Handbook for Catechetical Certification

For PREP Catechists, and Catechetical Leaders, Principals and Teachers in Catholic Schools

2020-2021
Partnership with Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute

The Department of Catholic Education has partnered with Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute to provide on-demand catechetical formation for those who pass on the faith to our children through their digital platform at Franciscanathome.com. This program will also serve as the central database of tracking catechetical certification for those who work with youth within our diocese.

Built upon the belief that the person and witness of the catechist is an essential factor to the sharing of faith in our classrooms, training will work both on knowledge and interior spiritual transformation. This process includes mentors who work with learners as they progress through workshops, giving feedback and encouragement.

The Learning Process:

Together with the Catechetical Institute, we have designed tracks consisting of workshops explicitly geared toward the different needs and roles of those who work with children and youth in our diocese. Currently, tracks exist for Catholic School Teachers, Catechists, Principals, and Parish Catechetical Leaders. Workshops in these tracks are comprised of videos and written tasks, which are sent to mentors for review and discussion. Mentors then follow up with learners, supporting them, and helping them to process what they learn. These newly designed tracks based on roles mean a change in the current requirements for Catechetical Certification for these groups while working in concert with other programs of formation within our diocese.

Expectations of Learners

Tracks are in levels of Basic, Intermediate, Advanced and Master Certification. Each level of certification is designed to take two years to complete. For convenience, each level certification is two parts, so learners can progress through at the pace of one part per year. Workshops required are available online at https://franciscanathome.com/diocese-
In fulfilling the Bishop’s vision for Catholic education, the Offices of Catholic Schools and Catechesis for Children commit expertise, time and energy to provide systemic standards for leadership, support, and service as PREP programs and schools live their mission to prepare hearts, educate minds, reveal Christ and cultivate our Roman Catholic tradition.

Diocese of Savannah Catholic Education...Powering Potential

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**Catechetical Certification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification Level</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Master Courses</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catechists</strong></td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>3 workshops per year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic School Teachers</strong></td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>14 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>3 workshops per year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Principals</strong></td>
<td>20 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>20 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>20 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 workshops per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parish Catechetical Leaders</strong></td>
<td>20 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>20 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>20 workshops over 2 years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3 workshops per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Position** | **Minimum Certification Requirement** | **Basic** | **Intermediate** | **Advanced** | **Master Courses** | **Ongoing** |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
DRE | Advanced Parish Catechetical Leader | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 3 |
CRE | Intermediate Parish Catechetical Leader | 20 | 20 | | | 3 |
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**Diocese of Savannah Catholic Education…Powering Potential!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Minimum Certification Requirement</th>
<th>Basic Courses (over 2 years)</th>
<th>Intermediate Courses (over 2 years)</th>
<th>Advanced Courses (over 2 years)</th>
<th>Master Courses (over 2 years)</th>
<th>Ongoing (per year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Administrator</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track: Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher of Religion: Middle &amp; High Schools</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track: Catholic Schools</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: Catholic</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track: Catholic Schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher: non-Catholic</td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track: Catholic Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional/Classroom Aide</td>
<td>Recommended: Basic</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track: Catholic Schools</td>
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*Starting someone on this track as an assistant while working with a seasoned catechist can be an excellent way to prepare them to be a catechist themselves.*

All catechists currently teaching in the PREP programs are required to make an account and submit certification documentation. Those who have received Basic certification in past years (through *Echoes of Faith, Diocesan Basic,* or *Escuela Fra Pedro De Corpa*) will receive the same *Basic Catechist Certification* on the new platform with proof of certification. Some will also receive additional workshops toward *Intermediate Certification.* For Spanish speaking only catechists, they may do this either on the platform as the Spanish workshops become available, or through applicable workshops developed in person through *Escuela Fra Pedro de Corpa.* If a catechist has already achieved Basic Certification, they should aim to complete Intermediate Certification over the next two years. Parish Catechetical Leaders should submit proof of certification for credit for the Catechist portion of their certification.

