

# Evaluation of Catechist Formation Tools

Offered to the Canadian Church  
of the west and north  
by the Western Conference  
of Catholic Religious Educators  
(WCCRE)

Based on Recommendation #4, Strategy #1 from

***A Sower Went Out to Sow...***  
*A Vision for Catechist Formation  
in Western and Northern Canada*

If it is important that catechesis be provided with valid catechetical material, yet more important is the preparation of suitable catechists. (*General Directory for Catechesis [GDC], 216*)

In all the ministries and services which the particular church performs to carry out its mission of evangelization, catechesis occupies a position of importance. (*GDC, 219*)

Catechesis is a fundamental ecclesial service... (*GDC, 219b*)

## Purpose

This document addresses Recommendation #4 from *A Sower Went Out to Sow: A Vision for Catechist Formation in Western and Northern Canada*. Recommendation #4 states that the WCCRE will “develop an evaluation tool based on the directives of the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* that could be used by dioceses and eparchies to assess local catechist formation initiatives.”<sup>1</sup>

This tool will look at four areas of catechist formation:

1. the person of the catechist
2. the goals of the *GDC* regarding catechist formation
3. the content of catechist formation, and
4. the details of preparing and offering catechist formation in a specific situation.

Each area of the tool includes a list of the referenced paragraphs in the *GDC*.

This evaluation tool has been developed in such a way that each of the four areas can be used independently.

Before embarking on any particular formation plan, there are a number of questions to ask:

- Who is being formed?
- What are the basic characteristics of those being formed?
- Which level of formation is required for those being formed?
- What are the administrative needs necessary for formation to occur?

Answering these questions will help those planning the formation to understand where the persons being formed are in the process of becoming or growing in their role as catechists. From this knowledge, the diocese or eparchy will be able to evaluate the level of formation that needs to be provided for their catechists.

**Section One** looks at the person of the catechist.

**Section Two** will help the diocese and eparchy understand what direction to take with their formation. The knowledge gained in this section will help direct the formation session regarding the method required.

**Section Three** will help the diocese and eparchy offer program content which meets the requirements of the *GDC* regarding catechist formation. It will also direct the diocese and eparchy as to which program content needs to be offered.

**Section Four** will help the diocese and eparchy plan the next step to appropriately form catechists in their particular church.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Sower Went Out to Sow...*, page 15.

## Section One

### The Person of the Catechist <sup>2</sup>

No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process.<sup>3</sup>

Most people working in dioceses and eparchies know that finding parishioners willing to be catechists can be a challenge. Yet some of those who come forward with the desire to become catechists may not be formed or suited for the task.

This first section of the evaluation tool will help dioceses or eparchies to know:

- whom they are forming, and
- where individuals are on their faith journey.

Knowing this will guide formation sessions regarding depth and particular emphasis. If you find that you are answering ‘no’ to many of these questions about your catechists, consider advising them that their gifts may lie in another area of ministry.

This section may also be used as a personal evaluation tool for catechists. The purpose of a self-evaluation tool is to help the catechist determine their own formation needs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The *GDC* paragraphs referenced for this section are 156, 237, 239, and 247.

<sup>3</sup> *GDC*, 156

<sup>4</sup> *GDC*, 245.

**Coordinators tool for evaluation:**

1. Is the person mature?<sup>5</sup>
  - Yes
  - No
2. Does the person have a deep, mature faith?
  - Yes
  - No
3. Does the person have a prayer life?
  - Yes
  - No
4. Does the person have a clear Christian and ecclesial identity?
  - Yes
  - No
5. Does the person have an understanding of the communal dimension of the Christian faith?
  - Yes
  - No
6. Does the person have a zeal for the Reign of God/a desire to be a witness for the faith?
  - Yes
  - No
7. Does the person have the ability to communicate the Gospel message in the name of the Church (are they able to share faith)?
  - Yes
  - No
8. Does the person have a social sensitivity?
  - Yes
  - No

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<sup>5</sup> *GDC*, 245: A mature person – “[the catechists’] cultural vision, social condition and lifestyle must not be obstacles to the journey of faith.

