



The National Community of Catechetical Leaders (NCCL) is dedicated to promoting the ministries of Evangelization and Catechesis in the U.S. Catholic Church by fostering a community of leaders who proclaim and teach the Word of Jesus Christ through the witness of accompaniment, education and formation in the Catholic faith.

The Practice of Catechesis with All Ages & Generations

NCCL National Catholic Certificate Program for Parish Catechetical Leaders

(Academic Version, February 2022)

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The *Practice of Catechesis with All Ages and Generations* Certificate Program is designed to provide a holistic educational experience for the Parish Catechetical Leader (Coordinator), integrating personal spiritual growth, leadership formation, and the latest thinking, approaches, and skills for catechesis with all ages and generations. The emphasis of the Certificate Program is on *practice* – equipping leaders for the requirements and challenges of their role as the leader of the parish’s catechetical ministry with all ages and generations.

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certificate is an **applied education program**, designed to help leaders develop and implement vibrant and engaging faith formation with age groups across the life span, with families, and with all of the generations together.

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certificate is a **hybrid program**, blending in-person with online learning, in synchronous and asynchronous formats. The program will utilize an online learning management system to integrate all aspects of the course work. Participants will have access to an extensive online library to complement the content in each of the courses with research studies, articles on effective practices, videos, audio podcasts, and online content.

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certificate **curriculum** includes four courses and a spirituality for ministry retreat experience, spanning 16 months.

- Course 1. Vision and Practice of Catechesis (in-person intensive and online learning)
- Course 2. A Plan for Lifelong Catechesis (in-person intensive and online learning)
- Course 3. Catechesis for Every Age and Generation (online learning)
- Course 4. Leadership for Catechetical Ministry (in-person intensive and online learning)
- Retreat Experience: The Spiritual Life of the Catechetical Leader (in-person experience)

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certificate is a **cohort-based** program, i.e., a group of leaders (in a diocese or a region) experience the program together (intensives and online meetings) over 16 months. Each cohort will be led by a **Mentor**, a veteran catechetical leader who will accompany leaders through the 16 month program, facilitate

online meetings, be available for 1-1 assistance, and participate in the in-person intensive programs. Each cohort will include 8-10 leaders. Dioceses or regions may have more than one cohort.

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certification uses a competency-based approach to learning that is developed around a **Parish Catechetical Competency Assessment Tool** with competencies for catechesis and leadership to guide Catechetical Leaders in discerning their level of proficiency in each course, identify the areas they most need to focus on, and assess their growth at the conclusion of the course.

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certification Program is a specialized program, analogous to a concentration in a graduate degree in religious education or pastoral ministry, and therefore does not provide the theological formation for a Parish Catechetical Leader. Each leader will develop a **Theological Learning Plan and Portfolio** to demonstrate prior theological background (independent learning, courses, workshops, online learning) and develop a personal plan for developing theological and scriptural knowledge through diocesan and national programs (independent learning, courses, online learning). Participants in the Certificate Program will be referred to the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers and their diocesan requirements for theological formation as they create their personal learning plan.

The *Practice of Catechesis* Certificate Program is envisioned as a **co-sponsored** program between NCCL and a participating diocese or multiple dioceses in a region. **NCCL** is responsible for curriculum design and course management, for assigning teachers for courses, for organizing the locations for the in-person intensives, for providing and managing the online learning management system, and for managing the registration process and finances for the program. **Dioceses** are asked to work with NCCL in recruiting Parish Catechetical Leaders, providing support for participating leaders, and assisting with on-site logistics for the in-person intensives.

Goals

Parish Catechetical Leaders will be able to:

- create a vision and plan for lifelong catechesis in their parish communities
- understand and respond creatively to the life stages, cultures, and religious diversity of people today
- utilize contemporary learning practices and methods in designing and teaching catechetical programs for all ages
- build a culture of intergenerationality in the parish community
- strengthen the faith of families and equip parents as faith formers of their young people
- design catechetical programming for all ages with a variety of content, methods, and approaches
- create catechesis responsive to the traditions and values of ethnic cultures, people with special needs and disabilities, and the needs of diverse families
- demonstrate practices for effective leadership: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart
- build the capacity of the parish—people and material resources—for implementing and sustaining lifelong catechesis
- practice relational skills in ministry, and develop and work collaboratively with teams
- identify, equip, and support leaders in catechetical ministry
- design catechetical innovations and facilitate change that leads to their implementation

