



Roman
Catholic
Diocese of
Portland

*encountering Christ
while building toward mission*

Diocesan Catechetical Plan



Office of Lifelong Faith Formation

July 2020–June 2027

Prepared by

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August 2021



DIOCESE OF PORTLAND OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Handing on faith in God is among the most important tasks entrusted to the Church. Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus commissioned his followers:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

This Great Commission is handed on to us by generations of Catholics who echoed the Gospel in their unique times and places. The preface of the new Directory for Catechesis published by the Vatican in July 2020 states “Proclaiming the Gospel is witnessing to an encounter that keeps the focus on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnate in the history of humanity, in order to bring to fulfillment, the revelation of the Father’s saving love.”

This diocesan catechetical plan puts before us the way in which the diocesan Office of Lifelong Faith Formation will help us in our parishes and schools in the diocese of Portland to focus our energies and resources toward a goal of each person encountering Christ in our midst and building each baptized person’s capacities to live out the mission Jesus gave us.

The goals and objectives in the plan respect past efforts to educate and form Catholics, celebrate the gift of faith present among us now, and address changes, opportunities, and challenges that impact how we hand on faith and make Christian disciples into the future. The diocesan Office of Lifelong Formation has already begun using the plan in order to guide decision-making that will help the faithful in our faith communities in encountering Christ. The plan will also assist in building toward mission over the next few years.

As we continue to cooperate with one another in the task of accompanying each other in faith, we will do well in drawing strength from these words of Pope Francis, “Today, too, the Spirit is calling men and women to set out and encounter all those who are waiting to discover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Christian faith.” (Motu Proprio Instituting the Ministry of Catechist, May 2021). Let us continue to pray for one another, especially for those who generously serve the Church through being a catechist and hand on our faith in God, who is love and mercy.

With a prayer that our efforts in proclaiming faith will be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ, our Teacher,

Most Reverend Robert P. Deeley, J.C.D.
Twelfth Bishop of Portland



Office of
Lifelong Faith
Formation

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Introduction

The Office of Lifelong Faith Formation (OLFF) 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” (General Directory for Catechesis, 265). Also, among its tasks as the diocesan catechetical office is “to attend to the analysis of the situation, the coordination with pastoral care as a whole, the development of a plan of catechesis and its practical program and the formation of catechists” (Directory for Catechesis, 417).

The OLFF helps fulfill the vision and directions of the Church by developing the leadership, guidelines, and structures for evangelization and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland in Maine.



Our Diocesan Team

MOST REV. ROBERT DEELEY, J.C.D. Bishop

LORI DAHLHOFF, ED.D. Director

SHAWN GREGORY Coordinator of Youth Ministry

HANNAH GONNEVILLE Assistant Coordinator

GEORGETTE DIONNE Coordinator of Children and Adult Ministries



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Grounding Principles for Catechesis in Maine

Office of
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encountering Christ while building toward mission

Grounding Scripture Ephesians 3:14-19

Brothers and sisters:
I kneel before the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory
to be strengthened with power through his Spirit
in the inner self,
and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;
that you, rooted and grounded in love,
may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Mission To echo the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth,
baptizing and making missionary disciples

Vision Every Catholic in Maine accepts the gift of faith and
wants to keep unpacking that gift for themselves and
others, especially through participating in the
sacramental life of the Church and serving one another
in the world

Values Accompaniment
Listening
Collaboration
Coaching
Relationships of mutual accountability in faith and mission

...the definitive aim
of catechesis is
putting people not
only in touch with,
but in intimacy
and communion
with Jesus Christ...

POPE JOHN PAUL II,
CATECHESIS IN OUR TIME, 5

The whole Christian
community is
responsible for
catechesis, even if
only some receive
from the Bishop the
mandate of being
catechists.

