Section 5 - Confirmation
- Section 6 - RCIA

[Guidelines for Parish Confirmation Coordinators](#)

This binder was designed to assist parish leaders of the Archdiocese of Mobile in the preparation for and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation with 11th grade teens.

OTHER ARCHDIOCESAN RESOURCES

[Office for the Protection of Minors and Adults](#) (OPMA)

“Staff and volunteers who have substantial contact with children” must attend the training program before they begin ministry.

[Click here](#) for information regarding training, both initial and renewal.

As a PCL, you need to verify that all of your catechists/volunteers are current in their child protection training/retraining. You also need to make sure that child protection classes for children and youth are completed by November 1st of each year. Accurate attendance records must be kept. For further information on this, contact:

Child Protection Office (251) 434-1559
childprotection@mobarch.org

[Youth Travel/Activities Policy](#), Revised 2020

This policy is for all minors who are involved in field trips or related outings. It is intended for use in all parishes, schools and archdiocesan offices.

[Policy for Electronic Communication with Minors](#), Revised 2016

All who serve the mission of the Catholic Church within the ministries of the Archdiocese of Mobile must comply with this policy for our children and youth's protection and for the protection of our adults. If you have questions regarding the implementation of this policy, please call the OEFL.

LIBRARIES and RESOURCE CENTER

The Office for Evangelization and Family Life in the Archdiocese of Mobile has DVDs and other resources at their office at 352 Government Street, Mobile, AL 36602

These resources may be checked out by coming into the resource center (352 Government Street, Mobile, normal office hours 8:30-4:30 M-F) or by calling or e-mailing the OEFL and requesting the materials needed.

Current Textbooks for Parishes and Schools

The selection of appropriate catechetical materials for your parish is a matter of great importance. The Office for Evangelization and Family Life can assist your parish with making the decision of a series for your parish/school religion program.

The OEFL maintains a complete set of the textbooks which are most commonly used by parishes in the Archdiocese. These textbooks can be borrowed so that catechetical leaders can compare the available choices.

Our Office strongly encourages parish leaders to select one series of texts for grades K-8. Using only one series helps to ensure that there will be no gaps in instruction throughout these initial years of catechetical instruction.

The series that you select is to be in doctrinal conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (U.S. Bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis: Catechism.). To find the most recent list of religion textbooks found in conformity with the CCC, go to the [USCCB's website](#).

If adolescent catechesis is taking place within a youth group setting, please contact OEFL for a discussion of additional middle & high school catechetical resources.

USEFUL WEBSITES

[Archdiocese of Mobile](#)
[Office of Catholic Schools](#) – Archdiocese of Mobile
[Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry](#) – Archdiocese of Mobile

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)
[Code of Canon Law](#)
[United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#)
[Conformity List of Catechetical Text and Series](#)
[Catholic Relief Services Resource Center](#)

WEBSITES RECOMMENDED BY ARCHDIOCESAN PCLs

Below please find websites and blogs recommended by PCLs in the Archdiocese. Always use caution when utilizing information from sites with private administration.

[Canva](#) design app for flyers, social media, etc.
[catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com](#)
[Catholic Icing](#)
[Catholic Kids Bulletin](#)
[The Catholic Toolbox](#)
[CatholicMom.com](#)
[EWTN](#)
[Lifelong Faith Journal](#)
[Look to Him and Be Radiant](#)
[Quotescover.com](#) – tool to turn your quotes into pictures for social media
[The Religion Teacher](#)
[Resources for Catholic Educators](#)
[Loyola Press](#)
[Our Sunday Visitor](#)
[Sadlier](#)
[Sophia Institute](#)

SECTION II

Program Development

PARISH CATECHETICAL PROGRAMS

Introduction

As a parish catechetical leader, the catechetical program is your central concern. Catechetical programs need continual development, maintenance and modification, requiring attention to the size of the parish, its financial status, clientele, facilities and resources.

The Parish Program

The parish catechetical program should not focus solely on children and youth. We are strongly encouraged to offer formation to parish family members at all stages of development, with a special emphasis on our adults. “The catechetical formation of adults is essential for the Church to carry out the commission given the apostles by Christ. Because of its importance and because all other forms of catechesis are oriented in some way to it, the catechesis of adults must have high priority at all levels of the Church.” (NDC, 187)

It takes a team of people to provide catechetical instruction to our parish families. The team leader is the pastor. “The pastor has the primary responsibility to ensure that the catechetical needs, goals, and priorities of the parish are identified, articulated and met.” (NDC, 221)

Parish religious education programs should encompass a variety of offerings to meet the needs of the needs of the entire parish family. Even small parishes should strive to include adult faith formation at their parishes as the entire Body of Christ need to be evangelized and catechized. Below are suggested offerings which your parish may seek to incorporate into a comprehensive religious education program as we seek to evangelize our parish families, affecting their heads (catechesis), hearts (prayer and spirituality) and hands (service/discipleship opportunities).

Adult Faith Formation

A parish program should feature quality courses or presentations that will attract adults and keep their interest. A wide variety of topics from family life courses to more advanced theology courses could be offered.

Remember that adults lead very busy lives and can choose how they spend their time. The presentations which they attend need to be personally worthwhile. If their needs aren't being met, they may not return to a second session. Some things to consider when planning an adult event:

- 1) Location and facilities – the space for adult faith formation needs to be inviting and welcoming. Adult-sized chairs at tables work well at most settings.

Round tables are ideal for small group discussions. Ensure that all present can hear the presenter. Check that heating and lighting are at comfortable settings.

- 2) Time and day of event – pay special attention to the needs of the group you are trying to attract to an event. Older adults may not attend an event after dark. Parents of school-aged children may not be available during late afternoon or during the dinner hour. Friday nights during football season may not be good meeting days for high school families. Here in Alabama, Saturdays of football season – especially rivalry games – may not work well as a meeting day for any group (unless of course, it's a social event centered on the game!).
- 3) Hospitality and refreshments – there's a time-honored saying, "if you feed them, they will come!" Let your group know that you value your presence at the gathering. Greet them at the door, encourage everyone to wear name tags, have simple refreshments available, and ensure that the room is clean, neat and welcoming.
- 4) Childcare - some families will not be able to attend any gathering without having childcare available. Don't assume that everyone with children has family in the area or is able to afford at-home babysitting. If you want to make it possible for young parents to attend a gathering, offer childcare. (At least two OPMA trained adults should be present at all times in the childcare room. The childcare room should be "toddler-friendly" with no safety concerns.)
- 5) Advertisement – two words – early and often! Families today have jam-packed calendars. Informing families of events as soon as possible - at least a month or two in advance – will give you a better likelihood of good attendance. Advertise through all possible means – flyer handouts, announcements at Mass, posters in gathering spaces, e-mail, social media, mass text or mass phone apps, and any other means available to your parish. Be sure to follow the Archdiocesan [Policy for Electronic Communication with Minors](#) when using any electronic means of advertising. Enlist others to help you with advertising. Ask members of parish groups (Pastoral Council, K of C, Women's Sodality, etc.) to help spread the word to their groups.
- 6) Evaluations – evaluations can be a great learning tool for you. Ask participants to fill out paper evaluations of the gathering – did it meet their needs? what did they enjoy? do they have suggestions for future gatherings? In addition to formal evaluations, speak to participants in the days and weeks following a gathering to obtain their informal evaluation. Ask other parish leaders to help you obtain other informal evaluations. Sometimes people will give a more honest evaluation to people who weren't directly involved in the presentation.

