



CALIFORNIA
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE



Guidelines for Obtaining The California Catechist Certificate and The California Master Catechist Certificate

Office of Religious Education
Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Revised Guidelines Approved by the California Catholic Conference, May 6th, 2009



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To All Church leadership,

On behalf of the Cardinal Archbishop of Los Angeles, the Archbishop of San Francisco and all the bishops of the Catholic Conference I am pleased to present these revised guidelines for catechist certification to be used in catechist formation programs throughout the state of California.

The promulgation of these guidelines is the culmination of a nearly two-year process of dedicated leadership and extensive consultation among the Catholic Bishops of the state with the Directors of Catechetical Ministry, the Superintendents of Catholic Schools, the Directors of Youth Ministry and the Directors of Adult Faith Formation of the Dioceses of the State of California.

These guidelines are consistent with the *General Directory for Catechesis*, *National Directory for Catechesis*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* and *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*.

The bishops of California express their gratitude and prayerful support to everyone involved in the essential ministry of catechesis in our Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward E. Dolejsi".

Edward E. Dolejsi
Executive Director

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*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”
Matthew 28:19*

Guidelines for Obtaining The California Catechist Certificate and The California Master Catechist Certificate

Purpose of the Guidelines

In order to promote effective catechesis and standardize the quality of the formation of catechists under their jurisdiction, the Bishops of the California Catholic Conference, in consultation with the Directors of Catechetical Ministry, the Superintendents of Catholic Schools, the Directors of Youth Ministry and the Directors of Adult Faith Formation of the Dioceses of the State of California, have agreed upon the following revised Guidelines for the Formation and Certification of Catechists and Master Catechists.

These Guidelines outline the process and standards whereby a catechist can gain or renew the California Catechist Certificate or an experienced catechist can gain or renew the California Master Catechist Certificate.

Catechetical Ministry and the Mission of the Church

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

“Go therefore, and make disciples” clearly calls for the formation of catechists who will proclaim the Gospel message in such a way that it may take root in those being catechized and foster conversion to the person and message of Jesus Christ. The post modern context

culturally, socially, and technologically, of the US in the 21st century, in which this process takes place, impacts the condition for the reception of the Gospel and a response to it.

The following key catechetical criteria must be upheld to help bring the transforming power of the Gospel to touch persons in their hearts and cultures at their deepest levels:

- That the same Gospel message that was given by Jesus Christ in its integrity, authenticity, and purity be preserved in the cultural environment in which it is presented. [NDC, p. 82]
- That “The baptismal catechumenate be the source of inspiration for all catechesis” [NDC, p. 115]
- That Adult catechesis be the organizing principle by which coherence is given to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular church. Adult Catechesis “is the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age” [GDC, no. 275]

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (hereafter GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (hereafter NDC) contextualize the whole of catechesis within the process of evangelization, calling catechesis an essential moment in the evangelization process. [GDC, nos. 85-86; NDC, pp. 59-62]

The NDC delineates the inclusion of the following six interrelated tasks for the development of full Christian faith:

- 1) to deepen knowledge of faith;
- 2) to provide a liturgical education that brings the faithful to full, conscious, and active participation in liturgy;
- 3) to provide a moral formation that transmits Jesus’ attitudes to the faithful in a way that leads to interior transformation;
- 4) to teach people to pray in such a way that catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer;
- 5) to prepare the Christian to live in community;
- 6) to prepare Christians to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church [GDC, nos. 85-86; NDC, pp.59-62]

Catechesis needs to include all of these interdependent elements for the Christian faith to attain full development.

Formation, Certification and Commissioning

“The call to the ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit” [NDC, p. 228] and is discerned within the community. To be truly effective, catechists should be appropriately formed, prepared and certified for this important ministry which carries out the

teaching mission of the Church. Since those seeking to be catechists have varying levels of experience and catechetical competence, catechetical formation programs should “help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples in Christ” [NDC, p. 235]. Persons serving as catechists, both experienced and newly invited, should be commissioned in a ceremony that “expresses the Church’s call, recognizes the catechist’s generous response, and confidently sends the catechist out to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ” [NDC, p. 236].

