

Authority Structures for the Catechetical Ministry

In all the ministries and services which the Diocesan Church performs to carry out its mission of evangelization, Catechesis occupies a position of importance.

Catechesis is a unique service performed jointly by priests, deacons, religious and laity in communion with the Bishop. The entire Christian community should feel responsible for this service. Even if priests, deacons, religious and laity exercise catechesis in common, they do so in different ways, each according to his/her particular condition in the Church.

The task of the Catechist, as an educator in the faith, differs from that of others involved in the program, even though the Catechist always acts in coordination with them.

Others perform such indispensable work as the formation of Catechists, the production of catechetical material, organization and planning.

Together, all are at the service of a single Diocesan catechetical ministry. Through them all, with their differing functions, the catechetical ministry hands on the Word in a complete way and witnesses to the reality of the church.

(GDC 219)

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The Archbishop (GDC 222-223)

The Archbishop has primary responsibility for catechesis in his diocese. The Archbishop supervises the catechetical mission of the Archdiocese and is responsible for the total catechetical mission of the local church. It is one of the most important responsibilities of his office. (*Canon 756, 775; GDC 222*).

The Archbishop ensures that:

- the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and the deposit of faith is handed on completely and accurately;
- the ministry of catechesis receives competent personnel, effective means, and adequate financial resources;
- the texts and other resources used in catechesis transmit the Catholic faith completely and authentically;
- the Catechists are well-instructed in Church doctrine and in educational psychology and method;
- the Archdiocesan catechetical plan is integrated into the overall diocesan pastoral plan and coordinated with the USCCB. (*National Directory for Catechesis 54 A*)

The General Directory for Catechesis singles out the following ways in which the Archbishop exercises overall direction of catechesis:

- by insuring that effective priority be given to securing the necessary personnel, means, equipment, and financial resources;
- by directly transmitting the Gospel to the faithful;
- by being vigilant with regard to authenticity in the transmission of the faith, including the quality of texts and materials used;
- by bringing about and maintaining a real passion for catechesis, a passion flowing from a profound conviction of the importance of catechesis for the Christian life of the Archdiocese;
- by embodying this passion in an effective Catechetical organization and program which responds to the true needs of the faithful, is integrated into the diocesan pastoral plan, and is coordinated with the programs of the Episcopal Conference;
- by insuring that the Catechists are adequately prepared for their task by being well-instructed in Catholic doctrine, in human psychological development, and in educational methodology. (*GDC 223*)

The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office

“Catechesis is so basic to the life of every particular Church that no diocese can be without its own catechetical office.” (GDC 267)

The Catechetical Office is “the means which the Bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all the catechetical activities of the diocese.” (GDC 265)

The *General Directory for Catechesis* singles out the following ways in which the Catechetical Office exercises its competencies:

- by analyzing the state of catechesis in the Archdiocese and identifying the catechetical needs;
- by developing and implementing an effective plan of action to address these needs;
- by providing formation for catechists and setting up centers for this purpose;
- by providing to the parishes guidelines and materials for catechesis, and ongoing assistance in the choice of catechetical texts and materials;
- by organizing, establishing, and supporting the programs, structures, and groups which cause and direct effective catechesis in the Archdiocese;
- by collaborating closely with the Archdiocesan Offices of the Liturgy and the Catechumenate. (GDC 266)

“To accomplish these responsibilities the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office should have a staff of persons who have special competence. The extent and the diversity of the problems which must be handled demand that the responsibilities be divided among a number of truly skilled people.” (GDC 267)

The Archbishop designates a highly skilled, professional Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office and commissions competent diocesan staff persons. The Catechetical Office assists the Archbishop in implementing his responsibilities such as ensuring that all who have a right to catechesis in the archdiocese have a realistic opportunity to receive it and that potential parish catechetical leaders are identified. (National Directory for Catechesis 54 A)

The Pastor

(National Directory for Catechesis 54 B 1)

The Pastor has the primary responsibility to ensure that the catechetical needs, goals, and priorities of the parish are identified, articulated, and met. According to the norms established by the Archbishop, the Pastor ensures that:

