



CERTIFICATION POLICIES

...the catechist is formed to become a witness of faith and a keeper of the memory of God.”
(Directory for Catechesis #139)

In the Diocese of St. Augustine, all those who form the faithful are fully initiated Catholics who are in communion with the Catholic Church.

A. Elementary Teachers and Catechists

1. **All Catholic School** (grades K -8) teachers, regardless of what subject(s) they teach, are required to complete Basic Catechist Certification within two (2) years of engagement or employment if they are employed three (3) or more days a week in a Catholic school. For clarification, this would be more than 12 hours of actual instruction per week.
2. **All lead teachers in a Diocesan Early Childhood Center**, who teach 4- and 5-year-olds, must complete Basic Catechist Certification within 2 years of employment. It is strongly recommended that all staff attain Basic Certification within a 2-year period of employment. Basic Certification for this group of teachers is achieved in the following ways:
 - Diocesan Basic Certification offered locally and described below in #11
 - Or
 - Completion of the following course through the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) entitled Basic Beliefs:
https://vlcff.udayton.edu/courses/course_details.php?course=3

Completion of the locally offered Catechetical/Legal/Administrative 2-hour course for Basic Certification is required with either of these two options.
3. **All Catechists in a Diocesan Catholic school or parish** setting who teach religion, even if they work as part-time catechists or are volunteer catechists, must complete Basic and Standard Certification. The Basic certificate should be earned within the first two (2) years of engagement. The catechist should complete Standard certification within (5) years of engagement.
4. A Catholic School Teacher who is primarily a **middle school religion teacher**, defined as teaching more than two (2) classes of religion per day, is obligated to the standards found below in the section marked “High School Teachers and Catechists.”

5. **All Catholic School principals** are to be certified at the Standard (Level II) or higher. Basic (Level I) is completed within 2 years of employment. Level II is completed within 5 years of employment. Principals are required to do continuing formation (Level III) defined as 30 hours of continuing formation submitted every three years.
6. All **school or parish** catechists, after the completion of their required level, maintain their certification by completing 30 hours of continuing faith formation to be submitted every three (3) years to the Office of Christian Formation (OCF).
7. Each **school's Catechist Certification Coordinator** should:
 - Explain in detail the Diocesan Catechist Certification guidelines to new Catechists as well as remind others of the requirements as needed.
 - Distribute the appropriate level personal record form to each new teacher at the beginning of the academic year.
 - Make known opportunities being offered throughout the diocese and maintain records of completion. Opportunities can be found on the www.dosaformation.com website or listed on the weekly *Echoes*, published by the Office of Christian Formation (OCF)
 - Suggest appropriate in-service topics to the school principal.
8. Each **parish's Catechetical Leader** should:
 - Should maintain a record in the parish offices on each of their catechists.
 - Explain the diocesan Catechist Certification guidelines in detail to new catechists, as well as explain to others the requirements as needed.

While it is the catechist's responsibility to fulfill these requirements, the Catechetical Leader should make known opportunities being offered throughout the diocese and maintain records of completion. Opportunities can be found on the www.dosaformation.com website or listed on the weekly *Echoes*, published by the OCF.
9. Catechist Certification **Documentation** Requirements:
 - The catechist should keep Course Completion/Attendance Forms until a level is completed, turning in the documentation to the School Catechist Coordinator or Catechetical Leader.
 - When a certification level is completed, the person with responsibility at the site:
 - a. Completes the proper cover sheet with signature verifying the work.
 - b. Attaches the completion certificates with summaries.
 - c. Scan, Fax, or email to the Office of Christian Formation
 - d. Catechists should keep their own copies for their records.
 - After diocesan approval, a copy of the certificate provided by the diocesan office should remain in the Catechist's personnel file at the parish or school along with the documentation, now countersigned by the diocesan official. The original certificate should be given to the catechist.
10. **Course Completion/Attendance** forms from other dioceses or sources:

Certification information from other dioceses is submitted to the Office of Christian Formation for assessment with our requirements.

Undergraduate or graduate courses in theology or related religion coursework from a Catholic institution completed within the last fifteen (15) years may satisfy a course area requirement. In these cases, the college transcript will serve as documentation. These can also be submitted to the OCF for evaluation and approval.