9. Does the person have the ability to help others identify with Jesus through the sacraments, whether a catechumen, a child preparing for sacraments of initiation, a couple preparing for marriage or the baptism of their child...<sup>6</sup>?
- Yes
- No
10. Does the person have the ability to help others identify with Jesus through Sacred Scripture?<sup>7</sup>
- Yes
- No
11. Does the person have the skills to teach, to be attentive, to interpret and respond to educational situations, and lead a group to maturity<sup>8</sup>?
- Yes
- No
12. Does the person have the ability to facilitate group discussions?
- Yes
- No
13. Is the person able to work collaboratively?
- Yes
- No
14. Does the person see that the ministry of catechesis is that of being a companion on the journey of faith, and have “a willingness to act as a guide”<sup>9</sup>?
- Yes
- No
15. Does the person have the ability to listen without reacting or judging (have “serenity of judgment”<sup>10</sup>)?
- Yes
- No

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<sup>6</sup> *GDC*, 176

<sup>7</sup> *GDC*, 127-128

<sup>8</sup> *GDC*, 244

<sup>9</sup> *GDC*, 239 which uses as its source the *GCM* 21

<sup>10</sup> *GDC*, 239

16. Is the person grounded in reality (“understanding and realism”<sup>11</sup>)?

- Yes
- No

17. Is the person a person of hope and affirmation (“a capacity to give consolation and hope”<sup>12</sup>)?

- Yes
- No

18. Is the person willing to follow the leadership of the particular Church—the diocese or eparchy (“an awareness of being sent by the Church”<sup>13</sup>)?

- Yes
- No

19. What is the catechist’s level of formation?

- a basic understanding of the faith.
- initial catechetical formation
- ongoing catechetical formation

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<sup>11</sup> *GDC, 239*

<sup>12</sup> *GDC, 239*

<sup>13</sup> *GDC, 247a*

**Self-reflection tool for catechists:**

After each question rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 4.

- 1 Not at all
- 2 Somewhat
- 3 Usually
- 4 Always

1. I am a mature person.

1  2  3  4

2. I am a person of deep faith.

1  2  3  4

3. I have an active prayer life.

1  2  3  4

4. I am a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ.

1  2  3  4

5. I am a member in good standing of the Catholic Church.

1  2  3  4

6. I am an active member of the local Catholic community.

1  2  3  4

7. I have a desire to tell people about the Reign of God and to be a witness for the faith.

1  2  3  4

8. I am able to tell others about Jesus.

1  2  3  4

9. I am concerned for people and the world I live in.

1  2  3  4

10. I understand the sacraments are one of the principle means through which I encounter God.

1  2  3  4

11. I understand Sacred Scripture is one of the principle means through which I encounter God.

1  2  3  4

12. I am able to share faith with others.

1  2  3  4

13. I am able to facilitate communication within a group.

1  2  3  4

14. I am able to work collaboratively with others.

1  2  3  4

15. I understand a catechist is a companion on the journey with other followers of Jesus.

1  2  3  4

16. I am a good listener.

1  2  3  4

17. I am understanding.

1  2  3  4

18. I am empathetic.

1  2  3  4

19. I am tolerant.

1  2  3  4

20. I am able to be objective.

1  2  3  4

21. I am a person of hope.

1  2  3  4

22. I am able to console others.

1  2  3  4

23. I am willing to take direction.

1  2  3  4

24. I am willing to honour the norms and directives of the diocese or eparchy.

1  2  3  4

25. The level of catechist formation I have is...

- a basic understanding of the faith.
- initial catechist formation.
- ongoing catechist formation.

## Section Two

### The Process of Catechist Formation according to the *GDC*<sup>14</sup>

The baptismal catechumenate is the inspiration for all catechesis.<sup>15</sup>

The process of catechist formation takes into account not only the need for theological formation, but also the need for the continual deeper spiritual development of the catechist. Therefore—like the baptismal catechumenate—the continual conversion of the catechist is primary. Theological formations is at the service of the catechist’s deepening conversion, which will strengthen the catechist’s ability to live, explain, and share the faith.

