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Introduction

Dear New Parish Catechetical Leader,

Congratulations on your new journey in the ministry of catechesis. You have been chosen for a very special role in our Catholic Church. The faith formation of children, youth, and adults is critical for a strong church in the Diocese of El Paso.

This special ministry as the catechetical leader for your parish is an opportunity to guide and walk with the Catholic faithful whom long for God and search to know God better. The catechetical documents remind us that the “definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (CTn.5). May the fruits of your work generate intimate relationships with Jesus.

The Office of Religious Formation at the Diocese of El Paso exists to serve you in your ministry. We have a monthly PCL meeting that provides an opportunity for you to connect and network with other PCL’s. Be assured that you are not alone on this new adventure; we have many wonderful people who have served in religious formation who are present to guide you and walk with you.

This PCL manual was developed to assist you in your ministry and guide you with any questions you may have. It was put together using the wisdom of numerous seasoned PCL’s and Confirmation coordinators who have served many years in the diocese. We hope it helps you as you begin this exciting catechetical journey.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Blessings,

Verónica Rayas, Ph.D.

Director

Hiring a New PCL

Hiring a new PCL or coordinator can feel like a challenge because there are numerous components that need to be addressed. Before you hire a new PCL, it is necessary to:

- Evaluate the program needs of your parish.
- Develop and/or reassess the PCL job description (articulates the parish vision for religious formation)
- Develop an evaluation tool that the new PCL can focus on areas of growth and set realistic goals.

Each individual parish should develop a PCL job description based on the needs of the parish.

In the appendix, is a copy of *A Handbook for Hiring a Parish Catechetical Leader* from the Archdiocese of Chicago. **The Diocese of El Paso has not adopted this manual, but it is included here as a resource.** Some of the sections that you may find helpful are: the role of a PCL, qualifications and necessary skills, worksheets for parish needs assessments, conducting a search, interviews and sample questions, to name a few. There are also sample job descriptions and evaluations for your review in the appendix.

Job Description

It is essential that you have a copy of the PCL job description as you begin your ministry. The job description is one of the most effective communication tools that clearly defines the expectations of the pastor and parish program. This gives you a clear vision and view of what your responsibilities are, including vision/program design, administration, recruitment, formation, and supervision of catechists, collaboration and communication, and continuing education. A job description can help you lay out a plan for the program year along with setting realistic goals. When it is time for your yearly evaluation, the job description serves to guide your achievements and also the areas of necessary improvement.

It is important that you meet regularly with the pastor or parish administrator so that you can discuss components of the job description, issues and give current updates about the program. When you meet with the pastor be sure to go over the calendar and important dates such as First Reconciliation, Confirmation, etc.

During your first year, it is important to make sure that the pastor is aware of the communication you send out to catechists and parents. Always provide the pastor with a copy of what you send out to parents, unless he tells you that it is not necessary.

If the parish does not have a PCL job description, it is necessary to develop a Job description with your pastor to guide you in your work and ministry.

Critical Reading List

As a new PCL you should be aware of the specific literature in the field of catechesis, religious education, church documents, etc. Below is a list of resources that may be useful to you in your new role.

Catechetical Documents

National Directory for Catechesis
General Directory for Catechesis
The Catechetical Documents; Contains all the catechetical documents between 1971-1994

Skills development

The Effective DRE series – Loyola Press has developed an 8 book series that covers practical skills for a PCL:

Keeping Records and Budgets, Maintaining Professional Balance,
Building Community, Catechizing for a Just World
Communicating Effectively, Forming Ministerial Relationships
Recruiting and Training Volunteer Catechists
Developing A Parish Program

Theology

Catholic Basics: A Theology series – A series developed by Loyola Press to provide basic theological competencies in religious education. These 8 books include:

Christology,
Church History,
Mary and the Saints,
Sacramental Theology,
Theological Reflection,
Ecclesiology,
Scripture,
Christian Morality

History of Catechesis

The Way of Catechesis: Exploring Our History, Renewing our Ministry
by Gerard Baumbach
The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis by Anne Marie Mongoven
The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium
by Francis D. Kelly

New Catechists

A Catechist' toolbox
Beyond the Catechists toolbox

PCL Tasks Throughout the Year

Developing your calendar for the program year will save lots of headaches. The better organized you are, the easier it is to plan and prepare for the sessions and events throughout the year. Start by looking at the current formation calendar for your parish to see what events and celebrations are regularly scheduled every year. We recommend you meet with other seasoned PCLs who can offer thoughts, suggestions, and questions.