Diocesan Responsibility

Under the direction of the local Bishop, who is specifically responsible for the transmission of the Faith in the particular Church entrusted to him several diocesan offices share responsibility for the diocesan catechetical mission. The diocesan catechetical office is chief among these in bringing leadership. [NDC, pgs. 215; 250; GDC, no. 265].

Each diocese, recognizing its individual needs and resources, has the responsibility to establish its own process to prepare and form catechists. When the diocesan formation process includes the standards outlined in this document, the diocese may issue the state-recognized certificates, i.e., the **California Catechist Certificate** and the **California Master Catechist Certificate**. All dioceses in California recognize the validity of these two certificates.

The Mission of Catechists in the Life of the Parish, the Family and the Catholic School

The mission of catechists is to “exemplify the manner in which we cooperate with God’s grace to ensure the growth of faith and remind us that it is God who causes the growth” [NDC, p. 217]. The catechist “is God’s instrument in the mission to ‘make disciples of all nations’” [NDC, p. 243].

“The parish is ‘the primary experience of the Church’ for most Catholics. It is where the faithful gather for the celebration of the sacraments and the proclamation of the word of God, and where they are enabled to live distinctively Christian lives of charity and service in their family, economic, and civic situations. It is the living and permanent environment for growth in the faith” [NDC, p. 254]. The parish provides a variety of models, settings, for nourishing growth in faith for adults, youth, young adults, and children.

Within the life of the family “parents are the primary educators in the faith” [GDC, no. 255]. “They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children; they are the first educators or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith” [NDC, p. 234].

Within Catholic schools “the distinctive Catholic identity and mission...depend on the efforts and example of the whole faculty” [NDC, p. 233]. “All the members of the faculty, at least by their example, are an integral part of the process of religious education” [NDC, p. 233].

Regardless of catechetical setting or environment, “catechesis is the responsibility of the entire Christian community” [GDC, no. 220] and “not only brings to maturity the faith of those being catechized but also brings the community itself to maturity” [GDC, no. 221].

Personal Qualities of a Catechist

The Church calls forth exemplary followers of Christ who have a living, conscious, active participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Personal qualities of catechists should include:

- faith that manifests itself in their piety and daily life;
- love for the Church;
- apostolic spirit and missionary zeal;
- love for their brothers and sisters and a desire to give generous service;
- a willingness to continue their own religious education and formation;
- the human, moral, and technical qualities necessary for the ministry of a catechist such as dynamism and good relationships with others;
- respect for the diversity of cultures;
- an ability to appreciate different stages of individual growth and development;
- an ability to communicate effectively with the persons to be catechized.

These general qualities will have to be made more specific for local conditions and applied to the particular circumstances in each area [see NDC, p. 236].

Selection and Formation of Catechists

It is an important task of parish catechetical leadership to discern who has the gifts, talents and abilities to be a catechist. “The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communication involving the recruitment of catechists” [NDC, p. 236].

The pastor and catechetical leadership in each parish and school have the duty to:

- call forth practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church;
- assist potential candidates in discerning their vocation to become faith-filled and dynamic catechists;
- screen and train candidates in accord with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and diocesan policies for safe environments;
- require candidates to complete formation programs for catechist certification as sponsored/developed by the diocese within the time period specified by the diocese;
- select, orient, commission, supervise and evaluate catechists — both those in the process of obtaining certification and those renewing certification;
- provide catechists with ongoing opportunities for continued personal, spiritual and professional formation and development annually.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* asserts that catechists should be known by the catechetical leadership, should be invited to ministry and should receive initial and ongoing formation. [NDC, pp. 236-237] This formation should conform to the following standards.

Standards for the California Catechist Certification Catechist Formation Course

CONTENT

A. Course of Studies to Obtain a California Catechist Certificate

The course of studies is consistent with the General Directory for Catechesis, National Directory for Catechesis, Catechism of the Catholic Church, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Co-Workers in the Vineyard and Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us.

