

people also need examples of ordinary people who do the right thing just because it's the right thing. As a catechist, you get to be a model and trusted adult to young people in your community.

Being a catechist brings joy.

Okay, so sometimes it's not ecstasy trying to teach a group of kids about morals when they'd rather be playing soccer — but most of the time, being with energetic, enthusiastic young people gives you renewed energy and vitality. Kids

remind adults to live and laugh in the present moment and get enthused about life's endless opportunities for joy. And, if your ministry calls you to work with adults, the pleasure of standing with a person as they receive the Eucharist for the first time, or witnessing the



Gospel take root in someone's life, is incomparable. Not to mention the deep-seated and long-lasting joy you experience when you see the Faith growing and developing throughout your parish.

Catechesis is fundamental.

It's easy to forget just how essential sharing the Faith, particularly as a catechist, is to our very lives. Pope Benedict XVI, in an address to French bishops, clearly explained the importance of catechesis when he said:

If every baptized person is to grow in desire for God and in understanding of life's meaning, catechesis is of fundamental importance. . . . It is about an organic presentation of the whole of Christian revelation, in such a way as to make available to minds and hearts the word of him who gave his life for us.

We are all called to be witnesses to the Gospel in our families and among our friends and neighbors — but

sometimes we hear a deeper call, feel a greater desire to convey our beliefs in a more formal, structured way. It is then that we realize that we are being asked to proclaim the Gospel as “irreplaceable evangelizers” (*Redemptoris Missio*). In short, we are called to be catechists.



If you've been approached to be a catechist, or if you feel the call of the Spirit, you are being asked to do something special for God, for the Church, and for your fellow Catholics.

You'll never regret saying “yes” to that call. And in responding, you may find you are doing something special for yourself.

Prayer of a Catechist

Here I am, Lord.
I am not worthy to be the one to teach your truths, but you,
in your infinite wisdom,
have called me to this place.
Give me the wisdom to use my abilities for the good of your kingdom.
Give me the courage to be a witness of the Gospel.
Give me the grace to deepen my Faith so that I might share that Faith with others.
With your help,
I will speak your words.
Reveal your presence.
Show your love.
Now and all the days of my life.
Amen.

For Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (USCCB, 2006)

Dantzer, Judy Elliott. *The Big Book of Family Gatherings for Parish Faith Formation* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007)

Hater, Rev. Robert. *Catechist's Companion: How to be a Good Catechist* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2006)

White, Joseph D., Ph.D. *Catechist's Companion to the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2006)

www.teachingcatholickids.com

www.amazingcatechists.com

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Why Be a Catechist?



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“You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

— Acts 1:8

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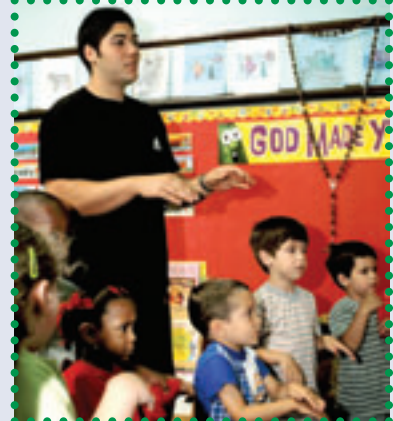
S hhhh. Listen! Are you being called? In a “low whisper,” God called Elijah. Your call may come as a question when registering your children for formation classes at Church; “Are you able to help?” Maybe it will come as a stirring when you read your parish bulletin — “Needed: Catechists to journey with adult learners in RCIA.” Most often God calls gently, nudging us a bit to draw our attention. Listen! Is God calling you?

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus said:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

— Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus’ great commission calls us, as members of the Body of Christ, to continue his mission begun 20 centuries ago. But contributing to the coming of God’s kingdom is no simple task, and sometimes we may feel as if it is all we can do to bear witness in our home lives, workplaces, and relationships, let alone to a room full of faces we



may barely know. However, if we are willing to step out in faith and trust, and remain confident that Jesus will indeed always be with us, we may find that becoming a catechist is a distinct and irreplaceable way we’re meant to answer God’s great commission.

Pope John Paul II put it this way:

Like John the Baptist, the catechist too is called to point out Jesus as the awaited Messiah, the Christ. His task is to invite people to fix their gaze on Jesus and to follow him, for Jesus alone is the Teacher, the Lord and the Savior.

— Jubilee of Catechists and Religion Teachers (Dec. 10, 2000)

But, taking up the challenge to spread the Good News may not be the only “nudge” you feel in considering this invitation. Here are a few other compelling reasons to answer the call.



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The best way to learn is to teach.

Anyone who has ever been an instructor will tell you that one of the best ways to learn is to teach. While it is important that you have a basic knowledge and grasp of the teachings of the Church before you begin, you aren’t expected to have all the answers. The resources and materials you will be exposed to as a catechist will refresh and expand your own knowledge. You will have access to others who can help you with your own questions and invite you to a deeper spiritual life. More than likely, you will discover you learn more than you ever expected.

Your own faith will come alive.

Spending time helping others “fix their gaze on Jesus” means your gaze is turned in that direction as well. One of the major benefits of being a catechist is that prayer and liturgy, even your own relationship with God, can become more vibrant and meaningful. By acting on what you believe and actively passing those beliefs on to others, you participate in a new way in the abundant life Jesus came to give us.

You become an active participant in one of the essential responsibilities of a Church community.

What kind of church would our Catholic Church be if the apostolate of proclaiming the Gospel rested squarely on the shoulders of our priests and Religious?

The laity are uniquely entrusted with the role of working in union with their priests to bring the message of faith to full bloom among diverse parish environments and beyond.

Nourished by their active participation in the liturgical life of their community, [the laity] engage zealously in its apostolic works; they draw men towards the Church who had been perhaps far away from it; they ardently cooperate in the spread of the Word of God, particularly by catechetical instruction.

— Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, 10



Those who with God’s help have welcomed Christ’s call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world.

— Catechism of the Catholic Church (prologue, 3)

You assist in bringing Christ to others.

This sounds overwhelming, I know, but it is really quite simple. A catechist meets a person in their faith journey and walks awhile with them. In that relationship, God is revealed and the hope for new understanding of the Divine is kindled. Our God is a relational God. And we, as God’s creation, are meant to be in relationship with one another just as Father, Son, and Spirit are in relationship. We are all created in God’s image, and yet we are all so different. Each person holds within them a unique reflection of God. The more we know one another, the more we know God.



You practice stewardship.

Regardless of your economic circumstances, serving as a catechist is a way of being a good steward by giving of one of your most precious resources — time. By donating your time and services on behalf of others, you demonstrate in a concrete way the importance of Christ in your life.

You show your own family that you value the Faith.

Taking time out of your life to teach the Faith shows your own children, grandchildren, siblings, and family members that you put a high priority on religious education. You may find you are teaching them as much by your example as you are your students by your lesson plan.

You become a role model.

Ask young people who their role models or heroes are and you’ll get a litany of movie and sports stars. While looking good and being athletic are fine qualities, young

Dear teachers, to you is entrusted the splendid mission of educating the young, by becoming examples and guides for them. . . . To invest in the formation of the younger generation is to invest in the future of the Church and the nation. The Second Vatican Council declares: “The future of humanity is placed in the hands of those who can transmit to the generations of tomorrow reasons to live and to hope (*Gaudium et Spes*, 31).”

— Pope John Paul II, Speech to Catechists and Ecclesial Movements (Oct. 4, 1998)