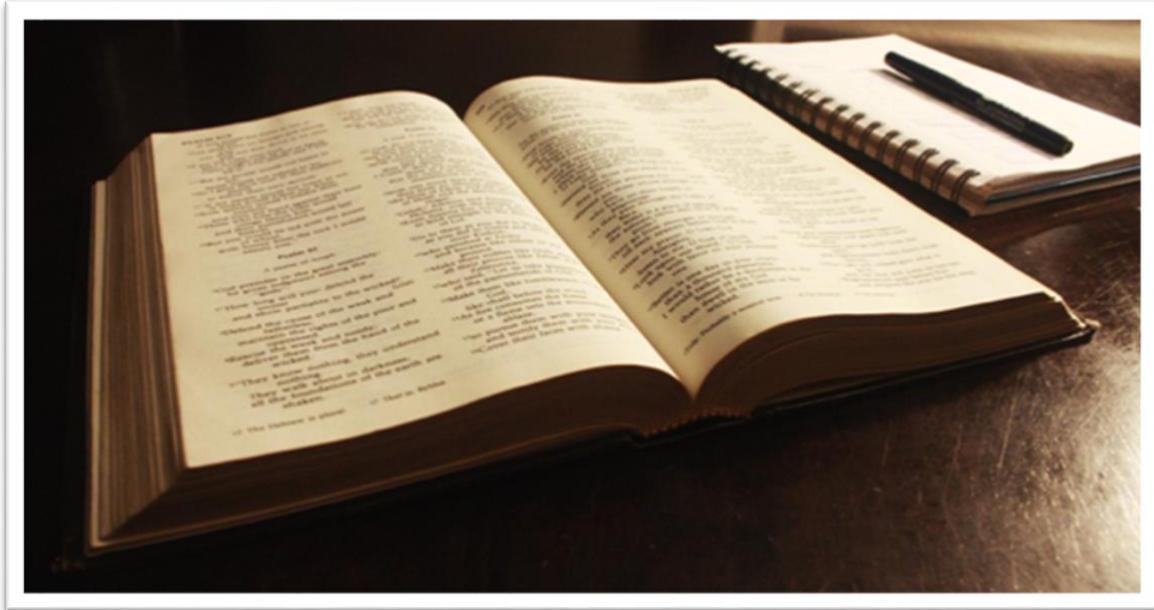


THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON



Training & Support for Catechists



Catechesis in the Diocese of Northampton

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

Catechists are supported by **Mission Northampton**, a Diocesan agency dedicated to mission. Mission Northampton seeks to develop catechists with a missionary mentality, who can help those they encounter become missionary disciples.



“Catechesis is an essential part of the broader process of renewal that the Church is called to bring about in order to be faithful to the command of Jesus Christ to proclaim always and everywhere his Gospel.

Catechesis participates according to its own nature in the effort of evangelisation.”

Directory for Catechesis 1

While each parish organises their own programmes for sacramental initiation and other formation, Mission Northampton provides Diocesan training and networking opportunities for catechists in order to support parishes.

As catechists have a particular and vital role to play in the mission of the Church they need to be continually nurtured and equipped to enable them to fruitfully respond to this calling from God.

The Spirit is Calling Catechists Today

“The history of evangelisation over the past two millennia clearly shows the effectiveness of the mission of catechists...In our own day too, many competent and dedicated catechists are community leaders in various parts of the world and carry out a mission invaluable for the transmission and growth of the faith... 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”

Pope Francis, Antiquum Ministerium 3, 5



This brochure describes the core support and training available for catechists in the Catholic Diocese of Northampton. In addition to the opportunities described here there are also other resources and training opportunities which are advertised regularly through the Catechist Newsletter and also the Mission Northampton webpages.

To subscribe to the Catechist Newsletter please contact:

admin.mission@northamptondiocese.org

To discover more about how catechists contribute to the Church’s mission in our Diocese you may wish to read another booklet entitled ***Our Mission as Catechists***. It unpacks how catechists contribute to the mission of the Church and draws on Scripture and Church teaching, especially the Directory for Catechesis. It is available on request or via the Mission Northampton webpages.

Training for Catechists

Catechist Training is offered to those already involved in catechesis as well as to form those who feel called to this work and are just starting out. Most courses are available virtually as well as in person.

For those catechists who may appreciate a gentle introduction to their learning journey the following two training sessions are ideal before moving on to the Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis:

'Let Down Your Nets for A Catch'-A Retreat for Catechists (2 hours)



Gathering catechists for prayers and reflections based on the biblical story of the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11).