I. Tasks of Catechesis

a) Knowledge of the Faith

- Revelation/Faith
- Scripture
- Tradition
- The Creed
- Trinity and the Image of God

- Christology
- Ecclesiology
- Mary and the Saints
- Life Everlasting

b) Liturgical Life

- The Paschal Mystery
- Sacramental Theology
- Liturgy
- Eucharist as Source and Summit
- Sacraments of Initiation
- Sacraments of Healing
- Sacraments at the Service of Communion

c) Moral Formation

- Dignity of the Human Person
- Sin, Grace, Redemption
- Ten Commandments, the Great Commandment, the Beatitudes
- Moral Principles
- Conscience Formation, Moral Decision Making
- Virtue and Gospel Values
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Life Long Conversion

d) Christian Prayer

- Prayer in the Christian Life
- Spirituality
- Prayer Forms
- The Lord's Prayer
- Leading Prayer

e) Communal Life

- Communal Character of Life in Christ - Households of Faith, Parish Communities
- Apprenticeship in Christian Living
- Ecumenical Dimension
- Multicultural Reality
- Safe Environments

f) Missionary Spirit

- Evangelizing Spirit, New Evangelization
- Discipleship
- Call of Laity in Mission and Service in the World
- Interreligious Dialogue

II. Nature and Purpose of Catechesis

- a) Initiating and Ongoing Catechesis
- b) Catechumenate as Model and Inspiration
- c) Evangelizing Catechesis
- d) Inculturation
- e) Faith and Human Development
- f) Authentic Presentation of Christian Message
- g) History of Catechesis

III. Methodology

- a) Divine Methodology
- b) Elements of Human Methodology
- c) Learning Styles, Teaching Styles
- d) Technology and Catechesis
- e) Resources
- f) Lesson planning

IV. Catechizing the People of God in Diverse Settings

Certification for specialized areas should include a comprehensive course of formation and instruction in the above-mentioned content areas as well as formation pertinent to that particular specialization. This includes:

- A. That the catechist “must take into consideration all the human factors of a particular age level in order to present the Gospel message in a vital and compelling way” [NDC, p. 187].
- B. That skills training for particular catechetical areas such as: whole community catechesis, adult catechesis, the elderly, young adults, adolescent catechesis, comprehensive youth ministry, family catechesis, elementary, early childhood, and catechesis for those with special needs. Skills training may also focus on areas such as RCIA, Scripture study, Infant Baptism, Restorative Justice, specific cultural groups, life-long faith formation.

V. Spiritual Development of the Catechist

“Spiritual formation aims to arouse and animate true hunger for holiness, desire for union with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, daily growing in love of God and neighbor in life and ministry, and the practices of prayer and spirituality that foster these attitudes and dispositions. It promotes and strengthens that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one’s life” [*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, p.38].

“Every theme covered by formation should feed, in the first place, the faith of the catechist” [GDC, no. 239].

The integration of the following methods of spiritual formation:

- A Theology of Ministry to include nourishment of the vocation of Catechist
- Prayer (to include retreats and days of reflection) and spiritual practices
- Spiritual guidance
- Faith sharing and theological reflection
- Practice of justice and charity
- Celebration of liturgical life

PROCESS

B. California Catechist Certification

A catechist will receive California Catechist Certification from the Diocese upon:

1. Satisfactory completion of the California Catechist program of formation and study as identified in Section A (above);
2. One year of catechetical experience;
3. Evaluation of the candidate's performance, by a Master Catechist / or experienced certified Catechist. including at least one observation and evaluation of the catechist in a catechetical session.

C. Expiration and Renewal

The California Catechist Certification expires in no less than three (3) years and no more than four (4) years after the date of issue. To renew this certificate, the catechist shall complete at The California Catechist Certificate least ten (10) hours annually in the content areas delineated in Section A (above) during the life of the certificate. Courses should have the prior approval of the diocesan office. The catechist must demonstrate on-going catechetical formation in accordance with diocesan requirements.

D. Alternative Methods to Obtain a California Catechist Certificate

Each diocese may establish alternative methods to obtain a Catechist Certificate. Some basic qualifications for eligibility include:

1. Completion within the last 5 years of a Degree or Certificate Program in Religious Studies, Catechesis or Theology, from a Catholic college, university, School of Ministry, that reflects knowledge in the content areas delineated in section A-1 through V plus B above and proven experience in catechesis.
2. A current Catechist Certificate from a diocese outside of California with evidence of on-going professional development and proven experience in Catechesis.
3. Connection with local Diocesan Catechetical Office so as to become familiar with and participate in local formation programs.