1. Does the process or program have a balance “between the general pedagogy of formation of catechists and the pedagogy proper to the catechetical process”<sup>16</sup>?  
(Does it teach the content necessary to catechist formation while also evangelizing the catechist to a deeper faith in Jesus Christ?)
  - Yes
  - No
  
2. Is the process or program well-structured, and does it contain within it a harmony between the different elements regarding the “hierarchy of truths”<sup>17</sup>?  
(Is the program being used balanced or does it over emphasize certain components to the detriment of others?)
  - Yes
  - No
  
3. Does the process or program include the necessary theological content (that is, Christology, Ecclesiology, Church History) while connecting the Gospel to the catechists’ lives?<sup>18</sup>  
(Does it teach the necessary theology while presenting the Gospel and having it all connect to the catechists’ daily lives?)
  - Yes
  - No
  
4. Does the process or program contain a spiritual component which nourishes the spirituality of the catechists so they grow as believers?<sup>19</sup>
  - Yes
  - No

<sup>14</sup> The *GDC* paragraphs referenced for this section are 156, 237, 239, 241, 245, and 247.

<sup>15</sup> *GDC*, 90

<sup>16</sup> *GDC*, 237

<sup>17</sup> *GDC*, 241a

<sup>18</sup> *GDC*, 241c

<sup>19</sup> *GDC*, 239 and drawing from *Christifideles Laici*, 60

5. Does the process or program have a strong practical component; for example does it teach methods for passing the faith on to children or adults?<sup>20</sup>  
(Does theology touch practice?)
  - Yes
  - No
6. Does the process or program employ adult models of learning, where the catechist is the protagonist of their own learning?<sup>21</sup>
  - Yes
  - No
7. Does the process or program engage the catechist in “‘learning while doing,’ by employing research and dialogue, by exchanging challenging points of view”<sup>22</sup>?
  - Yes
  - No
8. Does the process or program help the catechist “to identify with the figure of Jesus Christ, teacher and formator of disciples by seeking to acquire the zeal which Jesus had for the Kingdom”<sup>23</sup>?  
(Does the program being used help the catechist to transform more into the person of Jesus Christ and, like Jesus, proclaim the Kingdom through their teaching?)
  - Yes
  - No
9. Does the process or program form the catechist within the context of their own community?<sup>24</sup>
  - Yes
  - No
10. Does the process or program invite an evaluation by the catechist?<sup>25</sup>
  - Yes
  - No

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<sup>20</sup> *GDC*, 245

<sup>21</sup> *GDC*, 245

<sup>22</sup> *GDC*, 157

<sup>23</sup> *GDC*, 239

<sup>24</sup> *GDC*, 246

<sup>25</sup> *GDC*, 247c

11. Does the process or program create space for the catechist to share with others and to travel their own faith journey with humour and gentleness?

Yes

No

12. Does the process or program assist the catechist in integrating what they have learned?

Yes

No

## The Content of Catechist Formation according to the *GDC*<sup>26</sup>

Formation seeks to enable catechists to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ. The purpose of formation, therefore, is to make the catechist capable of communicating “The summit and centre of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message” (DGC (1971)111).<sup>27</sup>

In order to communicate the Gospel, one must know the Gospel and all that has brought the Church to this point in her history of understanding. Therefore, the scope of catechist formation is broad in that it covers many subjects and, at the same time, narrow in that all subjects lead to and come from the source of faith, the Person of Jesus Christ.

### Initial Catechist Formation

A catechist at the initial level is someone who is inexperienced or who has minimal experience in catechesis. They would have received some orientation and basic formation.<sup>28</sup>

### General Knowledge

1. Does the process or program offer the catechist a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ?
  - Yes
  - No
  
2. Does the process or program help the catechist to be familiar with Sacred Scripture?
  - Yes
  - No
  
3. Does the process or program offer the catechist the broad strokes of salvation history?
  - Yes
  - No
  
4. Does the process or program help the catechist to be aware of the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* or the *Catechetical Directory of the Ukrainian Catholic Church*?
  - Yes
  - No

<sup>26</sup> *GDC*, 33, 137, 235, 236, 237, 238, 240, 242, 244, 247

<sup>27</sup> *GDC*, 235

<sup>28</sup> This section has used the work of the WCCRE on Recommendation #5 regarding the definition of *Initial Catechist Formation* and required content formation items for both of these levels. The work done for this section of *The Sower Went Out to Sow* was also based on the requirements for catechist formation from the *GDC*.

