The Vocare Religious Education Certification Process

Introduction

Before He ascended into heaven, the Risen Lord commissioned the Apostles saying, *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19-20). In *Evangelii Gaudium* (33), Pope Francis tells us that today more than ever, this mission to evangelize calls for *boldness and creativity*, for *a willingness to rethink our goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization.* The Vocare process provides a means by which we empower others to effectively evangelize, disciple and teach the faith at every level.

By virtue of their ministry, Parish Catechetical Leaders, Parish Catechists, Catholic School Principals, and Catholic School Teachers, especially Religion Teachers, are called to be role models for the adults and youth they teach. They are called upon to be well formed in Catholic teaching, dedicated to ongoing formation, and witnesses to the Catholic way of life. To help them fulfill this role, Vocare provides a means for ongoing religious formation in the Catholic Faith in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Vocare Overview

The call to be a catechist, rooted in our baptismal call, requires commitment to formation. All catechists, religion teachers, catechetical leaders and principals in the parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati – full and part-time, paid and volunteer – are required to complete ten (10) credits per fiscal year in Vocare to remain certified in their ministry. Generally, each lesson within Vocare fulfills one credit. Additionally, at varying times, those in elementary catechetical ministry will be required to have their teaching of a religion class observed. All are encouraged to engage in small faith-sharing groups. In these ways, the Archdiocese cultivates evangelizing catechetical leadership that fosters a culture of missionary discipleship.

Vocare fulfills two roles in the certification of catechists – it is the program that tracks credits/coursework/certification, and it is the online program of courses that can be completed for certification. The rest of this document will deal with the latter – the online organization of courses.

There are nine courses that would be considered introductory in nature. These nine courses are arranged in groups that add up to the 10 credits required annually for certification. It is highly recommended that a catechist progress through these courses *in order* (**CALL** → **WITNESS** → **PROCLAIM**), and should complete the group of courses within two years of starting them.

Active Certification is based on 10 credits of formation per fiscal year. Of these 10, a catechist may choose to gain credit outside the Vocare format. Workshops, days of reflection, conferences, etc. that are theological or catechetical in nature – *as approved by the CNE* – can be applied toward annual credits. The 10 lessons in the **CALL**, **WITNESS**, and **PROCLAIM** courses are arranged in groups of 4 lessons, 3 lessons and 3 lessons to accommodate the possibility of outside credits. It should be noted that an online course must be completed within one calendar year of purchase date, or permission to use it will expire.

Some outside events are valued at 10 credits, such as college-level courses. These include – but are not limited to – completion with a passing grade of a semester-long Catholic university course in theology or catechetics, any VLCFF course from the University of Dayton, and any semester-long course from the Athenaeum of Ohio, including the LPMP program.

Definitions and Terms

Vocare - the name of the certification process for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Course - a group of lessons organized for varying purposes

   The **CALL**, **WITNESS**, and **PROCLAIM** courses are arranged in groups of 4 lessons, 3 lessons and 3 lessons each. The numerous other courses contain a series of lessons arranged around a particular topic or theme. These vary in credits per course, depending on the number of lessons in each.

Formation Plan - the systematic curriculum containing the lessons for each course.

Formation Path - a suggested path of classes based on the catechist's prior knowledge and experience. Lessons in **WITNESS** and **PROCLAIM** can be 'tested-out' of based on knowledge.

Growth in Personal Faith - an activity such as liturgical minister, retreat, spiritual reading, etc., that aids in the growth of one's relationship with Christ.

Lesson ☐ the classes within a course variously made up of prayer, videos, activities, etc.

Observation/Post-Observation Conference - the observation of a catechetical session by a veteran catechist with a follow-up debriefing

Outside Event - a college course, or a workshop or in-service on specific theological concepts or catechetical methodology that can be submitted for outside credit in Vocare.

Reflection - a journal of questions specific to a particular course.

Veteran Catechist - a certified catechetical leader (DRE, CRE or PCL), a principal, or an advanced catechist who has at least 8 years of catechetical ministry.

