



*Diocese of
San Jose*

(Add Parish name)

Catechist Handbook

2011-2012

This Catechist Handbook has been approved by the
Diocese of San Jose as a model for parish catechetical programs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome.....	3
Philosophy.....	4
Goals.....	4
Overview of Parish Catechetical Ministry.....	5-7
Catechist Responsibilities: Meetings, Catechetical Sunday, Safe Environment Requirements, Catechist Formation and Enrichment.....	8-9
Basic Catechist Certification.....	10
Session Planning.....	10
Attendance	
Catechist.....	11
Youth/Child.....	11
Creating and Maintaining a Positive Learning Environment.....	12-13
Maintenance of the Catechetical Environment.....	13
Parental Participation.....	13-14
Outreach Activities.....	14
Children with Disabilities or Special Needs.....	14
Arrival and Dismissal.....	14
Emergency Procedures.....	15
Emergency Evacuation Procedure (Map).....	16
Field Trips and Off-Site Activities.....	17
Communication Procedures.....	17
Pius X Awards and Appendix.....	18

WELCOME

Dear Catechists,

The catechetical staff of our parish welcomes you to Catechetical Ministry and hopes this handbook will provide you with helpful information about catechesis for adults, youth and children. It is important that you read the information in this handbook so that you will know our philosophy, procedures and policies before you begin your ministry as a catechist. We hope that this information will assist you in your role.

Please keep this handbook in a convenient place and refer to it when needed. We welcome any questions you have and look forward to helping you have a wonderful experience in catechetical ministry.

Sincerely,

Director of Catechetical Ministry

CATECHETICAL STAFF AND OFFICE INFORMATION

Name	Title	Phone	Email
------	-------	-------	-------

Office hours:

Fax number:

PHILOSOPHY

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” (Mk 16:15)

(Name of Parish) believes that Catechetical Ministry is a share in Jesus’ own mission of proclaiming the Reign of God. Catechesis is that activity which enables faith to become living, conscious, and active. Catechesis is a life-long process for each individual as well as the work of the entire Catholic Christian community.

Catechists echo the Catholic faith in a way that those being catechized (adults, youth and children) can understand. Catechists must do more than merely teach about their faith. They help adults/youth/children build and strengthen their relationship with Jesus and the Church. Catechists do this by proclaiming the Word, building a sense of community, leading to prayer and worship, and encouraging loving service to others. Catechists also lead others to faith through their example and by living a life consistent with the teachings of the Church.

The Church recognizes the importance of the family in forming children of faith. Therefore, it is a partnership between home and parish to prepare children for the sacramental life of the Church, to help them understand the social justice dimension of discipleship, and to integrate prayer into their lives. The Church assists parents in passing on the faith through the ministry of catechesis.

As catechists you come from many walks of life. You are people who have answered God’s call to minister to our adults/youth/children and who have prepared yourselves in a variety of ways to serve as catechists. Above all, you are people for whom faith is important enough to share. While our parish catechetical ministry does have professional catechetical leaders, the goals of catechetical ministry could not be fulfilled without your service to others in our parish community.

In conclusion, the catechetical process seeks to open adults/youth/children to the discovery of the goodness and beauty of God as reflected in their world, and help them to experience and respond to this world within the Catholic Christian community. It seeks to help them grow further in their faith, their understanding of our Catholic tradition, our unity in Christ and the many gifts of the Holy Spirit.

GOALS

The goals of the Catechetical Ministry Program at *(name of parish)* are:

- Ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ.
- Full participation in the life of the Catholic Church.

OVERVIEW OF PARISH CATECHETICAL MINISTRY

(*Name of Parish*) welcomes all adults, youth and children, baptized or not, to participate in Initiatory and/or Ongoing Catechesis.

Adult Catechesis

“The catechesis of adults... is the principal form of catechesis because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form. The catechetical formation of adults is essential for the Church to carry out the commission given the apostles by Christ. Because of its importance and because all other forms of catechesis are oriented in some way to it, the catechesis of adults must have high priority at all levels of the Church.” *National Directory for Catechesis #48A*

(*Name of parish*) forms and deepens the faith of adults through the sacramental and the prayer life of the Church and works of charity and justice.