5. Does the process or program help the catechist to be aware of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?  
 Yes  
 No
6. Does the process or program explore with the catechist other resource material (for example, commentaries, DVD resources, etc.)?  
 Yes  
 No
7. Does the process or program offer the catechist basic faith knowledge (for example, understanding of the use of symbols)?  
 Yes  
 No
8. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the flow of the liturgical year and its usefulness as a tool for formation?  
 Yes  
 No
9. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand their role?  
 Yes  
 No
10. Does the process or program offer the catechist knowledge of different forms of prayer?  
 Yes  
 No
11. Does the process or program provide the catechist experiences of different forms of prayer?  
 Yes  
 No
12. Does the process or program help the catechist to take their role seriously with a sense of humour and a spirit of joy?  
 Yes  
 No
13. Does the process or program help the catechist to mature on their own faith journey?  
 Yes  
 No

**Knowledge specific to Adult Catechists**

14. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand how to incorporate adult learning styles?
- Yes
- No
15. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the different levels of adult faith development?
- Yes
- No
16. Does the process or program help the catechist to be sensitive to the multicultural dimension of the Canadian Church?
- Yes
- No
17. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand how to use dialogue as a tool for faith formation?
- Yes
- No
18. Does the process or program help the catechists to understand that the adults that they are working with are the protagonists of their own faith journey?
- Yes
- No
19. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand and honour the life experience of the adults gathering for formation?
- Yes
- No

**Knowledge specific to Children and Youth Catechists**

20. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the pedagogy of passing on the faith?
- Yes
- No
21. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the developmental stages of children and youth?
- Yes
- No
22. Does the process or program help the catechist to develop lesson plans based on the learning cycle?
- Yes
- No
23. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand classroom management?
- Yes
- No
24. Does the process or program help the catechist to know and be able to work with the programs and resources particular to the diocese or eparchy?
- Yes
- No
25. Does the process or program give an overview of the catechetical resources endorsed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops?
- Yes
- No

## On-Going Catechist Formation

An on-going catechist is one who has had the experience of being formed in the basics of catechesis. This stage of formation enables the catechist to grow and mature in the work of catechesis.<sup>29</sup>

1. Does the process or program offer the catechist a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ, promoting the Trinitarian experience of life in Christ as the centre of the life of faith?  
 Yes  
 No
2. Does the process or program deepen the catechist's knowledge of the Sacred Scripture?  
 Yes  
 No
3. Does the process or program offer an understanding of salvation history?  
 Yes  
 No
4. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the development of the Creed and the meaning of the Creed as a statement of belief?  
 Yes  
 No
5. Does the process or program help the catechist to discover the rich history of the Church?  
 Yes  
 No
6. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the place of Sacred Tradition and its significance in the Catholic Church?  
 Yes  
 No
7. Does the process or program help the catechist to become knowledgeable of the Vatican II documents and the social teachings of the Church?  
 Yes  
 No

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<sup>29</sup> This section has used the work of the WCCRE on Recommendation #5 regarding the definition of *On-Going Catechist Formation*, and required content formation items for both of these levels. The work done for this section of *The Sower Went Out to Sow* was also based on the requirements for catechist formation from the *GDC*.

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8. Does the process or program explore with the catechist current issues of ethics and morality?
- Yes
- No
9. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the relationship between liturgy and catechesis?
- Yes
- No
10. Does the process or program help the catechist to deepen their knowledge of prayer and spirituality?
- Yes
- No
11. Does the process or program help the catechist to deepen their experience of prayer and spirituality?
- Yes
- No
12. Does the process or program offer the catechist opportunities to develop different types of skills to enhance their role as a catechist?
- Yes
- No
13. Does the process or program help the catechist to deepen their understanding of their role as a catechist?
- Yes
- No
14. Does the process or program help the catechist to develop the necessary skills for planning liturgies and presiding at prayer services?
- Yes
- No
15. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the relationship between catechesis and evangelization?
- Yes
- No

