

# Diocese of Belleville

## Handbook for Catechist Certification

*Revised July 2007  
Effective March 2008*



A Program of Lifelong Faith Formation

**Catechist Certification in the Diocese of Belleville is expected of:**

- Teachers (Catechists) in Catholic Elementary Schools
- Teachers (Catechists) in Catholic High Schools
- Teachers (Catechists) in Parish School of Religion
- Catechists in Parish Faith Formation Programs



Dear Fellow Teacher of the Good News of Jesus Christ,

Peace be with you! Thank you for your ministry as a catechist in the Diocese of Belleville of Belleville. Your service as a catechist, informing, forming and transforming our young people in Christ, is a vital contribution to the Church whether in a Catholic school, Parish School of Religion, or other catechetical program. As you know, your vocation as a catechist is to collaborate with the Holy Spirit and help the next generation of Catholics to grasp the profound meaning that our faith gives to our journey from God to God.

The catechist forms the young Christian by creating an environment of spiritual awareness that flows from his or her own interior life. Thus, before teachers even enter the classroom, their personal prayer, their casual encounter with a fourth grader on the playground, the way in which they relate to their fellow teachers, the manner in which they discipline an unruly youngster, all of these lay a foundation. Their attitude of trust and respect, their recognition of the dignity and worth of each person will help to establish the rapport that will be necessary if they are to do more than teach them about faith. If teachers are to help students to experience faith and to know the implications of that faith in their daily lives, the students must actually be able to participate in the teacher's living faith. Within this divine milieu the lay catechist, priest or religious forms the youthful Christian in the faith that comes to us from the Apostles.

If this formation is to be effective, it must go hand in hand with information. It is imperative that the Catholics who will be the leaders in the third millennium of Christianity be well informed in their faith. A clear, straightforward and integral presentation of the Catholic world view, tailored to the age, intelligence and background of the students is essential. This instruction must also be consistent. It is not helpful to teach second graders something that they will learn is untrue when they are eighth graders. Each year must build upon a firm foundation.

The catechist's vocation is not only to form and to inform, but also to transform in Christ. Transformation is the most difficult part of this ministry because it requires catechists to become co-workers with Christ in the ongoing work of conversion. To do this catechists must be willing to be spiritual companions to their students. A spiritual companion helps a young person in the process of self-discovery before God. This may occur in formal or informal ways. It requires that we be listening for God in our ministry.

The Catechist Certification process is designed to assist you in this important ministry. It offers opportunities to grow in spiritual awareness. It provides a firm foundation of the information of our faith. It assists in developing the skills necessary to be spiritual companions to young people. In the end, however, no certification process can ensure the most important attribute for effective catechesis; God's grace. Be assured of my prayers for you in your ministry.

Appreciatively yours Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton  
Bishop of Belleville

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### **History of Catechist Certification**

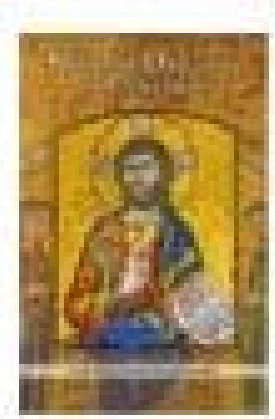
From the beginning of the Church catechists have received information on the faith, formation on the Christian life, and opportunities for transformation in Christ. The concept of a formal process of certification is a recent development. From the beginning of the Church in North America to the Second Vatican Council most dioceses in the United States relied upon informal catechetical training. As the number of Religious Sisters increased, their communities provided faith formation which often included training as catechists. Following Vatican Council II, a variety of lay movements arose which addressed the call for an increase in the active vocation of the laity. This call to discipleship and full, conscious, and active participation in the life of the Church resulted in significant changes in catechesis/faith formation in the United States. As more and more laity fulfilled their baptismal promises through parish ministry (including schools), the need for a more formal structure for training became apparent. This more formal structure developed into Catechist Certification. Catechist Certification began in the Diocese of Belleville in the 1980s. Since that time there have been several revisions. At first it was designed for the Catholic school teachers. Through time a parish level developed for PSR catechists/teachers. This revision brings all catechists into the same process and certification, and increases the formational component.