Some things to keep in mind when developing your calendar:

- Check the School District calendar and make adjustments to your calendar (Spring break, intercessions, vacation days etc.).
- Thanksgiving – most parishes do not have sessions the weekend before and after.
- Be aware of Starr test Saturday classes/tutoring from January-April. Certain children are required to attend these sessions and will not be able to attend formation.
- If you have Monday sessions, be aware of many Holidays because children and youth will not have school. (Martin Luther King, Presidents Day, etc.)
- Always remember to be pastoral; we need to be flexible and understanding.
- Religious Formation Conference is held on the second Saturday of Lent – leave this Saturday free in your program calendar so that catechists can attend.
- Date that religious formation sessions begin.
- No classes the week before Christmas.
- Dates for liturgical celebrations (include preparing for the events such as rehearsals.
- Make sure that you check with the parish or parish school calendar to make sure there is no conflict with the use of space, rooms, hall, time, etc.
- In collaboration with the Pastor schedule dates for First Reconciliation and First Communion.
- In collaboration with the Pastor, contact the Bishop's secretary to schedule the date of Confirmation.
- Schedule parent meetings.

- Schedule Safe Environment Training (Virtus©) for parents and religious formation children and youth (for more information contact your parish Safe Environment Coordinator). For the Virtus© registration page visit: <https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/>
- Catechetical Sunday Celebration – (see the USCCB website for the commissioning service, and other Catechetical Sunday resources)
- Appreciation fiestas for catechists and helpers (often held at Christmas and the end of the program year).
- A retreat day or day of reflection for catechists and helpers before the program year begins.
- Retreats for Confirmation I and Confirmation II – schedule dates, presenters or retreat team, location, and expenses.
- The Office of Religious Formation keeps a calendar of Confirmation retreats so that youth who are not able to attend their parish retreat have other options. Please call our office and let us know the dates of your parish Confirmation retreats. Also, if you have parents who are in search of a make-up retreat they can call our office to see what dates are available for their youth.
- Include all dates for catechist training including the Catechist Certification Program (CCP) and the Tepeyac Christian Formation Program.
- Orientation for new catechists.
- Community Service Coordinator – the Confirmation guidelines for the Diocese of El Paso requires Confirmation candidates to complete community service projects before being confirmed. It is helpful to have a Community Service Coordinator who can help to schedule meaningful service opportunities for the confirmation youth. This person can also serve by providing a time for reflection after the service projects that allow youth to connect the service project to their life of faith and connect these meaningful projects with a youth's desire to serve.
- Include significant liturgical dates including Sundays of Advent, All Saint's Day, Our Lady Guadalupe, Immaculate Conception, Ash Wednesday, Sundays of Lent, and Holy Week.
- Before finalizing the calendar make sure to review it with the pastor for his approval.
- Schedule a monthly meeting with the pastor to offer updates on the program and receive his feedback.

Your First General Meeting with Catechists and Helpers

- Make sure to send out an email or text reminder about the meeting.
- Once you schedule meetings it is important that you do not cancel or reschedule. People have marked these dates in their calendars and canceling or rescheduling appears unprofessional.
- When you have a meeting you need to honor time, start on time and end on time.
- Need to be pastoral – You are the Parish Catechetical Leader, this is the kick-off for the year, you set the tone, people are looking to you and can see your hope and love for this ministry. You need to be welcoming, appreciative of their time and ministry, as well as happy and hopeful about the upcoming year.
- You need to be organized. It's never too early start preparing for this meeting.
- Plan effective meetings, and include everything you need to get done. Catechists appreciate when you use time wisely through effective meetings.
- Make sure to start your meetings with a prayer.
- Lists of participants - Assign all participants to their catechist so catechist should have a list of the all the participants they will minister to.
- Give catechists a complete program year calendar and go over specific dates. Make sure to highlight the Diocesan Religious Formation Conference.
- This is a great opportunity to distribute textbooks and any other materials.
- Go over the process of taking attendance with the catechists and be clear on what your expectations for marking and submitting attendance.
- Explain to the catechists how you want them to check-in or report to your office that they are present, and how to communicate with you if they are going to be absent.
- Community building – make sure to set time aside for catechists to get to know each other because many who catechize on different days will not see one another. (Games, ice breakers, community building days)
- The parish buildings we use belong to the community. We need to respect the fact that others use the buildings. Always clean up after yourself and if you serve snacks make sure to take the trash out. Get weekly helpers to straighten up the room after each session.

Order Supplies

Textbooks

Make sure you check the conformity listing of Catechetical texts before placing an order. Please note that all the publishers invited to Publisher Day are in conformity with the USCCB requirements.

(<http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/upload/Current-Conformity-List.pdf>)

***Decision Point Series ***

Decision Point Series is not on the conformity list and cannot be used as the sole text for Confirmation.

Materials

Some suggested items to provide for catechists: crayons, markers, construction paper, glue, scissors, etc. - mostly for use with younger children. At the beginning of the school year, you will find lots of good sales.