- age appropriate catechesis is provided for adults, youth, and children with Catechesis for adults being the parish's primary catechetical mission;
- a total parish catechetical plan is implemented in consultation with the parish council and parish catechetical leadership;
- catechesis of youth and young adults is offered as part of youth ministry within the parish;
- children and youth are prepared properly for first reception of the sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation;
- children receive ongoing catechetical formation that enriches and deepens the sacramental preparation;
- people with special needs are given appropriate catechetical formation;
- the Catechumenate is an essential process in the parish;
- catechetical formation is adapted to the various cultures within the parish;
- parish Catechists are well trained.

The Director/Coordinator of Religious Education

(National Directory for Catechesis 54 B 5)

The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained and competent parish catechetical leader. Under the direction of the Pastor, the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education:

- provides overall direction of the parish catechetical program for adults, youth and children;
- plans, implements and evaluates the parish catechetical program;
- recruits, forms, provides ongoing development, and evaluates the Catechists;
- implements archdiocesan and parish catechetical policies and guidelines, including catechist certification and supervision, administrative policies related to negligence, sexual abuse harassment, and the safety of minors;
- collaborates with the Pastor and other parish ministers and appropriate committees, boards, and councils;
- assists in liturgical planning;
- participates in programs and spiritual and professional development.

Supervisory Responsibilities

The titles “Parish Director of Religious Education” and “Parish Coordinator of Religious Education” indicate the person who is the regular, on-site supervisor of the Parish Religious Education Program. The Director/Coordinator has supervisory responsibility for the Catechists, their assistants and the children and youth in the program. The Director/Coordinator may not delegate this supervisory responsibility on a regular basis to anyone else. By the act of delegating their supervisory responsibility, they are transferring the position itself as well as the title to their delegate.

The Pastor is the immediate supervisor of the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education. In fulfillment of the job description, the Director/Coordinator is directly responsible to the person of the Pastor (*cf Canon 776; National Directory for Catechesis #54 B 5*). A Parish Manager or Finance Director cannot properly be the supervisor of the Director/Coordinator.

Job Description of Director/Coordinator

The basic job description for all Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education in the Archdiocese is found in the Program Administration section of this Handbook. Any person accepting the position, whether on a salaried or a volunteer basis, is responsible to fulfill this job description.

Minimum Age of Director/Coordinator

The position demands maturity of judgment, years of experience and professional education in the fields of catechesis, education and administration. Accordingly, by appointing an individual as Director/Coordinator, the Pastor is publicly vouching for the maturity and professionalism of the Director/Coordinator he has appointed.

Code of Ethics (GDC 137)

The Director/Coordinator of Religious Education:

- leads a moral life, based on Jesus' example and the teachings of the Church, as witness and model for others;
- demonstrates faithfulness to the wisdom of the Church as expressed through the Scriptures, the Magisterium, and the living Tradition of the Church;
- manifests the Gospel model of leader as servant to the community;
- values and promotes the dignity and equality of all persons;
- recognizes, affirms, resources, and supports the distinct catechetical roles of parents, catechists, principals, youth ministers, deacons, priests, diocesan and national catechetical personnel, pastors, bishops;
- encourages and promotes the development of professional ministers within the catechetical community;
- communicates clearly the roles and expectations of those whom they supervise and evaluates them justly and objectively according to established criteria;
- employs justice and charity in actions and decisions regarding ministerial matters and supervisory responsibilities;
- respects the God-given freedom of all people and their freedom of conscience without compromising integrity or the values of the Gospel;
- respects and assures confidentiality in professional relationships, documents and records;
- acts in concert with national, state, local and ecclesial regulations concerning legal matters which impact the catechetical ministry and its personnel;
- plans, implements, and evaluates all aspects of catechesis in accord with the catechetical policies, regulations and guidelines which have been promulgated by the Church at the universal, national, diocesan, and parochial levels.

Code of Ethics for Professional Catechetical Ministers, National Certification Standards