VIRTUS® Compliant/Decree on Child Protection - completion of a VIRTUS® *Protecting God's Children* introductory workshop and an active background check, remains current with the monthly VIRTUS® bulletins, and is considered compliant and active by the Safe Environment Office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Vocare Administrator - the person identified at each parish and school who is responsible for coordinating the Vocare process.

Archdiocese of Cincinnati Vocare Support - Archdiocesan staff responsible for administering the day-to-day needs associated with Vocare.

Prerequisites for All Catechists

There are three prerequisites for catechists and leaders in a parish religious education program or Catholic school:

1. A catechist must have participated in a *Protecting God's Children* workshop.
2. They must be VIRTUS® compliant, maintaining eligibility through monthly bulletins.
3. They should be involved in an activity that helps them grow in their personal faith.

Upon completion of the prerequisites, the catechist begins with the Formation Plan appropriate for them. There are several options for completing the classes within the Formation Plan, and these will be described later in this document.

Requirements of the Introductory Courses

There are nine courses that would be considered introductory in nature. These nine courses are arranged in groups that add up to the 10 credits required annually for certification: **CALL**, **WITNESS**, and **PROCLAIM**.

New Parish Catechists and Catholic School Teachers of Religion complete the classes in the three **CALL** courses. These classes provide introductory information about the Catholic faith as well as catechetical information about teaching the faith. They include lessons on prayer, the creed, sacraments, methods for teaching, etc. They will guide the new Catechist in their vocation with children and adults as they answer the call to catechetical ministry.

The classes of the **CALL** courses are organized as follows:

Call Foundations	Pillars of Faith	Spirituality and Formation
Introduction	The Creed	Person & Spirituality of the Catechist
Prayer and Evangelization	Sacraments	Sermon on the Mount
The Practice of Prayer	Life in Christ	Foundation of Theology of the Body
Catechesis Methodology		

Upon successful completion of the classes required for the **CALL** courses – or during the first or second year of catechetical ministry – a catechetical session led by the catechist is observed by a veteran catechist. This observer will take note of the use of the catechetical method and prayer in the session, affirm the positive aspects of the session, and offer suggestions for improvement to the catechist after the observation.

 Upon completion of the **CALL** courses, the learner proceeds with the lessons in the **WITNESS** courses. Having been introduced to the basics of our faith, the **WITNESS** courses continue with further development of these concepts. These classes provide more in-depth information about the Catholic faith as well as catechetical information about teaching the faith. They include material about prayer, Jesus Christ, morality, the sacraments, etc. They will continue to guide the catechist in their vocation with children and adults as they answer the call to catechetical ministry.

The classes of the **WITNESS** courses are organized as follows:

Witness Foundations	Created in God's Image	Liturgy and Sacraments
Overcoming Difficulties in Prayer	The Trinity and Creation	Liturgy and Sacraments
Those Who Are Catechized	Jesus Christ	Baptism / Confirmation
The Incarnation	The Language of the Body	The Blessed Sacrament
The Moral Law		

 Upon completion of the **WITNESS** courses, the learner proceeds with the lessons in the **PROCLAIM** courses. The **PROCLAIM** courses contain further development of theological/catechetical concepts. These classes include lessons on prayer, scripture, liturgy, etc.

The classes of the **PROCLAIM** courses are organized as follows:

Proclaim Foundations	Living Out the Faith	The Mass and Our Spiritual Mother
Prayer in the Life of Jesus	Docility to the Holy Spirit	Mary, Our Spiritual Mother
Catechesis: Evangelization	Gift versus Use	Mass, Part I: Intro / Liturgy of Word
Liberation Humanity from Sin	Revelation	Mass, Part II: Liturgy of Eucharist
Origins of Scripture		

Certificates for Completed Courses

Upon the successful completion of a course within **CALL**, **WITNESS**, or **PROCLAIM** (or any completed course), the catechist has the ability to print out a certificate for that course. Select the Reports tab from the top of the page and click 'My Certifications.' Under the column *Certificate of Completion*, select the course you wish to print a certificate for. Select the 'Download Certificate' button and save the document for printing.