This retreat creates a welcoming and prayerful environment in order to strengthen, encourage and form catechists as well as to assist with recruiting potential catechists in the parish.

"The retreat was absolutely amazing... Within the stillness, I personally found Jesus anew. The retreat helped me to understand that as a catechist, I am simply volunteering to serve God as his disciple and collaborator. I particularly liked being taught to spend time daily in God's presence. Something particularly difficult but essential for spiritual growth. I will recommend starting the programme with the retreat to help one spiritually tune-in to the subsequent sessions."

"This was my first introduction to learning more about catechesis. The retreat gave me the opportunity to stop and reflect on my faith journey and vocation, to meet other catechists and explore the importance of spending time daily in God's presence. This beautiful quote from St Bernard of Clairvaux sums up what I learnt from the retreat and the importance of staying close to our Lord:

'We should seek to become reservoirs rather than canals. For a canal just allows the water to flow through it, but a reservoir waits until it is filled before overflowing then it can communicate without loss to itself.'

An Introduction to YOUCAT for Kids (90 minutes)

An opportunity to browse and be guided through a method of using YOUCAT for Kids. This is also a great resource for supporting families in their mission of passing on the faith at home (parishes to supply YOUCAT for Kids books).



"I enjoyed the YouCat for Kids sessions. They were very relaxed and practical. We were taught how to use the YouCat for Kids books and appreciate the format.

I particularly liked how we learnt to be reflective with the alternating use of words and pictures. We were also given ample opportunity to practice individually. I think that this brilliant approach helped me to build a lot of confidence around guiding sessions for families in the parish."

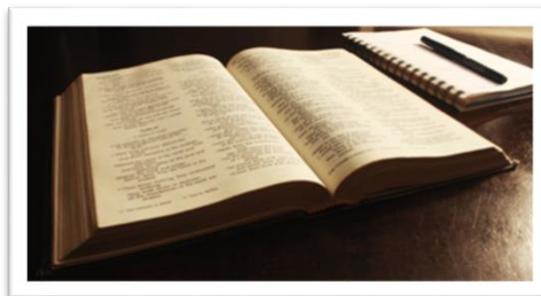
"During this session, Alex gave practical tips on how we could use the YouCat for Kids during our catechesis sessions and also how to teach parents how the book could be used at home. We had the opportunity to practice with other catechists who were attending the session. Following the session and after approval from the Parish priest, the YouCat for Kids formed an important part of our sacramental programme."

The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis

The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis provides the opportunity for catechists to explore some of the basics of what the Church teaches about catechesis. It is offered over four levels and is designed to equip catechists with essential knowledge and skills. A description of what is covered in each of the four levels is given on the following pages.

Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 1

Drawing on Scripture and Church documents the Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 1 covers some basic principles of catechesis, helping us to grow in confidence as we share the precious gift of faith in Jesus Christ with others. The course includes times of sharing, reflection and prayer.



The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 1 is structured around 5 sessions of 2 hours.

The 5 sessions are offered flexibly for parishes and pastoral areas either in person or online. For example, the course may be delivered over 5 x 2 hour sessions, two half days (2 x 5 hours), an evening and a full day or any other combination. There is no fixed charge for the course; however, we do invite those who can to make a donation to help cover costs.

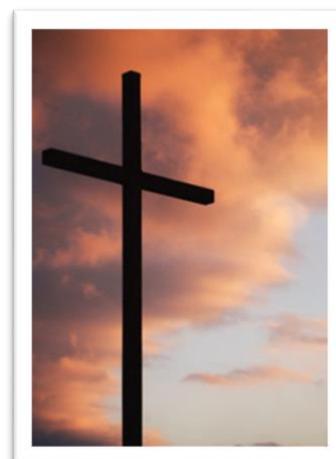
If you are a parish priest or lead catechist please contact the Mission Northampton office to enquire about available courses or to book a course for your catechists at a venue of your choice or online.

Following an introduction exploring the vocation, or calling, to be a catechist, the course then covers the following 5 session themes:

Session 1: *Starting Anew from Christ*

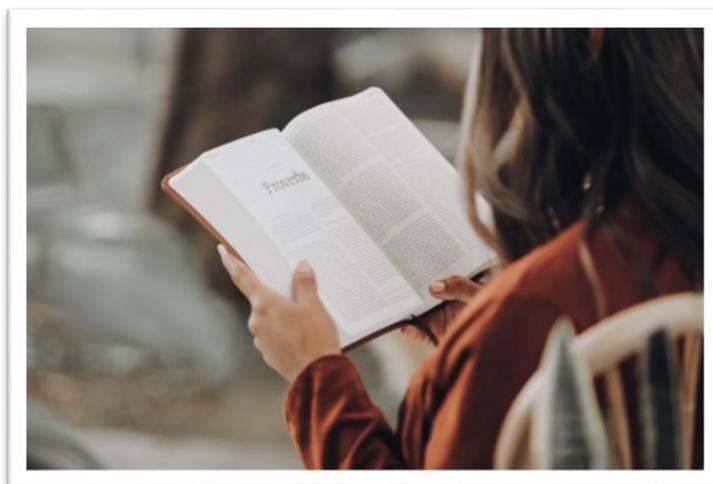
Reflecting on our encounter with Jesus Christ, our own journey of faith and our call to share the Good News.