As put forth in [Renewing the Vision](#), the three goals of our ministry with adolescents are:

- Goal 1: To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
- Goal 2: To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community
- Goal 3: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person

Catechesis is a large part of our ministry to adolescents. Our ministry with them however, needs to be a collaborative effort of the entire parish – those directly charged with adolescent ministry and all other adults in the parish. Adolescent ministry works best in parishes where the entire parish values the youth and understands the gift that they bring to the parish family. Advocate for your youth whenever possible!

The entire person of the teenager has need for ministry – head, heart and hands. No one person can meet all the needs of every teen in the parish. A team effort is needed for this ministry.

Adolescent Catechesis can be fashioned in different ways in different parishes. PCLs need to work closely with all those in Adolescent Ministry – pastor, YMLs, high school catechists, YM Core Teams, Confirmation Coordinators, and all those who work with teens – so that our teens are kept engaged and connected to the parish family. If you have questions concerning catechetical resources for teens, contact the OEFL.

Pre-school through 8th Grade

“It is important to remember that our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs are not meant to replace the efforts of parents, but to assist parents in the Catholic education which must first and always be present within the family.”
(Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi, 2008)

In addition to the usual catechetical program focused on our young parishioners, look at your K-8 program as your opportunity to evangelize the parents and hook them into the catechetical process. Keep parents informed of the content of their child’s catechetical program. Invite parents to accompany their children to special activities within the RE program. Send resources home via the children, through the postal system and electronically so that parents are able reinforce classroom instruction and develop family-based religious traditions.

Sacramental Preparation

PCLs should make every effort to include the parents and parish community in the sacramental preparation program. Specific information on the sacraments can be

found in the [Resource for the Sacrament Preparation of Children & Youth](#) and the [Guidelines for Parish Confirmation Coordinators](#).

Special Needs Programs

As a faith community we should seek to provide catechesis, sacrament preparation and other faith development opportunities to individuals with exceptional needs. If you have any questions regarding catechesis or the reception of the sacraments by persons with special needs, call the Office for Evangelization and Family Life or the [Disability Ministries & Services](#) at (251) 434-1550.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

RCIA is the process through which those interested in learning more about the Church can join together in the journey of faith. RCIA is designed for the unbaptized and the baptized from other Christian denominations. RCIA should not be used as a parish adult faith formation opportunity as the community in RCIA has different needs from the other adults in the parish.

RCIA is a process that involves the whole Christian community in various ministries, i.e. priests, witness to the Gospel, hospitality, prayers, sponsors, catechists, mentors, etc. Again, a team effort is required for a quality RCIA program. A quality program can invigorate the entire parish. The OEFL has a variety of resources to help PCLs develop or enhance their program.

Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) Adapted for Children

Sacramental preparation for children coming into the Church needs to be adapted for each individual and circumstance. Publishers have a number of resources for sacramental preparation for older children. The OEFL library has copies of these resources. If you have questions concerning sacramental preparation for children coming into the Church with their families, please call the OEFL.

Liturgy of the Word for Children (age 3 until Kindergarten or 1st grade)

In Liturgy of the Word for Children programs, children gather outside the main assembly prior to the first Reading at Mass to hear the Word of God at their own level and then return to the assembly before/at the Presentation of the Gifts. Resources for Children's Liturgy of the Word are available at the Office for Evangelization and Family Life or online.

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Summer Vacation Bible School programs can be organized and scheduled a number of ways, adapting to the needs of the parish community. The usual VBS program will run for 5 mornings in one week. Some parishes prefer to offer VBS during the

evening so that children of parents working outside the home can attend. VBS can also be offered as day-long Saturday programs, “Wonderful Wednesday” programs, or by a number of other schedules. Some parishes choose to offer a “non-gathered” form of VBS, sending resources home to parents to use at home. Catholic and interdenominational publishing houses offer a number of VBS programs each year.

Catechist Recruitment

Recruiting and retaining quality catechists should be one of the main efforts of every PCL. We should not settle for “a warm body” to stand in front of a class, but rather we need to have a selective search for individuals who love God, our Catholic Church and children/youth. We need to search for individuals who have at least a basic understanding of Catholic doctrine, faith and traditions. In addition, a good catechist should be a good communicator with those to whom he/she ministers - in both words and actions. Recruiting catechists should be a year-round process. Always keep your eyes and ears open to potential workers in the catechetical vineyard! Retaining quality catechists can be achieved through educating catechists in both doctrine and teaching methods, and showing appreciation to the catechist (and his/her family) for the sacrifices which they make to be a part of the education team.

Recruiting suggestions:

- Form a Volunteer Formation Team which knows your needs for volunteers and conducts an on-going search for individuals in the parish who fit your criteria
- Organize a Volunteer Open House to advertise program needs and begin the volunteer screening process
- Get to know the people of your parish and invite them personally to your ministry throughout the year.

Bulletin announcements and pleas from the PCL at the Masses are generally not effective ways to recruit.

Retaining suggestions:

- Encourage and assist your catechists to increase their own knowledge through the [St. John XXIII Catechist Certification Program](#), adult faith formation programs at your parish and neighboring parishes, and on-line classes offered through Catholic educational facilities. Catechists who invest time in learning will be more likely to continue teaching in your program.
- Show your appreciation for your catechists throughout the year. Have coffee/tea/juice available for the catechists when they arrive, write notes of appreciation, leave small mementos (snack-sized candy bars, holy cards, etc.) for the catechists at their desks, thank the spouse/children of the catechist and let them know how much you appreciate the work that the catechist does, invite catechists and their families to a Christmas dinner or End-of-Year celebration, and so on.

- Make sure that your catechists realize that they are your number one priority and that you support work that they do!

Instructional Facilities

Space and environment teach! Your facilities should be welcoming, well lit, safe, comfortable and age-appropriate. Rooms should be clean and uncluttered. A crucifix should be in each room. Religious symbols and a prayer table with a Bible are encouraged. If you are “borrowing” space, be aware of the expectations and leave the space as found.

Resources

The OEFL has both material resources and Archdiocesan personnel available to all of our parishes, large and small. Please utilize these resources available to you – the OEFL is here to help you!

- The Office for Evangelization and Family Life has a library for your use: there are sample catechetical materials sacrament preparation materials; resources for adult study groups; books on scripture, liturgy, doctrine, and catechesis. There are also audio-visual materials for all age groups.
- The [St. John XXIII Catechist Certification Program](#) is the religious education certification program of the Archdiocese. The “Be Prepared Apologetics Sessions” make up one part of the program. Please contact the OEFL for more information about the certification program.
- The staff of the OEFL is available to all parishes for consultation. Questions and challenges large and small are welcome! For in-depth questions or challenges, a member of the staff will come out to the parish to help. Remember, the staff is only a phone call or an e-mail away!
- The OEFL hosts a website with a variety of resources and links. Check out: mobarch.org/oeff. There you will find information about upcoming events, information about OEFL resources, and links to other websites of interest to those in the education ministry.

SECTION III

Parish Catechetical Leaders

TIPS for NEW CATECHETICAL LEADERS

A few simple tips from some seasoned catechetical leaders.