DIRECTORY FOR
CATECHESIS, 296

Office of Lifelong Faith Formation General Responsibilities



Sacrament Formation

Christian Initiation (RCIA), Infant Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Eucharist, Matrimony

Annual Diocesan Liturgies: Rite of Election, assist with Chrism Mass, Neophyte Mass, Silver and Gold Anniversary Mass, Regional Confirmations for Catholic Teens/Adults



Guide Comprehensive, Systematic Catechesis for Children and Youth

Including annual Circle of Grace training (safe environment requirements)



Training, Support, and Ongoing Development of Catechists, Catechetical Leaders, and Pastoral Life Coordinators

Including supporting priests and deacons in evangelization and catechesis



Pastoral Ministry for Lifelong Faith Formation

Adult faith formation, comprehensive ministry with youth including fall retreats and spring state convention, young adult engagement, Project Rachel (post-abortion healing ministry), lay formation and continuing education grant process, annual men's and women's conferences, leader and parishioner training for *Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*



Why a Diocesan Catechetical Plan

Discernment is a central practice of missionary discipleship. In seeking to follow God's will and to be responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to our community, clear priorities help in sifting through options that are more or less likely help fulfill our mission. Thus, the goals and objectives in a diocesan catechetical plan help the bishop and his staff say "yes" and "no" to opportunities and suggestions based on how they will both build toward mission and respond to the situations of the parishes, Catholic schools, and wider community in Maine.

The plan broadly outlines how the OLFF intends to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to the diocesan catechetical office. The aim is for every Catholic in Maine to encounter Christ and actively contribute to the Church's mission. Reports on OLFF efforts and discerned strategies will be communicated widely, at a minimum in an annual report of activities that took place in the prior fiscal year along with indicators of achievement and any needed adjustments to the plan.

Using the Plan

The OLFF staff will use the plan in decision-making and as a common reference for guiding parishes in local catechetical efforts over seven fiscal years: from June 2020 through July 2027 (FY21 through FY27). The indicators of success for each objective serve as benchmarks for assessing how OLFF is working toward meeting the stated goals and identifying adaptations needed to meet the overall mission and vision of the diocesan catechetical office.

While the goals and objectives are realistic, achieving them will stretch the diocese, parishes, and Catholic schools beyond our typical modes of working together. This is why specific strategies for the stated objectives will emerge during plan implementation and in collaboration with parishes and Catholic schools. In the end, this plan can only be accomplished through working with the Holy Spirit in fostering a state-wide evangelizing community that forms missionary disciples through faithful and effective faith formation for adults, youth, and children in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland.

Without a vision
the people lose
restraint; but
happy is the one
who follows
instruction

PROVERBS 29:18

Analysis of the Diocesan Situation

This catechetical plan is the result of a multi-year analysis of the state of evangelization and catechetical conditions in the diocese. Based on a broad consultation process of listening, assessment, and feedback, the OLFF discerned three primary needs that require special focus to achieve our vision:

- training and ongoing formation for catechists and leaders,
- renewing sacramental life and practices in parishes, and
- identifying effective structures and models for lifelong faith formation.

OLFF recognizes these needs as the priorities that shape diocesan planning and work for the next seven years.

Overview of Priorities Consultation Process

An initial survey of parish catechetical leaders in Fall 2017 informed subsequent individual and group conversations about the realities of sharing the Gospel and handing on faith in Maine. In addition to the research for the diocesan quinquennial report submitted to the Vatican in 2019, the staff of the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation (OLFF) gathered input for a diocesan catechetical plan through regular interactions with priests, parish leaders, visits to parishes, and conversations at four regional gatherings of pastors and catechetical leaders in Summer and Fall 2019. The experiences, hopes, and challenges surfaced were aggregated into fifteen (15) areas of ministry concern:

- Catechesis/faith formation with adults
- Catechesis/faith formation with families
- Catechesis/faith formation with children
- Catechesis/faith formation with teens
- ✦ Catechist training and formation
- Circle of Grace implementation (safe environment training for children and teens)
- ✦ Developing lay leaders within the parish
- Evaluating or recommending catechetical textbooks, materials, and other resources
- Guidelines for organizing or leading parish catechesis and faith formation efforts
- Leader's ministerial or professional development
- ✦ Pastoral concerns (for example: Mass attendance, Project Rachel, family situation, etc)
- ✦ Sacramental preparation: Baptism of Infants
- ✦ Sacramental preparation: Confirmation and 1st holy Communion (include Reconciliation)
- ✦ Sacramental preparation: Marriage
- Sacramental preparation: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Key Findings from a February 2020 Survey

