

INFORMATION SHEET

Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) Certification

“The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader”

— *National Directory of Catechesis, 54*



In partnership with Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute, the Diocese of Burlington has launched a certification process for all our parish catechetical leaders (PCLs). A PCL is the individual that leads catechesis at a parish or church — often named the Director of Religious Ed., Coordinator of Religious Ed., Faith Formation Director, etc.

To complete the Diocese of Burlington PCL certification, PCLs will complete 12 online workshops through the Catechetical Institute over the course of 2 years. Each workshop consists of watching video clips, responding to tasks, taking items to prayer, talking with a “critical friend,” and corresponding via email with an assigned mentor. This might sound like a lot, but our initial test group found this to be a spiritually rich and enjoyable experience. Since this is an online program, workshops can be completed at any time of day and don’t require any travel. Due to the nature of the tasks, workshops are best completed a little bit at a time. In most cases, a full workshop cannot be completed in one sitting.

Mentors

A unique and exciting part about this program is the role of a *mentor*. Each PCL will be paired with a mentor, a trained individual who receives and responds to the PCL’s work as they progress through the certification, allowing for further conversation and guidance. This mentoring takes place online. Our team of mentors are all here in Vermont and have been trained for this role.

Workshops

The certification process will consist of 12 online workshops. Although the workshops below are listed in a particular order, you may take the workshops in any order that you like.

1. The Vocation of the Catechist
2. Prayer: Introduction to the Spiritual Life of the Catechist
3. Recruiting, Training, and Forming Catechists I
4. Recruiting, Training, and Forming Catechists II
5. A Vision for Effective Youth Ministry
6. Being Guided & Guiding Souls
7. Jesus: The Christocentricity of Catechesis
8. Scripture: The Heart of Catechesis
9. The Deposit of Faith: An Introduction to the Catechism
10. Confirmation Preparation: Issues, Catechesis, & Liturgy
11. Teaching Catechesis for Conversion
12. Child Catechetical Methodologies & Learning Styles

Pacing Plan

At least one third of the certification, or 4 workshops, must be completed by the end of the first year, which would leave 8 workshops for the second year. This is only a bare minimum, however. Our team of mentors has experience taking these workshops and understands the time it takes to complete them and complete them *well*. As such, we recommend the following pacing plan:

Month 1	Register for the system, connect with your mentor, figure out how to use the system, and begin the first workshop.
Months 2-3	Complete workshop 1
Months 4-6	Complete workshops 2 and 3
Months 7-9	Complete workshops 4 and 5
Months 10-12	Complete workshops 6, 7, and 8
Months 13-15	Complete workshops 9 and 10
Months 16-18	Complete workshops 11 and 12
Months 19-24	Life is unpredictable. These last six months can serve as a “buffer” period for you to finish any workshops you haven’t completed yet!

Get Started Today!

Go to www.franciscanathome.com/burlington and follow the instructions to get signed up.

Note: Before you can begin the workshops, you will need to go through the registration process, which will take a few minutes. Creating a new account involves uploading a picture and short bio of yourself. This is an important step because your picture and bio will serve as your “first introduction” to your mentor!



Questions?

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Parish Catechetical Leader (PCL) Certification

1. I already have very little time to do my work as a PCL at the parish — why am I being required to spend even more time working on something else?

We recognize that many of our PCLs are already stretching themselves to be involved in ministry at their parish. The diocese has no intention of bogging down that work. Rather, we have worked hard to find a certification program that enriches and improves the ministry work that you're doing. While this will be an additional time commitment, we believe it will be time well-spent and directly related to your ministry.

2. Are there any exceptions for who is required to take part in this certification process?

All parish catechetical leaders are required to pursue certification. There are two exceptions.

