

**COMMISSIONING SUNDAY FOR CATECHISTS
THEME FOR 2015**



**FAMILIES AND CATECHISTS
NURTURING THE FAITH TOGETHER**

COMMISSIONING SUNDAY FOR CATECHISTS - 2015

(see the attachment that has a separate pamphlet for the Commissioning)

Introduction: Those who have been accepted to serve as Catechists will be called forth to be commissioned for their Ministry. Commissioning Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that *each person plays, by virtue of their Baptism*, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Commissioning Sunday is one of these opportunities for everyone to rededicate themselves to the mission of passing on the Faith.

The Catechetical Theme for 2015:

You will notice that the theme chosen is in keeping with the Bishops three year commitment to focusing on the importance of Family Life.

It is hoped that this year every effort will be made in our Dioceses, Parishes, outstations ..to creating awareness of the need for Catechists and Parents/Guardians to work together in nurturing the Faith of children and young people.

Catechesis Begins at Home

Formation in the Faith is a “gradual process that takes place within the Community of the Faithful”. For our children and young people, the most significant Community of the Faithful should be the family.

As the family lives, so the disciple will be formed. Just as families differ, so the journey of Faith varies “according to the many forms of God’s grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church and the circumstances of time and place”. For all, however, the family table can be a primary source of Christian formation, a place where words of reconciliation and love are spoken, and where nourishment for life goes far beyond the food served.

As we begin another Catechetical Year, Catechists, Parents/Guardians, Faith Community, should be invited to reflect on the urgency that we work together in building up a strong, committed effort in passing on the Faith, not as theory, but as a lived experience.

SUGESTIONS FOR A DAY/HALF DAY RETREAT BEFORE COMMISSIONING SUNDAY

Reflection on the Ministry of the Catechist and the importance of the commitment that they are going to make on Commissioning Sunday.

1. THE MINISTRY OF THE CATECHIST: WHO IS THE CATECHIST?

The term ‘Catechist’ is used for those lay women and men who participate formally in the Catechetical Ministry of the Church.

All members of the Christian Community of believers are called to share in this ministry – given to them in

Baptism - by being *witnesses to the faith*. But, catechists are, normally volunteers, who respond to a particular calling:

Catechists...

- respond to a call – therefore we speak about the ‘vocation’ of the Catechist.
- witness to the Gospel by their lives and by their teaching.
- as a Ministers of the Word are committed to the Church to faithfully transmitting the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- foster a sense of belonging and of community and directly involve parents wherever it is possible.
- offer their services to the Faith Community and take their commitment seriously.
- have to be open to deepening their knowledge of the Faith, enhancing their skills and abilities in order to successfully carry out their Catechetical Ministry.

The fundamental tasks of the Catechist are:

to proclaim and reflect on the Word of God
to teach the Faith of the Catholic Church
to encourage those being catechized to participate in efforts to develop a more vibrant and committed Faith Community,
to lead those they are being catechized to Liturgical Worship, personal prayer, living an exemplary Christian life and being open to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church.

The decisive task to which Catechists are called demands that in following in the life and footsteps of Jesus their Teacher and Guide, they reveal His “Good News” by their lives.

The effectiveness and extent to which the basic Christian message is transmitted through ordered, systematic catechesis depends a great deal on Catechists and Leaders....

2. THE CALL OF THE CATECHIST

The [*General Directory for Catechesis*](#) states that the entire Church is called to participate in the “... priestly, prophetic and kingly ministry of Christ...”

Within this *common vocation*, some members of the Faith Community are called by God to be Catechists.

The vocation and mission of the Catechist is deepened in the loving knowledge of Christ which motivates her/him to proclaim, to evangelize, and to lead others to the “yes” of faith in Jesus Christ.

While the Bishop is the chief Catechist in the Diocese, the practical organization of Catechesis is the responsibility of Priest, the Diocesan Catechetical Coordinator, the Parish Catechetical Coordinator.

The response to this call includes willingness to give of one’s time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but in the willingness to grow in one’s own understanding and practice of the faith.

3. QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CATECHIST

To serve effectively as a Catechist in the Church, a person must show to possess the qualities and characteristics necessary to give credible witness to the Gospel.

Human qualities of compassion and kindness, common sense, a sense of humour, an open and understanding heart, and a sense of one’s own self-worth are among the basic requirements for this Pastoral Ministry.

Beyond these basic human qualities, a catechist must also show a real and vital Catholic Christian faith based on *a personal relationship with Christ* that is nourished in and through the Church.....

Those called to the Ministry of Catechesis should be generous with their time and talent, open to deepening their understanding of the Teachings of the Church and using the methodology necessary for teaching and being able to communicate faith and knowledge effectively in both word and deed.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CATECHIST

A catechist must be willing to accept and fulfil, to the best of her or his ability, the following responsibilities associated with the Catechetical Ministry:

- to be a model of Catholic Christian faith and lifestyle;
- to participate in the spiritual, pastoral and methodological training provided by the Parish, and Arch/Diocesan Formation and Training Programmes.
- to know and abide by the Parish, and/or Diocesan guidelines and policies for promoting effective catechesis;
- to give sufficient preparation time for the catechetical task;
- to contribute to and support, by one's presence, a spirit of community with other catechists, and those who are being catechized.