Clergy and lay catechetical leaders helped further refine priorities through a survey. The majority of respondents agreed that the OLFF provides what they need to be successful as parish catechetical leaders in general. The five most common areas reported as requiring more help and direction are summarized as three urgent needs: (1) developing lay leaders and catechists, (2) sacramental formation for marriage and infant baptism, and (3) addressing the pastoral realities of living and passing on the Catholic faith.

Plan Overview

Analyzing the current conditions in the diocese in light of the Church's vision for evangelization and catechesis leads to the three goals and five objectives OLFF will use to prioritize work that complements the office's regular duties.

Goals and Objectives

Goal A

Parishes and Catholic schools engage in a common multi-pronged approach to catechist and pastoral leadership development to:

- a. expand the pool of potential local leaders for evangelization and catechesis**
- b. increase the competence and effectiveness of those currently serving in parishes and Catholic schools, and**
- c. strengthen collaboration between clergy, laity, and consecrated religious to help parish priests, especially pastors, fulfill their catechetical tasks as envisioned in the *Directory for Catechesis* (Vatican, 2020)**

Objective A.1: Implement a common set of expectations for catechist and catechetical leader formation that creates a pipeline for ongoing ministry development

Objective A.2: Initiate a bi-annual visitation process where members of the OLFF team meet in parishes with at least the pastor/administrator and primary catechetical leaders to learn about current conditions and help parish assess current efforts and future possibilities for evangelization and catechesis

Goal B

Revitalize parishes as catechetical communities rooted in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist as essential encounters with Christ

Objective B.1: Collaborate with other diocesan offices to assist parishes in the process of re-engaging people in parish life that emerges as pandemic conditions continue to change

Objective B.2: Work with the Office of Canonical Services to update formation guidelines for infant baptism and marriage



encountering
Christ while
building
toward mission



May the discernment of the gifts that the Holy Spirit never fails to grant to the Church sustain [bishops'] efforts to make the lay ministry of Catechist effective for the growth of their communities.

POPE FRANCIS
MOTU PROPRIO
INSTITUTING
THE MINISTRY OF
CATECHIST, 11



encountering
Christ while
building
toward mission

Goal C

Parish catechetical efforts are “working” in fostering living encounters with Christ and ripening initial encounters through organic, comprehensive, and systematic catechesis for children, youth, and adults that leads to missionary discipleship (*Directory for Catechesis, 75-78*)

Objective C.1: Articulate a general framework for outreach and lifelong faith formation efforts aimed toward the living encounter with Christ and participating in the mission of the Church that will:

- a. be applicable in diverse settings (rural, urban, small communities, regional collaborations, differing languages or cultures)
- b. serve as a guide for parishes and Catholic schools in planning, assessing, and adapting local efforts in making disciples
- c. foster healthy family life that naturally embodies and forms Catholic faith

Overall Theme and Assumptions

All of the goals and objectives detailed in this plan aim toward Catholics of all ages in Maine ***encountering Christ while building toward mission***. As we collaborate with the Holy Spirit in this work, we anticipate seeing indicators of first fruits of success in parishes as well as looking toward the long-term horizon of vibrant communities of missionary disciples across the whole diocese.

In addition, certain assumptions – or grounding principles – will guide how the plan is implemented, assessed, and adjusted from now through June 2027. This document sets out this information in a variety of ways to help parishes and parishioners see how OLFF will steward resources entrusted to the bishop as well as how local communities can best benefit from our collective efforts. All aspects of this plan will give glory to the Father as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and accompany one another in encountering the Son, Jesus Christ.

