



**Comprehensive  
Plan for the  
Formation of  
Catechetical  
Leader in the  
Third Millennium**

► A Companion to a Statement by the  
Catholic Bishops of New York State

*The Comprehensive Plan for the Formation of Catechetical Leaders in the Third Millennium* is developed in four sections.

Section 1, *The Formation of the Catechetical Leader*, identifies the competencies and skills specific to the five areas of catechetical leadership that are developed in *The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium*, a statement of the Catholic Bishops of New York State.

Section 2, *Leadership Qualities and Management Skills*, specifies the essential leadership qualities and management skills that ought to be integral to any formation program for catechetical leaders today.

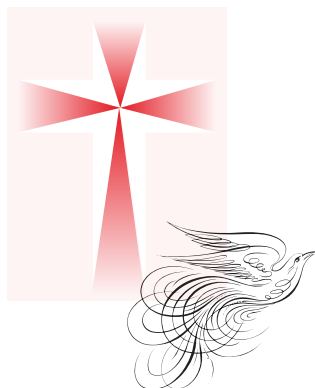
Section 3, *Implementing the Vision*, offers a comprehensive plan to realize the vision presented in *The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium*.

Section 4, *Sustaining the Vision*, offers a systematic summary of those competencies and skills essential for contemporary parish catechetical leadership. This information may be used in a variety of ways, including as a tool for performance evaluation and self-appraisal, in areas for professional development, and so on.



Abbreviations used in this document

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| GDC   | General Directory for Catechesis             |
| NDC   | National Directory for Catechesis            |
| USCCB | United States Conference of Catholic Bishops |



## Section 1

### The Formation of the Catechetical Leader

FORMATION PROGRAMS FOR effective catechetical leaders should be based on the USCCB's *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*. In addition, formation for catechetical leaders in the third millennium should include competencies and skills specific to Evangelization, The Changing Parish Landscape, The Family, Cultural Realities, and The Rapid Development of Technology. In order to develop and/or support catechetical leaders in their initial and ongoing education and formation, formation programs should include:

#### 1. Evangelization

- ▶ research, study and networking to address the full scope of evangelization and catechesis;
- ▶ the use of technology for research and the identification of resources;
- ▶ a mentoring process for the catechetical leader;
- ▶ opportunities to review and evaluate programs, processes and resources developed by publishers, dioceses and organizations in areas of catechesis and evangelization.

#### 2. The Changing Parish Landscape

- ▶ research and evaluation of catechetical methods and programs that address contemporary parish life and structures;
- ▶ use of media and technology for effective program implementation;
- ▶ information regarding diocesan catechist formation programs, workshops and conferences;
- ▶ ongoing education and spiritual formation opportunities that support lifelong faith formation;
- ▶ endorsement of attendance at regional, diocesan and national meetings, workshops and conferences that promote the effective training of catechists and parishioners of all ages;
- ▶ information about parish and diocesan safe environment mandates and their implementation throughout the diocese.

### **3. The Family**

- ▶ recognition of the primacy of the “church of the home” in the formation of children with parents as leaders of faith;
- ▶ information concerning complexities of today’s family with its cultural, political, socio-economic, generational and relational issues;
- ▶ opportunities to develop the skills needed to welcome people with special needs and their families into the faith community;
- ▶ research on the effects of contemporary media on the family;
- ▶ resources for families of newly baptized infants, preschoolers, children, teens, young adults and parents themselves to promote family faith development;
- ▶ outreach to families, including single young adults, who are not engaged in Catholic school, parish religious education programs or youth ministry;
- ▶ information about the impact of technology on today’s family and the education of today’s children, youth and young adults;
- ▶ demographics of the parish with regard to families, young adults, seniors and people with special needs.