Understanding the relationship between catechesis and evangelisation. Exploring why the core Gospel message (the *kerygma*) "needs to be the centre of all evangelising activity and all efforts at Church renewal" (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 164). Being able to share the Gospel using our personal faith story.



Session 2: Growing in our understanding of the Catholic Faith

Exploring a basic introduction to the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (YOUCAT and YOUCAT for Kids) and some key Church documents on catechesis, especially the Directory for Catechesis. Being aware of some important aspects of catechesis e.g. kerygma, accompaniment and family catechesis.



Session 3: Learning how to pass on the Catholic Faith

The 'how' of catechesis. Exploring essential skills that catechists can use and develop.

Session 4: The Church believes as she prays

Exploring the link between catechesis, prayer and liturgy.

Session 5: Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord

Responding to the call to be missionary disciples. Exploring opportunities for further training and ongoing support.

"During this course we were taught some of the basic principles of catechesis e.g. growing in our understanding of the Catholic Faith, reflecting on the Scripture, the Directory for Catechesis & Catechism of the Catholic Church and learning how to pass on the Catholic Faith. The sessions were engaging as different methods of teaching were used at the 5 sessions e.g. Bible readings, reflection questions, prayer time, group work etc. The course also gave us the chance to get to know Catechists from different parishes and learn from each other. The course helped me to grow in knowledge, confidence and also gave me a deeper desire to learn more about the principles of catechesis."

Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 2

The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 2 is designed to enable catechists to reflect on and learn from their practical experience of catechesis in their local community. There is no fixed charge for the course; however, we do invite those who can to make a donation to help cover costs. During an introductory session catechists are guided through an overview of the course which consists of the following elements:

Practical and Theological Reflection

At its heart this course consists of catechists reflecting on their ministry in the parish over an agreed time period (typically 9 months). This reflection is both practical and theological and is based on what is known as the Pastoral Cycle.

Local Support from an Experienced Catechist

During this period of reflection catechists are asked to identify a priest, deacon or experienced catechist in their own parish who can support them in this process.

Journaling and Report

As part of the course, catechists are asked to record some of their reflections. At the end of the course catechists also submit a written report to summarise their experience and what they have learned.



Accessing and Delivering New Forms of Faith Formation

As part of the learning process catechists are also asked to access and help deliver additional formation in their local area. For example, they may start or join a group offering a course such as: The Great Adventure Bible Timeline or related scripture courses, a CAFÉ course, or an Alpha course. Alternatively, they may arrange for a Catholic Basics course to be run. A menu of some of the available options will be offered and catechists can join others locally who may already be involved in formation projects.

A Final Session for Each Cohort

At the end of the process each cohort gathers to share, pray and celebrate. During this final session participants who have passed are awarded their certificates.

“As part of the course, I had to use the See, Judge and Act Method of pastoral reflection for 10 different aspects of catechesis. I found this method of pastoral journal reflection very helpful and I will continue to use this method and include ‘review’ in the process as well as I go forward.

As this course takes place over a period of time, I did not realise how much I had learnt from the course until I reflected and completed the report.

For my new experience of faith formation I chose to take part in the Bible Timeline Course online. The Bible Timeline Course has given me a better understanding of the Bible and also a deeper desire to learn more about the Bible and God’s Plan of Salvation.

The Level 2 Course has given me the opportunity to put the ‘theory’ from the Level 1 course into practice which has helped to re-inforce my learning. I feel deeply touched how God used the opportunity of my nieces’ Confirmation programme for me to hear His gentle call to my vocation as a catechist. I am so grateful for all the background work that has gone into preparing and delivering the different courses to support and encourage me and so many other catechists. Attending the courses gives us a wonderful opportunity to get to know other catechists and also to learn from each other. It does take time and commitment to attend these courses especially in our busy and hectic lives but the knowledge and confidence that is gained is worth it. I would encourage all catechists especially lead catechists, to take the opportunity to attend these courses to help build a firm foundation to enable the Word of God to be passed on to others.”