16. Does the process or program present the catechist different types of learning styles?
- Yes
- No
17. Does the process or program help the catechist to become an educator – with an ability to be attentive to people, an ability to interpret or respond to educational tasks or initiatives in organizing learning activities, and the ability of leading a group toward maturity?
- Yes
- No
18. Does the process or program employ the sciences in the light of faith in order to help the catechist to have a deeper understanding of people and the reality in which they live?
- Yes
- No
19. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the different stages of faith development?
- Yes
- No
20. Does the process or program help the catechist to understand the cultural and demographic realities of their particular diocese or eparchy?
- Yes
- No
21. Does the process or program assist the catechist in working with the particular cultural and demographic realities of their diocese or eparchy?
- Yes
- No
22. Does the process or program help the catechist to mature on their own faith journey as a believer?
- Yes
- No

23. Does the process or program offer the catechist personal development workshops?

- Yes
- No

24. Are there opportunities offered to mature catechists to pursue certified courses in religious studies and/or theology?

- Yes
- No

## Section Three

### What is the Next Step for Your Particular Situation regarding Catechist Formation according to the *GDC*?

...the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel. The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists. Thus the adequate formation of catechists cannot be overlooked by concerns such as the updating of texts and re-organization of catechesis. Consequently, diocesan pastoral programmes must give absolute priority to the formation of lay catechists...<sup>30</sup>

The formation of lay catechists cannot ignore the specific character of the laity in the Church, and cannot be regarded as merely a synthesis of the mission received by priests and religious. Rather, “their apostolic formation acquires a special character precisely from the secular nature of the lay state and from its particular type of spirituality”.<sup>31</sup>

To ensure excellent catechist formation takes more than having an excellent process or program. Consideration must also be given to the who, where, and how of the process or program.

The following questions will first help the diocese or eparchy to look at where they are now in terms of their formation process or program for catechist formation. The second set of questions will help the diocese or eparchy plan for the next step required to ensure excellent catechist formation.

#### Step One: Current Situation

25. What process or programs are currently being offered in the diocese or eparchy for catechist formation?

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26. How often is the current process or programs offered?

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<sup>30</sup> *GDC*, 234

<sup>31</sup> *GDC*, 237

27. Who does the teaching?

- local catechetical coordinators
- parish priest
- diocesan or eparchial catechetical director
- specialized resource person
- other \_\_\_\_\_

28. How is the learning offered?

- in person
- through reading material
- DVD with a written study guide
- audio and video podcasts
- topic specific blog
- video conferencing
- webinars
- online course
- website links for further learning
- other \_\_\_\_\_

29. Is there a communal aspect to the diocesan or eparchial catechist formation?

- Yes
- No

30. Have you done an assessment of the current diocesan or eparchial catechetical process or program?

- Yes
- No

31. Does the process or program being offered meet the criteria for catechetical formation laid out by the *GDC*?

- Yes
- No

32. Have you done a needs assessment with the catechists?

(Section One above would help the diocese or eparchy determine who their catechists are—for example, moms just trying to get their children through the sacraments, or those who are called to be catechists beyond their own personal needs.)

Yes

No

### Step Two: Planning for the Future

1. Is there an established time within the yearly calendar for catechist formation?

Yes

No

2. Will the process or program offered be systematic and comprehensive?

Yes

No

3. At what level of the Church will the catechist formation occur?

parish

deanery

diocesan or eparchial

inter-diocesan or inter-eparchial

other \_\_\_\_\_

4. What levels of formation will be provided?

initial catechist formation

ongoing catechist formation

both initial and ongoing catechist formation

5. Who will facilitate the formation sessions?

local catechetical coordinators

parish priest

diocesan or eparchial catechetical director

specialized resource person

other \_\_\_\_\_

6. How will learning be offered?
- in person
  - through reading material
  - DVD with a written study guide
  - audio and video podcasts
  - topic specific blog
  - webinar
  - video conferencing
  - online course
  - website links for further learning
  - other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who will coordinate the formation?
- parish catechetical coordinators
  - parish priest
  - diocesan or eparchial catechetical director
  - other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Will there be a certificate offered at the completion of the process or program?
- Yes
  - No
9. How will the funding be provided for the process or program?
- catechist
  - parish
  - deanery
  - diocese or eparchy
  - sponsorship \_\_\_\_\_
  - shared partnership \_\_\_\_\_
  - other \_\_\_\_\_

10. How frequently will the diocese or eparchy incorporate a process of ongoing evaluation of catechist formation?

semi-annually

annually

bi-annually

other \_\_\_\_\_