1. Be a person of faith.
2. Remember that catechesis is a ministry of the Church. We all have specific roles in exercising this ministry; pastor, PCL, YML, catechists and others. You need to strive to work collaboratively.
3. Have your number one priority be the support of your catechists.
4. Remember that your primary function is to organize and support your program.
5. Work within your limits. Quality is more important than quantity.
6. Keep in mind that being a catechetical leader is a ministry, not a 9-5 job.
7. Advertise your hours of availability to parents and catechists.
8. Learn how to say NO!
9. Attend PCL meetings and other catechetical gatherings to stay informed.
10. Participate in [St. John XXIII Catechist Certification](#) courses for PCLs.
11. Be thankful in person or in writing.
12. Keep your sense of humor.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS, YOUTH MINISTRY, and PARISH CONSULTATIVE BOARDS

Relationship with Parish School

If your parish has a Catholic school, it is imperative for the PCL to maintain an open relationship with the parish school, especially if the catechetical program uses school facilities. It may be helpful to meet with the principal several times a year, especially prior to the opening of school, to discuss use of the facilities and sacramental preparation and celebration. The faculty of a Catholic school can be a valuable resource to your catechetical program. Keep the lines of communication open.

Youth Ministry

The way youth ministry and catechetical ministry work together can take many forms in a parish. It is essential that youth ministry and catechetical ministry collaborate in the faith formation of teens.

Parish Consultative Bodies

You should be prepared to give reports on such things as budgets, textbooks, family participation and programming to the Pastoral and/or Finance Council. Again, communication is essential for good relationships in the parish.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Whether you are a full-time or part-time paid staff member, or a part-time volunteer, it is important to have a clear description of your responsibilities. Job descriptions will vary from parish to parish, but it is important to put them in writing. Below is a generic job description for paid and volunteer PCLs.

Parish Catechetical Leader

(Sample Job Description)

Name of Parish: _____ Date: _____

Pastor: _____

Name of PCL: _____

(The following points are given as an aid to developing your job description.)

1. Responsibilities for the PCL

- A. Assist the pastor in selecting a catechetical series from the *Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series*.
- B. Regularly attend Department of Catholic Education methodological, spiritual and educational offerings.
- C. Adhere to Archdiocesan Sacrament Guidelines.
- D. Maintain up-to-date records of all catechists' initial training and retraining in the OPMA's child protection program.
- E. Ensure that the Archdiocesan *Field Trip Policy* is followed.
- F. (Parish specific responsibilities - i.e., parent meetings, Christmas program, etc.)

2. Responsibilities for the Catechetical Program

- A. Administration
 - 1) Prepares a budget for catechetical program (if applicable).
 - 2) Maintains files on: yearly handbooks, catechists (including *St. John XXIII Program* records), and students.
 - 3) Completes Archdiocesan Office for Evangelization and Family Life annual Parish Profile.
 - 4) Ensures sacrament records are kept up-to-date.
- B. Leadership
 - 1) Assists the pastor in leading the catechetical program.
 - 2) Recruits, supports and enables catechists' training.
 - 3) Intentionally encourages catechists to complete the *St. John XXIII Catechist Certification Program*.
 - 4) Facilitates the spiritual and professional growth of catechists (days of recollection, joint in-service programs with neighboring parishes, etc.)
 - 5) Acts as the primary contact for procuring resources, particularly from the OEFL library.
- C. Programs
 - 1) Prepares calendar, class schedules, etc.
 - 2) Arranges for appropriate learning environments.
 - 3) Orders textbooks and other instructional materials.
 - 4) Oversees instructional process

Sample Evaluation of Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL)

Circle the number that best expresses the performance of the PCL. One (1) indicates a need for change, three (3) is average, and five (5) is outstanding. If responsibility does not apply, circle NA (not applicable).

Name: _____ Parish: _____

PCL:

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Knows and supports the teachings of the Church.
NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 2. Shows concern for ongoing personal growth and holds or is working towards Archdiocesan certification or appropriate degree. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 3. Supports catechists. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 4. Provides opportunities for growth for parish catechists.
NA | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 5. Oversees the instructional process including classroom supervision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 6. Communicates with the pastor about catechetical programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 7. Communicates with catechists. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |

Program concerns:

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Uses textbooks that are on the USCCB conformity listing of catechetical texts and series | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 2. Schedules prayers and/or liturgical celebrations for catechists, students and parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 3. Involves parents in sacramental preparation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 4. Keeps sacrament records updated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 5. Keeps catechist files updated.
NA | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5 |
| 6. Keeps family files updated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 7. Keeps Child Protection records on volunteers & students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
| 8. Completes annual Parish Profile for the Office of Religious Education. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |

SECTION IV
Administrative Responsibilities

BUDGET PLANNING

Budgets reflect the values and priorities of a parish. Good questions to ask might be: how much is the parish willing to spend on religious education for adults, youth, and children? Will an audio-visual library be established/maintained? How much ought to be spent on equipment? What proportion of expense will be borne by parents? A very simple worksheet is provided below.

SAMPLE
Budget Worksheet

Income

Tuition/ book fees	_____
Donations	_____
Other	_____

Total Anticipated Income

Expenditures

Student textbooks & teacher manuals	_____
Resource library	_____
Audio-visual purchases	_____
Audio-visual equipment	_____
Supplies for catechists	_____
Office supplies	_____
Postage	_____
Telephone	_____
Auto expenses (mileage)	_____
Printing	_____
PCL/Catechist formation	_____
Sacramental supplies	_____
Catechist Appreciation Gifts/Events	_____
Refreshments	_____
Guest speakers	_____
Other	_____

Total Anticipated Expenditures

RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

There are at least three kinds of files that must be maintained in the parish catechetical office:

- 1) Program and planning information
- 2) Catechist files
- 3) Family files for children and youth

1. Program and Planning Information

May include:

- Reports to pastor and parish
- Correspondence to catechists, parents, publishers, others
- Publisher advertisements
- Parish Profiles
- Newsletters or flyers
- Sacrament booklets and information packets
- Copies of goals, objectives and similar planning materials
- Budgets
- Other information that could be useful in future operations

2. Catechist Files, for both active and inactive catechists

Including:

- Name, address, phone-numbers, email addresses
- Training received: workshops, certification courses, etc.
- Grade levels taught
- Legal forms required by the Archdiocese (i.e., transportation documents, etc.)
- Documentation of Child Protection training/retraining
- Signed Catechist Agreement (See Catechist Handbook in Section V)

3. Files For Children and Youth

a) Permanent File:

The permanent file should contain:

- Registration form
- Medical release form
- Non-custodial parent form (if applicable)
- Pick-up authorization form
- Sacrament Record
- Attendance record

Only the PCL, parish secretary and pastor should have access to these files.

b) Transfer File: (see Section VII for sample)

When a family moves to another parish the PCL may be asked to forward a transfer form to the new parish. This form would include only attendance and sacrament preparation/reception. This request may be forwarded by the parish but must bear the signature of the parent/legal guardian.

c) Class Attendance Records: (see Section VII for sample)

The Class Attendance Record, which includes date of classes, catechist and student names, is recorded by the catechist and given to the PCL regularly (it is strongly advised that these remain on parish grounds at all times). These forms must be kept and transferred to the permanent record of each child.

SECTION V

Program Handbooks and Sample Forms

“A catechetical handbook enables catechists to become familiar with the policies and procedures of a religious education program. A family handbook enables students and parents to understand expectations and responsibilities.” (from *Religious Education and the Law: A Catechist Handbook*, 2006 by Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN.)