Bibles

“Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” – St. Jerome

If you want your children and youth to know the Bible, then you have to incorporate it into your program; use a good bible. There are many great bibles that focus on a particular age group. The *Catholic Children’s Bible*, the *Breakthrough Bible*, and the *Youth Bible* are all excellent bibles that include hundreds of articles to pray, study, and live the Bible. There are many age appropriate images and questions offered to engage the children and youth. These bibles are a good investment to be used in the program and also encourage families to read/pray the bible at home. You can also purchase the leaders guide, and activity booklet for your resource room and catechists will have hundreds of ways to use the Bibles in the sessions.

Very often parishes will give the Bible as a gift to the participants in the program and buy the cheaper \$5 Bible. While it is inexpensive Bible it is not attractive or engaging for youth.

This is a great opportunity to invite parents or Godparents to invest in a great bible for their children or youth. (\$20-\$25) You can easily have a prayer ritual where the parent or godparent presents the Bible to the child or young person.

Planning your Calendar and Program Year

In this section, we have PCL tasks to consider as you plan, prepare your calendar, and program year. These are suggestions and you can always add to it, or omit based on your needs.

Fall – September to October

Find out the fall schedule of the Diocesan Catechist Certification Program (CCP) and encourage Catechist to attend. This is a great time to set a goal and plan to work towards catechist's certification for your parish.

Encourage priests to be present sometime during the sessions. Kids and youth need to see the priest outside of Mass so that they might get a glimpse of them before receiving the sacraments. This is especially important for children at their first reconciliation. When they know the priest and feel he is approachable they are more comfortable going to their first reconciliation.

Invite the priest to briefly visit all the kids just before the first reconciliation. Have him stop by each group and he will put the kids at ease.

Don't expect priests to stop by the sessions. Many priests will not go into the sessions unless they are invited.

Be sensitive of your catechist's pre-Christmas season and obligations. Simplify the number of meetings and gatherings during the advent season.

Ask your catechist when to plan your Christmas party; many often suggest sometime between Christmas and New Years.

Winter/Spring – January – May

Schedule a meeting with the pastor to share a mid-year report. Points you may consider including:

- Attendance
- Current financial status
- Current evaluation of the program, materials, accomplishments, and weaknesses. about religious formation in the parish

Ask for time during the Parish Ministry Council or Parish Council to also share your report with them.

- Encourage catechists to attend the Religious Formation Conference. Brochures highlighting the keynote and the excellent presenters will be sent to the parishes. Gather with your catechists to car pool and wear the same color, or your parish shirts so you can all sit together at the opening prayer.
- Plan for the celebration of Lent and other Lenten projects.
- Begin to plan the calendar and budget for the following program year.
- Discuss with Pastor the registration and fees for the upcoming year.
Some possibilities:
Fees for one child/youth _____
Fees for two children/youth _____
Fees for three children/youth _____
- This also a good time to discuss ideas or solutions for families who truly cannot afford the registration fees. It is important to be pastoral and listen to the situation of the family. While these may be rare, there are families who have lost their jobs and are struggling to survive.
- Prepare and organize Confirmation retreats.
- If you leave the parish grounds for the retreat, make sure that you have the proper forms completed and with you at all times.
- If you leave the state of Texas for a retreat or event you must have form OA and OB signed by the parent and a notary public.
- If you are having a Vacation Bible School, it is time to plan and advertise your VBA. Remember you need parent release forms.
- Schedule time for evaluation of catechists.
- Make sure to ask your pastor about your yearly evaluation so that you can receive critical feedback and discuss the year's successes and goals for next year.
- Meet with catechists to discuss if she or he is going to continue to serve as a catechist in the upcoming year.
- At the end of year make sure to have catechists return catechist manuals and other supplies.
- Be sure that the permanent record for each child or youth is completely filled out.
- **Make sure that notifications of First Communion and Confirmation are sent to the church of Baptism.**

******This is not an option, records must be sent (See below for more information)**

Registration

Registrations can feel like a hectic time of year as you try to gather all the information from your participants for the upcoming year. Be aware that the more time you put into organizing and preparing for registration, the easier the process can be and you will feel that the process is more effective.

There are many components to the registration process. Very likely your parish has a system/forms already in place. Look over any previous registration materials with a critical eye and assess what can be reused, what needs to be modified, and what you may not need anymore. Keep at least one copy for you to reference.

Registration packets for Religious Formation vary from parish to parish but have many of the same components. Below we will discuss some of the components and you will also find samples from different parishes. They are for your review to assist in updating your own forms.

When accepting registrations, keep in mind that at the end of the program year you will be preparing sacramental certificates and also keeping records for each youth in the program. Collecting the complete registration packets during registration will save a lot of time and stress at the end of your program year. Therefore, make every effort to get the necessary name, dates, and certificates at the time of registration. You will encounter special cases that require a pastoral approach. For example, a sponsor may have difficulty finding his or her First Communion records. In these specific cases, remember to be pastoral by listening to the situation and giving them time to submit the necessary forms. There may be cases you will have to discuss with the Pastor to determine what needs to be done. Just remember to be pastoral with the candidates. It is advisable to set your own deadline for sponsors and completing all registration packets.