Curriculum

Course #1. Vision and Practice of Catechesis

Two-Day Intensive Program and Online Study Modules

Topics

1. Vision & Goals: the catechetical vision of the Church (*Directory for Catechesis*)
2. Context: the social, cultural, and religious context for catechesis in the US
3. People: the spiritual-religious identities, practices, and needs of people today
4. Process: the principles, practices, and methods for learning today; methodology in catechesis
5. Lifelong: how faith is formed and matures over the life span
6. Holistic: intergenerational faith community, family community, and life stages
7. Responsive: to the traditions and values of ethnic cultures, to people with special needs and disabilities, to the needs of diverse families, to people of different religiosities

Course #2. A Plan for Lifelong Catechesis

Two-Day Intensive Program and Online Study Modules

Topics

1. Seasons of Life: the unique life tasks and needs, and social and cultural settings from childhood through older adulthood
2. Intergenerational: a culture of intergenerational relationships and faith forming in the parish community
3. Family: the role of parents and the family in nurturing and practicing faith
4. Practices: effective practices of forming faith at each stage of life, with parents and the family, and with generations together
5. Methods: hybrid models of programming for all ages, personalizing faith formation around the lives and faith journeys of people today
6. Models: parish models of lifelong catechesis incorporating life stages, families, and the whole community
7. Plan: development of a multi-year plan for lifelong catechesis

Course #3. Catechesis for Every Age and Generation

Online Study Modules for Individualized Learning

Modules

Leaders will use a competency tool to assess their learning needs in each of the eight topics and then select the modules they need for their improvement. Each module explores the content, models, methods, and approaches for designing catechesis with a particular audience.

1. Children
2. Adolescents
3. Young adults (20s-30s)
4. Midlife adults (40s-50s)
5. Mature adults (60s-70s)
6. Older adults (80s_+)
7. Parent and family catechesis
8. Intergenerational catechesis

Course #4. Leadership for Catechetical Ministry

Two-Day Intensive Program and Online Study Modules

Topics

1. Leadership Practices: five practices of exemplary leadership: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart
2. Capacity-building: people, tools, technologies, and resources for catechesis
3. Relational Skills: listening, communicating, and responding pastorally
4. Adaptability and Innovation: skills, practices, and process for adaptability; creating and implementing innovations, facilitating change
5. Teams: skills and processes for situational leadership and working effective with teams—collaboratively and co-responsibly
6. Leadership Development: discovering and utilizing the gifts of leaders; equipping leaders with knowledge and skills for catechesis; and supporting, encouraging, and mentoring leaders
7. Curation: skills and processes for finding, identifying, and utilizing religious content and experiences in catechetical programming (print, audio, video, digital)

Culminating Retreat Experience: The Spiritual Life of the Catechetical Leader

Three-Day Overnight Retreat Experience

Topics

1. Spirituality of ministry for today's leaders
2. Theology of ministry for today's leaders
3. Calling and vocation as a parish catechetical leader
4. Spiritual practices for maturing as a parish catechetical leader

Academic Credit

A total of 150 hours of coursework (class time and online study) for the entire Certificate program. At 150 hours, the Certificate program should be equal to 10 academic credits.

Course #1. Vision and Practice of Catechesis (40.5 hours)

- 2-Day Intensive Program: 9-5:30 daily = 15 hours of class time
- 7 Online Study Modules: 3 hours of study per module = 21 hours
- 3 Online Cohort Meetings: 4.5 hours
- Assignment: Applied Project

Course #2. A Plan for Lifelong Catechesis (40.5 hours)

- 2-Day Intensive Program: 9-5:30 daily = 15 hours of class time
- 7 Online Study Modules: 3 hours of study per module = 21 hours
- 3 Online Cohort Meetings: 4.5 hours
- Assignment: Applied Project

Course #3. Catechesis for Every Age and Generation (28.5 hours)

- 8 Online Study Modules: 3 hours of study per module = 24 hours
- 3 Online Cohort Meetings: 4.5 hours
- Assignment: Applied Project

Course #4. Leadership for Catechetical Ministry (40.5 hours)

- 2-Day Intensive Program: 9-5 daily = 14 hours of class time
- 7 Online Study Modules: 3 hours of study per module = 21 hours
- 3 Online Cohort Meetings: 4.5 hours
- Assignment: Applied Project

Plan

Offered as a 14 Month Program for a Regional Cohort of Parish Catechetical Leaders

Months 1-2

- Application process
- Online orientation session
- Development of parish catechetical profile

Months 1-3

Course #1. Vision and Practice of Catechesis

- Competency assessment for the content of Course #1
- Two-Day Intensive Program
- 7 Online Study Modules
- Monthly online cohort meeting with mentor
- Online forum for all participants to connect, discuss, share, post questions
- Parish application project
- Competency assessment review