Parish Catechist Handbook (Sample handbook in Section V and available as a Microsoft Word document from the Office for Evangelization and Family Life)

The catechist handbook should cover at least the following four areas:

- program philosophy and parish mission statement
- catechist responsibilities or job description
- archdiocesan and parish policies and guidelines
- sample forms

Parish Catechetical Handbook for Families (Sample handbook in Section VI and available as a Microsoft Word document from the Office for Evangelization and Family Life).

Each parish is to design a simple handbook to ensure clear communication with parents. The handbook can serve as the legal contract with the parents. The following areas should be included:

- The parish mission statement, philosophy and objectives for the catechetical program
- Catechetical personnel: Pastor, Catechetical Leader and Staff
- Catechetical calendar for the year
- Components of the parish catechetical program
- Student and parent responsibilities

PARISH CATECHIST HANDBOOK

On the following pages you will find a sample *Parish Catechist Handbook* that you may wish to customize for your parish. It can be used as a guide from which to create your own, or you can download this document and then change as necessary for your own parish. A Microsoft Word document may be obtained from the Office for Evangelization and Family Life.

Remember, this handbook is meant to be merely a sample. Some items in this handbook may not apply to your program. Also, you may wish to add additional items to your handbook as necessary for your parish.

It is necessary to obtain the signed covenant agreement that the catechist has read and agreed to abide by the Parish Catechist handbook. This signature page should be kept in your catechist file.

If you need further assistance in creating your parish handbook, please contact the OEFL.

Sample Catechist Handbook 202X-202X



Catholic Parish
Address
Alabama
(000) 000-0000
email@address.org

Table of Contents

Parish Mission Statement and Objectives

Catechist Role Description

General Classroom Policies & Procedures

**Curriculum and Lesson Planning Information
Safety**

Forms

Catechist Calendar

20__ - 20__ Program Calendar

Catechist Covenant

Mission Statement

The mission of the catechetical program of _____ Parish of _____, Alabama, is to help all participants and their families develop a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and to live out their Catholic faith in ways that draw others to Christ and the Church. We seek to carry out this mission through catechesis, spiritual growth and service.

Objectives for Parish Catechetical Program

- ❖ To present a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, that integrates knowledge of the faith with living the faith
- ❖ To center on initiation into the life of the Triune God
- ❖ To be appropriate to the age level, maturity, circumstances, language and ethnic background of each participant
- ❖ To involve all members of the parish community, particularly the parents
- ❖ To focus on the symbols, rituals, and prayers of the Church
- ❖ To enable the believers to live out their faith in their everyday life

from the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC, 2005)*

Catechist Role Description

QUALITIES OF A CATECHIST:

- Practices the Catholic faith and is actively involved in parish life
- Knows and supports the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Participates in ongoing personal spiritual growth
- Maintains a positive attitude in relating to others
- Is committed to assisting parents in their role as primary religious educators of their child
- Holds Archdiocesan ***St. John XXIII*** catechist certification or is working toward it
- Relates well to the assigned age group

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Is a faithful model of Catholicism and teaches authentically what the Church has handed down.
- Is familiar with this Catechist Handbook.
- Attends scheduled catechist meetings, in-service opportunities, and archdiocesan classes and workshops as appropriate.
- Is present and prepared for scheduled responsibilities or communicates with PCL if unable to attend.
- Takes and keeps accurate attendance records. (It communicates caring if you call to check on students who are unexpectedly absent.)
- Communicates any concerns about students or families with PCL in a timely manner.
- Cooperates with PCL in implementing the goals and objectives of the parish program.
- Observes parish guidelines and policies, as well as archdiocesan guidelines and policies.
- Uses as primary resources only textbooks and materials in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as selected by parish leadership for use.
- Requests needed supplies, equipment, audio-visual resources from the PCL.
- Is compliant with the Archdiocesan Office for the Protection of Minors and Adults guidelines.

TEACHING TIPS:

- Pray for your students and let them know that they are in your prayers.
- Arrive early before each class and arrange the space to be orderly, attractive and conducive to learning; and return space in the order in which it was found.
- Greet students and parents by name as they arrive.
- Begin and end each session on time.
- Set and post a few simple and clear rules for discipline and follow the policies in the *Parish Catechetical Handbook for Families*.
- Present material clearly, with enthusiasm and in an interesting manner.
- Use a variety of methods to present material that would appeal to all learning styles.

- Share lesson points with parents so that they can reinforce the lesson throughout the week.
- Review the previous lesson and relate new material to the previous lesson.
- Summarize lesson at the end of each session. Determine one or two important points for each lesson and repeat and emphasize throughout the lesson.
- Begin and end each session with prayer, using prayer table and religious symbols as appropriate with the Liturgical Year.

General Classroom Policies and Procedures

1. Children should never be left unsupervised, with the exception of emergency situations. *(insert here the plan for emergencies if teacher needs to leave the room)*
2. Encourage parents to become involved in the catechetical process by providing handouts and take home family activities.
3. If possible, designate a “room mom” (or dad) to assist with special activities, parties, field trips, and special projects. These activities should be discussed with the PCL in advance.
4. Outside doors, classroom doors and copy room will be unlocked by _____ (time)
5. Sessions will begin promptly at _____ (time) and will be dismissed at _____ (time)
6. Each catechist upon arrival should check in with the Parish Catechetical Leader or office assistant.
7. *(Insert copying procedures, supply requests, use of AV equipment here.)*
8. Please take attendance at the beginning of each class. Keep attendance notebook accessible in the event you must quickly evacuate the classroom and need your attendance list to account for students and volunteers. Attendance records should be returned to the PCL at the end of each session. *(insert here parish policy for turning in attendance records)*
9. Communication with parents about special activities, a reminder to send an item with the child, notification of field trips, etc. is vital. A shotgun approach is advisable – send letters home with the children, send e-mails, send texts, place it in the bulletin, have it announced at Mass, skywriting... whatever works! Please make sure the PCL has a copy of all communication prior to being sent out in a timely manner so that any corrections can be made.

Curriculum

Age/Grade	Basal Text	Other
Preschool Program	(title & publisher)	
Kindergarten	(title & publisher)	
First through Sixth Grade	(title & publisher)	
Seventh & Eighth Grades	(title & publisher)	
High School	(title & publisher)	

When planning your class activities, you are welcome to use ideas from a variety of resources to support the main concept presented in the “chapter” for the week’s lesson. Additional catechist resources on topics such as drama, skits, music, games, crafts, prayer, etc. are located in (*insert location here*), or on our publisher’s website: (*insert webpage address here*). When using online resources, ensure that the resource is accurate and suitable. When in doubt, check with the PCL or pastor before use.

Lesson Planning

Each catechetical session should begin and end with prayer.

The catechetical lesson should be different than what children experience during the school week. We are seeking to educate the head, heart and hands. Catechesis is not just an academic exercise. Active learning is encouraged.

Class time may include a variety of activities, i.e., service projects, guest speakers, working with another class on a project, field trips, etc. Permission slips must be obtained from the PCL and signed by parents for activities outside of regular class time or if children are transported from (*insert parish name here*) Parish. All off-site activities must have a catechetical/educational purpose.

Snacks/Refreshments – be aware of food allergies of your students when you serve snacks and refreshments.

