

## **New Diocesan Catechetical Policies**

Promulgated: March 2014 / Effective Date: August 2015

Revised September 25, 2017

- 1. *Programs:* Every parish in the Diocese of Paterson must offer catechesis for children/youth in grades 1-10. When serious pastoral challenges exist, a parish may request permission from the Office of Catechesis to merge its catechetical program with a neighboring parish.**
- 2. *Programs:* All parish catechetical programs (grades 1-10) are expected to meet regularly during the academic year for a minimum of 25 hours. Summertime provides a unique opportunity for parishes to offer additional formation in discipleship, however, these summer programs may never substitute for, or replace, the parish catechetical programs scheduled during the academic year.**

Catechesis entails a lifelong growth in discipleship and an on-going relationship with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. This policy is to ensure that children and youth throughout the diocese receive a consistent amount of formation throughout the academic year, and that those children/youth are offered adequate opportunities to develop and mature in Christian discipleship and knowledge of their Catholic faith.

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ...” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 5). This intimate relationship with Jesus is one of knowledge and of love; a knowledge and love that require time and consistent exposure to Christ, the truths of His Gospel, and His Bride, the Church, if they are to be authentic means of transforming the mind and will of the human person.

- 3. *Administration:* The Office of Catechesis will send each parish an Annual Diocesan Catechetical Census to be completed by the pastor and DRE/CRE and submitted to the Office of Catechesis by the requested date.**

Each year the Office of Catechesis will disseminate the catechetical census no later than April 15. Parishes are expected to submit their completed census by June 1 of the same year. This policy exists so the Office of Catechesis has the opportunity to collect vital information regarding the size, scope and projections of catechetical ministry throughout the diocese. This census will also be used to track growth, shrinkage, demographic and population shifts in the diocese. The census will also prove useful to pastors and DRE/CRE's as they track their own parish shifts and changes.

- 4. *Administration:* Every DRE/CRE to be employed by a parish, whether paid or volunteer, must first receive approval from the Diocesan Office of Catechesis.**

The role of the DRE/CRE is vital to the success of any catechetical ministry. The catechetical efforts and wellbeing of a parish often pivot upon the vision and leadership of a DRE/CRE. The Office of Catechesis, in collaboration with pastors, takes seriously its obligation to ensure the ministry of catechesis is being

effectively and faithfully fulfilled on the parish level. It is therefore opportune to reiterate and enforce this long-standing policy in the Paterson Diocese.

- 5. *Catechist Training*: Prior to inviting a presenter/speaker to train catechists for credit hours toward *Basic Catechist Certification/Validation of Certification*, both the speaker and topic must first be approved by the Office of Catechesis. Please fill out and submit the *Presenter Approval Form* to the Office of Catechesis at least one month prior to the desired date of the engagement.**

***Priests/Religious*: Priests and Religious currently serving in an official capacity in the Diocese of Paterson are automatically approved.**

“The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists... Consequently, diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the formation of lay catechists” (General Directory for Catechesis, 234). Nothing is as vital to the work of catechesis as the catechists themselves. Every parish has the inherent responsibility to oversee the basic and continued formation and education of its catechists. This policy is intended to ensure that the highest quality and standards are being met when preparing and educating our catechists.

- 6. *Catechist Training*: The three-session “Introduction to Catechesis” course offered by the Diocesan Office of Catechesis is required for *Basic Catechist Certification*. Upon successful completion of the course, each catechist will be credited 5 hours toward certification in the area of “Catechetics and Methodology”.**

***New Catechists*: New catechists need to complete all three sessions during their first year. It is strongly recommended that the three sessions be completed in sequential order.**

***Current Catechists*: Every catechist currently serving in the Diocese of Paterson needs to attend the three-session “Introduction to Catechesis” course by August 2015.**

***Dates and Times*: The course is presented by the Office of Catechesis twice each year in both English and Spanish at multiple locations and on various days of the week.**

This new addition to the *Basic Catechist Certification* process represents the first and only common standard for all catechist formation in the Diocese of Paterson. This has been introduced into the formation of our catechists for several reasons: (1) to provide a common and overarching vision for catechesis in the diocese, and a solid understanding of its place in the Church’s primary mission of evangelization; (2) to help all catechists perceive the import of their vocation and mission through direct contact with diocesan personnel; (3) to ensure the *ecclesial nature* of the formation of catechists is maintained, as each catechist is entrusted with the mission of transmitting the Gospel in the name of the Church (see General Directory for Catechesis, 236). It is therefore crucial for the catechist to see himself/herself directly involved in the mission not only of the local parish and the diocese, but indeed,

the entire universal Church. For these reasons the *Introduction to Catechesis* course has become an indispensable part of the formation of new catechists, and also a refresher for current catechists in the normal annual validation of their certification.

- 7. *Catechesis for Candidates for Confirmation*: Bishop Arthur Serratelli has requested that all candidates for Confirmation understand and memorize the list of questions and answers that were sent to the parishes on September 25, 2017. The list is available on our website <https://insidethewalls.org/catechists>**

“Before any candidate is to be presented for the Sacrament of Confirmation, they are to demonstrate their ability to answer the questions that I am sending you (cf., CIC, cc. 775.1; 779; 780). I am asking each pastor in collaboration with his parochial vicar to interview the Confirmation candidates and provide the assurance that they know the questions and answers (cf., CIC, cc. 528.1; 773; 776; 777, 1, 2, 5). Memorizing these questions and answers is a supplement to a much wider formation of our candidates. Nonetheless, I consider the ability to articulate the faith clearly and accurately in our post-Christian society essential.” Bishop Arthur Serratelli, September 25, 2017.