Diocesan Implementation Timeline with Prioritized Needs and Goals

July 2020 (FY21)

Prioritized Need: TRAINING AND ONGOING FORMATION FOR CATECHISTS AND LEADERS

Goal A

Parishes and Catholic school engage in a common multi-pronged approach to catechist and pastoral leadership development to:

- a. expand the pool of potential local leaders for evangelization and catechesis,
- b. increase the competence and effectiveness of those currently serving in parishes and Catholic schools, and
- c. strengthen collaboration between clergy, laity, and consecrated religious to help parish priests, especially pastors, fulfill their catechetical tasks as envisioned in the *Directory for Catechesis* (Vatican, 2020)



July 2021(FY22)

Prioritized Need: RENEWING SACRAMENTAL LIFE AND PRACTICES IN PARISHES, especially participation in Sunday Eucharist and connections to households as a locus for living out the sacramental graces of baptism and matrimony

Goal B

Revitalize parishes as catechetical communities rooted in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist as essential encounters with Christ



July 2022(FY23)

July 2023(FY24)

July 2024(FY25)

Prioritized Need: IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE STRUCTURES AND MODELS FOR LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION, especially for engaging families and adults

Goal C

Parish catechetical efforts are working in fostering living encounters with Christ and ripening initial encounters through organic, comprehensive, and systematic catechesis for children, youth, and adults that leads to missionary discipleship (*Directory for Catechesis, 75-78*)



July 2025(FY26)

July 2026(FY27)

June 2027 (FY27)



encountering
Christ while
building
toward mission

Goal A: Catechist and Pastoral Leadership Development

Parishes and Catholic school engage in a common multi-pronged approach to catechist and pastoral leadership development to:

- expand the pool of potential local leaders for evangelization and catechesis,
- increase the competence and effectiveness of those currently serving in parishes and Catholic schools, and
- strengthen collaboration between clergy, laity, and consecrated religious to help parish priests, especially pastors, fulfill their catechetical tasks as envisioned in the *Directory for Catechesis*

Objective A.1 (June 2020-December 2024)

Implement a common set of expectations for catechist and catechetical leader formation that creates a pipeline for ongoing ministry development



Indicators of OLFF Success

- Publish "Pathways for Formation and Certification of Catechists and Catechetical Leaders" and related tools
- 150 adults across the diocese complete "Pathways" Level 1 (Basic Catechist)
- 25 parish catechetical and pastoral leaders engage with OLFF in a reflective process of annual ministerial formation planning to enhance their human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development ("Pathways" Levels 3 or 4)



How a Parish Gains Most Benefit

- Identify one person to be the promoter of and contact for the *Echoes of Faith* diocesan-wide adult faith formation program (Pathways Level 1)
- Have 5 or more adults from the parish complete "Pathways" Level 1 (Basic Catechist), with at least 3 of them being certified as a catechist
- Ensure leader(s) with responsibilities for faith formation connect with OLFF at least 6 times per year
- Support leaders' ministerial development by budgeting time and money for related activities
- Engage pastoral council in conversations about succession planning for key ministry leaders

Long-term Impact of Success for the Catholic People in the Diocese of Portland

Every parish has at least one well trained, competent leader who works along with the pastor/administrator in coordinating local efforts in faithful and effective lifelong faith formation AND is actively nurturing two or more adults toward serving as a catechetical leader in the future

Objective A.2 (August 2021 through June 2024)

Initiate a bi-annual visitation process where members of the OLFF team meet in parishes with at least pastor/administrator and primary catechetical leaders to learn about current conditions and help parish assess current efforts and future possibilities for evangelization and catechesis



Indicators of OLFF Success

- Every parish has had at least one on-site visitation with follow-up to celebrate successes and address challenges
- OLFF uses discussions and discoveries in parish visitation process to create a basic framework for the essential components of parish evangelization and catechesis that will be used to accomplish Goal C



How a Parish Gains Most Benefit

- Welcome OLFF for visit and communicate follow up to the parish
- Create an annual summary of intentional efforts in evangelization and catechesis for use in ongoing assessment and planning in light of current C.L.I. goals

Long-term Impact of Success for the Catholic People in the Diocese of Portland

Pastors and parishioners are conversant in how the parish is faithful and effective in providing faith formation for adults, youth, and children, especially families