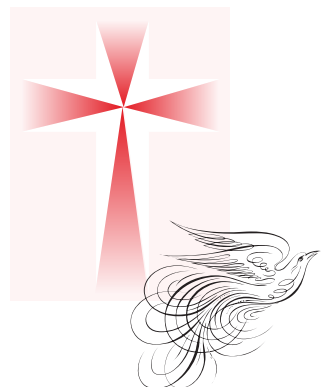
### **4. Cultural Realities**

- ▶ constitutive elements of culture, including its theological, sociological, spiritual, historical, psychological, linguistic and economic aspects;
- ▶ various techniques and spiritual programs to assist parishioners of all ages in examining their beliefs in light of Church teaching as a unified whole;
- ▶ a curriculum based on NDC #21:
  - to discover the seeds of the Gospel that may be present in the culture;
  - to know and respect the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture of the persons to whom it is addressed;
  - to recognize that the Gospel message is both transcendent and immanent—it is not bound by the limitations of any single human culture, yet it has a cultural dimension, that in which Jesus of Nazareth lived;
  - to proclaim the transforming and regenerating force that the Gospel works in every culture;

- to promote a new enthusiasm for the Gospel in accordance with evangelized culture;
- to use the language and culture of the people as a foundation to express the common faith of the Church;
- to maintain the integral content of faith and avoid obscuring the content of the Christian message by adaptations that would compromise or diminish the deposit of faith.

## **5. The Rapid Development of Technology**

- ▶ knowledge about how and why people use technology;
- ▶ basic knowledge concerning the effective and appropriate use of contemporary media and communication technology tools for catechetical formation, especially the effective and appropriate use of social media;
- ▶ openness to new technologies as they develop and the ability to use online opportunities designed to introduce and/or update knowledge and use of technology.



## Section 2

# Leadership Qualities and Management Skills

### 1. Leadership Quality: Embracing and Articulating the Vision

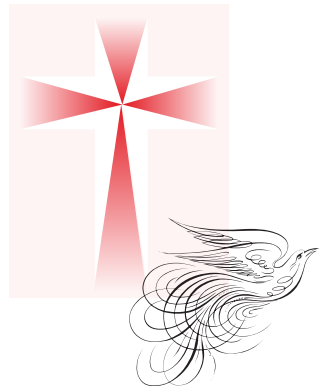
#### Associated Management Skills:

- ▶ ensuring that parish catechists understand the catechetical vision of the parish/diocese/universal Church;
- ▶ ensuring that the vision is clearly stated;
- ▶ allowing for individuals to identify and use their gifts for the common good of realizing the catechetical vision;
- ▶ developing and evaluating catechetical goals and objectives;
- ▶ recruiting, training, and supporting catechists and other volunteers;
- ▶ developing and working with agendas that relate to a better understanding of the vision;
- ▶ assessing and using appropriate communication skills to express the vision.

### 2. Leadership Quality: Initiating and Leading Change

#### Associated Management Skills:

- ▶ ability to analyze and understand current realities;
- ▶ understanding basic parish structures;
- ▶ exploring options for new parish/regional models;
- ▶ delegating responsibility during and after the change;
- ▶ developing appropriate marketing skills to help explain the change;
- ▶ working to ensure that a common vision is presented and understood.



### **3. Leadership Quality: Building Unity**

#### **Associated Management Skills:**

- ▶ ability to assess current barriers to unity and help to reduce those barriers;
- ▶ understanding group dynamics;
- ▶ building and maintaining a positive work environment with pastors and peers;
- ▶ developing strategies for conflict management;
- ▶ listening and dialoging with all groups and individuals;
- ▶ ability to set proper boundaries.

### **4. Leadership Quality: Discerning and Using Gifts**

#### **Associated Management Skills:**

- ▶ working closely with catechists to discern their gifts;
- ▶ promoting effective use of listening skills;
- ▶ providing constructive feedback to individuals and groups who are in the process of discernment;
- ▶ developing a commitment to diversity and dialogue;
- ▶ including and fostering different gifts that could be used for the common good.