Safety

Know where the first aid boxes are located. Caution should be taken if there are any blood-related injuries, bloody noses, serious cuts, etc. Notify parents of all injuries and illnesses. Always notify the PCL anything that is more than a minor injury or illness.

Registration forms include parent-reported information on special needs, medical allergies, etc. Know the medical needs of your students. It is imperative that you do not discuss the medical conditions of your students with anyone other than the parent, PCL, or pastor.

Emergency evacuation procedures are posted on each classroom wall near the doorway. Become familiar with the routes suggested for your classroom. A fire drill will be conducted each October and a tornado drill will be conducted each February.

In an emergency, take the attendance folder and calmly lead children to designated area. The evacuation procedure is posted in your classroom. Once evacuated, check attendance list to account for every child and volunteer. In order to have an accurate count of staff and children in your care, **always take attendance at the beginning of class** (both students, visitors, and any volunteers present each day). These forms also serve as legal documentation.

Child Drop-off/Pick-up policy is... (*insert here who, how, when as per parish policy*). Always greet parents when they drop off and pick up their children from your class. Encourage all parents to come to the classroom for drop off and pick up.

Catechist Calendar 20 __ - 20__

(This should list events offered in the parish and/or will be offered by the Archdiocesan Office for Evangelization and Family Life.)

Sunday, Aug. 21, 10:00	New Catechist Orientation	Rm. 2
Sunday, Aug. 29, 10:00	Catechist Meeting	Parish Hall
Sunday, Sept. 16, 11:30	Catechetical Sunday Commissioning and Blessing of Catechists	Church
Tuesday, Sept. 12, 7:00-8:00	Be Prepared #11	Corpus Christi
Friday, Dec. 15, 6:00	Catechist Christmas Dinner	Parish Hall

Etc.

_____ **Parish**

Program Calendar 20 ____ - 20 ____

Day/Date	Session/Activity
Sunday, August _____	Open House/Registration
Sunday, August _____	Classes Begin
Sunday, August _____	Class
Sunday, September _____	Class
Sunday, September _____	Class
Sunday, September _____	Class
Sunday, September _____	Class, Catechetical Sunday - Commissioning/Blessing of Catechists, 11am Mass
Sunday, September _____	Class, Parent Meeting
Sunday, October _____	Class, Child Protection Sessions for Children
Sunday, October _____	Class, Child Protection Session for Youth
Sunday, October _____	Class
Tuesday, October _____	First Reconciliation Parent Meeting
Tuesday, October _____	Confirmation Parent Meeting
Sunday, October _____	Class, All Saints Day Parade
Sunday, November _____	Class
Sunday, November _____	Class
Sunday, November _____	Class
November _____	Thanksgiving weekend (no classes)
Thursday, December _____	First Reconciliation Service
Sunday, December _____	Class
Sunday, December _____	Class
Sunday, December _____	Class, Advent/Christmas Celebration
December _____	No Classes – Christmas Holidays
Sunday, January _____	Classes Resume
Etc.	

OTHER ITEMS FOR THE HANDBOOK

Grade level Archdiocesan Curriculum Guidelines
Forms: supply order form, lesson planning, attendance, etc.
Catechist List (names, addresses, phone numbers, email, grade teaching)
*(make sure you have each catechist's permission to include their
contact information on list prior to giving out the list!)*

READING AND UNDERSTANDING OF CATECHIST HANDBOOK

I have received and reviewed the Catechist Handbook and the Parent/Student Handbook for the Religious Education Program. I understand the policies, rules and regulations stated therein and agree to abide by them.

Signature of Catechist

Date

Please return this page to (*insert PCL name*) no later than (*insert date*)

PARISH CATECHETICAL HANDBOOK FOR FAMILIES

On the following pages you will find a sample *Parish Catechetical Handbook for Families* that you may wish to customize for your parish. It can be used as a guide from which to create your own, or you can download this document and then change as necessary for your own parish. A Microsoft Word document may be obtained from the Office for Evangelization and Family Life.

Remember, this handbook is meant to be merely a sample. Some items in this handbook may not apply to your program. Also, you may wish to add additional items to your handbook as necessary for your parish.

It is necessary to obtain the signed covenant agreement that the catechist has read and agreed to abide by the *Parish Catechetical Handbook for Families* rules and policies. This signature page should be kept in your family file.

If you need further assistance in creating your parish handbook, please contact the OEFL.

**Sample
Parish
Catechetical Handbook
for
Families
202X-202X**



Catholic Parish
Address
Alabama
(000) 000-0000
email@address.org
website

(Month, year)

Dear Family,

Welcome to our parish catechetical program. The purpose of our program is to follow Christ's call "to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world and to hand his message on to successive generations by professing, living and celebrating the faith..." (*National Directory for Catechesis* #15)

The parents are the primary educators and evangelizers of their children. Our pastor, along with those working in catechetical ministry, seek to assist parents in their God-given duty to raise their children to a full life in Jesus Christ. This handbook has been designed to provide general information, dates, and requirements for participation in the parish program.

In the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the U.S. Bishops remind us that it is in the parish that the faithful are "energized to carry out Christ's mission." It is here that the "spiritual, moral and material support for the regular and continuing catechetical development of the parishioners" is provided. (*NDC*, #60)

The parish reserves the right to amend this handbook as necessary. Parents will be notified, in writing, if changes are made to any procedure or information contained in this handbook. We hope this serves to enhance communication, and provide a clear presentation of expectations and responsibilities of students and their families. In the long run, we hope it makes family life easier!

We thank you for letting us assist you in this most sacred of duties and for entrusting us with your most precious of assets. We look forward to working together with you this year. It is in working together that we are the Body and Christ and carry out His mission.

May the Lord bless our efforts,

Pastor

Parish Catechetical Leader

Mission Statement

The mission of the catechetical program of _____ Parish of _____, Alabama, is to help all participants and their families develop a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and to live out their Catholic faith in ways that draw others to Christ and the Church. We seek to carry out this mission through catechesis, spiritual growth and service.

Objectives for Parish Catechetical Program

- ❖ To present a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith, that integrates knowledge of the faith with living the faith
- ❖ To center on initiation into the life of the Triune God
- ❖ To be appropriate to the age level, maturity, circumstances, language and ethnic background of each participant
- ❖ To involve all members of the parish community, particularly the parents
- ❖ To focus on the symbols, rituals, and prayers of the Church
- ❖ To enable the believers to live out their faith in their everyday life

from the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC, 2005)*

The parish catechetical program admits students of any sex, race, color, or national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students in this catechetical program. Where possible, our parish program strives to make accommodation for children and youth with disabilities. Please contact (*insert name here*) for consultation about particular situations.

Catechetical Personnel

Pastor

Name
Phone
Email

Parish Catechetical Leader

Name
Office Phone
Email

Catechists (provide contact info only after checking with catechists)

Grade 1	Mrs. Jennie Smith	Rm. 5	jsmith@gmail.com
Grade 2	Mr. Larry Brown	Rm. 7	723-5113

Etc.

Calendar for the Year

Classes begin on _____
Last class is on _____

Classes are held on each Sunday except for those listed below.