It is the responsibility of the Priest and those in Parish Leadership to invite Catechists to understand this and take ownership of their responsibilities and to hold Catechists accountable for them.

5. ECHOING THE WORD:

The following chart may help clarify the difference between Religious Education that is imparted in Catholic Schools, and Parish Catechesis.

	SCHOOL MODEL – Religious Education	CATECHETICAL MODEL - Catechesis
AIM	Imparting and gaining knowledge	Getting to know Christ and constantly deepening knowledge and understanding of the Faith in order to come to a relationship of communion and intimacy with Jesus
LEADER	Teacher, an expert, who imparts information	Catechist who shares the Word of God, Catholic Teaching and Tradition and participates actively in the life of the Church through her/his Faith Community
INDIVIDUAL	The learner who is part of an Educating Community	The child, young person or adult who are aspiring to become members of a Faith Community
METHOD	Teaching, studying and testing for mastery of content	Witness and learning through Scripture stories, discussion, prayer and liturgy
SET-UP	Formal set-up	Preferably more of an informal set-up where the Catechist is part of the group and encourages interaction.
IMPLICATION	There's an end to learning: graduating to the next level	Undertaking a life-long journey of growing more and more deeply in Faith and understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

6. **THE ROLE OF THE CATECHIST (General Directory for Catechesis 156)**

This part of the General Directory for Catechesis, although a short section, contains the very basic requirements or considerations for a Parish Catechist. The qualities mentioned are the measuring stick for discerning good people for the Catechetical Ministry.

GDC 156. No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to (her or) him by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only his/her own human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of texts and other work instruments.

Three primary points emerge:

1. The Catechist has a specific message to impart
2. The Catechist must possess a personal spirituality and be a person of prayer
3. The Catechist is expected to possess a coherent and transparent witness to the Faith.

- *The catechist is essentially a mediator.*
- *She/he facilitates communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects amongst themselves, as well as with the community.*
- *His/her cultural vision, social condition and lifestyle must not be obstacles to the journey of faith. Rather, these help to create the most advantageous conditions for seeking out, welcoming and deepening the Christian message.*
- *He/she does not forget that belief is a fruit of grace and freedom of choice. Therefore the Catechist will ensure that his/her activities always draw support from Faith in the Holy Spirit and from personal and community prayer.*
- *The personal relationship of the Catechist with those being catechized is of crucial importance.*

What is the checklist we need to look at before we take the responsibility of being a Catechist, or, before we renew our commitment to continue being a Catechist? Honestly, we ask ourselves:

- Am I willing and able to facilitate good relationships amongst the children/young people I catechize and the Faith Community?
- Do I acknowledge God's grace in my service as Catechist?
- Is my Catechetical Ministry grounded in prayer and a spiritual life?
- Am I capable and willing to build up a relationship with the children/young people I catechise and their parents/guardians and sponsors?

The *General Directory for Catechesis* identifies six fundamental Tasks of Catechesis (GDC 85-87):

1. The Catechist promotes **knowledge of the Faith**.

The Catechist is constantly trying to deepen the knowledge of the faith of those being catechized in order to nourish a *life of Faith*. The Catechist tries to help those being catechized not only to have a personal deep Faith, but to be able to explain their Faith to others. The Creed which is prayed every Sunday at Mass is the summary of the Faith of the Church. It is important that children and young people know and understand the Creed.

2. Through **Liturgical Education** the Catechist helps children, young people and adults, understand **the Church's Sacramental Life and gives them an experience of the signs and symbols, gestures, prayers and creeds of the Church**. Christ is always present in his Church, especially in "liturgical celebrations. Good catechesis cannot exclude liturgical education.

3. **Moral Formation** leads to a gradual conversion to Jesus Christ. This means that those being catechized are constantly encouraged by the Catechist to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. To follow His example of love, compassion, forgiveness.... This implies a gradual journey of conversion of heart and mind to moral living according to the teachings of the Church.

4. An important task of the Catechist is **teaching to pray**.

To learn to pray with Jesus is to pray with the same sentiments with which He turned to the Father: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication and awe for his glory. All these sentiments are reflected in the *Our Father*, the prayer Jesus taught his disciples and which is the model of all Christian prayer.

5. **Education for Community Life and Mission**.

The Catechist leads those who are being catechized into a *way of life* that means belonging to a loving and caring Community of Faith; learning to live simply and humbly, to care for the poor and alienated, to forgive as they wish to be forgiven, and to join in common prayer.

Each one of these tasks carries its own importance.

It is the duty of every Catechist:

- ◆ to hand on the teaching of Christ;
- ◆ to provide an understanding of the Church's Liturgical Year;
- ◆ to prepare for the Sacraments instituted by Christ, especially the Sacraments of Christian Initiation.