(*Choose from the following offerings that apply and provide a short description*)

- Spiritual/prayer group
- Scripture study
- One time presentation on a specific topic
- Series of presentations
- Retreat
- Ministry formation
- Informal small groups
- Parish sponsored service programs
- Formation connected to liturgical year
- Grief Ministry
- Website Faith Formation
- Spiritual Direction
- Other

Catechesis of the Elderly

- Pastoral Care
- Intergenerational dialogue

Catechesis of Young Adults

(*Name of Parish*) invites all young adults, primarily individuals in the 20-39-age range, to join us! Officially known as the *name of group*, we meet regularly for fun events, service projects, and to share our faith experiences with one another.

Catechesis of Adolescents

(Name of parish) provides a comprehensive youth ministry model for high school and middle school youth for many reasons. The variety of the eight components of youth ministry allow for a wide breadth of knowledge and experiences that can help a young person critically examine their faith and mature in their way of thinking about religion and spirituality.

- [High School Youth Ministry](#) (*short description of youth ministry*)
Click [here](#) for a description of a youth ministry catechist
- [Middle School Youth Ministry](#) (*short description of middle school youth ministry*)

Catechesis of Children

Catechetical Standards for 1st- 8th grade

The Catechetical Standards are a set of age-level competencies for the catechetical programs of the Diocese of San Jose to identify the basic things that need to be learned taught and celebrated for children in grades 1-8.

In his letter to parents and guardians on August 20, 2007, Bishop McGrath stated;

"The Diocesan Catechetical Standards will strengthen the partnership that exists between the home and the parish so that children and youth will be able to develop life-giving relationships with Christ and his Church. Not only will these standards enable parents, clergy, catechetical directors/coordinators, catechists, and the entire parish to see what is expected at each grade level, but the standards will also support them in their efforts to contribute to the faith formation process.

Even young children should know that from us, they can receive the authentic teaching of the Church. At the same time, because their many questions may be difficult to answer, you—as parents—will need to seek continuing formation and education to be up to the task.

It is my hope that these Catechetical Standards will assist all who teach children about their faith—parents, clergy, and catechists—to do so fully, faithfully, and confidently."

Grades 1-6 (*short description of program*)

Sacramental Catechesis: (*short descriptions of each of the following*)

- RCIA:
- RCIA adapted for children:

- Restored Order:
- Infant Baptism:
- Confirmation:
- First Eucharist and First Reconciliation:
- Marriage Preparation:

Early Childhood:

(Provide short descriptions for the following that apply)

Intergenerational Catechesis:

Family Catechesis:

Vacation Bible Camp

CATECHIST RESPONSIBILITIES

Now that you have responded to the call to be a catechist at (*Name of parish*) the following will be your primary responsibilities.

CATECHIST MEETINGS

Catechist Meetings are held _____. The purpose of these meetings is for you to know other catechists, to review policies and procedures and to assist you with guidance and resources in your planning for your catechetical sessions. These gatherings provide you with spiritual and ministerial enrichment to help you have a successful experience as a catechist.

CATECHETICAL SUNDAY

The third Sunday in September is Catechetical Sunday. This Sunday is set aside by the United States bishops to recognize and bless all persons who catechize the children/youth/adults in all the parishes in the United States. We schedule a special commissioning for all the catechists of our parish at _____. This gives the parish the opportunity to thank you for what you are going to do in the coming year and for you to give witness to the parish that you are committed to the passing on of faith.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT REQUIREMENTS

In order to insure the protection of children and young people, catechists must be carefully screened, selected and supervised. New volunteers who will have supervisory or disciplinary oversight of children as catechists or aides must be checked and the application forms kept on file in a secure place. Follow the link for the Application Form. Spanish

Volunteer catechists and aides:

- Must be fingerprinted. Follow link for [FINGERPRINTING POLICY](#).
- Must report suspected instances of child abuse.