Holidays - (No Classes held on these Sundays)

September 9 – Labor Day Weekend
November 11 – Veteran’s Day Weekend
November 24 – Thanksgiving Weekend
December 22 – Christmas Break
December 29 – New Year’s Break
January 11 – Dr. Martin Luther King Break
March 22 & 29 – Spring Break
April 16 - Easter

*** CATECHETICAL SUNDAY IS ON SEPTEMBER (DATE)**

Sacramental Celebrations & Special Events

Saturday, Dec. 1, 10:00	First Reconciliation
Sunday, Dec. 2, 9:15-10:30	Family Advent Day (all K-5 th grade families are asked to attend)
Sunday, Feb. 10, 9:15-10:30	Lenten Family Day (all K-5 th grade families are asked to attend)
Sunday, May 12, 11:00	First Eucharist
TBA	Confirmation

Parent Meetings

Sunday, Sept. 22, 9:15	Parent Orientation for all K-6 grade Parents
Sunday, Sept. 22, 6:30	Parent Orientation for all 7-12 grade Parents
Sunday, Sept. 29, 9:15	First Reconciliation/First Eucharist Parent Meeting
Sunday, Oct. 6, 6:30	Confirmation Parent Meeting

Special Catechetical Programs

Liturgy of the Word for Children (LWC)

Liturgy of the Word for Children celebrates the Word of God during the 11am liturgy. Children in three-year old Kindergarten through first grade are invited to join adult leaders in hearing the Word of God proclaimed in child-appropriate language.

A profession of faith and intercessory prayers conclude the program and the children return to their families for the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the church. For more information, contact: *(insert name here)*

Vacation Bible School (VBS)

(Parish insert specifics here)

Adult Faith Formation (AFF)

(Parish insert specifics here)

Volunteers

Every parent has gifts to offer the parish catechetical program. Please speak with your child's catechist or the PCL to discuss ways in which you can become involved.

Sacramental Preparation Guidelines

Baptism

Pre-baptism classes are offered. These class/classes are designed to assist parents with nurturing their faith as they welcome a new member into their family. To schedule your participation, please call (insert name and number).

First Reconciliation & First Holy Communion

Children in second grade who have been properly catechized are eligible to celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. The remote preparation for the sacraments takes place in the parish catechetical program, the Catholic School, or home settings. Special (immediate) preparation classes are held in the fall for Reconciliation, and the spring for Eucharist. There are sessions for both parents and children.



Confirmation

The sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated in the 11th grade or 11th and 12th combined. The teen must be enrolled in a Catholic high school or the parish catechetical program. Confirmation formation is a two year process and is separate from and in addition to Adolescent Catechesis.

Parish Programs for Children and Youth

Pre-school

Preschool classes for ages 3 and 4

These classes are held at (time, place)

The sessions are activity-oriented and include snacks.

Kindergarten through Grade 6

The *(insert name of catechetical series here)* is used in Grades K through 6. This series focuses on specific faith themes and content in each grade and/or sacramental preparation, and has been found in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by the U.S. Bishops. The text includes age-appropriate activities and prayers for memorization. We encourage parents to become familiar with their child's catechetical textbook. Learning the faith begins at home and our program is designed to assist you in your role as primary educator of your child. These classes are held at (time, place)

Grades 7th through 8th

Students in grades 7 and 8 will use the *(insert name of series here)*. This series focuses on specific faith themes and content in each grade and has been found in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church by the U.S. Bishops. We encourage parents to become familiar with their child's catechetical textbook. Learning the faith begins at home and our program is designed to assist you in your role as primary educator of your child. They will meet on (day of the week, time and place).

High School-Adolescent Catechesis

Students in grades 9 through 12 will use the *(insert name of program here)* program for their catechetical instruction. Teens will meet on *(day of week, time and place)*.

(Describe make up of parish RE or YM program). We encourage parents to become familiar with this program and to become involved in their child's learning. Learning the faith begins at home and our program is designed to assist you in your role as primary educator of your child.

Parish Catechetical Policies

Attendance Policy

Students and parents should make every effort to attend the catechetical sessions and/or parent meetings offered at the parish. Parents are expected to have their children to the catechetical session on time, and to pick them up promptly.

Arrival and Dismissal

(insert parish procedure here)

Communication

Since the catechist has the most direct contact with your child, parents should discuss any classroom problems with the catechist first. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, parents should speak with the PCL. If still unresolved, the problem may be brought to the pastor.

Comments, suggestions and ideas are always welcome. Please share them with the PCL by email (insert PCL address) or in a written form.

Emergency Class Cancellation

If local schools are closed due to an emergency situation, catechetical classes will generally be cancelled. If you have any questions about cancellation, please check the parish website and the RE Program Facebook Page. An IRIS alert will also be issued.

Health Concerns

Health information is collected on the Catechetical Registration Form. Catechists and other personnel are not allowed to dispense or administer medication to students.

If your child is on medications (for ADD or other such medications), please follow their doctor's orders in administering their medication.

Student Behavior and Expectations

- Students will be expected to show respect to their teachers and classmates. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Classroom rules are posted in each classroom. At the first disruption, the child will be referred to classroom rules. After the second incident, the child will be sent to talk with the PCL. If inappropriate behavior continues, the parent/guardian will be contacted.
- All students are expected to share in the faith learning experience of the parish program. They are also expected to complete assignments and participate in group projects.
- The Archdiocese of Mobile has a detailed **Field Trip Policy**. This policy, its regulations, and permission forms will be used for all field trips, service projects, retreats, etc.
- Students attending parish catechetical sessions are expected to regularly attend the Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days, and celebrate sacraments. Parents or guardians are also encouraged to do so. We strive to help our students recognize this parish as their “family of faith”. In order to help them recognize their faith family, it is important that they celebrate Mass here as often as possible.

Dangerous behavior

Harassment, racial slurs, fighting, smoking, drugs, or other inappropriate (or gang - related) conduct among students will not be tolerated. Violations of this rule will warrant immediate notification of parents/guardians of the child involved, and may warrant suspension or even dismissal of the involved from the program. The proper civil authorities may also be notified.

Weapons

In the unlikely event a student is suspected of possessing a weapon or drugs while on parish premises or as a participant in catechetical program or a youth ministry event, the Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) or Youth Ministry Leader (YML) will immediately notify the parents of the child. The proper civil authorities may also be notified.

General Expectations

It is expected that each family become actively involved in the parish and in the catechetical program so that by their participation they model a living, conscious and active Christian faith, and reinforce the values and attitudes for living that faith. The family and their children are expected to embrace and live these values and attitudes.

Before a student will be permitted to participate in the catechetical program their parent or guardian must sign the Parent Consent Form at the end of this handbook stating that they have read these rules and policies, and that they agree to be governed by them. These forms are due no later than two weeks after a child begins attending class.

Child & Adolescent Protection Policy

“All children have the right to be safe and protected from harm in any and all environments – home, school, religious institutions, neighborhoods and communities. The Archdiocese of Mobile embraces this right to safety and is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of children” (Archbishop Lipscomb, 2003). With these words, Archbishop issued a policy that Archbishop Rodi continues today.

The policy requires, in part, that all children and youth in grades Pre-K – 12 be catechized on the principles listed in the Archdiocesan Child and Adolescents Protection Program. This catechesis takes place during *Respect Life* month which is in October. A letter will be sent to each family, notifying parents of the dates of these Child Protection classes for the children and youth.

In addition, the policy requires that all priests, deacons, school administrators, teachers, youth ministers, parish catechists, support personnel, coaches, and other volunteers having “substantial contact” with children attend training in the prevention and recognition of all forms of abuse against children. This program is provided by the Archdiocese. All persons who work with children in the Archdiocese of Mobile will be required to have background checks as part of the Child Protection training.