E. Reciprocity

All dioceses in California recognize the validity of the California Catechist Certificate issued by other dioceses in California that comply with these *Guidelines*.

The Mission of Master Catechists in the Life of the Diocese

Master Catechists, as extensions of the teaching office of the Bishop, are selected and commissioned to:

- A. Provide the specific formation and courses of studies and evaluations required by the diocese for catechists to obtain or renew a California Catechist Certificate;
- B. Provide workshops and in-services for the continued growth and formation of catechists and Catholic School teachers;
- C. To be willing to participate as a member of a catechetical leadership visioning team.

Qualifications of a Master Catechist

In addition to the “Personal Qualities of a Catechist,” (pg. 5) the Master Catechist should have:

- A. A current California Catechist Certificate;
- B. Proven expertise and recent experience in catechetical ministry at various age levels;
- C. An ability to communicate and work effectively with adult learners in a formation setting;
- D. The personal recommendation of the candidate’s pastor or other catechetical leader;
- E. Evidence of ongoing education in: Theology, Catechesis, the teachings of the Church and Spiritual Development in light of Vatican II and post-conciliar documents.
- F. Evidence of the ability to work in multi-cultural situations;
- G. An understanding of the purpose of the Master Catechist and a willingness to serve as such when certified;
- H. An ability to study at an advanced level.

The Selection and Formation of Master Catechists

The Bishop and/or his catechetical staff have the duty to:

- A. Call forth practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church;
- B. Select candidates and evaluate their potential to become Master Catechists;
- C. Certify candidates upon completion of the entire formation program for the Master Catechist;
- D. Orient, commission, supervise and evaluate Master Catechists;
- E. Provide Master Catechists with opportunities for continued personal, spiritual and professional development [NDC pg.249].

Standards for California Master Catechist Certification

CONTENT

The Master Catechist pursues an in-depth study of the same content offered in the Catechist formation course.

A. Course of Studies to Obtain a California Master Catechist Certificate

The course of studies is consistent with the *General Directory for Catechesis, National Directory for Catechesis, Catechism of the Catholic Church, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Co-Workers in the Vineyard, Renewing the Vision, and Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us.*

I. Tasks of Catechesis

a) Knowledge of the Faith

- Revelation/Faith
- Scripture
- Tradition
- The Creed
- Trinity and the Image of God
- Christology
- Ecclesiology
- Mary and the Saints
- Life Everlasting

b) Liturgical Life

- The Paschal Mystery
- Sacramental Theology
- Liturgy
- Eucharist as Source and Summit
- Sacraments of Initiation
- Sacraments of Healing
- Sacraments at the Service of Communion

c) Moral Formation

- Dignity of the Human Person
- Sin, Grace, Redemption
- Ten Commandments, the Great Commandment, the Beatitudes
- Moral Principles
- Conscience Formation, Moral Decision Making
- Virtue and Gospel Values
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Life Long Conversion

d) Christian Prayer

- Prayer in the Christian Life
- Spirituality
- Prayer Forms
- The Lord's Prayer
- Leading Prayer

e) Communal Life

- Communal Character of Life in Christ - Households of Faith, Parish Communities
- Apprenticeship in Christian Living
- Ecumenical Dimension
- Multicultural Reality
- Safe Environments

f) Missionary Spirit

- Evangelizing Spirit, New Evangelization
- Discipleship
- Call of Laity in Mission and Service in the World
- Interreligious Dialogue

II. Nature and Purpose of Catechesis

- a) Initiating and Ongoing Catechesis
- b) Catechuminate as Model and Inspiration
- c) Evangelizing Catechesis
- d) Inculturation
- e) Faith and Human Development
- f) Authentic Presentation of Christian Message
- g) History of Catechesis

III. Methodology

- a) Divine Methodology
- b) Elements of Human Methodology
- c) Learning Styles, Teaching Styles
- d) Technology and Catechesis
- e) Resources