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## The Importance of Catechist Certification

### Catechist Formation includes Growing in Knowledge of Jesus and His teachings as handed down through the Apostles

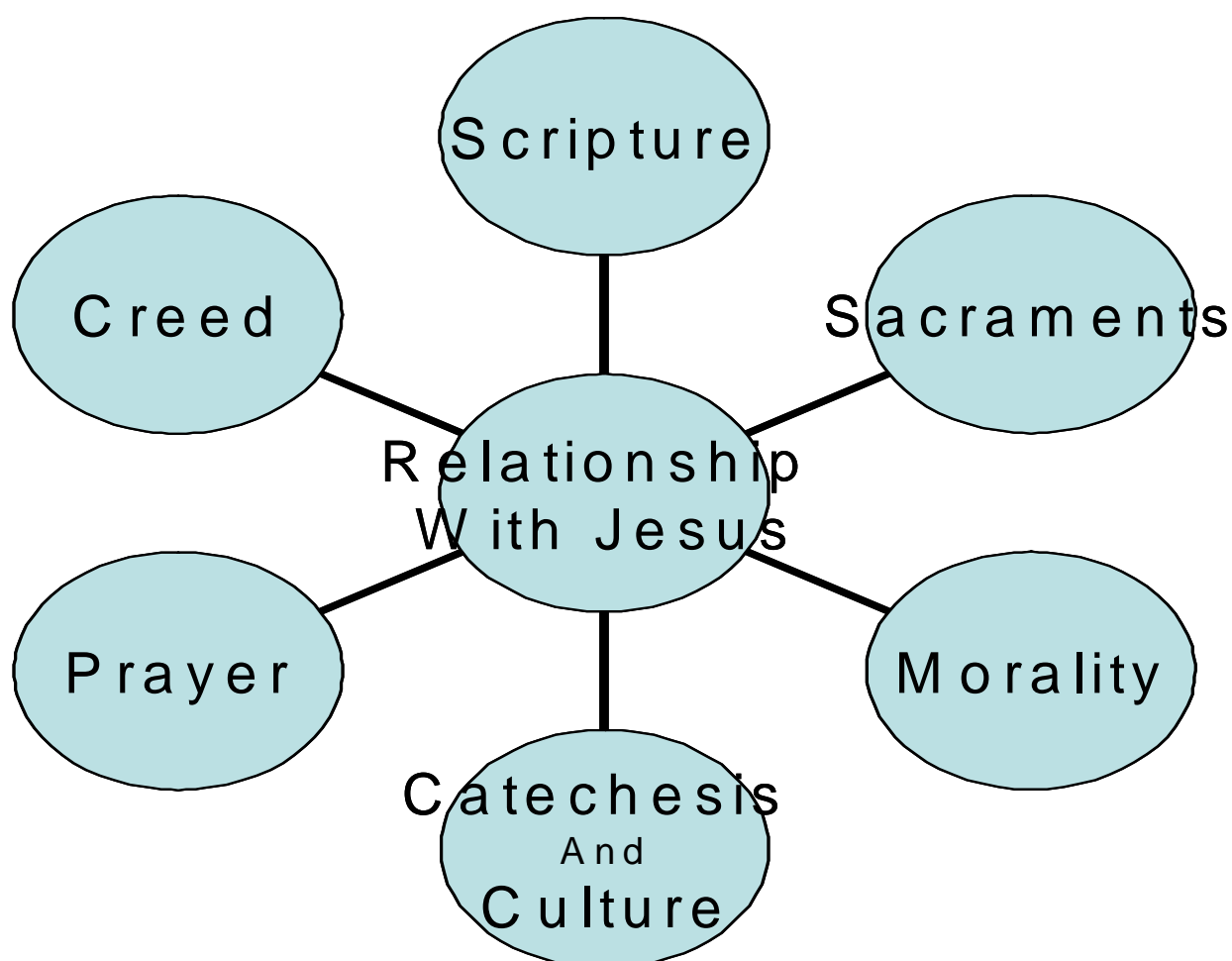
In order to best assist young people to grow in relationship with Jesus it is essential that the catechist have a knowledge of the information of the faith. This information needs to be presented in a systematic and comprehensive format. The Catechist Certification process is largely focused in this area. The diagram below states the six areas of study within which the information is structured.