For the Diocese of San Jose, Catechetical Directors, Coordinators, and volunteer catechists are mandated child abuse reporters and are required by law as “child care custodians” to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Volunteer catechists must be informed of this legal responsibility and asked to sign a Child Abuse Reporting Acknowledgment. Spanish

Follow the link for information on the Child Abuse Reporting Law.

If, in the course of their ministry, a Catechetical Director, Coordinator or catechist reasonably suspects child abuse, he or she must phone Child Protective Services (or 911) as soon as possible and must submit a written report to Child Protective Services (CPS) within 36 hours after the phone call to CPS. A catechist who reasonably suspects child

abuse should obtain a Child Abuse Report form (SS8572)¹ from the Catechetical Director/Coordinator and complete it before making the call to CPS. The pastor should be informed as soon as a report has been made and a copy of the report should be sent to the Diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Adults. If there is a question about whether a particular situation should be reported, the "child care custodian" should call CPS for advise. Calls for the purpose of clarification may be anonymous.

Note: If a catechist tells the Catechetical Director/Coordinator that he or she suspects child abuse, the catechist is the person who is required by law to report the observation to Child Protective Services. Follow links for CHILD ABUSE, [CHILD ABUSE REPORTING FORM](#), and [INSTRUCTIONS TO FILL OUT CHILD ABUSE REPORTING FORM](#).

- Are expected to follow the [Code of Conduct Spanish](#) in the [Diocesan Policy on Sexual Misconduct](#). Spanish
- Are expected to take safe environment training

The Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults offers the diocese ongoing safe environment training via e-learning. All catechists of children and vulnerable adults must take the diocesan online safe environment training every three years by logging onto www.shieldthevulnerable.org and participating in the training in the comfort of your home. Once you register you have up to thirty days to complete your training. Upon completion you will be able to print out your certificate of completion. This certificate as well as the fingerprint clearance is necessary if you plan to minister to children and youth. For additional information please contact the [Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults](#).

CATECHIST FORMATION AND ENRICHMENT

Enrichment opportunities are offered at various times during the year in the parish as well as by the Diocese. These opportunities are offered in the areas of

- Skills and methods development
- Theology and ministry enrichment and
- Spiritual growth

You will be notified when enrichment opportunities are scheduled and are encouraged to attend as many as possible.

Faith beyond 2000, the diocesan catechist formation program, is offered once a month and leads to basic catechist certification as approved by the California Catholic Conference of Bishops. This program provides you with both the opportunity to be personally enriched as well as formed as a catechist. Details follow.

BASIC CATECHIST CERTIFICATION

As servants of the community, catechists have a special responsibility to continue their own spiritual development and to grow in their understanding of Scripture, the teachings of the Church, and in the skills they need to be effective in their ministry.

The [Basic Catechist Certification](#) process provides the kind of catechetical and theological formation that builds catechist skills and confidence and insures effective catechesis in the parish. It is hoped that every catechist will enter the process and become certified within five years.

The process of catechist certification consists of the following components:

- Completion of the Introduction to Catechetical Ministry using *Echoes of Faith* (offered in the parish) – or by completion of *Sembrando la Palabra* (offered by the Diocese).

Note: If a Middle School or Junior High Catechist, the [Middle School Specialization](#) fulfills the Introduction to Catechetical Ministry. If a High School Catechist, completing any six of the [Youth Ministry Workshops](#) fulfills the requirements for the Introduction to Catechetical Ministry.

- Completion of Faith beyond 2000, parts 1 and 2 – offered at the diocesan level
- One year of satisfactory catechetical experience
- An observation and evaluation of one catechetical session.
- An observation and written report by the catechist of a designated catechetical session given by another catechist.

Follow the link for the Faith beyond 2000 basic catechist certification [record form](#).

Follow the link for the [Into the Fields basic catechist formation record form](#).

SESSION PLANNING

The Catechetical staff will assist you in any way we can to plan your catechetical sessions. Please ask – and we will be there for you.

- When you first begin planning a catechetical session, you should expect to spend about one to two or more hours planning. As you become familiar with the materials, your time should decrease to about one hour or more to plan a session.
- Your catechist guide assists you to plan your sessions.
- The catechetical staff will provide you with all necessary supplies and materials you need.
- You will be supplied with a calendar for the year. Please use it to plan your sessions.
- You will receive a list of resources that are available. We also encourage you to be creative and to use any activity you feel will help you successfully catechize.