Months 4-6

Course #2. Plan for Lifelong Catechesis

- Competency assessment for the content of Course #2
- Two-Day Intensive Program
- 7 Online Study Modules
- Monthly online cohort meeting with mentor
- Online forum for all participants to connect, discuss, share, post questions
- Parish application project
- Competency assessment review

Months 7-9

Course #3. Catechesis for Every Age and Generation

- Competency assessment for each of the eight topics and selection of modules for areas in need of improvement.
- 8 Online Study Modules for Individualized Learning
- Monthly online cohort meeting with mentor
- Online forum for all participants to connect, discuss, share, post questions
- Parish application project
- Competency assessment review

Months 10-12

Course #4. Leadership for Catechetical Ministry

- Competency assessment for the content of Course #4
- Two-Day Intensive Program

- 7 Online Study Modules
- Monthly online cohort meeting with mentor
- Online forum for all participants to connect, discuss, share, post questions
- Parish application project
- Competency assessment review

Month 13 or 14

Culminating Retreat Experience: The Spiritual Life of the Catechetical Leader

- Three-Day Overnight Retreat Experience

National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Developed by
The Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (FDLC, NCCL, NALM, APM, NFCYM)

Approved by The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service 2018-2025

Standard One: Human

1.0 Standard One

Lay ecclesial ministers demonstrate the qualities of human maturity needed for fruitful ministry with the people of God.

Vision Statement

Lay ecclesial ministers, as all ecclesial ministers, develop their human character and relational abilities so that they can be “a bridge and not an obstacle” for people in their encounter with Jesus Christ (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43). This development entails the twofold dynamic of strengthening positive traits that foster ministerial effectiveness and lessening negative traits that hinder it. Accordingly, lay ecclesial ministers strive to deepen their knowledge of self and others, grow from experiences of suffering and challenge, maintain a balanced lifestyle and positive relationships, appreciate and value diversity, and demonstrate basic human virtues. Cultivating such traits and skills within a Christ-centered community contributes to the development of “a healthy and well-balanced personality, for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service” (*Co-Workers*, 36).

Core Competencies

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 1.1 Appreciate and affirm the dignity of each human person and demonstrate openness and willingness to encounter the personal values of diverse cultures, races, and socioeconomic groups.
- 1.2 Identify personal gifts and limitations through self-reflection, personal prayer, collaboration with others, peer feedback, supervisory assessment processes, and/or spiritual companionship.
- 1.3 Engage in continuing lifelong formation through programs or practices of on-going ministerial development and personal growth.
- 1.4 Recognize both the reality of sin with its personal and social consequences and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation to heal persons and relationships.
- 1.5 Recognize the importance of self-care by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a reasonable balance among the legitimate claims of family, community, personal relationships, and ministry.
- 1.6 Manifest “psychological health, marked by integrity, appropriate interpersonal boundaries, and the ability to honor and safeguard the trust that people place in them as Church ministers” (*Co-Workers*, p. 36).
- 1.7 Understand the power inherent in positions of pastoral leadership and be diligent in the responsible exercise of such power regarding, for example, sexuality, confidentiality, financial accountability, supervision of others, and decision making.
- 1.8 Be mindful and understand the role that family systems and dynamics play in the personal development of the minister.

Standard Two: Spiritual

2.0 Standard Two

Sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized, a lay ecclesial minister demonstrates Christian spirituality as foundational to ministry, integrated in service with the people of God, and possessing a sacramental view of the world that recognizes the world can be a vessel of God's presence and God's transforming grace.

Vision Statement

Having encountered the person and message of Jesus Christ, the hunger of the lay ecclesial minister for union with the Triune God is constant. The result of this hunger is the call to holiness, built on the Word of God, experienced in the liturgy and sacraments, formed through suffering, nurtured in joy, and sustained in community with all the baptized and through the Church as Mystical Body. The minister gives witness to a well-formed spirituality through a rich and diversified prayer life, theological reflection, and action rooted in Catholic social teaching. Spiritual formation is grounded in the understanding that "if ministry does not flow from a personal encounter and ongoing relationship with the Lord, then no matter how 'accomplished' it may be in its methods and activities, that ministry will lack the vital soul and source needed to bear lasting fruit" (*Co-Workers*, 38). Therefore, open to the mystery of God's love and in touch with the world's realities, all actions of the lay ecclesial minister flow from "that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one's life" (*Co-Workers*, 38).