Catechists who teach in adult faith formation programs or RCIA fall under the Department of Evangelization and are not required to follow the expectations for Certification from the Department of Catholic Education. They can make an account and take workshops on the platform for their own enrichment.
Youth Ministry:

Tracks for Youth Ministers and Youth Ministry Core Team members are in development. Youth Ministry which is the sole catechetical formation for an age group should treat those who teach in these programs as catechists. They should start to work through the catechist track, taking teen methodology workshops.

Optional Tracks:

- There are tracks for Adult Faith Formation, RCIA, and Hispanic Faith & Family Ministry, and Pastoral Accompaniment and more in development on the platform. Leaders and catechists in these areas are not required to take these but are welcome to if they would like.
- The Ministry of Parenting Track is also now open, and is an excellent way to help parents live their role as primary catechist more deeply. Workshops from this track could be completed individually, or in groups settings as part of a family catechesis initiative.
- A customized track can be created for a particular role in your parish. Other diocese have utilized this feature for tracks such as parish councils, parish welcome committees, parish ministry leaders, etc. If this is something you are interested in, please contact us.
- If a parish seeks to encourage participation in the above tracks, we recommend finding mentors who could serve for these areas.

The Role of Mentors in the Certification Process:

As leaders in the field, we have a duty to help in the formation of those we lead. The temptation in our digital age can be to replace formation only with distant experts, but when we do this, we lose something indispensable.

We know we cannot replace, with even the best videos, authentic ministerial relationships in the field. By offering workshops with a local guiding figure, we aim to encourage our parishes and schools toward mentored formation. This approach allows for person-to-person engagement over extended periods guided by tasks and assessments in the workshops. In our first year, mentors will be provided for every catechetical leader in parishes and schools as they participate in workshops. Parish and school leaders are responsible for choosing mentors for learners as they start formation in the Fall of 2020.
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How to Get Started:

In 2019-2020 All parish and school catechetical leaders are required to register their parish/school, submit their previous formation, and begin working on certification for themselves. See attached deadline documents for when to accomplish this.

Cost:
Subscriptions are on a per parish (including the parish school and missions) basis of $300 per year for an unlimited # of users. All parishes with 75 families or less are free. Schools that are not affiliated with a parish will need to pay its own subscription.

Franciscan at Home has video tutorials that visually walk through many of the elements of the platform. They are found under the Resources tab.

Sign up the Parish/School:

- Register by going to https://franciscanathome.com/diocese-savannah
- On the right-hand side, click the button that says "I am a representative of a parish or school, and I would like to register my institution,"
- Choose "Diocese of Savannah"
- Fill in parish information, be sure to include the city your parish resides in the title.
- Choose a payment option (Credit Card or Check) If you are registering as a parish under 75 families, select check request and email the form to svincourt@diosav.org.
- Once you have made the payment, your institution is registered.
- Follow any other instructions to set up your account.

Invite Others to Sign Up:

- To invite other leaders, mentors, or interested learners direct them to https://franciscanathome.com/diocese-savannah
- From the drop-down menus, find the Diocese of Savannah, then the parish/school name. They will be instructed to fill out their information from there.
Step 2: Become Familiar with the Platform

Functions for the Institutional Leader:

Once you sign in, you can view your dashboard by clicking on the tab towards the top-right hand of the landing page screen. In your dashboard, you will see some tabs that are accessible only to you, the Institutional Leader.

The most important tabs are "Dashboard," which is the default and "Learners" that gives a list of all learners, and the progress that they have made. On the dashboard, you can look at a snapshot of your parish learners, add more leaders, and assign mentors to your learners, etc.

Underneath your institution tab to the right of their name, there is a place to choose to make a learner a mentor for your institution or to make them mentorable. **A learner cannot request a mentor until you choose to make them mentorable!**

Be sure to fill out your biography under the *Edit My Account* tab; this will help in placing you with a mentor and for those you will mentor. The biography should help them get to know you as a person, as well as your professional and catechetical background.

If leadership access should be shared with someone else in the parish or school, you can add them under this tab. Since parish and schools will have the same account, the DRE and a Principal may both be placed as institutional leaders. Pastors who sign up will also be placed as institutional leaders.
**Start a Track and Start Learning:**
Once a learner sets up an account, they can begin on the track that applies to the area in which they serve. On the leader’s dashboard, this area is underneath the institutional leader information. Be sure to choose a track that is under the Diocese of Savannah box. Each track will have a place to request a mentor, send paperwork, and see the course of study. To start the first course of study, select the linked name, which will open up all the workshops in the course.