Progress from July 2020 to June 2021

While the Covid19 pandemic delayed the publication of the full diocesan catechetical plan, the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation started in June 2020 to work toward Goal A, Objective 1: *Implement a common set of expectations for catechist and catechetical leader formation that creates a pipeline for ongoing ministry development.* The resulting "Pathways for Formation and Certification of Catechists and Catechetical Leaders" is included with this version of the plan along with a brief description of reflective process of annual ministerial formation planning for catechetical leaders. OLFF has also launched *Echoes of Faith* catechist training program as a path toward Level 1 Basic Catechist certification and assisted the Catholic schools office in organizing the *Catechism of Catechists* course for non-Catholic teachers.

Pathways for Formation and Certification of Catechists and Catechetical Leaders

serving Diocese of Portland Catholic parishes and schools

THREE KEY AREAS IN MINISTERIAL FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- A. BEING – Maturing as a person of faith (Human and Spiritual Formation)
- B. KNOWING – Knowledge of the message, of those to whom the message is transmitted, and of the social context in which they are living (Intellectual Formation)
- C. SAVOIR-FAIRE – Art of how to transmit the message effectively (Pastoral and Pedagogical Formation)

All levels assume recognized proficiency and or certification in prior level(s). Comprehensive, systematic catechesis is best delivered by certified catechists/religion teachers with support from certified parish and Catholic school catechetical leaders.

LEVEL 1: BASIC CATECHIST

Who: **Any fully initiated Catholic adult (over 18 years old)**

Outcomes: **Grow as a person of faith; understand foundational Catholic beliefs; develop effective teaching/facilitating skills; and recognize need for own ongoing training and development for ministry**

Paths: a) *Echoes of Faith Emmaus Edition* catechist formation program [11 modules, community-track with Office of Lifelong Faith Formation for certification]

OR b) Non-Catholic faculty in Catholic schools: St Joseph College
The Catechism for Catechists course [online]

Practices: **1) Participation in parish sacramental life, especially Sunday Mass**
2) At least 5 hours of ongoing ministerial development each year

LEVEL 2: ADVANCED CATECHIST

Who: **Certified catechists interested in taking on more leadership in evangelization and catechesis**

Outcomes: **Establish practices for ongoing spiritual growth; develop skills for theological reflection; enhance skills for evangelization and catechesis with a variety of people; and a plan for own ongoing training and development for ministry**

Paths: a) St Joseph College Certificate in Catholic Catechesis [six undergraduate credits]

OR b) University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)
Level 1 Certificate in Catechesis [six courses]

OR c) University of Notre Dame STEP Certificate in Theology in area of Catechesis
[six courses]

Practices: **1) Participation in parish sacramental life, especially Sunday Mass**
2) At least 10 hours of ongoing ministerial development each year

LEVEL 3: BASIC LEADER

Who: **Experienced catechists who are ready to deepen their involvement in the catechetical ministry of the Church and called to provide catechetical training for others in parishes and Catholic schools as a master catechist**

Outcomes: **Develop the core competencies described in the professional standards for lay ecclesial ministers**

Paths: a) Bachelors in Theology, Education or related field
OR b) University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) Certificate in Youth Ministry or Level 2 Certificate in Catechesis

Practices: **1) Participation in parish sacramental life, especially Sunday Mass
2) At least 20 hours of ongoing ministerial development each year
3) Engage in reflective process of annual ministerial formation planning
4) Membership in state and/or national catechetical or Catholic education ministry organization**

LEVEL 4: ADVANCED LEADER

Who: **Catechetical leaders with 5 or more years of experience called to serve as peer coaches to others in ministry. Experienced mentors may also be formed as potential candidates for diocesan staff**

Outcomes: **Synthesize experience and learning in relation to national standards for lay ecclesial ministry and apply it in local and regional settings**

Paths: a) Masters in Theology, Education, Pastoral Ministry or related field
OR b) National certification as a Lay Ecclesial Minister with specialization appropriate to leadership role (evangelization, catechesis, pastoral ministry)
OR c) University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) certificate in pastoral ministry focus (adult formation leadership, special needs, ...)