- If you plan an activity and need materials, please call the office so we can be sure to have the supplies ready.

ATTENDANCE

CATECHIST

Please arrive 20 minutes before the session begins. This will give you time to prepare your space and be ready to welcome the participants as they arrive.

We are fortunate to have a list of persons who will substitute for you if you are unable to be the catechist for a session. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent, please let the coordinator or director know as soon as possible so we can arrange for a substitute. If you find you are unable to be here at the last minute, please call the office and we will make arrangements to have someone cover the session. Call _____ or email at _____. The answering machine is on at all times. We ask that you do not find your own substitute. That is something we do so that we can guarantee that someone we know is teaching the session.

YOUTH/ CHILDREN

You are asked to have the youth sign in at every gathering. A form for this purpose will be provided each week. Please send this form to the office 15 minutes after class starts with the parent helper or with one of the students.

It is important that you keep your master attendance sheet up to date. This sheet is to remain in your room from week to week so you have an attendance list in case of an emergency.

If a youth/child is tardy, you need to send the child or parent to the office to change the attendance slip if you have already sent it in to the office.

Please note on your attendance sheet if a youth/child is tardy. The catechetical staff checks the attendance sheets periodically and follows up on repeated tardiness and absences by calling the parents. We know that it is disruptive to you to have children/youth coming into class late and frequently missing sessions so we try to discover the problem and see if we can help to have the children here regularly and on time.

EARLY DISMISSAL FROM A CATECHETICAL SESSION

If a youth/child must leave a session before the usual dismissal time, a dated written request or authorization signed by the parent or guardian is required. Children/youth will only be released to parents, guardians, or persons designated in writing by the parent. The adult must meet the child in the Catechetical Office and sign him or her out before leaving. Never allow a child to

leave the room on his/her own and wait outside for pick up by the parent. The catechetical director, coordinator, or administrative assistant will collect the child from the class and escort her/him to the Office.

CREATING AND MAINTANING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Youth Code of Conduct

One of your first concerns is to maintain an atmosphere in which the child/youth can form a community, share faith, and enjoy an optimum learning environment.

- Every youth is expected to act in a *Christ-like manner*.
- Every youth is expected to be *respectful*.
- Every youth is expected to follow the *rules and policies* as given.
- Every youth is expected to *cooperate* with classmates, teachers, peers and adult leaders.
- Every youth is expected to *communicate in an appropriate manner*.
- Every youth is expected to *respect the personal boundaries and property* of others.
- Every youth is expected to *promote and support a safe, fun and healthy environment* through positive participation.

No youth will tolerate abuse of any kind!

At the first catechetical gathering, each catechist should discuss conduct rules. Older children may be involved in helping make the rules. The list of rules should be short and to the point. This does make it easier for children to follow the rules. A list of rules might be:

- Youth and children should be on time.
- No youth/ child may leave the room without permission.
- Save all gum for home.
- Each youth/child will respect others by listening and waiting a turn before talking.
- No unchristian language will be used.
- Each child/youth is responsible for their own behavior,
- Each child/youth should keep their hands to themselves.
- Youth and children should silence and put away cell phones and other electronics.

Parents/ guardians will be called if their child/youth repeatedly disrupts the class session. The Director of Catechetical Ministry, in consultation with the pastor, is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations. You are not expected to cope with an impossible situation. It is better to send one youth/child out than to keep an entire group waiting while you deal with the problems. If you find a youth/child does not respond to expectations, please talk with a member of the professional catechetical staff about the situation. We will try to help you find ways of responding to the youth/children. If a youth/child continues to be disruptive, please have an aide accompany him to the office to talk with the director. If you do not have an aide, please send

two children to the office to get the Director or Coordinator to remove the disruptive child from the classroom.

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

(Name of parish) believes that any form of harassment is contrary to the sanctity and integrity of all persons and is committed to providing an environment free of harassment. All children/youth/adults are forbidden from engaging in any form of harassment directed toward another child/youth/adult. This includes verbal, physical, visual, or sexual harassment. Any allegation of harassment will be dealt with in a serious manner according to our harassment policy.