### **5. Leadership Quality: Monitoring Accountability**

#### **Associated Management Skills:**

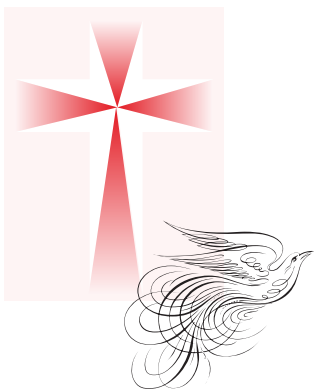
- ▶ developing and discerning funding sources/budget;
- ▶ coordinating resources of parish, parishes or region;
- ▶ understanding one's own management skills and the management of skills of others involved in parish, parishes or region;
- ▶ developing a network of accountability within the parish, parishes or region.

## Section 3

### Implementing the Vision

TO ENSURE THE ONGOING implementation of the vision presented in *The Catechetical Leader in the Third Millennium*, the Council of New York State Directors of Religious Education will:

- ▶ develop a module for clergy formation on the role of pastor as chief catechist in the parish;
- ▶ develop and maintain a list of current resources (people, print and digital) for each of the competencies named in the document;
- ▶ develop online resources and social media to communicate the vision to the broadest audience;
- ▶ develop an online resource for formation in the area of leadership skills for catechetical leaders;
- ▶ coordinate with Catholic colleges and universities that offer programs in religious studies and other related major areas of study to integrate these competencies into their curricula;
- ▶ cooperate with existing diocesan formation programs to integrate these competencies into their curricula;
- ▶ identify resources, both financial and personnel, to assist in the development of accessible online formation for catechetical leaders in these competencies;
- ▶ identify various models for formation in each competency area.





## Section 4

### Sustaining the Vision

“THE SINGLE MOST CRITICAL factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader” (NDC, #54, B5). To participate in the Church’s mission of evangelization and catechesis effectively, the catechetical leader in the third millennium requires a particular set of competencies and skills as noted below. The following section, “Sustaining the Vision,” lends itself to multiple uses. It may be used:

- ▶ by the pastor as he considers the qualifications for hiring a catechetical leader;
- ▶ by the parish catechetical leader and/or the pastor to identify competencies and skills for ongoing faith formation and professional development;
- ▶ as a self-appraisal tool for the Catechetical Leader;
- ▶ as a guide for the Catechetical Leader in establishing personal goals;
- ▶ as criteria for the performance evaluation of the Catechetical Leader.

#### 1. Evangelization

**Does the Catechetical Leader personally accept and live the Gospel and the teachings of the Church?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader’s:**

- ▶ regular attendance at Sunday Liturgy;
- ▶ participation in the sacramental life of the Church;
- ▶ active participation in parish life;
- ▶ personal witness to ethical choices that are in harmony with Church teaching;
- ▶ familiarity with diocesan and parish catechetical guidelines.

**Is the Catechetical Leader committed to ongoing spiritual formation?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader’s:**

- ▶ desire to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ;
- ▶ commitment to personal and communal prayer;
- ▶ participation in opportunities for spiritual formation and renewal.

**Does the Catechetical Leader understand and articulate the Catholic faith in the areas of Sacred Scripture, Christology, Sacraments, Morality, Ecclesiology, Liturgy, Spirituality/Prayer, Christian Anthropology, Ecumenism and the Church's social teachings as expressed in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and other relevant Church documents?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ formation and education in the areas noted above;
- ▶ experience as a catechist in a Catholic school and/or parish faith formation program;
- ▶ knowledge of the Catholic faith as articulated in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *United States Catechism for Adults*.

**Can the Catechetical Leader re-imagine the scope and methods of evangelizing catechesis?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ knowledge of the three goals of evangelization as presented in *Go and Make Disciples*;
- ▶ comprehension of the relationship between evangelization and catechesis as set forth in the GDC and NDC;
- ▶ familiarity with the New Evangelization in the writings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI;
- ▶ outreach to the inactive and unchurched;
- ▶ commitment to hospitality, listening, reconciliation and inclusion as a standard in catechetical ministry;
- ▶ application of new approaches, models and strategies of evangelizing catechesis;
- ▶ engagement in activities that improve intercultural communication skills;
- ▶ knowledge of current issues through participation in local and national ministry associations;
- ▶ ability to address current issues in light of the Gospel.