Please see the appendix for sample registration forms & program requirements.

Do's and Don'ts on Registration

- From *How to Be a Great DRE*, Gail Thomas McKenna

The things to **Do**:

1. Schedule pre-registration time each spring before your sessions are over.
2. Allow for flexibility in payment or fees scheduling payments throughout the year.
3. Have mid-summer registration especially for new families moving into the parish.
4. Create a system for ongoing registration all year round.
5. Develop unpublished scholarship funds to help families with financial difficulties.
6. Provide a welcoming environment for all members to register for your programs.

Things **NOT** to Do:

1. Say we have no more room in our program for your family members.
2. Have a "waiting list" to become part of a group.
3. Allow registration fees to be a barrier for families to participate.
4. Put parents on a guilt trip because of late registration or fees.
5. Start children in sessions the day they register. Invite them to the next session.
6. Be the reason families are driven away from your local parish.

Files for Record Keeping

There are two specific types of records that you should keep: 1) Catechist files, and 2) Files for Children and Youth

Important note – These files need to be kept at the parish, under no circumstances is a PCL to keep these files at his or her home.

1. Catechist files

(for both active and inactive catechists)

Updated contact information for your catechists

Name, address, phone numbers and email addresses

Contact person in case of emergency

Virtus Training Certificate for each catechist

2. Files for Children and Youth

a. Permanent file (files must be kept for 7-10 years)

Registration form

Form A Medical release form (**not an option- you must have Form A completed and signed for each participant in the program**)

Non- custodial parent form (if applicable)

Attendance record

Sacrament record

(Only the PCL, office secretary or pastor should have access to these files.)

b. Transfer file

When a family moves to another parish you may be asked to submit a transfer.

You will need to send the transfer form to the new parish. Make sure that you

have the signature of parent/legal guardian, the signature of PCL or pastor, and

the seal of the parish. See appendix for the Diocesan Certificate of Transfer form.

Notes:

Always back up your system to ensure you do not lose your data.

Never keep the original certificate, make a copy.

When no longer needed, all files must be shredded to safeguard personal information.

How long do I need to keep records?

Sacramental records are kept forever

Historical Records – if they are related to sacramental records are kept forever

Registration and Financial records are kept for 7-10 years

Scanning of Sacramental certificates or registration records is not permitted

Sacramental Records

Record keeping for the sacraments is very important. Canon Law states that the record of First Communion and Confirmation must be sent to the Church of Baptism. Notifications of the sacraments should be sent to the parish of Baptism as soon as possible.

(Note – when a person is previously baptized in another Christian denomination, the church of reception is notified – not the church of baptism)

Below are citations from Canon Law

Can. 535 §1. Each parish is to have parochial registers, that is, those of baptisms, marriages, deaths, and others as prescribed by the conference of bishops or the diocesan bishop. The pastor is to see to it that these registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved.

§2. In the baptismal register are also to be noted confirmation and those things which pertain to the canonical status of the Christian faithful by reason of marriage, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1133, of adoption, of the reception of sacred orders, of perpetual profession made in a religious institute, and of change of rite. These notations are always to be noted on a baptismal certificate.

§3. Each parish is to have its own seal. Documents regarding the canonical status of the Christian faithful and all acts which can have juridic importance are to be signed by the pastor or his delegate and sealed with the parochial seal.

Can. 895 The names of those confirmed, the minister, the parents, the sponsors and the place and date of the confirmation are to be recorded in the confirmation register of the diocesan curia or, wherever this has been prescribed by the Episcopal Conference or by the diocesan Bishop, in the register to be kept in the parochial archive. The parish priest must notify the parish priest of the place of the baptism that the confirmation was conferred, so that it be recorded in the baptismal register, in accordance with can. 535 §2.

Can. 896 If the parish priest of the place was not present, the minister, personally or through someone else, is to notify him as soon as possible that the confirmation was conferred.

Valid Baptisms

This list is being generated. If you have any questions about valid baptisms please call the chancery 915-872-8407.

Churches in El Paso not in communion with the Roman Curia

Be aware that there are a number of “churches” in the El Paso area that claim to be Roman Catholic, under the Diocese of El Paso. These churches deceive the people and some believe that they have received the sacraments at these churches. The following are parishes who are not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. It is possible that Baptism is valid but First Communion and Confirmation from these parishes are not valid in the Catholic Church. In these cases, please call the chancery for further direction.