Catechist formation also requires the formation of the catechist. While every course includes formational elements, the second tier of the process is focused on formation. Therefore a retreat style opportunity is provided in two format options; overnight or three day-times.

The Apprentice level is focused on the three dimensions of the catechist; being, knowledge, and the “art” of the catechist. Primary attention is given to the being or person of the catechist and the “art” or method of catechesis.

Initial Formation is achieved upon the completion of Tiers I and II. This includes a retreat experience and an introductory course for each of the four pillars of the Catechism (Creed, Sacraments, Morality, Prayer) as well as Scripture and catechesis. Advanced Catechist Certification expands the knowledge of the catechist in these six areas and provides opportunities for formation and skills development.

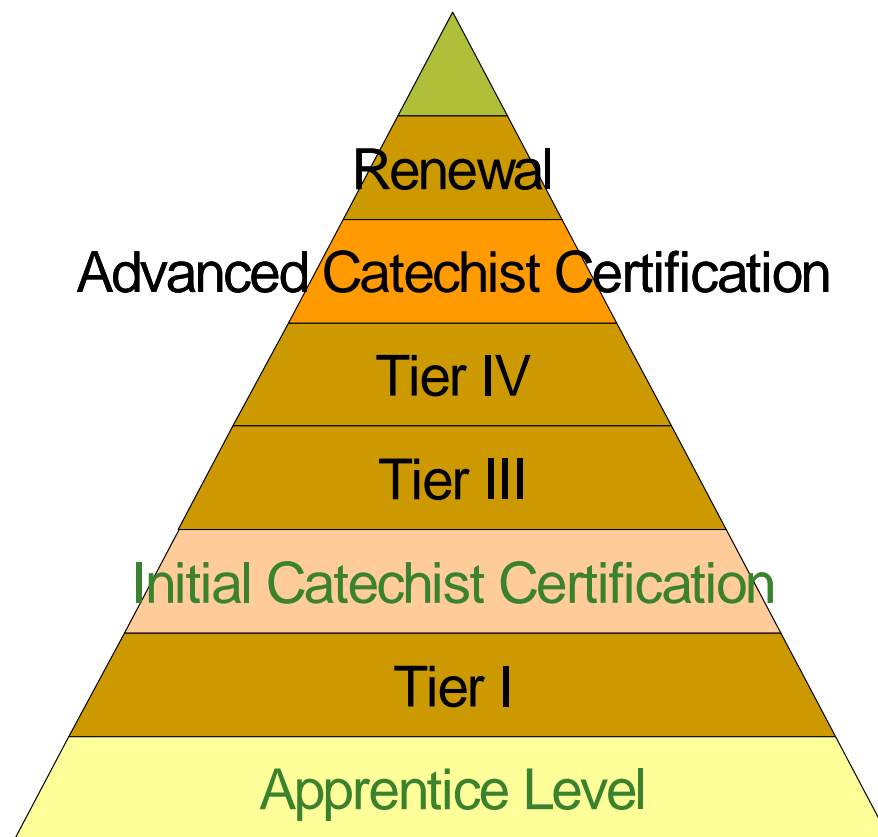


**A Systematic and Thorough Presentation of the Catholic Faith**

Every tier of the revised Catechist Certification includes Scripture, Catechetics, and each of the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church; Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer. Courses and presentations build on one another so that deeper and more probing questions can be pondered as the process is continued. Therefore, only one tier can be undertaken at a time.

Tiers of thirty hours have been created to assist the catechist/teacher, the school or parish, and the diocesan Office of Education in tracking a catechists progress towards the Renewal of Advanced Catechist Certification level. These tiers begin after the completion of the apprentice level. Each tier has a combination of mandatory courses and electives. All but one tier has 12 hours of electives.