Practices: **1) Participation in parish sacramental life, especially Sunday Mass.
2) At least 20 hours of ongoing ministerial development each year
3) Mentor in reflective process of annual ministerial formation planning
4) Membership in state and/or national catechetical or Catholic education ministry organization**

Prioritized Need: RENEWING SACRAMENTAL LIFE AND PRACTICES IN PARISHES, especially participation in Sunday Eucharist and connections to households as a locus for living out the sacramental graces of baptism and matrimony.

Goal B: Revitalizing Parish Sacramental Life

Revitalize parishes as catechetical communities rooted in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist as essential encounters with Christ

Objective B.1 (July 2021-June 2024)

Collaborate with other diocesan offices to assist parishes in the process of re-engaging people in parish life that emerges as pandemic conditions continue to change



Indicators of OLFF Success

- Majority of parishes are regularly offering adults avenues to deepen knowledge about the Sacraments and the graces offered through them, particularly about encountering the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and healing through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation
- Mass attendance levels exceed those reported in October 2019 counts
- All parishes in the diocese implement at least one element of the Eucharistic Revival organized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, especially those that involve local outreach (slated to begin 2022)



How a Parish Gains Most Benefit

- Use at least two different ways for parishioners of different ages/situations to learn more about encountering Christ in the Sacraments
- Explicitly communicate how parish service and pastoral efforts connect to celebrating the Sacraments and discipleship
- Implement one or more elements of the national Eucharistic Revival organized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Long-term Impact of Success for the Catholic People in the Diocese of Portland

New faces are regularly seen in parish efforts, especially through outreach that extends beyond parish grounds, due to vibrancy of personal life in Christ and consistent connections through the Church

Objective B.2 (July 2022-December 2025)

Work with the diocesan Office of Canonical Services in consultation with parishes to update formation guidelines for infant baptism and marriage



Indicators of OLFF Success

- Updated guidelines are readily available to parish leaders and parishioners
- Parishes are supporting one another in the shift to accompanying parents and couples beyond the date of the sacramental celebration of baptism or matrimony
- 40% of households engaged in immediate sacramental formation maintain an active relationship with parishioners for at least 3 years beyond the celebration date



How a Parish Gains Most Benefit

- Allocate resources to accompany engaged and newly married couples beyond the day of the sacramental celebration of matrimony
- Allocate resources to accompany parents with a new child beyond the day of the sacramental celebration of baptism
- Do a census of couples who have gone through the parish sacramental preparation process for marriage or infant baptism in the last 5 years to see how many are still connected to the parish in some way; talk with those whom you can locate to learn what was most and least meaningful to them in deepening their relationship with Christ and being able to access the graces offered in those sacraments

Long-term Impact of Success for the Catholic People in the Diocese of Portland

Shifting from focusing on "sacrament preparation" that ends with liturgical celebrations to "sacrament formation" that provides remote and immediate preparation as well as expectations for ongoing catechesis beyond the celebration will lead to majority of children, youth, and adults continuing to be active in the sacramental life of the parish

Prioritized Need: IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE STRUCTURES AND MODELS FOR LIFELONG FAITH FORMATION, especially for engaging families and adults

Goal C: Catechesis that Works

Parish catechetical efforts are working in fostering living encounters with Christ and ripening initial encounters through organic, comprehensive, and systematic catechesis for children, youth, and adults that leads to missionary discipleship (see *Directory for Catechesis*, 75-78)

Objective C.1 (July 2024 - June 2027)

Articulate a general framework for outreach and lifelong faith formation efforts aimed toward the living encounter with Christ and participating in the mission of the Church (*Directory for Catechesis*, 75) that will:

- a. be applicable in diverse settings (rural, urban, small communities, regional collaborations, differing languages or cultures)
- b. serve as a guide for parishes and Catholic schools in planning, assessing, and adapting local efforts in making disciples
- c. foster healthy family life that naturally embodies and forms Catholic faith