**How to Request a Mentor:**
At the start of each track, there is a place to request a mentor. The leadership of parishes and schools must make sure to click "start this track and request a mentor from the Diocese of Savannah" Our office will then assign a mentor to you. If you started without a mentor, there will be a box on the right-hand side that says “request a mentor.” Your learners will only be able to request a mentor from your institution.

**Track Set Up:**
Each track is set up into a group of courses, with each course designed to be one year to complete. To start the course, click the blue linked course title, workshops in this course will then become clickable. Each track contains workshops that are categorized into areas of “Mission, Doctrine, Scripture, & Methods.” Leaders also have an additional “Leadership” set of workshops each year. At the bottom in the methods
category, there is an opportunity to choose which method to take based off of the ages served.

*The Learning Format of the Workshops:*

It is essential to know how to navigate the format of the workshops. Familiarize yourself with the components that are present in each workshop. Each workshops contains the following elements:

- Workshop Description
- Workshop Patron Saint & Scripture Quote
- Workshop Objectives
- Resources for Workshops
- PDF Download (good for use in groups)
- Workshop presenters
- Content (Video) and Task format

Responses of the learner are available to the assigned mentor only, no one else. Parish and diocesan leaders are able to monitor the progress of learners through the platform. There are no test or quizzes in this process, but grasping of the concepts is assessed by written responses and discussion with mentors.

*Saving Progress:*

Learners can start and stop workshops at any time. This makes formation much easier to accomplish. It’s essential that learners remember to save their progress after each task to keep all their answers saved. They can choose to submit and send to mentor review when ready.

**Step 3: Make a Plan for the Mentoring of your Learners.**
**Goals of the Mentor:**

Mentors do not catechize, teach, correct, or administrate. They simply accompany the learners through the process of formation through encouragement, discussion, insight, and presence. The goals of the mentor-learner relationship are primarily ensuring that the person is:

- Persevering through the program
- Being formed adequately
- Growing in their relationship with Christ

**Discerning Mentors:**

Parish and school leadership, along with the pastor, should take time to discern who would best mentor those going through the Catechetical Institute's workshops.

We recommend the following criteria for choosing mentors in your parish/school:

- has at least three-five years of experience in the field they will mentor in
- has achieved basic catechist certification
- is willing to go to the Catechetical Institute Mentor training days or to complete the online mentor training course.
- has a developed spiritual life including the areas of prayer, good moral life and holy habits, a faithful sacramental life and an eagerness to do God’s will
- and has been vetted in some way to get a sense of that person’s basic fidelity to the Church, faith life, and general ministerial prudence.

Each parish and school’s needs for mentors will be different. Before deciding which mode of mentoring you will use, first think about the formation needs of your potential learners, and the experience and talent that lie within your community.

- How many have achieved Basic Certification? How many have done additional work in other areas or worked toward On-going I or II or in other programs outside of there? Do any have degree work on theology, or religious education?
- Keep in mind that mentors who have not achieved their required level of certification will still need a mentor themselves either through leadership or a more experienced and well-formed mentor.
- How many can leadership mentor? Essential to our roles as catechetical leaders is mentorship. We may not be able to mentor every single one, but we need to be apart of this journey and experience. Will you mentor only those that will be mentors? Or
will you also mentor catechists? Will you mentor everyone? Is the pastor, deacons, or any other parish leadership willing to help mentor new catechists?

- If your parish has a mission and they have a catechetical program, what are their needs?
- Schools that have teachers who are not catholic and going through basic. Which teachers would work well with these people?

**Different Modes of Mentoring:**

Here are some suggestions of the ways to set up mentoring and working through workshops in your parish or school. Keep in mind that you can choose one of these modes, or employ several different ones.

- **One-on-one:** Ideal where there are a good number of mentors, and many of the mentees are in different places in their formation journey. Where each learner is assigned to a mentor, with the expectation that those mentors will meet individually with their learner. Within this process, a mentor may choose to respond via email, through phone call, or to set up in-person meetings every 4-8 weeks.