See Appendix for certificates from these churches not in communion with the Roman Curia:

Iglesia Misiones San Francisco de Asis

Holy Spirit of Hope

Iglesia Misionera de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe

Jesus and Mary Roman Catholic Church

Requirements to be a Confirmation Sponsor

Most candidates registering for Confirmation may not have decided on who their confirmation sponsor will be, but this is the ideal time to ask. This will help on several levels. First of all, everyone will be clear on the requirements, second, the young person prepares to ask the sponsor, and finally, having the information of the sponsor and his or her sacramental certificates will save you time and headaches as you get closer to the sacraments. Samples of Sponsor/Parent Agreement can be found in the appendix.

Citations from The Code of Canon Law

The norms are identical to those for a godparent in a Catholic baptism. According to the Code of Canon Law:

Can. 872 Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.

Can. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor, or one of each.

Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

1. be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
2. have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
3. be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;
4. not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
5. not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

Can. 892 Insofar as possible, there is to be a sponsor for the person to be confirmed; the sponsor is to take care that the confirmed person behaves as a true witness of Christ and faithfully fulfills the obligations inherent in this sacrament.

Can. 893 §1. To perform the function of sponsor, a person must fulfill the conditions mentioned in can. 874.

§2. It is desirable to choose as sponsor the one who undertook the same function in baptism. (this is not a requirement but expresses more clearly the link between Baptism and Confirmation and also makes the function and responsibility of the sponsor more effective).

See Appendix for sample form of Confirmation Sponsor Information

Registration Promotion

- Publish in the Bulletin
- Make posters and place them where they can be visible for all to see
- Publish dates on your website, parish website, and Facebook, etc.
- Make announcements after Mass
- Make phone calls to second year participants to remind them about registration

Vocabulary

Language is important because it influences how we view the program and ministry of catechesis. The words and vocabulary you use shapes minds and ideas about the formation we nurture.

Religious formation is focused on the formation of the whole person meaning the head (cognitive), heart (affective), and hands (active). The head points to a cognitive understanding of formation, the heart symbolizes the affective dimensions, and the hands signify the active dynamic in learning. Catechesis nurtures an intellectual understanding of the faith (head), is rooted in a relationship with God (heart), and moves people to live life differently (hands) in faith.

The word catechesis comes from the Greek *Katechien*, which means to *hand on, echo or retell*. What we do in catechesis in hand on the faith, we retell the story of Jesus Christ and echo the words of the gospels. It is not Sunday School, Church class, Catechism, or CCD. We are about nurturing the faith life of children and youth.

Language is thus important. We have to be aware of using words like *class, classrooms, teachers, and students*. This is critical because the children and youth see faith as a subject to be learned and when they complete it they can graduate. For us as catechists we don't simply teach a class like math or science, we teach a way of life rooted in a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and living life as a member of the Catholic Church. We need to move away from the school mentality to nurture religious formation and the way we talk about living a life of faith.

Why don't we call it CCD anymore?

Many people in the US will tell you that they attended CCD as children. CCD is known as Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and the focus of CCD was to prepare children and youth for sacraments by making sure they knew the teachings of the Catholic Church. In CCD a child memorized certain questions and answers in the Baltimore Catechism. All the questions were the same and the answers had to be known by heart.

For example,

#1 Who made the world? A#1 God made the World. and

#2 Who is God? A#2 God is the creator of heaven and earth, and all things

CCD was great for ensuring a uniform understanding of the faith. If you were in Texas, Mississippi, or Colorado you would always get the same answer for #1 and #2. People learned and we were all on the same page. After the catechetical renewal of the 20th-century, religious educators realized that the intellectual understanding of faith was good but a personal relationship and active role as a Catholic were lacking. In other words, CCD focused on a head understanding but did not center on the heart and hands formation of a person.

We don't call it CCD anymore because religious formation takes on a greater understanding of the Church's mission to hand on the faith and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. As St. John Paul II tells us, the definitive aim of catechesis is to "put people not only in touch, but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ" (CT n5).

This topic on language including CCD and catechesis is discussed in greater detail in the Catechist Certification Classes, **Catechist 101 and Age Appropriate Methodology**.

Some Acronyms

PCL – Parish Catechetical Leader

USCCB – United State Conference of Catholic Bishops

CCC – Catechism of the Catholic Church

GCD – General Catechetical Directory (1971)

NCD – National Catechetical Directory (1978) Sharing the Light of Faith

GDC – General Directory for Catechesis (1998)

NDC – National Directory for Catechesis (2005)

Budget

To plan and organize expenses for your program, we recommend that you carefully review and discuss the budget with your pastor and/or parish finance committee. This way everyone is all clear on how the registration money and parish operational support will be budgeted.

A very simple worksheet is provided below.