**Does the Catechetical Leader have the necessary skills to build and maintain a catechetical program?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's ability to:**

- ▶ plan, organize, direct and evaluate the ministry of catechesis through the lens of evangelization;
- ▶ develop models of catechesis for outreach both to the unchurched and inactive, and to the active of all ages and cultures;
- ▶ select programs, resources, and processes that enable each child, youth and adult to know and love Jesus Christ;

- ▶ be attuned to the catechetical needs and resources for those with disabilities;
- ▶ develop and maintain ongoing ministerial relationships with pastors, peers and catechists;
- ▶ collaborate with parish leaders to form members of the community for their role as evangelizers.

## **2. The Changing Parish Landscape**

**Does the Catechetical Leader understand that the parish is critical to effective catechesis, i.e. “Christian community is the origin [and] locus ... of catechesis?”**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader’s:**

- ▶ active participation in the sacramental and communal life of the parish.

**Does the Catechetical Leader demonstrate a respect for the heritage and tradition(s) of parishes that are experiencing change?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader’s:**

- ▶ openness to all cultures and traditions within parishes;
- ▶ willingness to incorporate aspects of various cultures into the parish catechetical program.

**Is the Catechetical Leader knowledgeable about catechetical models and best practices that have proven effective in meeting the needs of parishes today?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader’s:**

- ▶ collaborative efforts with parish and diocesan leaders to learn about other catechetical models and best practices;
- ▶ willingness to implement new models and learn from best practices of catechesis.

**Can the Catechetical Leader help parishioners to broaden their horizons beyond both former and current parochial boundaries and to collaborate in the development of faith formation programs that address the needs of recently reconfigured, linked and merged parishes?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader’s:**

- ▶ vision and leadership to assist the parish as it enters into the dying/rising involved in future changes;

- ▶ positive attitude to inspire and form catechists and parishioners to work within the structures of the new parish reality;
- ▶ ability to work in partnership with other parishes and diocesan offices that can help to foster and develop effective faith formation opportunities.

### **Does the Catechetical Leader have community-building skills?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's ability to:**

- ▶ build community, collaborate and develop strategies and models to address the changing catechetical needs in emerging parishes;
- ▶ develop processes to facilitate conversation, cooperation and collaboration with pastors, parish leadership groups and catechists who are responsible for the development and implementation of catechetical models;
- ▶ recruit and train volunteers to assist in the implementation of new models for catechesis.

## **3. The Family**

### **Does the Catechetical Leader recognize and support parents' role as the first catechist for their children?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ support for parents' role as the primary catechist for their children;
- ▶ assistance to parents as they exercise their role as the primary catechist.

### **Is the Catechetical Leader fully aware of the many and varied changes affecting the family and how it manifests itself in the modern world (such as the decline in the number of traditional nuclear families, the increase in the number of single parent families, the high rate of interfaith marriages, and the significant rise in divorces and separations)?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ approach and responsiveness to parents, i.e., sensitivity to the complexities of today's family;
- ▶ provision for flexible and alternative choices to form children in the faith to meet the varying needs of today's families;
- ▶ promotion of adult faith formation programs that help parents cope with the many different challenges they are facing;
- ▶ provision for mentoring or sponsoring families when no extended family is available to them.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader recognize and understand the impact of new societal and cultural realities on families?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ assistance to catechists and parents in naming these realities and exploring them through the lens of Catholic values;
- ▶ incorporation of learning experiences that name and explore these realities through the lens of Catholic values into programs for children and youth.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader understand and respect the particular strengths of families from various cultures?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ development of opportunities for families to celebrate and share with others in the parish community the faith devotions of their particular culture;
- ▶ recognition of a culture's particular gifts and the ability to call them forth for the service of the community.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader have the skills to build a program that best serves today's family?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's ability to:**

- ▶ direct the implementation of catechetical programs that are both sensitive to the practical needs and situation of families today, and that are also faithful to the Gospel and the teachings of the Church;
- ▶ provide catechetical models that support the family as the domestic church and the primary setting for faith formation.