- **Catechist/Teacher training** Ideal to incorporate into all parish/schools in part of the way to work toward some workshops. Leaders may choose to offer certain workshops in a group setting with their catechists/teachers, an excellent way to build community among them. We highly recommend doing this at least 1-2 times a year to help keep catechists/teachers connected and giving them some ways to connect with each other while also growing in their formation.

- **Day retreat/workshops:** Ideal to incorporate into all parish/schools in part of the way to work toward some workshops. Same as group workshops but over an entire day. Leaders may schedule a Mass, meals, holy hour, confessions, or other times of prayer in between the video and discussions. While all workshops are spiritually focused, there are some even more focused on this than others. *(The Vocation of the Catechist, the Spiritual Life of the Catechist).* Feel free to contact us for more suggestions and help in building a retreat day from these workshops.

- **Small group mentoring:** Ideal for parishes and schools with a limited # of mentors to learners. Mentors meet with 3-4 members of a small group who are working on the same workshops at the same time. The mentor reviews their responses and has a group discussion with all. **Important to note:** Mentees who are grouped together like this should be in a similar formation place, have some level of openness to each other, and be willing to plan to work through workshops together before meeting.
Some of the topics covered in the responses are personal in nature, and respect should be given to this.

**Offering Workshops in a Group Setting:**

- The leader signs into their account, starts a workshops and projects the video over a tv or projector. The group watches the videos together discusses or does the tasks in each video.
  - Be sure to print the handout for each workshop
  - In these settings, tasks that instruct the learner to speak to the critical friend or to their mentor are accomplished by the group discussion.
  - Sometimes tasks will instruct them to look up a passage in scripture or the catechism, it is good to have these available.
- Budget at least 2-2.5 hours to complete a workshop in a group setting or plan to complete the workshop over two shorter time periods.
- If you don’t finish the whole workshop, learners can be sent home to finish the final sections.
- Larger groups can break off into smaller groups and discussion can be lead by a mentor.
- How to track credit (2 options):
  - Learners log into their personal account on the mobile devices, start the workshop, and write a quick note on the discussion in each task, once the workshops is finished, they can fill out the survey and submit the workshop to be finished.
  - The leader sends an attendance list and the workshops completed in a message so credit for the workshop is given.
- Franciscan’s suggestions on doing workshops in a group setting are available at [https://franciscanathome.com/about](https://franciscanathome.com/about)

**Tips for Choosing and Inviting Mentors:**

- Pray that God leads you to a good discernment of who you should invite to be a mentor.
- Meet with the priests or other leaders in your parish and brainstorm potential mentors together.
- Think outside the box- does your parish have retired teachers or catechists who could make great mentors? Does your parish have a priest or deacon or any religious who would be willing to mentor a few learners?
Consider meeting with a potential mentor and ask them some of the suggested questions below if you don’t know the answers to them.

- Invite your choices personally, explaining the role and why you think they would be an excellent choice for this role.
- Make sure they know about the mentor training days.
- Emphasize the goals of the mentor. The role is one of relationship, not administration or teaching.
- Explain your expectations for how you want them to mentor.
- Get a sense of how many mentees they might be able to take on at this point based of the type of mentoring you will have them do.

**Some Questions to Ask Potential Mentors:**

- Have you taken any other programs or certifications in the field of Catechetics, Theology, or Spirituality?
- Who has been someone that has mentored you in the faith? How did they do that?
- In your spiritual life, please describe what well-developed habits are the mainstays of your continuing formation and growth.
- What ministry areas do you currently anticipate that you might be able to provide mentorship for (such as general catechesis, RCIA, school teaching, youth ministry, etc.)"

**How to Assign Mentors:**

- Consider which learners would connect best with your chosen mentors. Think about things such as background, experience, stage of life, personalities, age groups they work with, etc.
- It is ideal to start make a list of who you will assign to me mentored by who before leaners start signing up.
- As learners request a mentor; an email notification will be sent to all leaders of an institution. Parish or school leadership will have the option to choose the mentor from their institution in a tab similar to the one below.
• Please be aware, since parish and schools will share an account, mentor requests will be sent to both parish and school leadership.