Budget Worksheet

Income

Registration Fees	_____
Operational Support from parish	_____
Donations	_____
Other	_____
Total Anticipated Income	_____

Expenditures

Textbooks	_____
Catechist manuals	_____
Resource library	_____
Periodical subscriptions	_____
Technology equipment	_____
Supplies for catechists	_____
Office supplies	_____
Postage	_____
Printing	_____
PCL/Catechist formation	_____
Sacramental supplies	_____
Catechist Appreciation Gifts/Events	_____
Retreat for Catechists/Helpers	_____
Refreshments/Hospitality	_____
Guest speakers	_____
Other	_____
Total Anticipated Expenditures	_____

Safe Environment Training Program

As Parish Catechetical Leaders we have a major responsibility in caring for God's children. When a parent leaves their child at one of our programs, he or she trusts that we do everything possible to keep their children safe. We are responsible for creating a Safe Environment in all aspects of our parish programs.

Three main areas of safe environment training must be conducted: Catechists, Parents, and Children and Youth in your catechetical program.

It is necessary that you coordinate with the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator to schedule the Virtus training for the program year.

Catechist Training

All catechists are required to attend safe environment training (Virtus program). You need work with the Parish SEC to scheduled training for the catechists. It is also your responsibility to make sure all catechists have attended training and completed background safety check.

Parent Training

Training session for parents in your program must be scheduled during the program year. Work with your parish SEC to plan the parent training.

Training for Children and Youth in the Program

Training session for children and youth in your program must be scheduled during the program year. Work with your parish SEC to plan the children and youth training.

Legal Forms

Diocesan Liability Waiver and Consent For Emergency Medical Treatment Forms Overview

Please use the following approved forms for children and youth attending your religious formation program and/or events.

In the case of a medical emergency, you will need to access these forms immediately to show you have parental consent. Keep all forms in a location where they can be easily accessed.

Form A Parent/Guardian/Conservator Permission, Liability Waiver, and Medical Information

This form must be filled out for each child/youth attending the religious formation program or related events beginning any time after May 31st.

Form B Parental Consent for children or youth to participate and to receive Emergency Medical Treatment

This form must be filled for each person attending an event that is away from the parish premises.

Forms A and B

Needed for all events away from the parish. The responsible adult who is supervising the youth must have forms A & B with him or her at all times during the event. If there is a medical emergency, he or she will need to provide these forms to the paramedics.

Forms OA and **OB** must be used for out of state/country trips/pilgrimages. For any out of state or international trips forms must be notarized.

Form D Adult Liability Waiver, Medical Release and Promotional Release Form is to be filled out by all adults participating in the religious formation program or events. (catechists, helpers, etc.)

Please be sure to save these documents in the participant file.

These forms must be updated every year.

See Appendix for copies of these legal forms in English and Spanish. You can also access the current years forms at officeofreligiousformation.com under the Safe Environment tab.

Confirmation Liturgy

At least one month before the Confirmation liturgy at your parish, take time to review the following documents that will assist you in planning for the Liturgy.

1. Diocese of El Paso Confirmation Guidelines
2. Liturgical Guidelines for the Celebration of Confirmation
3. Guidelines for the Preparation and Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation
4. Form - Diocese of El Paso Liturgy & Music Plan for Confirmation
*NOTE * Form must be completed and submitted 3 weeks prior to the event
5. Sample - Enrollment Rite for confirmation candidates
6. Sample – Presentation of Candidates
7. Preparing prayers of the faithful
 - a. Sample –prayers of the faithful
8. Sample – Worship aid

Working with Catechists

A solid and effective religious formation program is dependent on having well-trained catechists with a heart for the catechetical ministry. While every baptized Catholic is called to serve in ministry, it is only a select few who have been called to serve as catechists and hand on the faith to our children, youth, and adults.

Recruiting, training, and retaining good catechists should be a priority for you as the PCL. The role and responsibility of a catechist is a very serious one and we can no longer settle for “warm bodies” that can read to children and maintain control of a room.

You are the Parish Catechetical Leader and the catechists you choose, represent you, the parish, pastor, and Bishop of our Diocese. Ultimately they represent the message and love of Jesus Christ both in words and actions. Therefore, seek faith-filled individuals who desire to share their faith. Make sure they are people with a basic understanding of Catholic doctrine and willing to continue formation that includes further theology, skills, and spirituality. These catechists should embody what Pope Francis calls the “Joy of the Gospel”.

Recruitment

Recruiting is an all year round event. Always keep your eyes and ears open for people who are natural catechists and invite them to serve in the ministry. Remember to take this to your prayer, asking God to help you see people in the community who would be good catechists.

Recruiting catechists in the bulletin and pulpit announcements are not generally effective ways to recruit. Most people will respond to a personal invitation from the PCL or coordinator before responding to an ad in the bulletin.

Interviews

As the parish catechetical leader, it is your responsibility to interview and assess each person for this ministry.

See Appendix – A Catechists Role Description including qualities and knowledge of an effective catechist.

