



Called to teach.

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; and for rediscovering that 'discipleship' and 'mission' are inseparable.* In other words, it calls for authentic missionary conversion.

The Office for Evangelization and Discipleship (OED) of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati is charged with fostering an Archdiocesan, parish-centered culture of Disciples Making Disciples. We continue in our mission of assisting our Archbishop in *directing and moderating all the catechetical activities of the Archdiocese (General Directory for Catechesis 265, National Directory for Catechesis 59).* The Vocare Certification Process and its requirements provide the 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, the Vocare process provides a means for ongoing religious formation in the Catholic Faith for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Built into the Vocare process is support of Missionary Discipleship. Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* that "baptism makes us 'missionary disciples' (120)." "To be called' by God (*vocare*) to catechetical ministry is a particular call to missionary discipleship. Disciples are formed through the sharing of faith-experiences with others. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus says, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Mt 18:20). It's in these 'gatherings' that we are supported in efforts to grow in our relationship with Christ. The word *catechesis* means 'echo.' Through the telling of the stories of God's presence in our lives, we come to experience the richness of God's call to us as catechists as we 'echo' God's love for others.

Vocare Overview

The call to be a catechist, rooted in our baptismal call, requires commitment to formation. The Vocare process includes study, practicing the Catholic faith through a life rooted in the Sacraments and prayer, as well as practical disciplines of faith as experienced in small groups. As a result, 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 year in Vocare to remain certified in their ministry. Generally, each class within Vocare fulfills one credit. Additionally, at varying times, those in catechetical ministry will be required to have their teaching of a religion class observed, complete reflection papers, participate in small faith-sharing groups, and other tasks specified by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. 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. In order for a catechist to grow in their ministry and formation, it is further recommended that the completion of the introductory formation courses (**CALL**, **WITNESS**, and **PROCLAIM**) be limited to the 10 required credits per fiscal year.

Upon successful completion of the **PROCLAIM** set of courses, a catechist begins the **INSPIRE** course. It is hoped that all catechetical personnel in the Archdiocese will complete the **INSPIRE** course. At this point in certification, the Vocare process invites all those in catechetical ministry to be involved in a Missionary Discipleship faith-sharing group along with the completion of their annual credits. After **INSPIRE**, a catechist is encouraged to take courses suggested by the **INSPIRE** Pathway Assessment or any course they are interested in.

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

An exception to the ‘3 outside credits only’ policy exists in the case of 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 classes organized for varying purposes



The **CALL**, **WITNESS**, and **PROCLAIM** courses are arranged in groups of 4 classes, 3 classes and 3 classes each. The **INSPIRE** course has its own formation plan totaling 10 credits. The numerous **ENRICH** courses are each a series of classes arranged around a particular topic or theme. These vary in credits per course, depending on the number of classes in each.

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.

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.

Formation Plan → the systematic curriculum containing the classes for each course.

Formation Path → a suggested path of classes based on the catechist's prior knowledge and experience.

Missionary Discipleship → a small faith-sharing group.

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

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

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.

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.

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

Archdiocesan 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:

<u>Call Foundations</u>	<u>Pillars of Faith</u>	<u>Spirituality and Formation</u>
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, and will 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:

<u>Witness Foundations</u>	<u>Created in God's Image</u>	<u>Liturgy and Sacraments</u>
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:

<u>Proclaim Foundations</u>	<u>Living Out the Faith</u>	<u>The Mass and Our Spiritual Mother</u>
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 in **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.

Requirements of INSPIRE



The **INSPIRE** course is designed to be an inspirational launch into independent study for all Parish Catechetical Leaders and Catechists, and Catholic School Principals and Teachers of Religion. Using the **Wild Goose** series from the Augustine Institute, the learner experiences a deepening of God's love and transforming power through the Holy Spirit. 'Wild goose' is a Celtic Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit. As the Augustine Institute writes: *We are able to experience the beauty and freedom of God's Love by the Holy Spirit... When we experience God's Love we come to understand in a powerful way that we are in fact "lovable." God's Love reveals our beauty and goodness before him.*

When beginning the **INSPIRE** course, the catechist is free to view the **Wild Goose** series individually, or it can be watched in a group to facilitate discussion and interaction with the material.