Core Competencies

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 2.1 Embody an integrated spirituality formed by Scripture and liturgical celebration, theological reflection, and active participation in parish life.
- 2.2 Bear witness to the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives both as individuals and within the Catholic community.
- 2.3 Live a life of liturgical and private prayer that is both formed by and reflective of the breadth and depth of the Catholic spiritual tradition.
- 2.4 Value and demonstrate the integration of the sacred arts, i.e., art, music, and architecture, into liturgical celebrations and communal prayer.
- 2.5 Honor the call to ministry that is rooted in one's baptism by developing ministerial goals that flow from one's spirituality and reflect an integration of Gospel values.
- 2.6 Accept and articulate one's ministerial vocation as coming from God and confirmed by the ecclesial community.
- 2.7 Demonstrate an ability to discern the "signs of the times" and address current realities in the Church and the world in light of the Gospel.
- 2.8 Display an openness to ecumenical prayer, works, and practices that promote Christian unity, acknowledging the gifts afforded to humanity from world religions.
- 2.9 Model the spirit of Jesus in one's life, identify with and promote the global mission of the Church.
- 2.10 Develop a spirituality responsive to the diverse cultural expressions of conversion, communion, mission, and solidarity.
- 2.11 Utilize social media and other technology to foster and develop communal spirituality.

Standard Three: Intellectual

3.0 Standard Three

A lay ecclesial minister demonstrates understanding of the breadth of Catholic theological and pastoral studies as well as the intellectual skill to use that knowledge in ministry with God's people from diverse populations and cultures.

Vision Statement

"Formation for lay ecclesial ministry is a journey beyond catechesis into theological study" (*Co-Workers*, 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, the social sciences, humanities, and culture and language studies. Based upon this study, a theologically competent minister can articulate and interpret this Catholic theological tradition with disciples from diverse communities. A key dynamic of effective lay ecclesial ministry is the integration into ministry practices of the key documents and principal theories of pastoral ministry.

Core Competencies

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 3.1 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of revelation as God's self-disclosure, and interpretation of Scripture and tradition in accord with Dei Verbum.
- 3.2 Know and integrate into ministerial practice Trinitarian theology, Christology, pneumatology, missiology, theological anthropology, and ecclesiology.
- 3.3 Know the major events in the history of the Church, especially the Second Vatican Council, understand the perspective those events provide on the life of the Church today, and integrate this understanding into ministerial practice
- 3.4 Know and integrate into ministerial practice the liturgy and rites of the Church; theologies of liturgy, worship, and sacraments; and traditions of liturgical spirituality.
- 3.5 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of the moral life, including Catholic social teaching, attentive to relationship with God, neighbor, and the earth.
- 3.6 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of pastoral ministry as well as guiding principles for the practice of ministry in support of the Pastoral Competencies.
- 3.7 Know and integrate the history and theology of Catholic spiritual traditions into prayer and ministerial practice.
- 3.8 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of Canon Law and its role in the life of the Church.
- 3.9 Know the Catholic principles for ecumenism and interfaith engagement, apply these in ministerial practice, and be able to publicly represent Catholic belief/practice in respectful engagement and collaboration with others.
- 3.10 Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of the humanities and social sciences.
- 3.11 Know and integrate into ministerial practice knowledge of intercultural communication and linguistic/cultural skills, appropriate to their cultural and ministerial context.

Standard Four: Pastoral

4.0 Standard Four

A lay ecclesial minister demonstrates a range of leadership and pastoral skills needed for functioning effectively in ministry.

Vision Statement

As a response to their baptismal call, lay ecclesial ministers accept the grace of leadership and manifest a range of skills and pastoral gifts which allow them to function effectively in ministry. In their role as evangelizers, they operate in a parochial setting which has various dimensions—faith formation, worship, cultural diversity, community life, social justice, and apostolic service. They are effective listeners who foster respect and offer compassionate care within varied family, community, and cultural settings. In the spirit of the Gospel, they serve others as companions on the journey of faith. These ministers demonstrate good stewardship, work collaboratively with other lay and ordained ministers, and exhibit human resource and management skills. They have an ability to discern and nurture the gifts of all the baptized in order to build the Kingdom of God. Lastly, these ministers embrace a professional code of ethics worthy of Catholic ministry and abide by civil and Church law. “Pastoral formation cultivates the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry” (*Co-Workers*, 47).

Core Competencies

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 4.1 Manifest a pastoral charity which seeks the salvation and sanctification of those they serve.
- 4.2 Empower persons to enculturate the Gospel through critical reflection on their own culture, fostering unity in diversity by utilizing human, spiritual, theological, and pastoral approaches proper to each culture.
- 4.3 Implement the principles and processes of evangelization and faith formation as outlined in national and universal Church documents.
- 4.4 Understand communication technology and assess the best ways to employ it for proclamation of the Gospel.
- 4.5 Utilize leadership skills of collaboration, visioning, planning, communication, decision making, delegation, and conflict management to work effectively with others.
- 4.6 Employ the benefits of effective ministerial supervision, seeking supervision oneself and to employees and volunteers.
- 4.7 Continually seeking opportunities to improve knowledge, attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting.
- 4.8 Develop, nurture, and participate in the prayer life of the community in which one servers.

Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL)

(Standard 4. National Certification Standards 2018-2025)

By virtue of baptism, all Christians are called to proclaim the Good News. The Spirit elects certain individuals and calls them to the specialized role of catechetical leader within the faith community. As competent catechetical leaders they collaborate with others to develop a culture of lifelong formation within their communities that enables each adult, youth and child to know and love Jesus Christ, and to grow as a disciple and a witness to the Gospel.

As such the catechetical leader will be well formed in the study of the Catholic faith and of catechesis its theology, its history, and its right praxis.

A parish catechetical leader will:

- PCL 1 Plan and evaluate catechetical ministry through the lens of evangelization, and ensure the centrality of catechesis in the development of the parish as an evangelizing community.
- PCL 2 Direct the parish catechetical program through design, implementation, and evaluation of parish catechetical processes.
- PCL 3 Embrace the catechumenate as model and inspiration for all catechesis.
- PCL 4 Collaborate with stakeholders - pastor, staff, school personnel, appropriate committees and boards - to develop a comprehensive lifelong vision and plan for parish catechesis, based on ecclesial catechetical documents and correlated with the parish and (arch)diocesan vision.
- PDC 5 Ensure that catechesis is age-appropriate, sensitive to diverse cultural backgrounds, responsive to learning styles across the lifespan, and adapted to those with disabilities.
- PCL 6 Develop and implement parish catechetical policies in accord with (arch)diocesan policies and guidelines.
- PCL 7 Recognize and support parents in their role as the first educators of their children, implement programs that engage the family as an essential partner, and champion the family as domestic church.
- PCL 8 Recruit, form, and evaluate parish catechists, supporting them in their development as disciples, teachers, and witnesses of the faith.
- PCL 9 Provide orientation and in-servicing of catechetical committee members and formation teams in their areas of responsibility.
- PCL 10 Exercise effective supervision of catechetical employees, catechists, and volunteers while fostering leadership abilities.
- PCL 11 Select effective catechetical resources, programs and processes, appropriate to particular audiences, in accord with national and (arch)diocesan guidelines, and utilizing suitable technology.
- PCL 12 Manage communications, maintain records, administer a budget, and advocate for resources and parish support for catechetical ministry.

Parish Director of Evangelization (PDE) Specialized Competencies

(Standard 4. National Certification Standards 2018-2025)

A parish director of evangelization is a member of the parish staff who gives direction to evangelization efforts in the parish community. These efforts attend to the active community, to inactive Catholics, and to the unchurched, and therefore involve renewal and formation ministries within the parish, and outreach and welcome toward those not active or connected with the Church. A parish director of evangelization aims to foster conversion and growth in discipleship among the faithful, to develop a welcoming community, to animate and equip parishioners to evangelize, and to accompany seekers or returning Catholics. As such, the ministry requires leadership skills, a deep knowledge of the Catholic faith, an ability to provide formation, competent communication, and an ability to foster collaboration.

A parish director of evangelization will:

- PDE 1 Collaborate with the pastor, other staff, and appropriate councils and committees to articulate a vision for evangelization in the parish.
- PDE 2 Plan and implement strategies to reach active parishioners, inactive Catholics, and the unchurched in the community.
- PDE 3 Demonstrate knowledge and familiarity with the vision, goals, principles, and components of evangelization as outlined in the U.S. bishops' pastoral plans and related Church documents.
- PDE 4 Design and coordinate adult inquiry and faith formation opportunities.
- PDE 5 Animate, equip and organize parishioners to evangelize by witness, words and action.

- PDE 6 Recruit and provide formation for volunteers and ministry leaders for evangelization and adult formation events.
- PDE 7 Coordinate or cooperate in parish ministries of outreach, welcome and renewal, such as: hospitality ministry, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, new member welcome, returning Catholics ministry, parish missions, or parish community-building events.
- PDE 8 Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of Christian conversion, faith development, and disciple-making.
- PDE 9 Collaborate with other parish leaders to collect and analyze data for pastoral planning, for example, parish census, needs assessment, interest surveys, or area demographic research.
- PDE10 Utilize multiple means of digital and print communication (web, bulletin, newsletter, social media), creating engaging and creative content, enhancing communication with parishioners and with the public beyond.