Sample Interview questions for catechists

Catechist Commitment Ritual

A prayer service at the beginning of the program year that includes a catechist commitment ritual provides an opportunity for catechists to make a prayerful commitment to their ministry. See appendix for a sample

Training & Catechist Certification

Catechists need to feel confident in the ministry. The Catechist Certification Program offered at the Diocese of El Paso provides an excellent opportunity in preparing catechists for ministry and simultaneously nurtures competence and confidence for catechetical ministry. The basic certification program is 65 hours and focuses on the three areas of theology, skills, and spirituality. Below is more detailed information about the breakdown of the program.

Make sure to encourage your catechists to attend formation. They are representatives of the Church and they need to have proper training and formation to minister to our children and youth.

Catechist Appreciation

Catechists give whole-heartedly of their time to the ministry. They prepare weekly for their catechetical sessions and make a major commitment to serve as catechists. Remember to take several opportunities throughout the year to affirm and appreciate them. Set time aside for catechist gatherings, prayer, learning, and social time.

Be creative and find different ways to do this. Some ideas you can offer include a retreat, a small gift, or an appreciation meal. The ideal times to do this would be Catechetical Sunday (third Sunday in September), Christmas, and/or at the end of the program year.

Catechetical Sunday

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has designated the third Sunday of September as Catechetical Sunday. It is a time to recognize all the people who play a role in the ministry of catechesis including catechists, parents, and grandparents. The USCCB website offers materials and resources for Catechetical Sunday each year. Plan for Catechetical Sunday by reviewing the resources available and see what you would like to use at your parish. They offer points for developing the homily on this day, prayers of the faithful, retreat outlines and suggestions, printable materials, certificates for catechists, etc. This is the perfect opportunity to plan a commissioning ceremony at Mass to give the catechists a blessing and connect the community to the ministry. For catechetical Sunday resources, go to the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/>

Supervision of catechists

One of the privileged responsibilities of the PCL is to work with and supervise catechists. Your catechists represent you, your parish and the Church. Part of supervising catechists means inspiring them to join the mission and vision of catechesis in your parish.

At the beginning of the year, you need to make time to gather catechists to write lesson plans and then set times to observe/evaluate catechists at least once a year.

Develop a good team of people working together with you.

Lesson Planning

Gathering to prepare lesson plans with your catechists is one of the best investments you can make in your program. First of all, you will set the tone for preparing well for all sessions. Second, your catechists will all be on the same page and can share many great and creative lessons, activities, dynamics, prayers, etc. Lastly, even though you may have more work at the beginning, over the months you will see that the catechists themselves begin to take charge in lesson planning.

Schedule into your calendar time for lesson planning and bring together catechists to see the basics of lesson planning. Go over the catechist manuals and highlight all the components already offered by the publisher. Then take 8-12 catechists and break them into one of four groups. Assign each group one week's lessons for the month. So, one group has week one, another week two, another week three and the last week four. When each group develops the lesson plans they share it with the others and all catechists have lesson plans for the month. This may sound like a lot of work but you are preparing your catechists for the ministry and you can observe what is being planned for each session.

To help you in this process, the Diocese offers a course called Catechist 101. During the training, catechists begin to realize that the parish programs are generally 30-45 hours a year. He or she then sees the need for preparing solid lesson plans and that it is actually fun and fulfilling. In Catechist 101 they are giving the tools necessary for effective lesson planning.

Observation/Evaluation

In order to ensure an effective formation program, it is critical that you make regular rounds and visit the rooms during the catechetical sessions and complete regular evaluations of your catechists. Briefly visiting the rooms with a critical eye will allow you to observe what catechists are teaching, see the response of the children and youth, and be aware of the catechist preparation for the lesson. You will also see results of the group lesson planning and its effectiveness in different groups.

Your occasional presence will hold the catechist accountable and encourage them to prepare well for each lesson.

Keep an eye out for:

A catechist who wants to show videos or religious cartoons frequently.

Resources or materials being given to children that are not appropriate for the age group.

Witnessing that a catechist is not prepared and has no lesson plan over several sessions.

A catechist who lectures or reads the entire time.

Appendix

Candidates Name _____

Catechists Name _____

Information Form for a Confirmation Sponsor

A sponsor is chosen because he or she is an important person who will walk and guide the candidate through the journey of faith life in preparation for the sacrament and continues to be in the life of the candidate after receiving the sacrament. The sponsor is a spiritual mentor that affirms the candidate's strengths and assists him or her to grow in the faith. The sponsor is expected to participate in all aspects of the candidate's faith formation journey. A sponsor should attend Mass and Parent/sponsor meetings with the candidate. The sponsor should also participate in retreats and special events with his or her candidate.

A Sponsor is someone who:

- Is at least 16 years old
- Has received all sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist)
- Is not the mother or the father of the candidate
- Is a believing and practicing Catholic
- If married, is married in the Catholic Church
- If single, must be living a single life, not living with anyone

If a person is living with anyone or is married by the court, he or she cannot be a sponsor.