Pursuant to state law, we are required to report suspected child abuse, and we will also follow all Archdiocesan policies on such matters. If you have questions, feel free to contact the Archdiocesan Office of Child Protection.

Phone: (251) 434-1559

Email: childprotection@mobarch.org

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

If the Parish Catechetical Program plans an off-site activity or program, you will be required to complete a parental/guardian release form according to the *Archdiocesan Field Trip Policy*.

Acceptance of Responsibilities

I have read this handbook and understand the policies concerning the parish catechetical program for Pre-school – High School. I agree to abide by these policies, and make sure my child understands her/his responsibilities.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

For the Student:

I understand that I am taking classes to further my growth in the Catholic faith. I will do my best in class and participate fully.

Student's signature

Date

This page is to be completed, signed and returned to
The Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) before the beginning of the parish
catechetical program. It must be received no later than two weeks after a
child begins attending class.

SAMPLE CATECHETICAL FORMS

Sample Attendance Record may be adapted with dates for your catechetical sessions. The Catechist should keep regular attendance at the beginning of each session. This form should be kept until the end of the class, at which time it should be turned in to the PCL. The catechist and PCL should check for multiple and/or consecutive absences. After several unexcused absences, the catechist and/or PCL may want to contact the family to see if there is some family illness or other difficulty. Make-up work may be offered to the family, especially during sacrament preparation years.

Sample Attendance Record

Name of Student	9/7	9/14	9/21	9/28	10/5	10/12	10/19	10/26	11/2	11/9	11/16	11/23

Sample Student Registration Form may be found on the next two pages. In addition to family and student information, the following form includes: sacrament information on the child, parent agreement to contents of the Family Handbook, pick-up authorization, emergency contact and medical release information. Please feel free to duplicate this form for use in your parish.

3. PARENT/GUARDIAN AGREEMENT	
<p>I understand that I, as parent or legal guardian of the child listed above, am required to read the Parent Handbook provided by the Religious Education program at _____. I understand and agree to abide by the guidelines, rules and regulations set forth in this handbook. I understand that my child(ren) need(s) to observe the basic rules of conduct, and adhere to the rules stated in the handbook. I understand that failure to comply with the family handbook could bring about disciplinary actions including, in extreme cases, dismissal of my child from the catechetical program.</p> <p>I understand that I am responsible for sharing the rules, regulations and other important information in this handbook with my child.</p> <p>SIGNATURE: _____</p> <p>Relationship to child : _____</p>	

4. PICK UP AUTHORIZATION	
<p>We encourage all parents to come into the classroom when dropping off or picking up your children. If your child is the 4th grade or lower, it is mandatory that someone come into the classroom to pick up your child. If a sibling will pick up your child, they must be in the 5th grade or higher.</p> <p>Please list all who have permission to pick up your child:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

5. MEDICAL RELEASE	
<p>As a parent and/or guardian, I do herewith authorize the treatment of my child by a qualified and licensed medical doctor of the following minor in the event of a medical emergency which, in the opinion of the attending physician, may endanger his/her life, cause disfigurement, physical impairment or undue discomfort if delayed. This authority is granted only after reasonable effort has been made to reach me first or the emergency contact person listed below.</p> <p>Name of Minor _____ Relationship _____</p> <p>1st Emergency Contact Name: _____ Relationship: _____</p> <p>Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Other: _____</p> <p>2nd Emergency Contact Name: _____ Relationship: _____</p> <p>Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Other: _____</p> <p>This release form is completed and signed of my own free will with the sole purpose of authorizing medical treatment under emergency circumstances in my absence and only after all efforts have been made to reach me or the emergency contact person(s) listed.</p> <p>Parent(s) or Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____</p>	

6. FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
Amt. Paid:	Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Check <input type="checkbox"/>	Check #	Certificate of Baptism <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no

SECTION VI PCL MONTHLY CHECKLIST

This checklist is provided as a starting point for your parish ministry. Each parish has specific needs so this checklist should be adapted as necessary.

August

ADMINISTRATION

Review, update and if necessary develop forms for:

- registration
- attendance
- RE program handbook
- Review, update and if necessary develop guidelines for:
 - discipline
 - safety
 - cancellation due to weather
 - attendance
- Finalize the program calendar for the year, checking parish, OEFL, Catholic school(s) and public school calendars (be sure to schedule student Child Protection training in October!)
- Finalize catechist and parent calendars
- Develop grade level rosters from registration forms
- Develop an Emergency Plan (i.e. weather, fire, etc.)
- Identify persons with special needs and/or disabilities and working with their parents, arrange for suitable faith formation program for each individual

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Identify returning catechists -- grade level, day, etc.
- Continue to recruit new catechists or group leaders, taking care to ensure that new recruits receive initial Child Protection training.
- Facilitate Catechist Meeting prior to first class day. Distribute Catechist Handbook, teacher texts, resources and other materials. Ensure that "Catechist Agreements" are returned to you prior to the first class.
- Assign rooms for RE events and classes
- Check textbooks and resources, order where needed
- Check all AV equipment and resources for repair, replacement or safety
- Collaborate with the support staff of parish and school

- Find tools to include, assist and affirm the catechists
- Remind catechists and all others with substantial contact with children to complete their Child Protection retraining.
- Facilitate communication between catechists, principals and day-school teachers to support and encourage sharing space and resources
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a “Be Prepared” session this month
- Encourage catechists to attend Archdiocesan *Called to Evangelize* event

September

ADMINISTRATION

Prepare administration report for pastor

- registration
- budget update
- concerns
- Prepare for and facilitate the initial Parent Meeting
- Check fire drill regulations and verify routes are posted in each room
- Put together first aid kits and have readily available. Make sure that all catechists know the location of the kits.
- Purchase office and teaching supplies as needed
- Discuss and plan with pastor Catechetical Sunday celebration
- Update permanent records and make records for new students
- Collect Baptismal records for Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation candidates
- Prepare a fall newsletter for families
- Create a RE bulletin board and place pictures of events, articles, notices, etc
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Ask Catechists to contact those who haven't attended first classes
- Update and revise class lists
- Obtain or check supplies for catechists
- Recruit substitutes and catechist aides
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a “Be Prepared” session this month

October

ADMINISTRATION

- Meet with Pastor and appropriate catechists to plan the celebration of sacraments (Baptism, Reconciliation, Communion, Confirmation, RCIA)
- Hold Parent Meetings for sacramental preparation
- Take advantage of all forms of communication at your parish and keep parents informed about events.
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Provide information for All Saints and All Souls
- Ensure each catechist's and volunteer's compliance with Child Protection policies (contact OPMA if you have questions concerning this verification)
- Confirm that catechists plan for and implement Child Protection curriculum in classrooms
- Assist Catechists in providing parents with list of prayers appropriate for child's age level
- Ongoing affirmation and communication
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a "Be Prepared" session this month

November

ADMINISTRATION

- Check out resources for Advent and share them with your catechists
- Begin planning for Thanksgiving and/or Christmas celebrations
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.
- Prepare for the celebration of Reconciliation for 2nd grade

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Celebrate Thanksgiving with notes or cards to catechists and encourage them to do the same with students
- Give an Advent packet of ideas to catechists (Advent wreath prayers, St. Nicholas, Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Lucy, Jesse Tree ideas, etc.)