IV. Additional Formation for Master Catechists

In addition to the formation and course of studies required to obtain a California Catechist Certificate, the Master Catechist Course of study should include, but is not limited to the following:

- a) Teaching-learning process
- b) Effective teaching methods and skills
- c) How to recognize those with special needs
- d) Communication and public speaking skills
- e) Behavior management skills
- f) How to evaluate textbooks / Web based resources

- g) Goal-setting and supervision skills
- h) Thorough knowledge and use of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*
- i) Curriculum development and adaptation
- j) Lesson planning
- k) Adult, youth, and child psychological and moral development
- l) Conflict management skills

V. Spiritual Development of the Master Catechist

The course of study should include opportunities and direction in personal spiritual development by integrating the following spiritual formation practices:

- Prayer (to include retreats and days of reflection) and spiritual practices
- Spiritual guidance
- Faith sharing and theological reflection
- Practice of justice and charity
- Celebration of liturgical life.

PROCESS

B. California Master Catechist Certification

While there is no specific length of study required to obtain a Master Catechist Certificate, the Bishop and/or his catechetical staff shall develop specific, professional criteria and time-lines for awarding a Master Catechist Certificate. Completion of these criteria will be determined by means of:

1. A review of the candidate's application for Master Catechist Certification;
2. An interview of the candidate;
3. A review of the candidate's continuing education and formation;
4. The evaluation of the candidate's supervised performance;
5. On-going professional development and proven experience in catechesis

C. Expiration and Renewal

This certificate expires in no less than three (3) and no more than four (4) years after the date of issue. To renew this certificate, the Master Catechist must demonstrate on-going professional growth based upon his/her previous and current evaluations and serve as a presenter in the basic Catechist formation program as called upon.

D. Alternative Methods to Obtain a California Master Catechist Certificate

Each diocese may establish alternative methods to obtain a Master Catechist Certificate. Some basic qualifications for eligibility include:

1. Completion within the last 5 years of a Masters Degree or Masters Certificate Program in Religious Studies, Catechesis or Theology, from a Catholic college or university, that reflects knowledge in the content areas delineated in section A-1 through V plus B above and proven experience in catechesis with Adults.
2. A current Master Catechist Certificate from a diocese outside of California with evidence of on-going professional development and proven experience in Catechesis with Adults.
3. Connection with local Diocesan Catechetical Office so as to become familiar with and participate in local formation programs.

Statewide Recognition of Certification

The Bishops of California recognize the competency of each diocesan Catechist and Master Catechist program based on these guidelines. An authorized California certified Catechist or Master Catechist who moves from one diocese to another should participate in the local formation programs for the following reasons:

1. By participating in the local programs, the Catechist becomes part of that catechetical community.
2. The catechist becomes acquainted with the scope and direction of each program as designed to meet the particular needs of that diocese.
3. The Diocesan staff can become acquainted with the person and the competencies of the Catechist or Master Catechist.

Catechetical Documents

Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time), Pope John Paul II, 1979

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992

Christifideles Laici (Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World), Pope John Paul II, 1988

Co Workers in the Vineyard, USCCB, 2006

Dei Verbum (On Divine Revelation), Vatican II, 1965

Encuentro and Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry, USCCB, 2002

Evangelii Nuntiandi (Evangelization in the Modern World), Pope Paul VI, 1975

Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), Vatican II, 1965

General Directory for Catechesis, Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, USCC, 1997

Go and Make Disciples (A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States), USCC, 1993

Guide for Catechists, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, USCC, 1993

Maturing in Faith: The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 1986

National Directory for Catechesis USCCB, 2005

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us USCCB 1999

Principles for Inculturation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, USCC, 1994

Redemptoris Missio (On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate), Pope John Paul II, 1991

Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium, USCCB, 2005

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, NCCB, 1997

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults USCCB 1988

Sin Fronteras (Without Borders), Comite Episcopal de Baja y Alta California, Sonora u Arizona, 1994

To Teach As Jesus Did, USCC, 1973

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School 1988

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, USCCB, 2006

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, USCC, 2000

Loving, Learning, Living Your Faith, Orange Diocese