Name of Sponsor _____

Address _____
Street City Zip Code

Phone _____ email _____

Documents to be submitted

_____ Baptism Certificate of the Sponsor

_____ Eucharist Certificate of the Sponsor

_____ Confirmation Certificate of the Sponsor

_____ Church Marriage Certificate of the Sponsor (if married)

Preparing the Prayers of the Faithful
From *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*

The Universal Prayer

69. In the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in some sense to the Word of God which they have received in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal Priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all. It is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer in Masses celebrated with the people, so that petitions may be offered for holy Church, for those who govern with authority over us, for those weighed down by various needs, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the whole world.

70. The series of intentions is usually to be:

- a) for the needs of the Church;
- b) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world;
- c) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty;
- d) for the local community.

Nevertheless, in any particular celebration, such as a Confirmation, a Marriage, or at a Funeral, the series of intentions may be concerned more closely with the particular occasion.

71. It is for the Priest Celebrant to regulate this prayer from the chair. He himself begins it with a brief introduction, by which he calls upon the faithful to pray, and likewise he concludes it with an oration. The intentions announced should be sober, be composed with a wise liberty and in few words, and they should be expressive of the prayer of the entire community.

They are announced from the ambo or from another suitable place, by the Deacon or by a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful.

The people, for their part, stand and give expression to their prayer either by an invocation said in common after each intention or by praying in silence.

Spirituality

Retreats for catechists-

Some guidelines or direction on giving a retreat

Sample of a catechist retreat

Prayer/Spirituality

How to pray with your own catechists?

How do you nurture the spirituality of your catechists?

Put in the back view window of the binder

TIPS for NEW CATECHETICAL LEADERS

A few simple tips from some seasoned catechetical leaders.

1. Keep your sense of humor.
2. **BE A PERSON OF FAITH. BE PASTORAL.**
3. Remember that catechesis is a ministry of the Church. We all have specific roles in exercising this ministry; pastor, PCL, YML, catechists and others.
4. You need to strive to work collaboratively.
5. Have your number one priority be the support of your catechists.
6. Remember that your primary function is to organize and support your program.
7. Work within your limits. Quality is more important than quantity.
8. Keep in mind that being a catechetical leader is a ministry, not a 9-5 job.
9. Advertise your hours of availability to parents and catechists.
10. Learn how to say NO!
11. Be thankful in person or in writing.
12. Keep your sense of humor.

Catechist Commitment

I intend to serve my parish as a catechist beginning in (Fall/Spring) of the year _____

I commit to serve those in my charge to the best of my abilities, learning and growing in my faith as I serve others

I commit to be active and fully participate in the sacramental life of the Church

I commit to integrating the tasks of Catechesis into my ministry with those I serve:

- Communicating the message of our faith
- Leading participants to a deeper understanding and active participation in liturgy and worship
- Promoting moral formation
- Teaching prayer
- Building Christian Community and motivating participants to mission and service

I intend to love, respect and pray for those in my care

I understand that I must follow the diocesan and parish Safe Environment requirements for working with children and vulnerable adults

I intend to advance my knowledge and skills by participating in courses, workshops, conferences, and retreats, so that I may work towards full certification.

Signature _____ **Date**

May the spirit of the Lord empower us with wisdom and courage to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ in the world.

And, may our faith in Him and His Church be strengthened and deepened as we share in His work.

Program Evaluation and Development

Review of Loyola Press book

Self-evaluation at the beginning and end of the year

A person in charge of evaluations/observations of all catechists

Self-evaluation

Safety Issues

CPR

Seizures

Nurse

Special needs situations, Autism

What to do When...?

See Diocese of Victoria documents

Referrals –

Suicide, pregnancy, alcohol, runaway, drugs, counseling

Confidentiality**Communication**

Getting rid of stuff –

Support –

Collaboration with ministries in the parish

Letter to Pastor

Dear Pastor,

As a pastor you have the privileged role to guide your people on their journey of faith. Many Church documents highlight the importance of your role and responsibility in the faith formation of your parishioners. Providing

In the end, the faith formation and the future of well-prepared Catholics are in your hands.

We know you take this component of your ministry very seriously.

Your active role in your parish formation program and your support of the PCL and catechists makes a significant impact on the effectiveness of the parish formation program.

We encourage you to meet monthly with your PCL in order to have regular discussions on the goals and growth of your program. This way your PCL receives critical feedback to make the necessary adjustments. PCL's have a loving heart and great desire to do their very best in this ministry, but your guidance is necessary.

The PCL needs your support and the support of the community as well. This includes you being available when they need you to assist with prayer and confessions at retreats and programs. Please remember they need space to grow into this ministry and may need your time and affirmation.