- Help catechists research and plan Advent service opportunities
- Plan a St. Nicholas, Advent, Christmas or Epiphany party for catechists
- Encourage all catechists to attend this month's "Be Prepared" session

December

ADMINISTRATION

- Invite families to help with decorating the church, preparing gifts for the needy, etc.
- Write Christmas message to parents/families
- Clean up office/file things
- Check with catechists on spring semester needs and supplies
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Remind Catechists of policy for liturgical and feast celebrations
- Prepare and distribute thank-you/Christmas cards or gifts to all catechists and volunteers
- Provide background on symbols and traditions of the season
- Provide blessings for the tree, crib scene, baking projects, and Epiphany blessings for homes and classrooms
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a "Be Prepared" session this month

January

ADMINISTRATION

- Meet with Pastor
- Finalize spending records for last calendar year
- Review job description, meet with pastor if changes are needed
- Review year's goals and evaluate how they are coming along
- Plan for Lent/Easter activities
- Facilitate Sacrament parent meetings
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Touch base with catechists to affirm and to assess additional needs
- Assess the progress of students with special needs
- Encourage catechists to welcome parent/family Involvement
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a “Be Prepared” session this month

February

ADMINISTRATION

- Follow up on the Parent Meetings for sacramental preparation -- those who could not make it, questions/concerns of those who did
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Help Catechists research and plan Lenten service opportunities
- Provide a Lenten/Easter packet of ideas to Catechists (stations of the cross, Lenten practices, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, etc.)
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a “Be Prepared” session this month

March

ADMINISTRATION

- Begin plans for Vacation Bible School -- order materials, recruit catechists and helpers, and send out initial announcements.
- Review retreat plans for the sacramental candidates – Eucharist and Confirmation.
- Discuss the final plans for liturgical celebration of the Sacraments with the parish liturgy committee, music ministers and Pastor.
- Collaborate with Catholic School teachers for preparation of the First Eucharist liturgy if necessary.
- Follow up on the requirements for sacraments -- students who have not fulfilled them; those who need a gentle reminder or phone call.

- Plan the end of the year activities or celebrations for staff, catechists, volunteers, and families.
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHIST SUPERVISION

- Assist catechists in planning Easter celebrations for classrooms and for participation in Holy Week services
- Prepare end of the year notes for catechists so they know what is expected of them in regard to clean-up, wrap-up, and records.
- Meet with each catechist to share his or her strengths and recommendations for improvement.
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a "Be Prepared" session this month

April

ADMINISTRATION

- Implement retreat events for sacramental candidates.
- Finalize plans for sacramental celebrations -- environment, social, practices, and collaboration with liturgist.
- Record all data necessary for those who have received sacraments this year.
- Continue with preparation for Vacation Bible School
- Continue recruiting catechists and other support volunteers for next year
- Meet with Pastor:
 - o Budget report
 - o Evaluation of sacramental programs
- Plan for the end of the year evaluation
- Plan for final gathering/appreciation of catechists and helpers
- Review class rosters. Contact families who have missed a number of sessions.

CATECHISTS SUPERVISION

- Invite catechists to the end of the year celebration.
- Follow-up on the end of the year procedures; ask them what supplies, books and materials need to be replaced or ordered

- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a “Be Prepared” session this month

May

ADMINISTRATION

- Complete sacramental program -- write thank you's to all who assisted in the celebration
- Evaluate retreat events and the sacramental celebrations with those who planned and make notes for next year

CATECHISTS SUPERVISION

- Prepare for the final appreciation celebration
- Continue to recruit catechists for next school
- Enable all catechists to have an opportunity to attend a “Be Prepared” session this month

June, July

ADMINISTRATION

- Hold Vacation Bible School
 - o Thank catechists and helpers afterwards – dinner, gift, etc.
- Replace, repair, and reorder... supplies and equipment
- Plan for next year's supplies and equipment based on catechists' needs
- Replenish the library with new books, videos, and resources
- Draw up a report and meet with Pastor
 - o Results of the evaluation
 - o Plans for recruitment of catechists
- Continue preparations for upcoming school year
- Take some well-deserved time off

SECTION VII

PCL GUIDE TO THE CATHOLIC “ALPHABET SOUP”

Those who work for the Church have a habit of using acronyms instead of the official titles. Sometimes we forget that not everyone understands these acronyms. Here is a list of some of the more common acronyms (both national and related to our Archdiocese) to help you become more familiar with our “alphabet soup”!

ACYC: Archdiocesan Catholic Youth Conference (usually held in February each year)

AFF: Adult Faith Formation

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church

CCD: Confraternity of Catholic Doctrine (a program which hasn't been used in MANY, MANY years!)

CRS: Catholic Relief Services

CSS: Catholic Social Services

CST: Catholic Social Teaching

CYO: Catholic Youth Organization (here in Mobile, only Mobile – sports organization)

DCE: Department of Catholic Education

FF: Faith Formation

FL: Family Life

DC: Directory for Catechesis

LaRED: National Catholic Network Pastoral Juvenil Hispana

MFL: March for Life (pilgrimage offered each January by OYM)

NAB: New American Bible

NACFLM: National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministry

NACYML: National Association of Catholic Youth Ministry Leaders

NALM: National Association for Lay Ministry

NCCGSCF: National Catholic Committee on Girl Scouts and Camp Fire

NCLO: New Catechetical Leaders Orientation

NCCS: National Catholic Committee on Scouting

NCEA: National Catholic Educational Association

NCCL: National Conference of Catechetical Leaders

NCCYM: National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry (for adults – even years)

NCYC: National Catholic Youth Conference (for youth and adults – odd years)

NCYAMA: National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association

NDC: National Directory for Catechesis

NET: National Evangelization Team (national retreat ministry invited here – see

OYM for details)

NFCYM: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry

NPM: National Association of Pastoral Musicians

OCS: Office of Catholic Schools

OEFL: Office for Evangelization and Family Life

OFOF: One Faith, One Family Conference (odd years)

OPMA: Office for the Protection of Minors and Adults

OYM: Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

PCL: Parish Catechetical Leader

PCL is the “generic” title. Some parishes may wish to designate further:

- DRE – Director of Religious Education – designates one who holds a Master’s degree in Theology, Religious Education or related field
- CRE – Coordinator of Religious Education – designates one who holds a Bachelor’s degree in Theology or Religious Education or an Archdiocesan or National certification in the field
- ARE – Administrator of Religious Education – designates one who administrates the RE program who has no degree or certification in Theology, Religious Education or related field.

PSR: Parish School of Religion

RCIA: Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

RE: Religious Education

USCCB: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

YA: Young Adult

YAM: Young Adult Ministry

YML: Youth Ministry Leader – this is the term we use – designates a parish “leader”

Other possible titles –

Director of Youth Ministry

Youth Minister (could be confusing term – may be YML, may be someone who works with YML)

Core Team – usually those who work under YML with youth at parish

HS YM – Youth Minister ministering to high school youth

Jr. Hi YM – Youth Minister ministering to middle school youth

Not Acronyms, but you may be wondering about these:

Search: Not an acronym, but this is the high school retreat that OYM sponsors, two times each year

Called to Lead: Archdiocesan Men’s Conference – spring of even years

Called to Love: Archdiocesan Women’s Conference – fall of even years