

Catechist Training Retreats

Table of Contents

Catechist Training Retreats.....	1
Preparations Before the Retreat.....	3
Help, I'm A Catechist!	5
Catechist Training Retreat	6
Checklist of Materials Needed.....	7
Station 1: Welcome & Sign In.....	8
Catechist Training Retreat Review	9
Station 2: Opening Prayer and Icebreaker	10
Station 3: Welcome to "Help! I'm a Catechist!"	12
Station 4: "What We Need to Know"	13
Station 5: An Introduction to Augustine Institute and FORMED	14
Station 6 "Fan the Flame"	15
Station 7: Faith Formation 2025.....	17
Station 8: Closing Prayer and Questions	18

Preparations Before the Retreat

The Retreat Team

Many hands make light work! Do not try to do it all on your own – delegate!

One volunteer per station is recommended (sometimes more). At the beginning of the new school year start recruiting for adults or teens to help with the retreats. Think of people with various gifts and talents who enjoy working with others.

When gathering volunteers, you must explain what is expected of them, including time commitments. Describe the work necessary to oversee a single station – the specific one you have in mind for them. Remind them of the rewards of helping, specifically to help bring the adults to deeper conversion and love for Christ and His Church.

The Retreat Team should include:

- Parish priest
- Coordinator of the retreat
- Volunteers made up of adults and teens to help with set up and stations

Be sure to thank the volunteers for helping. Acknowledge them at the end of the retreat and also send them a note of appreciation after the retreat. Volunteers frequently return if it is a good match for their gifts and talents and they know they are needed.

Prayer

Ask other parishioners to pray for our children, our program and our church. We are all “priest, prophet and king.”

Supplies

This retreat handbook includes a checklist of supplies needed to make the retreat successful. All resources are available online or as free downloadable images. This task could be delegated to one of the retreat team members.

Parish Size

The size of a parish may determine how the retreat is organized.

Smaller Parishes (less than 12 adults):

Consider joining together with other neighboring parishes to offer a retreat. Parishes could rotate hosting the retreat.

Larger Parishes:

Consider dividing up the adults into groups of 10 to 12 and rotating the groups separately through the stations. You will need small group leaders who will lead the group from station to station; they will need to know the order their group is doing the stations and where each station is located. Different colored name tags (or different colored markers)

could be used for each group.

Creating the Retreat Environment

The environment you create should help foster prayer and this means changing things around that are usually in the space to make it more pleasant to the eye. The sacred space should be in an area where it catches the eye as you walk in the door. See below for sacred space ideas.

You will need to use a social hall for gathering, meals/snacks. You will need a craft area, which can also be set up in the social hall.

One idea you could employ is to gather a committee of high school students from your parish for the decorating committee. You would just need to supply the materials and let them create the perfect space.

Things to include in the environment:

1. Framed sacred artwork
2. Sacred space
3. Book corner
4. Decorated tables if you are serving a meal
5. Soft background music

A Sacred Space:

1. Wherever you teach, whenever you teach, set up a sacred space in your room. Keep it simple, but sacred.
2. A crucifix, candle, and liturgical cloth would be just fine, or some sacred objects relating to the subject you are teaching.
3. You might also include a Bible, holy water, a rosary or an image of some sort (e.g. print, holy card, statue, etc.).



Catechesis in Art

Each retreat will include a print of a famous painting to provide a visual to reflect on as they keep the image in their mind throughout the retreat. As you talk about the event from scripture, the adults will be able to visualize the event which will help them to better understand what happened. The artwork prints may be purchased online at various vendors and many images may be downloaded free. Please follow copyright restrictions.

Help, I'm A Catechist!

Catechist Training Retreat 2025



Catechist Training Retreat

In Catholic teaching, parents have a primary and inalienable responsibility to educate their children in the faith and morality. This duty is rooted in the belief that children are first and foremost children of God and that parents are called to nurture their adults's relationship with God. This education is not just an obligation, but an act of love that helps parents fulfill their own commitment to God's law. Catechists help parents to educate their children.

Becoming a catechist allows you to deepen your own faith, share the love of God with others, and contribute to the life of the Church by nurturing the faith of the next generation!

