

CATECHIST HANDBOOK



Saint Leonard Faith Community

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THE MINISTRY OF EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

Jesus said to his disciples, “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).

The disciples became disciples through their personal experience of the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' commission to them called them to lead others to a personal encounter with the same Jesus they had come to know. Our ministry of evangelization and catechesis is the Church's continuing response to Jesus' commission. We, his disciples, are called to lead others to a personal encounter with the Risen Lord. In living our Christian faith, growing in relationship with Jesus, and serving the community in which we live, we answer the call to discipleship within the St. Leonard Faith Community and lead others to do the same.

The Ministry of Evangelization is the Church's ministry of leading others to a personal experience of God's love, forgiveness, and healing through an encounter with Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of Catechesis, from the Greek word meaning “to echo the teaching,” is the Church's ministry of helping “individuals and communities acquire and deepen Christian faith and identity through initiation rites, instruction, and formation of conscience” (National Catholic Directory 5). We pass on our beliefs, rituals, prayers, and practices in order to lead others to a full understanding of Christian discipleship as a way of life.

Further, in the words of the Church, “*there must be a NEW EVANGELIZATION, focused on evangelizing or re-evangelizing under-catechized, inactive, and alienated Catholics, as well as on re-animating the faith of those who have grown up in the Church. The “New Evangelization” also means that each one of us who already has faith in Jesus Christ allows Christ to touch the unconverted corners of our lives*” (“Gathered and Sent,” 2003, Pastoral Initiative I, Archdiocese of Los Angeles). The ministry of evangelization and catechesis must reach out to all ages, all realms of the Catholic community.

Whole Community Catechesis is the ministry of the Church that fulfills this “new evangelization.” It is a vision of faith formation that promotes the ongoing, lifelong, and intentional faith life of the whole community, especially the household within which each student lives. It is based on the understanding that the experience of discipleship occurs within the community (households, faith communities, and all the places we live and work), and that the process of forming disciples is ongoing and lifelong.

At the St. Leonard Faith Community, we understand the call to honor and sustain households of faith as we nourish the developing faith of children. The goal of St. Leonard Religious Education is to develop faith formation programs that evangelize and catechize both children and the adults with which they live.

THE GOAL OF CATECHETICAL MINISTRY IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES.

ST. LEONARD FAITH COMMUNITY MISSION STATEMENT

St. Leonard Faith Community is a freely formed Catholic community sharing in the Franciscan heritage. We are committed to creating, through active worship and the offering of our individual and collective gifts, a spiritual environment which opens us to the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. Through a variety of ministries, we reach out to respond to the needs of others, with love. Our mission will be to live our Christian Faith, to grow spiritually, and to be actively involved in the community and St. Leonard Faith Community.

ST. LEONARD FAITH COMMUNITY STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

SLFC Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

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SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS

Chapter Two of the *General Directory for Catechesis* identifies six Tasks of Catechesis in the process of evangelization. The *object of catechesis* is “communion with Christ.” Our primary purpose is to lead others to a personal relationship with Jesus. In so doing, we must be attentive to each of these six areas of formation.

1. **Promoting Knowledge of the Faith** – information; knowledge of the Catholic Creed and basic aspects of God’s self-revelation through Scripture and Tradition. A desire for knowledge “comes naturally when individuals have had opportunities to encounter Christ and His message and have experienced an initial conversion” (White 7).
2. **Liturgical Education** – understanding our celebrations of faith, especially the sacraments. This includes not only an understanding of form and meaning of liturgical celebrations, but “helping individuals prepare their minds and hearts to enter into these mysteries of our faith” (White 7).
3. **Moral Formation** – living our faith; learning how to apply the Gospel to our daily lives, our decisions, our actions, and the consequences of our behavior.
4. **Teaching to Pray** – learning how to nurture a relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, contemplation, and presence.
5. **Education for Community Life** – “Christian community life is not realized spontaneously. It is necessary to educate it carefully” (GDC 86). This teaching of Christ includes: a spirit of simplicity and humility, attentive care for the least of humanity, particular care for those who are alienated, common prayer, and mutual forgiveness. “Catechesis should prepare us to live and work with one another, both within the Church and in society as a whole” (White 7).
6. **Missionary Initiation** – “preparing individuals to spread the Gospel to others by word and example” (White 7).