All mandatory Tier I courses are to be completed through the *Echoes of Faith Plus* using both the DVD and the workbooks. Both are essential for the completion of the courses. DVDs can be borrowed through the Audio/Visual Department of the Office of Education. Workbooks can be purchased through the Office of Education. Through the use of the *Echoes of Faith Plus* series, the entirety of Tier I can be achieved on the local or cluster level. Experienced Catechists with several renewals or individuals with Graduate degrees in Theology are the preferred leaders for sessions of the *Echoes of Faith Plus* series.



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## Courses for Catechist Certification

All courses are three hours except for the retreat at Tier II.

### **Apprentice (The Foundation)**

The Role of the Catechist

The Spirituality of a Catechist

### **Tier I**

Catechetics: Methodology

Introduction to Scripture

Introduction to the Catholic Creed

Introduction to Liturgy and the Sacraments

Introduction to Morality

Introduction to Christian Prayer

Twelve hours of Electives



**Formation. Information.  
Transformation.**

### **Tier II**

A formational/ retreat- approach will be used.

It will incorporate the following topics:

Personal Prayer in a Busy Life

Culture and Catechesis

The Use of Scripture in Christian Spirituality

The Person of Jesus

The Human Person

Culture and Spirituality

Six hours of Electives

This formation/retreat will be offered in two formats: one, an over-night retreat from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm the next day, and, two, a three day retreat from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm each day.

### **Tier III**

Engaging Parents in their Child's Catechesis I

Overview of the New Testament

Trinity

Sacraments of Initiation

Social Justice

History of Christian Spirituality

Twelve hours of Electives

### **Tier IV**

Faith Growth in Persons with Developmental Disabilities

Overview of the Old Testament

The Four Marks of the Church

Sacraments of Healing

Moral Teachings on Human Sexuality

Praying the Psalms

Twelve hours of Electives

## **Courses for Catechist Certification**

### **Tier V**

Catechesis, Ecumenism and the Inter-Faith Dialogue

The Gospels

Communion of Saints and Resurrection of the Body

Sacraments of Vocation

Virtues

Being a Leader of Prayer

Twelve hours of Electives

### **Renewal of Advanced Level Catechist Certification**

1. The catechist who has achieved Advanced certification must renew the certification every three years by completing a minimum of 30 hours of approved certification credit .
2. All hours must be acquired during the period of the Renewal.
3. Certification credit can be acquired through faculty in-services, diocesan conventions, on-line courses, use of the reading option, theology courses from Catholic colleges and universities, most diocesan programs and institutes, and parish workshops that have been approved for catechist certification credit through the Office of Education.
4. On-line courses through STEP (University of Notre Dame) and the University of Dayton are approved for renewal credit for catechist certification. Other on-line courses require individual approval through the Office of Education.
5. Renewal credit can not be accumulated.
6. There is a book review option for Renewal Credit of Catechist Certification. This option allows catechists on Renewal to earn credit hours for private spiritual reading. Catechists working on their first Renewal can use this option for up to 10 hours/credit of their 30 hours. Catechists with at least one Renewal completed can use this option for up to 20 hours/credit of their 30 hours. Only certain books are approved for this category. There is a list of approved books on the Office of Education portal [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net) . Other books may be approved as appropriate by the Office of Education upon request.

The Process of the book review option:

1. The books on the approved list are available through the Office of Education. Approved books can be acquired through other means.
2. The catechist shall notify the Coordinator of Catechist Certification of the intent to utilize the reading option for Renewal hours. The catechist needs to inform the Coordinator of the name and author of the book. Books that are not on the approved list may or may not be approved by the Associate Director of Catechesis and Religious Education.
3. The Coordinator of Catechist Certification will send an outline for writing the reflection paper.
4. The catechist reads the approved book in the context provided by the outline and questions from the outline. The catechist will write a 3-5 page reflection paper according to the outline.
5. The reflection paper will be mailed or e-mailed to the Coordinator of Catechist Certification.
6. The Catechist will be notified upon the review and approval of the hours for Renewal of Catechist Certification.