Stations for the Catechist Training Retreat

There are eight stations in the Catechist Training retreat. Depending on the number of adults attending the retreat you can either split them into groups or keep them together as they visit each station. The retreat begins in the social hall after Mass as they gather.

Station / Activity	Possible	Room	St Time	Time
Mass	Father Johnson	Church	9:00 AM	45 min
Station 1: Welcome & Sign In & Snacks	Angela McAfee and Allie Gillispie	Social Hall	9:45 AM	15 min
Station 2: Opening Prayer & Icebreaker		Social Hall	10:00 AM	15 min
Station 3: <i>"Help! I'm a catechist"</i>		Social Hall	10:15 AM	10 min
Station 4: Review <i>"What We Need to Know"</i>	June	Social Hall	10:25 AM	80 min
Working Lunch	Allie	Social Hall	11:45 AM	15 min
Station 5: Word of Life, Signs of Grace and FORMED	Augustine Institute - Kelly?	Social Hall	12:00 PM	45 min
Station 6: <i>"Fan the Flame"</i>		Social Hall	12:45 PM	30 min
Station 7: Faith Formation 2025-2026	June	Social Hall	1:15 PM	30 min
Station 8: Questions and Closing Prayer		Social Hall	1:45 PM	15 min
			2:00 PM	

Checklist of Materials Needed

Station 1: Welcome & Sign-in

- Name tags & markers & colored lanyards
- List of groups & stations photocopied
- Food and refreshments
- Retreat handouts – Questionnaire, calendars, Parents Handbook

Station 2: Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

- TV connected to internet – Ice Breaker – Make copies
- Pads and pens

Station 3: *Help I'm A Catechist*

- Poster board and markers
- Paper and pens

Station 4: *"What We Need to Know"*

- MAKE A LIST
- Bibles
- Poster board

Snack Break

Station 5: Word of Life, Signs of Grace and FORMED

- Slides
- Paper and pens

Station 6: *"Fan the Flame"*

Station 7: Faith Formation 2025-2026

Station 8: Questions and Closing Prayer

Station 1: Welcome & Sign In

Greeting:

Activity:

Welcome & Sign-In

Objective:

Welcome all catechists

Materials Needed:

Sign-in sheet

Name tags

Handouts

1. Assign a retreat team member to greet people at the door. First impressions of a warm welcome are essential to set the tone of the retreat. Make sure your greeter knows the overall retreat so they can answer questions.
2. Each person should sign in on the appropriate sheet and put on their name tag. There will be 2 groups. As they arrive, it is recommended that the parish priest mingle with the participants.
3. If refreshments are served, a different volunteer oversees them than the one who welcomes and assists registering the adults

Directions:

1. Have everyone gather in the social hall where they can visit as people enter.
2. Have them sign in and give each the retreat handout.
3. Explain the layout of the retreat.

Catechist Training Retreat Review

Directions: This form is for your personal use but please share your thoughts on ways we can improve!

Station 3: "Help! I'm a catechist"

Station 4: "What We Need to Know"

Station 5: Word of Life, Signs of Grace and FORMED

Station 6: "Fan the Flame"

Station 7: Faith Formation 2025-2026

Optional notes

Station 2: Opening Prayer and Icebreaker

Directions:

Activity: Opening prayer and icebreaker.

Objective:

Get to know each other – build community

Materials Needed:

TV connected to internet Prayer on Screen

Poster board – someone writing answers

1. [Welcome and then Pray together:](#)

“Enlighten my mind to know these mysteries which your Church treasures and teaches. Move my heart to love them and my will to live in accord with them. Give me the ability to teach this Faith to others without pride, without ostentation, and without personal gain.”

This prayer reflects dedication to learning, love of the faith, and commitment to teaching without worldly motivations.

2. Introduce yourself and tell which Mass do you go to and why?

3. "If I could..." Questions: "If you could have any question answered by God, what would it be?" or "If you could have a conversation with any figure from the Bible, who would it be and why?" Have someone write the answers at the front.

4. Father Johnson gets 20 minutes whenever he wants it!

Station 3: Welcome to “Help! I’m a Catechist!”

Activity: “Welcome and an Overview”

Objective:

Set the tone of the retreat for catechists. Today is a chance to look at what we know, what we need to know and how to ‘fan the flame’ of God’s love in our students.