### Step 4: Get Mentors Started

On your institutional account, there is a tab with a link to send directly to your mentors to get them signed up. Once mentors have an account, they need to participate in one of the mentor training opportunities either through the online training track, or the in-person workshop days.

**Accompanying Mentors:**

Besides content and mentorship relations, the Catechetical Institute is interested in transforming parish and school catechetical leaders into leadership mentors. The catechetical leader's most important relationships are with those who help carry out the ministry in the parish. Depending on the size of your parish or school, it may be challenging to have a meaningful and fruitful relationship with all catechists or teachers.

**If implemented correctly:**

• Leader’s energies are mostly aimed at the mentors and developing them as spiritual leaders in the parish.
• The mentor's energies are aimed at learners (catechists and teachers).
• The learner's energies are aimed at the evangelization and formation of the students.

**Tips:**

• Check-in with them periodically (once a month, for example) to make sure they are doing alright. At your check-in:
• Pray with them
• Encourage them in their spiritual life
• Prepare by reviewing the progress of the learners assigned to them
• Ask about their successes and challenges
• Provide them with opportunities for spiritual enrichment (retreats, conferences, workshops, etc.)

**Step 5: Submit any Previous Certifications for Credit:**

Those with Basic Certification obtained through our Diocese (Diocesan Basic, Echoes of Faith Basic, Escuela de Fray Pedro de Corpa, Journey through the Catechism) will transfer to our current Catechist or Teacher Basic Certification with proper documentation.

Other means of formation can receive credit such as:

• Any courses taken in the Ongoing I or Ongoing II certification
• Courses taken in theology, catechetics, spirituality at a catholic college or university
• Catechetical certifications from other dioceses
• Training in a specific catechetical program (ex. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd)
• Attendance at catechetical conferences
• Certain Adult faith formation classes taken at a parish

**Note for High School Theology Teachers:** Any High School theology teachers with a Masters in Theology will need to make an account submit their transcripts through the platform for review. High School Theology teachers hired before July 1st 2020, will receive Master Certification for their degrees. Those hired after July 1st 2020 will have their degrees individually reviewed, and may be required to take certain catechetical methodology workshops if not taken in their coursework.

**To Obtain Credit for Previous Formation:**

Once a learner starts the track on the Diocese of Savannah tracklist, on the right-hand side, they can choose to send a message to our department and upload a file of previous
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Documented Accepted:

- Certificates (from Diocesan, or university, or specific catechetical programs)
- Transcripts from college or university
- Triplicate form
- Individual workshop certificate
- PLU forms
- Sign-in sheet from a workshop
- Completed workshop form from Catechetical Conference
- Certain retreats

Other Means of Credit:
Credit may continue to be earned toward certification for workshops or courses taken in the same topic and essential elements from another Catholic program, such as theology courses or certificates from an accredited Catholic University, certain Adult Formation courses, or specific program training. Consultation with the Department of Catholic Education is essential prior to coursework to ensure all necessary topics of certification are covered. After July 1st, 2020, any outside credit must be approved before work starting this work.

Step 6: Create a Plan for Rolling out in the Parish/School

We recommend leadership plan a roll out event to gather excitement and to onboard learners. This can take place in an annual retreat, in-service, formation day, etc. Please make sure to be aware of the timelines of registration for all catechists and teachers.

Elements to include:

- Explanation of the catechetical institute platform: plan to show them how the platform works, how to sign up, and give them time them to sign up.
- Explanation of diocesan expectations of learners: Handouts designed to give to your learners will be developed and given out at the Mentor Training Days.
• The parish or school plan for workshops and mentorship: go through how you plan to set up mentoring, and if there will be any workshops done as a group
• How to submit credit for equivalency.
• Go through part or all of a workshop: This will help them open up and get excited about how this will be helpful to them and the work they do.

**In-Person Workshop Options:**

Live workshops that will receive credit for online workshops provided are also in development. If a Priest or Deacon, or someone who has obtained the *Master Catechist* certificate would like to offer a live workshop in their parish or region, or if a parish would like to request someone to give a live workshop at their parish, please contact the *Office of Catechesis for Children*.

**Questions?**

Please feel free to contact the Office of Catechesis for Children: sviancourt@diosav.org, (912) 201-4044