

The “Itch” to Teach: Catechists Report for Duty

All across the United States, an army of nearly 500,000 men and women will be mobilizing, preparing to report for duty after a summer leave. Many of the half-million or so are returning for another tour of duty while perhaps up to 150,000 are reporting for the first time. Who are these courageous people?

They are the catechists who staff Faith Formation programs in parishes across the country.

As families return from summer vacations and schools are back in session, parishes prepare to welcome over 4 million (Kennedy Directory, 2007) public school elementary and high school students to Faith Formation sessions.

So, just who are these catechists?

They are secretaries, executives, factory workers, stay-at-home moms and dads, real estate agents, construction workers, lawyers, nurses, accountants, firefighters, and police officers. In other words, they are everyday Catholics, dedicated to inviting young people into a deeper relationship with Jesus. They help young people to understand the Creed, celebrate the sacraments, live moral lives, and pray.

Catechists are those who are called to serve through teaching, witness, and prayer, service and building community. Catechists minister to adults, youth, and children in a variety of locations and programs: parish faith formation & Faith Formation programs, youth ministry programs, sacramental preparation, RCIA, family programs, Scripture study, and more. Through word and example, catechists teach the Catholic faith and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Catechists have a vocation...a calling from the Lord rooted in Baptism to carry out His mandate to teach the Gospel. The *General Directory for Catechesis* tells us that "The Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechize. The Lord Jesus invites men and women, in a special way, to follow him, teacher and formator of disciples." (GDC 231)

The call and response to become a catechist is recognized in the local Church by the bishop. The response to this call includes willingness to give one's time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one's own growth and understanding of the faith. The call to this ministry often comes through the pastor, catechetical leader, youth minister, pastoral associate, or another catechist.

Catechists must possess and exhibit qualities or characteristics necessary to give credible witness to the Gospel. A catechist must: be a model of Catholic Christian faith and lifestyle; participate in the spiritual, theological, and methodological training and formation provided by the Archdiocese of Chicago; know and abide by the parish and/or diocesan guidelines and policies promoting effective catechesis; and give sufficient preparation time for the catechetical task.

St. Pius X Faith Formation is in desperate need of Catechists and Aides.

For more information, contact Patrick Koren by phone at 708-788-6090, by email at spxre@sbcglobal.com, or in his office to learn about training for catechists.