

## Introduction to Vocare and the Archdiocesan Catechetical Certification Process

**Vocare** is the new online certification process of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The word Vocare means “to call” and is the basis of the word, vocation. Just as Jesus called His disciples, so at every Mass in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati the faithful pray that we will be given the grace to know the definite purpose to which God has called us. Those called to the particular ministry of teaching the faith in our Catholic schools and parishes are therefore called catechists, which comes from the Greek term meaning “to echo.” Their purpose is to hear and echo the voice of Christ the Teacher and that of the Magisterium, the teaching office of the Church.

In all this we recall that the “definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Through Vocare, the Office for Evangelization and Discipleship of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati assists Archbishop Schnurr in the central task of Catholic catechesis: forming and certifying in the deep riches of the faith<sup>2</sup> those called to be Catholic school principals, teachers, parish catechetical leaders, and parish catechists.

Vocare aligns this process to the seven Archdiocesan tasks of catechesis. These are the six classically envisioned, Tasks of Catechesis<sup>3</sup> and a seventh task, recently promulgated for Catholic Schools and Parishes in Cincinnati, the Catholic vision of the human person, known as Theology of the Body.



The Vocare logo symbolizes these seven Archdiocesan tasks of catechesis as interwoven and interdependent strands:

- Knowledge of the Faith
- Knowledge of Sacraments and Liturgy
- Moral Formation
- Praying with Christ
- Living in the Community of the Church
- Missionary Discipleship and service to society
- Theology of the Body

"All of these tasks are necessary. As the vitality of the human body depends on the proper function of all of its organs, so also the maturation of the Christian life requires that it be cultivated in all its dimensions: knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, belonging to community, missionary spirit. When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development. Each task realizes, in its own way, the object of catechesis."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Catechesi Tradendae 5

<sup>2</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis* 33

<sup>3</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis* 85-86

<sup>4</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis* 87

Each of these seven tasks is woven into certification, known as Badges: **Call, Witness, Proclaim, Inspire, and Enrich**. Some Badges focus more on one task than others. Just as in any catechist's life there may be one particular dimension needing development, or one particular subject one is called to teach, Vocare offers the flexibility of structuring catechetical certification based on the individual catechist's unique, personal, and spiritual journey. These seven tasks are outlined in detail below and provide a conceptual overview of the elements required for Catechetical Certification:

## 1. Knowledge of the Faith

The first step of the first disciples was a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. He invited them to come and see.<sup>5</sup> As with the calling of St. Matthew, this initial encounter with Christ led to a personal calling to follow him into deeper communion with the Father.<sup>6</sup>

Through knowledge of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, those called to teach the faith begin to hear and recognize God's self-revelation and are increasingly able to echo it, coming to understand the meaning of the Creeds.<sup>7</sup> Beginning with the lived awareness that God is the source of all that is good, visible and invisible, and that God chose to reveal himself to us through creation, salvation history and Sacred Scripture, those being catechized will grow in their knowledge of the faith and, in turn, will live the faith in Christian community and proclaim it in the world.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Knowledge of Sacraments and Liturgy

Because Christ is truly present in the sacraments, it is there that believers come to know him more intimately, especially the Eucharist.<sup>9</sup> Catechesis not only explains the meaning of the rituals, but also draws those being catechized into full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy of the Church.<sup>10</sup> Formation of minds for prayer, thanksgiving, repentance, and the communal spirit of liturgy and sacraments is also emphasized.<sup>11</sup> Sacramental

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<sup>5</sup> John 1:39

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 9:9

<sup>7</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis* 20(1); *General Directory for Catechesis* 85

<sup>8</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis* 84

<sup>9</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis* 20(2)

<sup>10</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14

<sup>11</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis* 20(2)

catechesis prepares for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides correct understanding and ongoing formation for sacramental living.