- i. The first exception is for priests who are also the parish catechetical leader. Such priests are invited to participate in this process but not required to.
- ii. The other exception is for some of our PCLs who will qualify "out" of 6 workshops of the certification process. This applies to PCLs who:
 1. Are ordained deacons
 2. Are religious sisters
 3. Have completed the 2017-2019 Diocesan Lay Formation Program
 4. Have a graduate degree in theology (or similar) or education
 5. Have completed the Diocesan Lay Ministry Program

**If qualify for this, please contact the diocesan offices (see question #27).*

3. I have already completed a previous certification or hold a degree in theology or philosophy — why do I still have to participate?

We are thankful that you have formation experience in your background and glad that you are applying that training in your ministry! For this reason, some qualifications will allow a PCL to bypass half of the workshops necessary for certification (see above). It is still important to take part in these workshops for two reasons. First, there is an element of solidarity in this process. Our diocese is coming out of the synod with a renewed focus on our efforts in evangelization and catechesis. Having all our PCLs involved in the same certification process will underscore the dioceses' shared catechetical mission. Second, each of these workshops have a uniquely catechetical character to them. Whether the workshop has to do with Jesus, Scripture, Leadership, or prayer, it will be taught with a focus toward how these elements interact with your ministry of catechesis.

4. I've been teaching religious education for 30 years — does this still apply to me?

Yes! While we recognize and appreciate that some PCLs have more experience and education than others, these workshops



are applicable to everyone. They have a uniquely catechetical character to them that makes them useful even if you are theologically well-versed in a subject. Additionally, these workshops have a strong spiritual component that is appropriate to all levels of ministry experience.

5. Are there any other ways to complete my certification besides taking these workshops?

The only partial substitute for workshops at this time is attending the St. John Bosco Conference at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. Attending this conference, and corresponding with your mentor about it, will count as 2 workshops (of your choice) that can be bypassed from the list of 12 for certification. If you go to the Bosco Conference twice during the two-year certification, this would count for a total of 4 workshops that could be bypassed.

6. Does working toward this certification count toward my work at the parish?

Yes, the time you spend watching the workshop videos and completing your tasks is to be considered part of your work as PCL at your parish.

7. My parish has 2 PCLs...how does that work?

Most of our parishes have one PCL, but some do indeed have 2. Such cases should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to see whether one or both PCLs should take part in certification. Please contact the Diocesan Coordinator of Religious Education (see question #27) if this applies to your parish!

8. Are conversations with my mentor private? Who can see my task responses?

Typically, correspondence between you and your mentor will only be seen by your mentor. The same goes for the task responses you will give on the system. However, that information can also be accessed by the Catechetical Institute and the Diocese of Burlington.

9. What is the cost of this program?

This PCL certification program is being fully paid for by the diocese, leaving no financial burden on the parish. Using these workshops for people other than the parish catechetical leader, however, would entail an additional cost and a separate arrangement with the Catechetical Institute. If you would like to make these workshops available to your catechists, or to your whole parish, the Catechetical Institute typically charges a \$300 annual fee that would cover everyone in the parish.

10. How will I know if I am falling behind pace? Will anyone remind me?

We know that every PCL has a different schedule, so we don't expect everyone to keep the same pace. We require that PCLs complete at least 4 workshops by the end of their first year of certification. We have provided a pacing plan for those who would like to finish sooner!

11. How long does a workshop take?

It really depends! The Catechetical Institute says that workshops take 3-4 hours, but our initial testing group found that time difficult to track because workshops are completed bit-by-bit as opposed to in one sitting.

12. Can I work on multiple workshops at a time?

Yes! You can work on as many workshops at a time as you'd like, though in our experience that can get confusing.

13. What is a critical friend?

A critical friend (critical in the sense of important rather than criticizing) is someone who helps a learner to be accountable to the goals of a workshop and with whom a learner can share his or her thoughts candidly. A critical friend is a sounding board,



someone who is on a similar learning level as the workshop participant — not a second mentor, but rather an available, supportive person, a spiritual friend to walk along with you on this learning journey. This could be a spouse, neighbor, co-worker, someone in a parish group, a long-time prayer partner, etc. We've designed these workshops to lean into this kind of relationship as an urgently important part of a learner's progress.

