

POLICY AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF RELIGION AND PARISH CATECHISTS

Policy 1.1 Every parish catechist and Catholic school teacher of religion is required to achieve certification according to the Archdiocesan Faith Formation Program.

REGULATIONS:

Parish catechists and Catholic school teachers of religion need to be theologically prepared, skilled in the methods of religious education and firmly committed to the faith of the Church. Hence catechists are entitled to a careful and thorough preparation for their teaching ministry. Educational workshops, courses, learning resources and teacher meetings shall be provided and funded by the parish on a regular basis.

In addition, catechists must satisfy the following pre-requisites:

- a) be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church
- b) participate faithfully in the sacramental life of the Church
- c) lead a life that is doctrinally and morally consistent with the person of Jesus and the teachings of the Church

Description of Requirements

Since 1997, Archdiocesan certification of parish catechists and elementary school religion teachers (henceforth “catechists”) has been offered through the Hearts Aflame Faith and Ministries Formation Program.

To be certified, a catechist must complete or be exempted from the Hearts Aflame Core Courses. In addition to the Core Courses, catechists must complete the Specialization Course entitled **Ministry of Catechesis** (see below for details). The course entitled **Philosophy of Catholic Education** will no longer to be taught for Hearts Aflame certification credit. Those who have taken this course, however, do not need to take the Ministry of Catechesis.

Core Courses: The Core Courses are: **Sacraments, Prayer, Morality, Introduction to Scripture, and Creed.** These are offered around the Archdiocese on a regular basis, in both English and Spanish. Each course consists of between four and eight two-hour sessions. There is a \$10 registration fee for each class. Please note that there is now only **ONE** course entitled “Creed.” Those who have already taken Creed I do not have to take the new Creed course. Those who have only taken Creed II must complete the new Creed course or pass the Creed assessment to be exempted.

Specialization Course: Catechists must take the course entitled **The Ministry of Catechesis** in order to be certified. It is offered in both English and Spanish. There is no assessment for this course.

The Summer Institute: Every year, the Office for Religious Education sponsors an eight-day Summer Institute during which all of the Core Courses, the Specialization Course, and several assessment opportunities are available at one site, in both English and Spanish. This is an excellent opportunity for catechists to take several courses and assessments at the same time.

Certification Ceremony: Upon completion of the certification requirements, catechists will be notified and invited to attend the certification ceremony that is held during the annual Archdiocesan Catechetical Day (usually scheduled in Oct/Nov). Those unable to attend will receive their certificates in the mail.

Status Reports: School Principals and parish Catechetical Leaders may call Carolyn McCart at 301-853-4531 to obtain a status report for all their catechists. Catechists may call the same number to obtain a personal status report. Reports will be mailed.

Alternative Ways To Be Certified

Core Course Assessments: There is one multiple-choice assessment for each Hearts Aflame Core Course. Each assessment takes about 30-45 minutes to complete. Successful passing of an assessment will exempt one from taking the appropriate Core Course. The cost is \$5 per assessment. All those desiring to take assessments should review a copy of the preparation guidelines (see attachment).

Principals and Catechetical Leaders may request that assessments be offered at their parish/school if at least five catechists will be present. Please pick at least three possible dates and times and call 301-853-5384 to arrange for a staff person to administer the assessments.

Courses Online: The Archdiocese of Washington, through the Hearts Aflame program, is a diocesan partner of the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF). VLCFF offers web-based courses for catechist formation and adult faith formation.

Hearts Aflame credit may be received for taking certain VLCFF courses, as follows:

Hearts Aflame Course

Creed
Sacraments
Introduction to Scripture
Ministry of Catechesis
Prayer
Morality

VLCFF Course

Survey of Catholic Doctrine*
Sacraments
Introduction to Scripture
Introduction to Catechesis
Praying with Children
Introduction to Morality

* Formerly, the VLCFF "Catholic Beliefs" course was the equivalent of the "Creed" course. We have made this change as the "Survey" course more closely mirrors "Creed." Those who have already taken "Catholic Beliefs" will still receive credit toward catechist certification.

VLCFF courses are 5-6 weeks in length and cost \$40. Catechists who complete a course are awarded 2.5 CEU's from the University of Dayton. The number of participants in each course is capped at 12 to foster the creation of "virtual learning communities." This goal distinguishes VLCFF courses from traditional distance learning. More information and registration instructions may be found at www.udayton.edu/~vlc.

Other Options for Alternative Certification:

1. Catechists certified in other dioceses may be granted certification in the Archdiocese of Washington. The other diocese's certification program must be comparable to Hearts Aflame in scope and content.
2. Graduates of certain Catechetical Institutes and Master Catechist programs, such as Education for Parish Service (EPS), may be eligible for certification in Washington.

- 3. A canonical religious may be eligible for certification contingent upon the scope and content of his or her religious formation program.
- 4. Catechists may be exempted from individual Core Courses for having taken appropriate undergraduate or graduate level courses.

All inquiries regarding alternative certification should be directed to Carolyn McCart, the Coordinator for Catechist Formation, at Mccartc@adw.org or 301-853-4531.

Transition from Level II

Hearts Aflame replaced the Archdiocese’s former Catechist Formation and Certification Program in 1997. Those previously certified as Level II catechists through this program remain certified. Those who have successfully taken Level II courses will receive Hearts Aflame credit, as follows:

<u>Level II Course</u>	<u>Hearts Aflame Course</u>
Experience of God <u>AND</u> Person of Jesus <u>AND</u>	Creed
Images of the Church	
Word of God	Introduction to Scripture
Christian Mysteries	Sacraments
Christian Life	Christian Morality
Catechesis as Ministry <u>AND</u> Methodology	The Ministry of Catechesis

Further Information

For more information or a current schedule of courses and assessments, you may:

- Visit the Hearts Aflame Web Page at <http://www.adw.org/news/default.asp>
- Contact your parish catechetical leader or school principal.
- Call the Office for Religious Education at 301-853-4506.