Other Vocare Courses

The remainder of Vocare courses contain classes arranged by similar topics. These courses use content from the *Institute of Catholic Culture*, *My Catholic Faith Delivered*, Archdiocese of Cincinnati staff, partnerships with other dioceses, and numerous other resources. Additional courses will be added annually in consideration of the catechetical needs of those in the Archdiocese and to provide a comprehensive curriculum throughout the Vocare process. Catechists are not required to complete these courses, but they are available for those who wish to study particular content. The requirement for certification continues to be 10 credits per year.

Completing Courses – Options

There are several options for completing the classes within a Formation Plan. The options vary in engagement, leadership, and cost. There are three ptions:

Option 1: Individual Use

In this option, individual catechists access online content independently. They pay full price for each lesson in a course and complete the work individually.

Option 2: Small Group Live Course Event – *No Online Content*

In this option, the Instructor (who must be a certified catechetical leader or principal) requests and downloads the teacher manuals for a course. The Instructor uses these manuals to teach the classes 'live' at an onsite location in the parish or school. Participants complete the classes with the instructor and their attendance is recorded for credit in the Vocare system. The teacher manuals are free to the instructor, and each student pays $15 for the total course taught within the live classes.

Option 3: Small Group Live Course Event – *Only Instructor Has Access to Online Content*

In this option, the Instructor uses the online content to display or teach in the onsite setting. The Instructor purchases the entire course at full price, and participants pay $15 each.

Vocare Credits for Catechetical Events Outside the Online System

As mentioned earlier, active certification is based on 10 credits of theological formation per year. Workshops, days of reflection, conferences, etc., that are theological in nature – *as approved by the CNE* – can be applied toward annual credits.

'Outside Events' fall into three categories:

1. Automatically Pre-Approved Events
These include completion with a passing grade of a semester-long Catholic university course

in theology or catechetics as follows:

- A semester-long Ohio Catholic university course in theology or catechetics (outside Ohio Catholic university courses, including distance learning, must be pre-approved)
- Any VLCFF course from the University of Dayton
- Any semester-long course from the Athenaeum of Ohio, including the LPMP program.

A transcript or certificate of the course must be submitted to the Vocare system using the appropriate form. The course will be posted in the Vocare system as completion of 10 credits for the *fiscal year the course was taken.* There will be no 'carry-over' of credit from one year to another.

Procedure: complete *University Credit Submission Form*; attach transcript to the form.

2. Seminars/Conferences

These events include theological or catechetical workshops outside of the parish or school that are within a conference and are at least one hour in length. The learner submits a completed event form in the Vocare system with the information required on the Event Submission form. This form includes a description (minimum 200 words) of the concepts learned in the workshop and how they will help the learner catechetically. Each event/workshop will be given one credit per submission, *pending CNE approval*. There will be no 'carry-over' of conference credits from one year to another.

Procedure: complete *Event/Conference/Workshop Submission Form.*

3. Events Submitted for Pre-Approval

These events include parish and/or school workshops and/or in-service opportunities that take place at the local level. These events must be submitted to Vocare Support for *pre-approval* to ensure adequate content for credit. The catechist is required to submit an Event Submission form, which includes a reflection (minimum 200 words) on the concepts learned in the workshop and how they will help the participant catechetically. Each event/workshop will be given credit *pending CNE pre-approval*.

Procedure: Instructor submits *Event Pre-Approval Form* to Vocare Support *at least 2 weeks before* the event. Learner completes *Event Submission* after the event for credit.

More Information

If you need help using the Vocare system or have specific questions about Vocare, you can email VocareSupport@CatholicCincinnati.org.

The Center for the New Evangelization is continuously involved in the study of catechesis as directed by the Catholic Church. Revisions to the Vocare process will be made as appropriate. Updates will be presented to Parish Catechetical Leaders and Catholic School Principals with the expectation that the information is shared with all catechists and teachers of religion. Feedback and suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

- March 2021