- ◆ to orientate towards a life lived according to the moral teaching of Christ;
- ◆ to encourage a life of prayer – which is union with God.

Thus the adequate formation and training of catechists cannot be

7. TEN QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE CATECHIST

1. The Catechist reflects her/his own personal love for Christ and God's unconditional love for us.
2. The Catechist delivers a clear message that is always well prepared beforehand.
3. The Catechist is always consistent in what she/he expects of those being catechised:
4. The Catechist knows that repetition is essential to learning. Don't be afraid to repeat often.
5. The Catechist always links the Message to life experiences of those being catechised.
6. The Catechist is creative and brings variety into the different sessions by using her/his imagination and other personal gifts in teaching.
7. The Catechist is firm but compassionate and understanding, allowing for individual differences as well as the needs of the group.
8. The Catechist learns to exercise great patience particularly with parents/guardians.
9. The Catechist is always loyal and charitable towards others. She/he knows how to resolve differences in a Christian manner.
10. The Catechist is also an evangelizer reaching out to the parents/guardians of those being catechized.

8. BEATITUDES FOR CATECHISTS

Blessed are those Catechists who **listen** to what is being said to them, especially to those with repeated questions, for every Catechist possesses the **EARS OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists who **see** the needs of those entrusted to their care, for each Catechist possesses the **EYES OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists who **speak kindly** to and about others, especially to the ones without positive motivation, for every Catechist possess the **MOUTH OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists with the **gentle touch**, especially those who have experienced rejection and abuse, for every Catechist possesses the **HANDS OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists who carry others in **prayer**, especially those who are struggling with their faith, for every Catechist possesses the **SPIRIT OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists who **show love**, especially to those with unlovable qualities, for every Catechist possesses the **HEART OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists who **walk patiently**, especially with those who lack spiritual guidance, for every Catechist possesses the **FEET OF CHRIST**.

Blessed are those Catechists who **persevere** in their Catechetical Ministry, especially when confronted by many difficulties and when all their efforts seem to be in vain.

In those moments let them recall the words of Jesus: "Come to me all you who are heavily burdened and I will give you rest". Every Catechist possesses the **HEALING PRESENCE OF CHRIST**.

9. A CATECHIST'S PRAYER:

Father of all families, you have called me to serve Your Family in truth and love as a Catechist. May I be faithful to this call, rooted in your Word, and open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

May I use these gifts, especially the gifts of Faith, Hope, and Love, to serve Your Family as a witness to you, who are love and life and the source and destiny of all families.
Let your Spirit enlighten my mind and strengthen my heart so that I may be a path of Christ's love to those I catechize and their families, especially the most needy. Amen.



10. ROLE OF THE CATECHETICAL COORDINATOR

It is good for Parish Catechists to know the role and responsibilities of the Parish Catechetical Coordinator. Coordinators are called upon to work with several groups of people.
An overview of the duties and responsibilities of this ministry are:

1. Supporting Catechists and Facilitating their Work

- ◆ Ensure Catechists have the pastoral support they require
- ◆ ≥ Facilitate local Catechist meetings
- ◆ ≥ Allot Catechists to the various levels and groups
- ◆ ≥ Encourage Catechists in ongoing Faith Formation and Training
- ◆ ≥ Ensure that Catechists implement the Diocesan Catechetical Programme
- ◆ Facilitate recruitment of new Catechists.

2. Liaising with Parents

- ◆ Organise enrolment procedures and where it is customary, collection of fees
- ◆ ≥ Encourage parent participation in the catechesis of their children
- ◆ ≥ Provide parents with the necessary information
- ◆ ≥ Be available as a contact person
- ◆ ≥ Provide pastoral support.

3. Working with Children

- ◆ Organise children into appropriate levels/groups.
- ◆ ≥ Ensure attendance registers are kept and maintained.

4. General

- ◆ ≥ Promote a team approach involving Parish Priest and Catechists to plan, prepare and conduct common activities
- ◆ ≥ Prepare and present a Report to the Parish Pastoral Council
- ◆ ≥ Inform children and parents of the Parish's policy regarding code of conduct
- ◆ ≥ See that the Catechists have all the necessary materials for teaching
- ◆ ≥ Promote Catechists' work in the Parish and request the support of other Parish groups, or Parents and Guardians, where appropriate.

5. Managing Finances

- ◆ Prepare a Budget for relevant Parish body
- ◆ ≥ Set and collect fees

6. Liaising with the Diocesan Catechetical Coordinator

- ◆ Maintain regular contact with the Diocesan Catechetical Coordinator.
- ◆ Attend meetings that are called by the Diocesan Coordinator.
- ◆ Provide the necessary information to the Diocesan Catechetical Office/Coordinator when requested to do so.

***The role of the Parish Catechetical Coordinator is essentially a collaborative one.
Many aspects of the role will be shared, and the Coordinator will be supported by the Parish Priest, the Diocesan Catechetical Office and fellow Catechists.***