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### **Additional Options for Credit in Catechist Certification**

1. College courses completed through a Catholic university or college may apply for Catechist Certification credit. Documentation and course description must be provided to the Coordinator of Catechist Certification. Generally, one college credit of an approved course will transfer as ten hours general elective in Catechist Certification.
2. Graduates with Masters degrees in Theology, Pastoral Studies, or Divinity will receive Advanced Catechist Certification in the Diocese of Belleville. LIMEX certificate recipients will receive credit for the completion of two tiers of Catechist Certification.
3. Catechist Certification from another diocese or archdiocese will qualify for the equivalent credit in the Diocese of Belleville. Transfer of credit from other diocesan catechist certification programs to this program is determined by the Associate Director for Catechesis.
4. Courses/workshops sponsored within the catechetical programs of other (arch)dioceses can receive catechist certification credit normally as elective hours.
5. Attending workshops and keynotes at Catholic conferences such as NCEA can receive catechist certification credit as electives. Credit is given for the individual sessions that are of a catechetical nature.
6. Adult Faith Formation such as Initial Formation, Small Christian Communities, and presentations can receive catechist certification as electives.
7. Participation as a leader or observer in a youth retreat may receive catechist certification elective hours one time in the certification process: TEC 15 hours, Quest 10 hours. Other youth retreats may qualify. Contact the Coordinator of Catechist Certification for more information.
8. Parish missions, RCIA, and other catechetical efforts of parishes can qualify for Catechist Certification. The number of elective hours given will be determined through the Coordinator of Catechist Certification. Programs and schedules will need to be submitted.
9. Trainings for particular ministries in the Church (ex. Lectors, Parish Council, Win the Prize) will only receive general elective credit for the portions of the training that are religious instruction or formational in nature. Trainings which focus exclusively on the skills needed for the ministry will not receive Catechist Certification.

### **Responsibilities of the Office of Education**

*Echoes of Faith Plus* DVDs and workbooks will be available for schools and parishes to obtain them.

Workbooks must be purchased while DVDs may be borrowed at no cost.

Registration Sheets (green sheets) must be mailed to parishes or schools that request them in the appropriate manner.

The list of Approvals of completion of a tier of Catechist Certification will be e-mailed to Principals, and Catechetical Leaders by March 30 each year. Catechists will receive written verification soon after.

Mandatory courses for Tiers III-V must be offered yearly at a minimum of one location in the diocese during the Summer months. The dates and places of Summer courses will be publicized on the portal, [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net), by April 15th each year.

The mandatory retreat must be offered yearly in at least one of the two formats. Each format will be offered within a two year period.

**Participation**

All elementary and secondary teachers in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Belleville are required to progress in the Catechist Certification process. Parish catechists and PSR teacher/catechists should progress in Catechist Certification. Participation of part-time faculty and other school staff is at the discretion of the Principal. All of the faithful are welcome to participate.

**Incentives for Participation**

Ordinarily elementary and secondary teachers in Catholic schools should progress through Catechist Certification in the following manner:

Apprentice	1 year
Tier I	2 years
Tier II	1 year
Tiers III-V	2 years for each tier

Two of the tiers are markers for increases in pay. Upon completion of Initial Formation (Tier II) the catechist/teacher shall receive a \$300.00 increase yearly. Upon completion of Advanced Catechesis, an additional \$500.00 increase is to be given yearly. These financial benefits must continue as long as the catechist is progressing with Catechist Certification. Catechists on Renewal should continue receiving the full amount each year as long as 30 hours every 3 years is completed and the paperwork submitted.

According to the Lay Teacher Salary Guidelines an elementary or high school teacher who is not actively progressing in Catechist Certification may have salary increases curtailed until certification is obtained.

When a teacher then does meet certification requirements, the teacher shall be able to proceed to the next level on the salary scale, forfeiting the years lost to non-compliance with the certification process.

**Costs**

Courses which utilize the *Echoes of Faith Plus* DVDs require a booklet which must be purchased. The retreat cost may vary but will range from \$120.00 to \$150.00. Mandatory tier III-V courses will cost \$5.00 per hour in the Summer Catechist Certification Course schedule. Forms cost \$1.50 or can be downloaded at no charge at [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net). The Catechist Certification Handbook is \$5.50 in print or can be downloaded at no charge at [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net)

**Documentation**

Documentation for the completion of a tier of Catechist Certification must be submitted by February 28th of each year. The completion and submission of forms is the responsibility of the catechist. Documentation may be submitted on-line or in paper form. On-line documentation will be available at [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net). Paperwork is to be submitted to the Office of Education, Coordinator of Catechist Certification 2620 Lebanon Ave., Belleville, IL 62221. Catechists will not be issued an attendance form. Attendance will be recorded through the registration sheets (green sheets).