Indicators of OLFF Success

- Regularly updated ministry handbook for parish pastoral and catechetical leaders
- Orientation manual and process for newly hired/delegated pastoral or catechetical leaders
- General diocesan evangelization and catechesis framework is used as the common reference point by priests and parish leaders, especially in biannual visits with OLFF



How a Parish Gains Most Benefit

- Create and share faith formation handbook for catechists and parishioners
- Annually assess local efforts using the diocesan evangelization and catechesis framework
- Integrate youth and family accompaniment as parts of the overall parish plan for forming and educating missionary disciples (rather than only addressing them as isolated groups)

Long-term Impact of Success for the Catholic People in the Diocese of Portland

Easily redirect energy spent on lamenting the past, voicing frustration with the present, or despairing about the future toward echoing the Good News of Jesus Christ: sharing evidence of faith growth in parishioners, consistent engagement of the baptized, and various models that provide effective catechesis across the lifespan

But careful!
 Jesus does not say:
 Go off and do things
 on your own. No!
 That is not what he is
 saying. Jesus says:
 Go, for I am with you!
 This is what is so
 beautiful for us;
 it is what guides us.
 If we go out to bring
 his Gospel with love,
 with a true apostolic
 spirit, with *parrhesía*,
 he walks with us,
 he goes ahead of us,
 he gets there first

POPE FRANCIS,
 ADDRESS TO
 PARTICIPANTS IN THE
 YEAR OF FAITH
 INTERNATIONAL
 CONGRESS ON
 CATECHESIS



encountering
 Christ while
 building
 toward mission

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Office of Lifelong Faith Formation (OLFF) helps our local bishop fulfill the vision and directions of the Church by developing the leadership, guidelines, and structures for evangelization and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland. This diocesan catechetical plan maps out where the OLFF will give special attention and energy in the next few years to help the people, parishes, and Catholic schools in Maine encounter Christ and build toward mission. The immediate next step is to communicate the plan to those responsible for evangelization and catechesis in Maine. In this way, parishes and Catholic schools can utilize the diocesan plan to inform and shape local efforts toward our common aim on knowing, loving, and serving Christ.

Like most of the development in the Church, this written plan reflects where the Holy Spirit has already been at work among the faithful and will roll out gradually to bear fruit. The "already, but not yet fully realized" nature of catechesis and a catechetical plan necessitate regular assessment and communication of efforts and outcomes. Each January and July the OLFF staff will review activities and results as well as current conditions in parishes and schools in comparison to the plan for budgeting and resource allocation purposes. Each August, findings and next steps will be reported to the bishop, priests, catechetical leaders and all the faithful in Maine.

For example, efforts toward Goal A launched in Fall 2020 with opening enrollment in the diocesan-wide adult faith formation program utilizing *Echoes of Faith Emmaus* edition online basic catechist training. To date, seventy-eight (78) adults from fifteen (15) different parishes are participating in this program and recruitment efforts continue, with Catholic school personnel starting in Fall 2021. This means that in the first year of using the diocesan catechetical plan to focus our work, we are half-way toward achieving OLFF's goal of 150 participants in the program, with more work to do to reach the aim of every parish benefiting from a common catechist and leadership development process.

While the goals in the plan are for the diocesan office, success will show in the fruits evident in the lives of individuals and parishes across the state. May God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit continue to guide us as we work together to echo the Gospel and make disciples, encountering Christ while building toward mission.

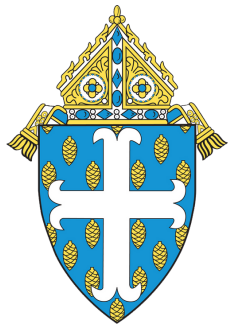
Let us continue to pray for one another as we live out this plan

Brothers and sisters:

*I kneel before the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory
to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self,
and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;
that you, rooted and grounded in love,
may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones
what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Ephesians 3:14–19





encountering
Christ while
building
toward mission



Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland Catechetical Plan for June 2020 - July 2027



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