Everyone involved in catechetical ministry have a responsibility to:

1. Conduct themselves in a manner which contributes to a positive environment.
2. Avoid any activity that may be considered discriminatory, intimidating, harassing or bullying.
3. Immediately tell anyone who is harassing or bullying him or her that the behavior is offensive and unwelcome.
4. Cease any behavior upon being told that it is perceived as discriminatory, intimidating, harassing, bullying or unwelcome.
5. Report all incidents of discrimination, harassment or bullying to the Catechetical Director/Coordinator or to the catechist who will inform the Catechetical Director/Coordinator.

MAINTENANCE OF THE CATECHETICAL ENVIRONMENT

It is your responsibility to leave the space as you use as you found it. The rooms are used by other parish organizations during the week. If you move the any furniture or other materials, please make a diagram so you can return them to the proper place. We have a carpet sweeper and vacuum in the office to assist you with clean-up.

If a wastebasket is full, please empty into a large can in the designated area.
Please be sure the youth/children respect the property of others who use the room.

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION

The partnership of home and parish is the ground for nurturing faith. Catechists are encouraged to strengthen the partnership between themselves and the primary educators of children – their parents -- so that children and youth will develop life-giving relationships with Christ and his Church. Communicate regularly with the parents. Send handouts and resources to support the catechetical teaching at home.

VISITORS

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit your classes after checking in with the catechetical office. If a child would like to bring a friend to class, parents are asked to contact the catechetical office to obtain a visitor's information card. This card must be given to you before you allow a child to visit your class. Parents are asked to do this in advance so materials can be prepared for the child who is visiting and for emergency preparedness.

OUTREACH

The parish catechetical ministry has an outreach project for families (*provide a short description of outreach projects.*)

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES OR SPECIAL NEEDS

(*Name of Parish*) desires to provide effective catechesis for those with disabilities. You will be notified in advance by the Director about the possibility of including a child with disabilities in your class. If you think that a child has disabilities or special needs, please talk with the Director to develop a plan for this child. You will be able to talk with the parents, child, and Director and obtain any resources needed to make inclusion successful for everyone. Click [Parent Survey-Catechesis with Children with Special Needs](#) to use with as a resource at the parent interview. Click on [Catechetical Resources for Children and Youth with Disability](#) to support your catechesis for those with disabilities. Ongoing conversations with the parents and Director throughout the year are encouraged to insure continued success.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents have been asked not to drop youth/children off for catechetical or youth ministry no more than 15 minutes before the session begins. Parents of children ages 3 through Grade 2 are asked to escort their children to the room. At the end of the session, children ages 3 through Grade 2 will be kept inside the room with you until a parent/guardian comes for them. You are not to release any child to a person other than a parent or guardian unless an authorized individual has been designated by the parent/guardian in writing to pick up the child. This person needs to check in at the office before picking up the child and get a dismissal authorization form. You need to wait no more than 10 minutes while you clean up your room. Then bring any children/youth still waiting to the Catechetical Office to be picked up. Children in the elementary grades are to wait outside their rooms for their parents/guardians to pick them up. When you leave your room, if there are children waiting, please bring them to the Catechetical Office to be picked up. A child/youth who is walking or riding a bicycle is the responsibility of the parish from the time they arrive on parish property until they leave. Please

do not leave youth/children inside or outside unsupervised by an adult. Junior High and High School has special procedures which are discussed with the parents and the youth at the first class meeting of the year.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

FIRE DRILLS: A Fire Drill will be initiated by the sound of a siren activated by the Director pulling the Fire Emergency Switch. When you hear the siren, have the children line up at the door to the classroom. Evacuate the buildings following the plan. (See page following.) It is important that you leave the plan in the folder in your basket along with your attendance sheet and class emergency cards. When you evacuate, take your attendance sheet, emergency cards and the evacuation plan with you to the field. When you are on the field, line the children up in the direction of the arrows and take roll. We will need to know if a child who is present for class is missing when you have reached the field.