While individual catechists/teachers are responsible for the paperwork, the school will be required to provide records and explain any lack of progress by a teacher as part of the Diocesan Accreditation process. Principals may request Catechist Certification status reports regarding their faculty from the Office of Education at any time.

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## Diocesan Regulations

If after registering and paying for a Summer course a catechist is unable to attend, the catechist must contact the Coordinator of Catechist Certification before the course to receive a voucher to be used on a future course.

Parishes or schools wishing to offer mandatory courses will be given outlines of the course and assistance in ensuring that the course will meet diocesan regulations.

Principals and Catechetical Leader have the right to inquire and be informed of the progress of catechists as recorded by the Office of Education..

All Presenters and Facilitators of courses receiving credit for Catechist Certification must comply with the Policies and Guidelines of the Diocese and teach in conformity to the Catholic Church.

### **Presenters and Facilitators of Mandatory Courses:**

Facilitators are the normal leaders of required courses for Apprentice Level and Tier I.

Facilitators of *Echoes of Faith Plus* Sessions must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Catechist/Teacher with several Renewals
- Catechetical Leader of a parish or Principal of a school
- Person with a Graduate degree in Catholic Theology, Pastoral Ministry, or Divinity

Facilitators must follow the outline:

1. Begin with prayer
2. Follow the process of the booklet and DVD.
3. Encourage small group and/or large group discussion
4. End with a prayer.
5. Collect the Evaluation pages at the end of the workbook.
6. Submit the Evaluation pages and Registration (Green) sheet to the Coordinator of Catechist Certification .

Presenters of Mandatory Courses on tiers III-V must meet one of the following criteria:

- Person with a Graduate degree in Catholic Theology, Pastoral Ministry, or Divinity
- Person with an Undergraduate degree in Catholic Theology and recognized as an expert in a particular topic.

Presenters must follow the main point and broad outline of the course. Mandatory course main points and outlines are available through the Office of Education.

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## Request for Catechist Certification Credit

*(Must be submitted 2 weeks prior to the date of the presentation)*

Title of Presentation \_\_\_\_\_

Description of what will be presented \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Presentation \_\_\_\_\_ Hours per session \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter/Facilitator \_\_\_\_\_

**Please include a brochure/program outline if one is available**

Submitted by:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Parish/School \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

## **Catechesis is an Essential Ministry of the Church**

from the National Directory for Catechesis p. 56

*Catechesis is a pivotal dimension of the Church's pastoral activity and a significant element in all the Church does to hand on the faith. Every means that the Church employs in her overall mission to go and make disciples has a catechetical aspect.*

*Catechesis gives form to the missionary preaching that is intended to arouse the first signs of faith. It shapes the initial proclamation of the Gospel. Catechesis assists the early examination of reasons for belief. It communicates the essential elements in the experience of Christian living. It prepares for the celebration of the sacraments. It facilitates integration into the ecclesial community. It urges apostolic activity and missionary witness. It instills a zeal for the unity of Christians and prepares one for the ecumenical understanding and mission of the Church.*

*Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographic extension and numerical increase but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis.*

For more information go to the Diocese of Belleville Office of Education portal, [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net). If you need an username and password please contact the Office of Education at 618 235-9601

Forms to complete for each of the tiers can be downloaded at [www.diobelle.net](http://www.diobelle.net)  
Forms are also available for purchase.

The Coordinator for Catechist Certification is Vickie Korte. Her e-mail is [vkorte@diobelle.org](mailto:vkorte@diobelle.org).

The Associate Director for Catechesis and Religious Education is Russell Peterson. His e-mail is [rpeter-son@diobelle.org](mailto:rpeter-son@diobelle.org)