Materials Needed:

TV

POSTER Board, marker and writer

Introduction:

Introduction by the leader to the group:

A catechist/prophet is one who echoes the faith. Our faith is comprised of facts and information and beliefs that we hold to be true. We want to echo all of that, not just one facet of the faith.

Today is a chance to look at what we know, what we need to know and how to ‘fan the flame’ of God’s love in our students.

Directions:

Welcome to Help! I’m a Catechist!

1. Start off by saying – A lot of this information is from Loyola Press, St Mary’s Press and Augustine Institute. I have changed it, like a recipe, to make it my own. And now,

First Slide Have you ever had nightmares about teaching? Children misbehaving? Not being able to answer their questions? Are you prone to panic? If so, you are not alone. Just look at all the people in the Bible who tried to get out of things directed by God, Himself: Abraham (I’m too old!), Moses (But I don’t speak very well!), Jeremiah (I’m too young!), Isaiah (I’m a man of unclean lips!), Jonah (Find somebody else!). God does not call the qualified, but qualifies the called!

2. Who, from the Bible, do you relate to? Have someone write answers on Poster.
3. But you’re here now so...Teaching faith formation is not rocket science; but it is an art, and if you are going to succeed, you will need to focus on some basics. Here are basics that I encourage you to focus on as you inch closer to the beginning of the school year.

Station 4: “What We Need to Know”

Activity: “What We Need to Know”

Objective:

A very cursory review of the basics of our faith.

Materials Needed:

TV

Activities

Poster

Paper and pens

Introduction:

A review of the basics of our faith.

Directions:

Welcome to Help! I’m a Catechist!

1. **Make a commitment to your own faith formation.** You may very well be asking yourself, “Am I smarter than a second grader?” when it comes to knowledge of your faith. This is a good time to revisit the basics of your Catholic faith.

- [Gifts of the Holy Spirit](#)
- [Fruits of the Holy Spirit](#)
- [Works of Mercy](#) (See Calendar for these throughout the Year)
- [Holy Days of Obligation \(Activity\)](#)
- [Marks of the Church – now make this lesson for children](#)
- [Precepts of the Church](#)
- [The Beatitudes](#)

- [The Great Commandment and New Commandment](#) (Bible Activity)
The "Great Commandment" in Catholicism refers to the two-part teaching from Jesus found in Matthew 22:37-40, which emphasizes loving God with all one's being and loving one's neighbor as oneself. The "New Commandment," found in John 13:34, instructs believers to love one another as Jesus has loved them. These commandments are central to Catholic teachings on faith and practice, emphasizing love as the foundation of Christian life.
- [Theological and Cardinal Virtues](#)
- [The Ten Commandments](#) (Activity)

Station 5: An Introduction to Augustine Institute and FORMED

Activity: *Augustine Institute Overview*

Objective:

Give teachers a good place to start

Materials Needed:

TV

Introduction:

A complete review of WOL, SOG and Symbolon for Teens.

Directions:

1. We have teamed with Augustine Institute to help us with Faith Formation this year.
2. All grades K-8 will be using *The Catholic Youth Bible, 4th Edition* and the *Word of Life* series from the Augustine Institute.
3. Communion preparation students will be using the Signs of Grace books: *You Are Loved* and *You Are Forgiven*
4. Confirmation preparation students will be using *Symbolon Teens* through FORMED.
5. Faith Formation for Parents will be using *Symbolon* through FORMED.

In addition, there is on-line access for all students at FORMED.

[Overview from them.](#)

Station 6 “Fan the Flame”

Introduction:

“Use Gospel stories as a jumping off point. We have to bring that Gospel to life.”

Directions:

Make prayer an integral part of the experience. You are not the teacher of a subject but the [facilitator of an encounter](#). This means that prayer must be more than a perfunctory beginning and ending to your session. It should be an integral part of each session so that participants can prayerfully reflect on God’s Word and speak to Jesus in their hearts.

Activity: How does God reveal himself to me?