Correlation to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Profession of Faith/Creed = Knowledge of the Faith
- Celebration of the Christian Mystery = Liturgical Education
- Life in Christ = Moral Formation, Community Life and Missionary Activity
- Christian Prayer = Teaching to Pray

Resources:

General Directory for Catechesis. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997.

White, Joseph D., Ph.D. **Catechist’s Companion to the National Directory for Catechesis.** Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2005.

THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST

The catechist's role is to assist the Church in its mission of evangelization and catechesis. Ultimately, catechists give witness to their own relationship with Jesus Christ by attending first to their own spiritual formation and ongoing faith journey. A catechist's role is to nurture the faith development of those whom they teach, one person at a time. It is expected that each catechist will:

- seek an ongoing relationship with the person of Jesus Christ through prayer, Scripture, worship, fellowship, and service to the community;
- act in the name of the Church and faithfully reach out to others to proclaim in word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- pursue the values of truth, holiness, justice, love, and peace in all aspects of life and allow the Gospel message to permeate and transform the world;
- grow as a minister of the Church by acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to carry out his/her ministry.

SUPPORT FOR THE CATECHIST

St. Leonard Faith Community bears the responsibility of supporting and affirming the catechists in their ongoing ministry of evangelization and catechesis. As such, the Faith Community will:

- provide the necessary catechetical and support materials for effective catechesis, including teaching manuals, subscriptions, media resources and classroom supplies;
- provide continual training opportunities for catechists, including individual mentoring and assistance, and will cover the costs of Archdiocesan catechist certification courses and workshops as the budget allows;
- provide opportunities for recognition, affirmation, and community building within the Faith Community and among catechists.

CATECHIST CERTIFICATION

It is intended that catechists be certified or working toward Archdiocesan certification in catechetical ministry. Catechists are strongly encouraged to attend Archdiocesan approved programs to update their knowledge and formation. Certification fees will be paid by the Faith Community. Appropriate certificates are to be given to the DRE to be placed in the catechist's file. Catechists are also encouraged to keep a personal record of all courses and workshops attended.

The *Archdiocesan Decree on Child Protection* requires mandatory participation in the VIRTUS® Child Awareness Session for the Decree on Child Protection and an acceptable online background check in accord with the current policies of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Catechists should contact the DRE for information about registering for a VIRTUS® Child Awareness Session and completing an online background check. All volunteers who have received VIRTUS training must complete monthly online bulletins in order to remain active volunteers. Individuals who fall behind by three or more bulletins will have their VIRTUS accounts deactivated and will need to retake the VIRTUS® Child Awareness Session.

CLASS AND LESSON PREPARATION

The catechist will be provided with a schedule of class dates for the calendar year. The catechist is expected to prayerfully prepare a complete lesson plan for each scheduled class session. Examples of lesson plans and suggested related activities are included in the resources provided. Thoughtful and prayerful preparation requires time but facilitates a more meaningful class experience. Individual help from the DRE is available upon request.

SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS

If a catechist knows ahead of time that he/she will be absent from an upcoming class, it is requested that the catechist find an appropriate substitute to fill the absence and inform the DRE of the substitute. It is also requested that the catechist prepare an appropriate lesson plan and see to it that all necessary materials are on hand for the substitute catechist. The DRE will assist as needed. In the event of an unexpected absence, the catechist should contact the DRE as soon as possible.

NURTURING HOUSEHOLDS OF FAITH

Nurturing households of faith is a fundamental element of our efforts in nourishing the developing faith of the children we serve. The catechist is responsible for building a relationship with each child and the members of the child's household and assisting students in living out the lessons learned in the classroom. Personal contact with parents/guardians through newsletters, emails, personal phone calls, classroom visits, and other means are critical elements of whole community evangelization and catechesis.

CALENDAR AND CLASS TIME

Catechists will be informed by the DRE of all scheduled events and activities for the year. Catechists will also receive regular communication from the DRE with any changes to the schedule. It is the catechists' responsibility to be aware of the schedule and to follow the expectations of the DRE. Catechists should remind children in advance of Sundays when class is not scheduled and of pertinent Faith Community events.