14. How important is it that I do the “critical friend” piece?

While this step may sound hokey or not worth the time, our group of mentors has found exactly the opposite. Being asked to talk with someone else in a one-on-one conversation about parts of the workshops adds a whole new dimension that helps solidify the content for the learner. The critical friend piece was something our mentors came to greatly enjoy as they progressed through the workshops.

15. Can I have multiple critical friends?

Yes, of course! Please feel free to have as few or as many critical friends as makes sense. Some of our mentors found using multiple critical friends to be very useful.

16. Will I be graded for my work?

No. While we do hope you learn and grow from these workshops, the main objective is to facilitate your spiritual growth and familiarity with the subjects covered by the workshops.

17. My mentor isn't responding to my emails. What do I do?

Mentors will usually have multiple mentees, which could sometimes result in an unusually high volume of correspondence for them. However, if your mentor still hasn't responded after more than 2 weeks, please reach out to the Diocesan Coordinator of Religious Education (see question #27). We'll figure out the problem!

18. What if I was hired in the middle of the year? How long do I have to complete my certification?

Your two years to complete the program will begin in the August of your first full academic year as PCL. If you were hired in March 2020, your two-year deadline would not begin until August 2020. If you were hired in August 2019, your two-year deadline would begin in that same month, August 2019.

19. Some of the 12 workshops don't interest me. Can I skip them?

Unfortunately, no. As part of our effort to “raise the bar” of Catholic religious education in Vermont, we are starting by ensuring that our catechetical leaders meet a minimum standard, which is defined by this set of workshops. You may, however, choose the order in which you take them.

20. Does this relate to the St. John Bosco Conference?

Yes – these workshops are compiled by the same group of folks that run and present at the St. John Bosco Conference for religious educators at Franciscan University in Steubenville.

21. I see lots of other workshops that aren't included in the PCL Certification track. Can I participate in these?

Yes! You have access to all workshops on the system. During your two-year certification, any extra workshops you decide to take will not count toward your 12-workshop certification and will not be mentored.

22. Can I share these workshops with my catechists?

If you intend to have your catechists take these workshops for their own formation, we encourage your parish to consider purchasing their own subscription, which would be \$300 annually for anyone in the parish to have access to these



workshops. If you simply want to share a few video clips with your catechists, however, you are free to do so.

23. What if I want to sign the parish up for these workshops?

If you would like to make these workshops available to your catechists, or to your whole parish, the Catechetical Institute typically charges a \$300 annual fee that would cover anyone in the parish.

24. Does this certification replace any part of the Virtus training I have to complete annually, or the Circle of Grace lessons?

No, this certification does not change anything about our diocesan safe environment programs. For questions about Virtus or Circle of Grace, please contact the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment Programs at (802) 658-6110 ext. 113.

25. What happens after I am certified?

Just as we strive to teach our students, both children and adults, that ongoing catechesis is a lifelong process, we need to model this at the leadership levels as well. As such, parish catechetical leaders will be required to annually complete 2 additional workshops, of their choice, through the Catechetical Institute for as many years as they remain catechetical leaders at their parish.

Another way to fulfill their yearly continuing education would be to attend the St. John Bosco Conference for Religious Educators at Franciscan University. Arrangements would be made with the diocese so participants would follow-up with their mentor after this experience. Attendance at the conference and follow-up with their mentor would fulfill the yearly continuing education requirement.

26. I'm having technical issues!

If you are having technical issues, please reach out to the Coordinator of Religious Education (see question #27)

27. Have more questions?

Contact the Manager of Religious Education, **Michael Hagan** at mhagan@vermontcatholic.org or **802.448.3514**

Check out the Catechetical Institute's FAQ here: <https://franciscanathome.com/faq>