What follows is a description of each of the certification levels, starting with supporting statements from the Directory for Catechesis (USCCB, 2020)

Knowledge

“The catechist should know:

- ~ the main divisions of salvation history: Old Testament, New Testament, and Church History in light of the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ;*
- ~ the essential core of the Christian message and experience: the Creed, the liturgy and sacraments, moral life and prayer;*
- ~ the principal elements of the ecclesial Magisterium concerning the proclamation of the Gospel and catechesis.”* (Directory for Catechesis #144)

Presentation

“In the presentation of the message, (catechists must be aware) of:

- ~ the concise and kerygmatic character...attentive to human experience.*
- ~ the narrative quality of the biblical account.*
- ~ a catechetical style of theological content.*
- ~ a knowledge of the discipline of apologetics, connection of faith and science.”*
(Directory for Catechesis #149)

Attitude

“The pedagogical formation of the catechist should develop several attitudes:

- ~ the capacity of inner freedom and gratuitousness, of dedication and consistency in order to be a credible witness to the faith;*
- ~ expertise in the communication and narration of the faith;*
- ~ the maturation of an educational mentality;*
- ~ the serene handling of educational relationships;*
- ~ the capacity to prepare an itinerary of faith that considers socio-cultural, languages, techniques, and tools with creativity and to be able to make an assessment.”*
(Directory for Catechesis # 149)

11. Basic Catechist (Level I) courses:

Role of the Catechist: An overview of effective ways for catechists to share the Gospel with students and families.

Practical Skills: An exploration of the best methods for helping children and youth develop a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Scripture: An overview of both the Old and New Testaments with application for daily life.

Church: An overview of the Church with an emphasis on the documents of Vatican II.

- Liturgy & Sacraments:** An overview of the sacramental life of the Church and examines communal and personal prayer.
- Basic Beliefs:** An overview of the whole Creed and an in-depth examination of the specific areas professed in the Creed.
- Faith Development:** An examination of the stages of both moral and faith development and how to help people develop in these areas.
- Administrative/Legal:** An overview of the various legal and ethical concerns of Church ministers today.

A more detailed set of objectives for each course may be found on www.dosaformation.com.

12. **Standard Catechist Certification (Level II)**

Course information is available on www.dosaformation.com. There are three online options for Standard certification:

- a. The Searchlight Virtual School, Diocese of Palm Beach
- b. STEP course package from the McGrath Institute at Notre Dame University.
- c. University of Dayton VLCCFF course package.

Topics covered in Standard Certification include: Scripture, Church History, Morality, Sacraments, Prayer, and Basic Beliefs. -Objectives for each course are available on the www.dosaformation.com website.

13. **Continuing Certification (Level III)**

A continuing professional development component to help the catechist maintain his/her current level of certification. Every three (3) years, a catechist, principal, DRE/CRE/Diocesan Formation staff member must submit a record of thirty (30) hours of formation in the Catholic faith.

Professional continuing formation increases one's knowledge of the Catholic Faith and gives better skills in imparting that faith and sharing the Gospel more effectively. Suggestions would be: workshops, online classes, Catechism Studies, approved Bible studies.

14. **Advanced Catechist Certification (Level IV)** is achieved in one of the following ways: completion of the Diocese of St. Augustine Ministry Formation Program or by obtaining a bachelor's degree from an accredited Catholic institution in theology, religious education, or pastoral ministry.

15. **Professional Catechist Certification (Level V)** is achieved by earning a master's degree from an accredited Catholic institution in the areas of theology, religious education, or pastoral ministry.

16. **Presenters of ...**

- **Basic Certification** theology courses must possess a B.A. in Religious Education or Theology from an accredited Catholic institution or be graduates of the Ministry Formation Program (MFP).

- **Standard Certification** courses must possess an M.A. in Religious Education or Theology from an accredited Catholic institution or be a member of the ordained clergy.
- **Continuing formation opportunities** should be presented by those who possess the same qualifications as someone who would present Basic or Standard Certification.