Sunday morning classes will begin at 9:00 AM in the classrooms for students in preschool through eighth grade. All classes end at 10:15 AM. Classes are not to be dismissed early. Individual students may be permitted to leave class early only with a parent/guardian request. Individual students helping with the 10:30 AM Mass may leave class early with permission from the DRE.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Catechists are expected to arrive early enough to allow time to gather any necessary supplies, make copies, and prepare the classroom for the arrival of students. Classrooms will be unlocked no later than 8:40 AM.

To ensure student safety and building security, students must arrive through the Chapel entrance and proceed directly to their classrooms.

At no time should students be wandering unsupervised in the halls, classrooms, or office areas. Students should be reminded to walk in the hallways and to be respectful of Franciscan Living Center residents at all times.

Students in preschool through third grade should be dismissed directly to a parent, guardian, or older sibling. Catechists may not leave the room until all students have departed.

CLASS ENVIRONMENT

An orderly and attractive room stimulates student learning and faith formation. Creative use of space is encouraged to stimulate prayerfulness, community building, and learning.

Items can be hung from the ceiling with hangers or paper clips put on the metal ceiling strips. Bulletin boards and bulletin strips are available in some classrooms. Masking tape can be used for short term hanging on some walls. White boards and erasable markers are provided in every classroom.

The use of food in the classroom is discouraged except in a celebration. Drinks are to be used with extreme caution because of the carpet. Table coverings should be used for messy projects.

Classrooms should be left in good order: tables cleared, boards erased, paper off the floor, windows closed and lights off. Any food trash must be removed from the room and placed in the containers in the Trash Room. AV equipment should be left in the room.

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

All basic classroom supplies are kept in the supply room in the Office (the “Treasure Room”). Each catechist has a storage cabinet in the classroom in which to keep basic class supplies. Request forms for additional materials are located inside catechist folders. Please return supplies you are not using and make every effort to keep your cabinets tidy.

A Supply Request Form is available for specific requests or to replace diminishing supplies. Catechists are also welcome to purchase their own supplies and submit reasonable requests for reimbursement. Receipts must accompany any request for reimbursement. Please check with the DRE with any questions concerning what supplies are acceptable for reimbursement.

AUDIOVISUALS AND MEDIA RESOURCES

A limited reference library of print and AV resources is located in the Office. Resources in the library are available for use in the classroom or at home and may be signed out for two weeks. Please return materials on time so they will be available for use by others.

Videos and books are also available from the Archdiocesan Media Center. Media Center Material Request Forms are located inside catechist folders. Please submit forms to the DRE at least two weeks prior to your intended use of the material.

CLASS ROSTERS AND ATTENDANCE

Archdiocesan policy requires that all students participating in Religious Education programs complete a registration and release of liability form. A list of all students will be given to each catechist at the beginning of the year based on registrations received. Thereafter, any new students entering the program must complete the appropriate paperwork.

ABSENCES

Catechists are to keep an accurate attendance record which will be examined periodically by the DRE. Whenever a student is absent, a written or verbal excuse from the parent should be requested by the catechist. Catechists are expected to provide make up work for students who miss class. Catechists should inform the DRE of any concerns with student attendance. The DRE will contact families with excessive absence or tardiness issues.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR FIRE AND THREATENING WEATHER

Catechists must familiarize themselves with the emergency procedures posted in each room and located inside catechist folders. Students are to be verbally instructed and walked through the procedures at the beginning of the school year. In the event of an emergency or drill, catechists should take their attendance sheets with them and should take attendance once the class has reached a safe area.

ACCIDENT OR INJURY

Any accident or injury involving a student, catechist, volunteer, or other Religious Education participant should be brought to the attention of the DRE or other administrative personnel immediately and an Incident Report Form (located inside catechist folders) completed at the earliest available opportunity. Parents/Guardians must be informed of any incident involving children. Basic first aid supplies are located in the supply room in the Office (the "Treasure Room"). Tips for basic first aid are posted in each classroom. Catechists must wear surgical gloves when dealing with any incident involving blood or bodily fluids.

DISCIPLINE

In the case of student misconduct, the catechist will speak with the student privately. If misconduct continues, the catechist will inform the DRE, who will contact the student's parents. If the misconduct is serious, the DRE will recommend to the Pastoral Administrator that the student be removed from the program.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

Students are not permitted to possess tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, controlled substances, illegal drugs, incendiary devices, or weapons. Catechists are required to investigate even the suspicion that such items are in a student's possession. If such objects are found, catechists should confiscate them immediately and accompany the student to the DRE for disciplinary action.