Objective:

Connect catechism to Holy Scripture

Materials Needed:

Bibles

Slides

Paper and pens

Music

Poster board

One of the most often-used phrases in TV commercials is, “But wait, there’s more!” Just when you think you’ve heard it all and that it can’t get any better, the seller doubles down and tells you that it’s about to get even better—beyond your wildest dreams! (“Order now and get a second set free!”)

In our proclamation of the Gospel, we have a “But wait, there’s more!” moment: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ! Just when you thought you’ve heard everything there is to hear about Jesus—his teachings, his miracles, his healings, and his laying down his life for us by dying on the Cross—we hear the Good News that he is Risen! Sin and death have been conquered once and for all. And if God can overcome sin and death, he can overcome anything, so we have nothing to fear and every reason to be joyful!

The Resurrection is the linchpin to evangelizing catechesis, since it is the linchpin to the Gospel. St. Paul stated firmly that, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” (1 Corinthians 15:14) So what does it mean for us to proclaim the Risen Lord?

- It means, first of all, that we proclaim a Person, not a set of beliefs, not a memory, not a history lesson, but a living Person with whom we are invited to enter into relationship.
- It means that we take time in our catechesis to invite learners to talk with the Risen Christ through [reflective prayer](#). Too often, we teach as though we invite Jesus into the room and then make him sit in the corner while we talk about him!
- It means that we *a/ways* proclaim with **joy**! (This is not to be confused with “putting on a happy face” or being glib.) When we evangelize, we lead, not with doctrine or morality, but with an attitude of joy. Bishop Robert Barron compares

it to teaching someone the love of the game of baseball, something that we don't accomplish by handing out a rule book. We teach the love of the game by inviting people to play baseball and experience the joy of the game. *Then* we teach them the rules.

- It means that we create a climate of joy when we gather people, something done through hospitality as well as through praise, [namely singing](#).
- It means that we accompany people who are not experiencing joy but are rather in despair. Our presence alone is the assurance that joy will return; we need not engage in happy talk as much as simple presence and reassurance.
- It means to always be proclaiming a future of [hope](#)—not of doom and gloom—since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ indicates what is in store for us if we remain faithful.
- It means to teach and practice mercy since the Risen Christ returned, not for revenge against those who betrayed him, but to extend mercy and forgiveness.

An evangelizing catechist is not a teacher of a subject but a facilitator of an encounter—an encounter with a living Person: The Risen Christ.

1. .

Station 7: Faith Formation 2025

Introduction:

This Year's Program

Directions:

1. Review Handbook

Activity: Review Handbook

Objective:

Educate and Improve

Materials Needed:

Handbook

Station 8: Closing Prayer and Questions

Directions:

Activity: Questions and closing prayer

Objective:

Materials Needed:

TV connected to internet
Prayer on Screen

1. [Questions?](#)
2. [Thank everyone and then Pray together:](#)

“Enlighten my mind to know these mysteries which your Church treasures and teaches. Move my heart to love them and my will to live in accord with them. Give me the ability to teach this Faith to others without pride, without ostentation, and without personal gain.”

1. Not used: **Polish your technique.** As a catechist, you are now a public speaker! This means that you have to pay attention to your voice (pace, tone, volume), posture, facial expression, body language, eye contact, movement, and so on, so that your [presence and delivery](#) exude confidence, joy, and enthusiasm. "Positive presence" refers to all of the ways we present ourselves to those we teach and includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - **Eye contact.** Do we meet eyes with those we teach or look around them/over them or keep our eyes on our notes?
 - **Movement.** Do we [move around when we teach](#) to express energy or remain stationary and risk expressing passivity?
 - **Facial expression.** Do we express excitement, joy, enthusiasm, etc. in our facial expressions or remain stone-faced for the most part?
 - **Body language/posture.** Do we use body language and posture to express drama, excitement, poise, confidence, and joy, or do we express boredom, fatigue, or uneasiness?
 - **Voice: pace, tone, volume.** Do we use our voice to express energy, profundity, joy, reverence, and confidence, or do we come across as monotonous, low energy, fearful, or nervous? Do we speak loudly enough or too loudly? Fast enough or too fast?
 - **Dress.** Do we dress in a way that shows the importance of what we are doing and expresses confidence, or does it appear that what we are doing as a catechist is a low priority for us and that we are not comfortable in the position?