A deeper dimension of the catechetical ministry is highlighted in the **INSPIRE** badge with the added commitment to Missionary Discipleship. A "missionary disciple" is both a disciple and a missionary – a disciple being a follower of Jesus Christ and a missionary being one who goes out into the world on a mission. The knowledge of a teacher, while very important, is not what makes them an effective transmitter of God's Word. They must be a disciple – one who follows the Lord and devotes their life to him. As Saint Pope Paul VI is so often quoted, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he *does* listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." Missionary Discipleship is the requirement to participate in an ongoing discipleship group. Small faith-communities are essential to disciples because they offer an opportunity to develop relationships of faith, and in turn, deepen our relationship with Christ. They become true "schools for discipleship" (*National Directory for Catechesis* 29) in which we are apprenticed in the heart and habits of the Christian life and we, in turn, are initiated into the "art of accompaniment" of others (*Evangelii Gaudium* 169). The Missionary Discipleship experience of friendship, accompaniment, and on-going conversion will help us become a better catechist who's lived faith spills over into our catechesis as we accompany others in their own growth as disciples of Jesus Christ. Please see the Vocare information on Missionary Discipleship for further details.

Upon successful completion of the **Wild Goose** series, the learner completes a series of short reflections that are housed in the "Welcome" activity of the **INSPIRE** course. The entire **INSPIRE** course (**Wild Goose** series) *must be completed during the same fiscal year* and fulfills 10 annual credits.

Requirements of ENRICH



The **INSPIRE** course completes the formal levels of certification in the *Vocare* process. After completing the **INSPIRE** course, the learner continues with independent study. The final requirement of the **INSPIRE** badge is 'Formation Pathing.' This assessment will offer suggestions as to areas of theology/catechetics that may be of interest to the learner to 'fill in the gaps' of possible weak areas in theological or catechetical topics. The learner is free to take advantage of the Formation Pathing suggestions, or may take any course of interest to them. All these courses are available in the **ENRICH** section of *Vocare*. Upon completion of the **INSPIRE** badge, the learner is free to engage in any and all classes offered throughout the *Vocare* system – including all courses from **CALL**, **WITNESS**, and **PROCLAIM**.

ENRICH courses contain classes arranged by similar topics. These courses use content from the *Institute of Catholic Culture*, *FORMED*, *My Catholic Faith Delivered*, and numerous other resources. Additional **ENRICH** courses will be added annually to consider the catechetical needs of those in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and to provide a comprehensive curriculum throughout the *Vocare* process. Catechists are not required to complete **ENRICH** courses. These courses 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 four options:

Option 1: Individual Use

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

Option 2: Small Group Live Class 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. Students 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 class.

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

In this option, the Instructor (who must be a certified catechetical leader or principal) uses the online content to display or teach in the onsite setting. The Instructor purchases the entire course at full price, and students pay \$15 each.

Option 4: Small Group Discussion Group – *Instructor and Students Each Access Online Content*

In this option, *the Instructor and the students* use the online content individually. The Instructor invites students to engage in group discussion after completing a class or an entire course. The Instructor and students each pay full price for bundle.

Vocare Credits for Catechetical Events Outside the Online System

As mentioned earlier, active certification is based on 10 credits of theological formation per year. Of these 10, three (3) may be outside the Vocare format. Workshops, days of reflection, conferences, etc., that are theological in nature – *as approved by the OED* – can be applied toward annual credits.

'Outside Events' fall into three categories:

1. 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 OED approval*. Regardless of the number of workshops attended/submitted, a maximum of three credits will be permitted per conference. There will be no 'carry-over' of conference credits from one year to another.

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

3. Other Events

These events include parish and/or school workshops and/or in-service opportunities that take place at the local level. These events are planned far ahead and must be submitted to VocareSupport for pre-approval to ensure adequate content for credit. The learner 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 learner catechetically. Each event/workshop will be given one credit per submission, *pending OED pre-approval*.

Procedure: Instructor submits *Event Pre-Approval Form* to VocareSupport *at least 6 weeks before* the event. Learner completes *Event Submission* after the event for credit.

Regardless of the number of workshops attended/submitted, a maximum of three credits will be permitted for events outside the Vocare system annually.

More Information

Information can be found on the Office for Evangelization and Discipleship website. Click on [Vocare](#) for more information.

If you need help using the Vocare system, you can email VocareSupport@CatholicCincinnati.org.

Continuous Improvement

The Office for Evangelization and Discipleship 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.

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