B. High School Teachers, Middle School Teachers and Catechists

All **Catholic High School teachers**, regardless of what subject they teach, must complete Basic Certification within the first 2 years of employment. After Basic Certification is completed, they go directly to the continuing formation level. Basic certification options for high school teachers who are not religion teachers can be achieved by:

- Diocesan Basic Certification offered locally and described above in #11

Or

- Completion of the following course through STEP:

<https://mcgrath.nd.edu/online-courses/step/courses/foundations-of-catholic-belief/>

Completion of the locally offered Catechetical/Legal/Administrative 2-hour course for Basic Certification is required with either of these two options listed above.

A middle or high school religion teacher or campus minister in a Catholic high school in the Diocese of St. Augustine must be a practicing Catholic and in Communion with the Roman Catholic Church. They must be qualified in one of the following manner. These are in order of preference:

- Must have a bachelor's or master's degree in theology, religion, Religious Studies, or Theological Studies from an accredited Catholic college or university; if not a certified teacher in these areas, the teacher must be working toward certification to be endorsed by the bishop. The religion teacher then must complete at least 30 hours of approved professional development in religious studies every three (3) years.

Or

- Must complete the Ministry Formation Program of the Diocese of St. Augustine. The religion teacher then must complete at least 30 hours of approved professional development every three (3) years.

Or

- Must have at least 12 hours of graduate credits in Theology, Religion, Religious Studies, or Theological Studies from a Catholic college or university and be certified by the State in another academic field to be endorsed by the bishop at the recommendation of the principal. The subject area for coursework is to be approved through the Office of Christian Formation prior to beginning courses. The religion teacher then must complete at least 30 hours of approved professional development every three (3) years.

All high school catechists, after the completion of their required level, maintain their certification by completing 30 hours of continuing faith formation to be submitted every three (3) years to the Office of Christian Formation. (OCF).

“Formation for lay ecclesial ministry is a journey beyond catechesis into theological study” (Co-Workers, p. 43). A lay ecclesial minister’s faith and ministry is formed by the study of the Catholic theological tradition focusing on the following core elements: Scripture and its interpretation, dogmatic theology, Church history, liturgical and sacramental theology, moral theology and Catholic social teaching, pastoral theology, spirituality, canon law, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.” (USCCB Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers, 2017)

C. Certification of Catechetical Leaders

Includes OCIA and Adult Faith Formation in addition to those who work with children/youth programming.

(excerpted from NCCL section of the Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers and taken from Religious Education Handbook)

Director of Faith Formation/Catechetical Director

Oversees all formation at the parish in the name of the pastor.

Holds an M.A. from an accredited Catholic College or University in the areas of religious education, theology, or pastoral ministry.

Or

Is a graduate of a recognized Catholic lay ecclesial ministry program such as the local Ministry Formation Program.

Coordinator of a Catechetical Program:

Oversees one program or a small set of programs in the name of the pastor.

Holds a B.A. from an accredited Catholic College or University in the areas of religious education, theology, or pastoral ministry.

Or

Is a graduate of a recognized Catholic lay ecclesial ministry program such as the local Ministry Formation Program.

Another option:

<https://mcgrath.nd.edu/online-courses/step/certificates/catechesis/>

Administrator of a Catechetical Program:

Is responsible for the day- to- day clerical aspects of a catechetical program.

Is overseen by someone certified at one of the levels above.

Is obligated to a minimum of basic and standard certification within the 5-year period of engagement.

D. Certification of Youth Ministers

Director of Youth Ministry:

Oversees all aspects of youth ministry at the parish in the name of the pastor.
Holds an M.A. from an accredited Catholic College or University in youth ministry, pastoral ministry or affiliated subject area.

Or

Is a graduate of a recognized lay ecclesial ministry program such as the local Ministry Formation Program.

Or

B.A. in theology or related field and completion of a Catholic Youth Ministry Certificate Program.

Coordinator of Youth Ministry:

Is a graduate of a recognized Catholic lay ecclesial ministry program such as the local Ministry Formation Program.

Or

Has completed an approved certificate program in Youth Ministry from an accredited affiliated program. Example:

https://vlcff.udayton.edu/certificates/youth_min.php

Parish Leader of Youth Ministry:

Is generally a volunteer who is responsible for the day-to day aspects of the parish's youth ministry efforts in the name of the pastor.

Has completed or is enrolled in a series of youth ministry online short courses such as:

<https://mcgrath.nd.edu/online-courses/step/courses/youth-ministry/>

Approved: Bishop Erik T. Pohlmeier February 1, 2024