## **4. Cultural Realities**

### **Does the Catechetical Leader recognize and respect the diversity of people in the parish?**

#### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ ability to identify and understand the many and varied cultural dimensions of the current parish community;
- ▶ articulation and affirmation of Catholic values inherent in each of the cultures of the parish community;
- ▶ pastoral sensitivity and ability to create opportunities for full participation in lifelong faith formation;
- ▶ creation of opportunities to educate the community on the various cultures present in the parish.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader give a consistent public witness to transform the world?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ integration of the various cultural expressions of faith found in the parish into faith formation programs;
- ▶ emphasis on the catechist's responsibility to be a public witness of the faith.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader recognize and respond to the growing reality of the Hispanic community in today's Church?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ recognition of the gifts and diversity of the Hispanic community while responding to the generational differences within families.

## **Is the Catechetical Leader aware of the growth of particular populations in the parish, welcoming to them, and willing to incorporate all cultures, ethnicities, and families into the parish community?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ acceptance of the gifts of the multicultural parish;
- ▶ incorporation of the devotions and customs of the particular nationalities present in the parish into the prayer and worship of the community.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader recognize the profound influence of popular culture on the formation of the person?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ effective use of media and new communication technologies to spread the Gospel message;
- ▶ provision for the tools needed to foster Catholic identity in a time when being a practicing Catholic is countercultural;
- ▶ assistance to catechists and families in understanding the popular culture as it influences the living of our faith.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader have adequate teaching skills?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's ability to:**

- ▶ provide, when necessary, catechetical programs that respect the culture and language of the recipients;
- ▶ articulate the truth of the Church's teachings;
- ▶ draw others into the rich treasure of the Church's teachings;
- ▶ help others to examine their beliefs in light of the unified whole of Church teaching.

## **5. The Rapid Development of Technology**

**Does the Catechetical Leader have a general understanding of contemporary technology; its value, limitations and dangers; and the obstacles and challenges it poses for evangelization and catechesis?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ ability to understand and critique the use, or misuse, of technology in light of the Gospel and Christian values and parish community life;
- ▶ ability to discern, and to help others discern, appropriate, edifying and healthy use of technology;
- ▶ awareness of the obstacles to evangelization and catechesis posed by the use of new technologies, such as minimal attention spans and perpetual distraction, and the ability to work with and around them.

**Does the Catechetical Leader embrace digital technology in general, and new media in particular, as viable means for enhancing evangelization and catechesis?**

**Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ use of digital materials that support formation of families, adults, teens and school-aged children;
- ▶ knowledge of online resources for parents, teens, children, families and catechists, and the ability to distribute, communicate and make them accessible;
- ▶ ability to use effectively and appropriately websites, email, mobile devices, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube), blogs, texting and other digital communication;
- ▶ competence to communicate the Gospel message in a manner easily accessible to “digital natives;”
- ▶ ability to create effective PowerPoint presentations;
- ▶ capability to identify, recruit and cooperate with those who can assist in the content creation (photos, videos, social media), distribution, and administration of materials and information for evangelization and catechesis.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader accept the challenge of and actively participate in learning new technologies?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ openness and willingness to learning new technologies and to identify and adopt best practices, especially those related to communication, education and community-building;
- ▶ ongoing education in technological advances that could potentially enhance evangelization and catechesis in any way.

## **Does the Catechetical Leader understand the impact of media, including new media, on the formation of the individual?**

### **Consider the Catechetical Leader's:**

- ▶ general awareness of the nature and extent of media consumption of the people they serve;
- ▶ understanding of the impact of not only media content, but the constant consumption of media on the formation of the individual;
- ▶ understanding of media culture, its values and assumptions, especially in those areas where it weakens, contradicts, or undermines family and community life, Gospel values and Church teachings;
- ▶ general knowledge of today's popular music, TV, movies, video games, and social media that are informing and shaping people's minds, attitudes and actions.



New York State Catholic Conference  
465 State Street  
Albany, NY 12203-1004  
518.434.6195  
info@nyscatholic.org  
www.nyscatholic.org