Bishop’s Certificate in Catechesis Levels 3 & 4

Theological formation is offered by means of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) which is offered in the Diocese. The Bishop’s Certificate in Catechesis Level 3 & 4 include a specialist module in catechesis.

Participants who audit the course (i.e. attend without undertaking the assessment) will gain the Bishop’s Certificate level 3.

Those who complete the assessment and are awarded the CCRS, including the catechesis module, will gain the Bishop’s Certificate level 4.



For more information about how the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies is offered in the Diocese, or the specialist catechesis module please contact the Mission Northampton Office and we can send you the relevant information.

Support for Catechists

A series of **Catechetical Gatherings** has been established on a parish, pastoral area and Diocesan level in order to bring catechists together for mutual support and resourcing. These meetings help catechists to stay in touch with each other and also enable us to be connected with our Bishop and Diocesan vision on an ongoing basis. An outline of the Catechetical Gatherings is given below:

PARISH CATECHETICAL GATHERINGS (*Every year in the Pentecost Term*)

- A gathering of all parish catechists with their clergy to review catechesis taking place in the parish, in order to affirm and celebrate achievements and identify needs.
- Each parish nominates 2 catechists who are willing and able to represent the parish at pastoral area and/or diocesan meetings*.
- If they are able, parishes may wish to cover travel expenses and other reasonable costs for catechist representatives who have limited financial means.

*Where catechetical provision is shared between more than one parish the above gathering and representation can be worked out locally to reflect this arrangement.

PASTORAL AREA CATECHETICAL GATHERINGS (*Every year in the Advent Term*)



- Every pastoral area hosts a Catechetical Gathering that brings together 1 or 2 catechist representatives from every parish in that pastoral area.*
 - The aim of this gathering is to enable the fruits of the parish catechetical conversations to filter up so as to help the Dean and those in leadership in the pastoral area identify common catechetical needs and relevant issues that are coming to the fore in parishes.
- A short formal report (1-2 sides of A4) should be produced summarising the main points raised during each Pastoral Area Catechetical Gathering. This should be sent to the Mission Northampton Office c/o Alex Heath to inform the AGM. As well as the Dean and any members of the clergy who are able to attend, 2 catechists from each pastoral area should be officially nominated by the pastoral area as catechetical representatives to attend and report to the Diocesan AGM.

DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL AGM WITH OUR BISHOP *(Every year in the Lent Term)*

- Hosted by Mission Northampton it brings together our Bishop (or his representative), the Deans (or their representatives), clergy, catechetical representatives nominated from each of the pastoral areas, and any interested parties in common purpose to support the catechetical mission of the local Church.
- The AGM provides the opportunity for the Bishop, as chief catechist, to communicate his vision for the diocese and for catechesis.
- The Diocesan Catechetical AGM also provides a forum for dialogue and exploration of key issues facing catechists.
- Since each pastoral area submits their report in advance, delegates are able to speak to these issues and share about some of the catechetical issues they are facing in their work as catechists.
- It also provides a forum for sharing information about Diocesan training opportunities and other means of ongoing support and formation that are available.



Catechetical Support and Advice

For further information about catechist support and training or to book any of the courses for your parish or Pastoral Area please contact:

Alex Heath, Adviser for Catechesis & Adult Faith Formation via the Mission Northampton Office.



Mission Northampton, Diocese of Northampton
Making Missionary Disciples Together

Northampton Roman Catholic Diocese
St Thomas Centre, Primrose Hill, Northampton, NN2 6AW
alex.heath@northamptondiocese.org

Prayer for Catechists

*God our Father, in your love you continually call catechists
to serve in your Church.*

*We ask you to bless all catechists,
that they may be filled with your love.*

*Strengthen them by the power of your Holy Spirit
so that they may be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ.*

*Enlighten them, so that they may grow in their own understanding of
and commitment to the Word of God.*

*By the power of your grace, at work in their weakness,
make them authentic teachers of the Catholic Faith.*

*Through their word and example may current and future generations
know the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord (Ph 3:8)
and the salvation and life that is found in Him
through His Body, the Church.*

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*“In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God
have become missionary disciples.”*

Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 119

Acknowledgements:
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<https://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/282> (accessed July 24, 2017). Celtic Cross <https://pixabay.com/photos/cross-celtic-scotland-sky-blue-1049338/> Bible image <https://pixabay.com/photos/book-bible-text-literature-2073023/> Church image <https://pixabay.com/photos/church-blood-church-3730222/> Home learning photo by Natasha Hall on Unsplash
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