Commonly Asked Questions about Certification

Why is catechist certification important?

All Catholic adults are expected to be life-long learners in our faith. The more that people know about ministry, the easier and more fulfilling it becomes. Catechist classes provide instruction in church doctrine as well as teaching techniques that help you deliver a well-informed message at an age appropriate level and manner.

Do I have to be certified as a catechist before I can teach?

You do not have to be certified to volunteer but parishes may require that you begin the process when you volunteer to teach. There are many ways to earn certification credit that can suit even very busy schedules. The catechetical leader at your parish can provide you with options and guide you through the process. You are asked to make every effort to complete the Basic Certification Process within two years of your first catechist assignment.

I took Basic certification classes years ago, do I need to repeat them?

Not necessarily. If you have taken classes related to religious education over the past five years, and have remained active in this ministry, your current classes may count toward intermediate or advanced certification. Consult your parish leader for help in determining which level of certification is applicable to your situation. This situation also applies to those who have moved from another Diocese and may have earned certification credit in their former diocese.
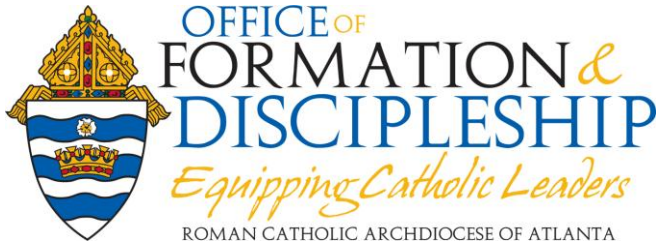
How do I get started?

Check with your parish catechetical leader for requirements and opportunities at your parish. If you have taken any adult education classes or other courses that you expect might apply, consult with your parish catechetical leader, typically a member of the religious education staff. Otherwise, watch for opportunities in your parish or around the archdiocese that apply.

What classes do I need to take?

The catechist certification program, "Communicating the Catholic Message," is found on the Archdiocesan website, (http://www.archatl.com/offices/ofd2012/pd/pd-certificationprogram.html). The information on the website includes a list of requirements. Please note that your parish may be using a modified version of this program so please check with your parish religious education staff to verify the requirements.

If I have an education degree, am I exempt from any of the requirements?

If you have a degree in education, you are exempt from some of the methodology courses. There are, however, courses that specifically address teaching techniques for religion classes that are still required.

How do I receive my certificate once I complete the program?

As you complete each class, keep the documentation provided. In many cases a certificate of completion is issued at the conclusion of the class or seminar. This certificate will include the name of the class and topic that was covered. Follow the directions provided by your parish for recording this information. When all requirements have been met for a particular level of certification, your parish leaders will submit an application and your record to the Office of Formation and Discipleship who will provide a certificate signed by the Bishop. Certificates are returned by the Office of Formation and Discipleship to the parish leaders who will give them to you.

Do I need to complete Basic certification before beginning Intermediate or Advanced?

No, a catechist may be working towards all three levels concurrently.

Do certification classes count toward continuing education credits?

If you work for a Catholic school or need Continuing Education credits, please be sure to check with your employer to see if the credits will apply.

How do I maintain my certification?

Once certification is complete, catechists are asked to complete 15 hours of faith formation every five years. These hours count toward Intermediate and Advanced levels of certification.

How do I achieve Intermediate and Advanced Certification?

Guidelines for intermediate and advanced certification are included in the document "Communicating the Catholic Message" that can be found on the Archdiocese of Atlanta website, (http://www.archatl.com/offices/ofd2012/pd/pd-certificationprogram.html).

What is required for Master Catechist Certification?

Master Catechists are individuals recognized by the Archdiocese of Atlanta and their parish community as exemplifying the ideals of adult catechesis. Master Catechists are eligible to present catechist certification classes for the Archdiocese of Atlanta in their identified areas of expertise. Requirements include: Submitting an application to the Office of Formation & Discipleship, providing supporting evidence of formal coursework in Theology and/or Religious Studies, three letters of recommendation and at least three years experience as catechist.

More questions? Contact your parish DRE or catechetical leader or call or email Cathy Marbury at 404-920-7625, cmarbury@archatl.com