### **3. Moral Formation**

Following Christ and united with him,<sup>12</sup> Christians strive to be imitators of God as beloved children, and walking in love<sup>13</sup> by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the mind...which is yours in Christ Jesus, and by following his example.<sup>14</sup>

Jesus' moral teaching is an integral part of his message.<sup>15</sup> Beginning with the lived awareness that we are created to know, love, and serve God; moral formation aims to convert those being catechized into life in Christ. Rooted in the understanding that all we are and have comes from God, those being catechized will be formed by the Beatitudes, Ten Commandments, and other teachings in order to seek happiness and meaning through Gospel teachings, and to recognize the consequences of failing to do so.

### **4. Praying with Christ**

We may forget our Creator or hide far from him, we may run after idols or accuse God of having abandoned us; yet the living God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer.<sup>16</sup> Jesus taught his disciples to pray.<sup>17</sup> Prayer, always directed to the Father, is the basis of Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection. As such, it is also the basis of Christian life.<sup>18</sup>

Catholic teachers and catechists in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati should invite believers to join Christ in prayer, offering their lives to the Father. All of the knowledge and practice of the Christian life is understood in the context of prayer.<sup>19</sup> Beginning with the understanding that prayer is communicating with God, those being catechized should grow in their

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<sup>12</sup> John 15:5

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 5:1-12

<sup>14</sup> John 13: 12-16; Catechism of the Catholic Church 1694

<sup>15</sup> National Directory of Catechesis 20(3)

<sup>16</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church 2567

<sup>17</sup> Luke 11:1

<sup>18</sup> National Directory of Catechesis 20(4)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

knowledge and practice of various prayer forms and styles, as well as learning the traditional prayers of the Church.

## **5. Living in the Community of the Church**

Catechesis encourages an apprenticeship in Christian living. As Jesus commanded the disciples to “Love one another,” catechesis should point to their own life of faith lived in community.<sup>20</sup> Those being catechized should be formed in communal prayer, mutual forgiveness, concern for the poor and alienated, and a spirit of humility and simplicity.<sup>21</sup> Beginning with the lived awareness that the Church is the body of Christ, and the pillar and foundation of truth,<sup>22</sup> catechists will develop an understanding of the structure of the Church, the role and responsibilities of each member of the Christian community, as well as the relationship to the hierarchy and saints. It should also foster the desire for unity among all Christians.<sup>23</sup>

## **6. Missionary Discipleship and service to society**

The world is where the lay faithful live out their Christian vocation.<sup>24</sup> Catechesis, then, should prepare believers to bear personal witness to their faith in the world, through word and deed.<sup>25</sup> Formation in this area trains believers to have the attitude of Jesus: “to be poor in spirit, to be compassionate, to be meek, to hear the cry of the injustice, to be merciful, to make peace and to accept rejection and persecution.”<sup>26</sup> Catechesis includes care for the environment, recognizing the dignity of all people, and dialogue with other religious traditions.

## **7. Theology of the Body**

The Theology of the Body is Saint John Paul II’s pioneering vision of the human person. He emphasizes the body as not only a biological reality, but also as a “resacramentalizing” of our Catholic intellectual and moral life.<sup>27</sup> He explores how “in the beginning” of Creation, God gave our biological

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 20(5)

<sup>21</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis* 86

<sup>22</sup> Colossians 1:18; I Timothy 3:15

<sup>23</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis* 86, *Catechesi Tradendae* 32

<sup>24</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 16

<sup>25</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis* 20(6)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Weigel, George. *Evangelical Catholicism*, New York: Basic Books. 2013. 211

masculinity and femininity to complement each other and help answer two fundamental questions: “Who am I?” and “How am I to live?”<sup>28</sup> In exploring his teachings on the great themes of love, gender, gift, vocation, creation, redemption, purity, and covenant, those being catechized will come to a lived awareness of the language spoken by the human body, the dignity of each human person, the pathway to happiness with God and others, and the importance of marriage, family and friendship.

*“This is the body: a witness to creation as a fundamental gift, and therefore a witness to Love as the source from which the same giving springs.”*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Genesis 5:2; Matthew 19:4

<sup>29</sup> TOB 14.5