You will be told by the Director or Coordinator when you may return to the rooms.

EARTHQUAKE DRILLS: An Earthquake Drill will be initiated by repeatedly ringing the school bells (15 times). The catechist will give the command, “DROP,” and everyone will drop to the floor, away from the windows, under desks or table where possible. Children will remain in safety positions as long as necessary. You will be directed by voice command when to evacuate the building. Follow the Fire Drill procedures for evacuating the building. In addition, take the Emergency Backpack in the classroom to the field with you. This contains materials that may be needed in case of an actual earthquake.

You will be told by the Director or Coordinator when you may return to the classrooms.

In the event of a real earthquake, follow the “DROP” procedures and you will be directed to evacuate as during a drill. We will not reenter the building but will remain on the field until further instructions are given. Children cannot be released to any adult other than a parent/guardian or emergency listing on the emergency card. You must remain with the children until all children have been released.

*We will try to have Drills on a regular basis. If you hear a bell, don’t panic! Just follow these procedures and everything will be fine. The Director or Coordinator will be responsible for seeing that utilities are turned off and emergency information is available to you. For parishes, with schools, we will follow the school procedures.

LOCK DOWN

CODE RED:

CODE BLUE:

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

FIELD TRIP AND OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Field trips or off-site activities such as service projects and retreats are occasionally scheduled with the permission of the Director. When such an activity is scheduled, the following policies are in effect.

No child/youth may go on a field trip or an off-site activity unless a completed permission form, signed by a parent/guardian, has been submitted to the Catechetical Office. **Verbal permission given over the telephone or in person will not be accepted.** Separate permission forms are required for each field trip or off-site activity.

Parents/guardians driving children/youth to and from field trip or off-site activity locations are required to be fingerprinted, have a current California Driver's license, proof of automobile insurance and a seat belt to accommodate each child in the car.

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

The catechetical staff will publish a Catechist Newsletter each week. This will be placed on top of the materials for your session each week. It is important that you read this before your session because it will contain any information you need to know for that week. If you have a teaching partner, please see that the other copy of the newsletter goes home with one of your partner's children (in your group or in another group). It is important that each catechist know what is happening each week regardless of whether he/she has a teaching responsibility for that week.

Catechists and catechetical staff work in partnership with parents/guardians in helping children/youth grow in faith. Therefore, good communication is essential. If problems develop, they should always be solved at the lowest level whenever possible. If a parent/guardian wishes to talk with you, they may do so after a session or they may make an appointment with you. You may give them your phone number or ask that they go through the Catechetical Office to make the appointment. They may also make an appointment to talk with the director or the coordinator by calling the Catechetical Office at _____

You may communicate with parents/guardians by phone, mail, e-mail, or by sending notes home with the children/youth. You are provided with a class roster to help you do this.

The Catechetical Office publishes a monthly newsletter that is sent home with the youngest child in each family from the last class session each month. If a child is absent on that day, please put it in the attendance folder so it can be sent home the following week. If a child is absent two weeks, please give the newsletter to the coordinator or the director and it will be held in the office to be picked up by the family. This procedure follows for any fliers or other communication that goes home from class sessions to families.

PIUS X AWARDS

Before you think this is going to be all work and no play - - - we would like to let you know that the Diocese of San Jose recognizes catechists who have served in this ministry for 5, 10, 25, 30 years and more! We recognize five years of service here in the parish and the awards for 10 years and above are presented at a Diocesan dinner once a year. We hope you find this ministry rewarding so that we can recognize you at a dinner some year in the future.

We hope this handbook is helpful to you during the year. If you find we have left something out, we would appreciate your letting us know so that it can be added for next year. This book is for you – so keep it handy and help us make it a tool that meets your needs.

APPENDIX

Suggested additions to the Handbook:

Forms

- Attendance
- Permission Slips
- Early Release
- Visitor Information
- Emergency Information

Yearly Calendar

Class Schedule

Class Roster

Catechist and Aide Roster

Resource Papers

Enrichment Materials

Resources

- Books
- Records
- DVD's
- Videos

Web Sites

Map of Parish