

# Support & Training for Catechists



Catholic Diocese  
of  
Northampton

# Unpacking the Gift of God

In the Bible we find these words from St Paul about our new life in Christ:

***"for it is by grace  
you have been saved, through faith  
and this is ...the gift of God"***

*(Ephesians 2:8).*



Our faith, like any gift, needs to be received and unpacked. As catechists have a vital role to play in passing on the faith, they need to be properly equipped so that they can effectively help others to receive and unpack the precious gift of the Catholic faith.

Whilst recognising that each parish organises their own programmes for sacramental initiation and other formation, the diocese provides support and training for catechists. This brochure contains information about the support and training available for catechists in the Catholic Diocese of Northampton.



# Training for Catechists

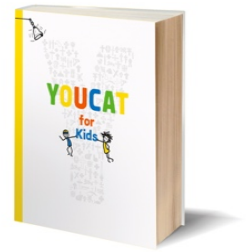
**Catechist Training** is offered to those already involved in catechesis as well as to form those who feel called to this work and are just starting out. For those catechists who may appreciate a gentle introduction to their learning journey the following two training sessions are ideal:

## **Retreat for Catechists (2 hours)**

Gathering catechists for prayers and reflections. This creates a welcoming and prayerful environment in order to encourage and support catechists as well as to assist with recruiting potential catechists.

## **An Introduction to YOUCAT for Kids (90 minutes)**

An opportunity to browse and be guided through a method of using YOUCAT for Kids. This is also a great resource for supporting families in their mission of passing on the faith at home (parishes to supply YOUCAT for Kids books).



## **The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis**



The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis provides the opportunity for catechists to explore some of the basics of what the Church teaches about catechesis. It is offered over 4 levels and is designed to equip catechists with essential knowledge and skills.

A description of what is covered in each of the 4 levels is given on the following pages.

## **Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 1**

Drawing on Scripture and Church documents the Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 1 covers some basic principles of catechesis, helping us to grow in confidence as we seek to share the precious gift of faith in Jesus Christ with others. The course includes times of sharing, reflection and prayer. **The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 1 is structured around 5 sessions of 2 hours.**

**The 5 sessions are offered flexibly for parishes and pastoral areas.** For example, the course may be delivered over 5 x 2 hour sessions, two half days (2 x 5 hours), an evening and a full day or any other combination. There is no fixed charge for the course; however, we do invite those who can to make a donation to help cover costs. Please contact the NORES office to enquire about booking a course for your catechists at a venue of your choice. Following an introduction exploring the vocation, or calling, to be a catechist, the course then covers the following 5 session themes:

### ***Session 1: Starting Anew from Christ***

Reflecting on our encounter with Jesus Christ and our own journey of faith. Exploring our call to share the Good News and understanding that catechesis is an essential moment in evangelisation.

### ***Session 2: Growing in our understanding of the Catholic Faith***

Exploring the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and some key Church documents on catechesis.

### ***Session 3: Learning how to pass on the Catholic Faith***

The 'how' of catechesis. Exploring essential skills that catechists can use and develop.

### ***Session 4: The Church believes as she prays***

Exploring the link between catechesis, prayer and liturgy.

### ***Session 5: Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord***

Responding to the call to be missionary disciples. Exploring opportunities for further training and ongoing support.



## **Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 2**

The Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 2 is designed to enable catechists to reflect on and learn from their practical experience of catechesis in their local community. There is no fixed charge for the course; however, we do invite those who can to make a donation to help cover costs.

During an introductory session catechists are guided through an overview of the course which consists of the following elements:

### ***Practical and Theological Reflection***

At its heart this course consists of catechists reflecting on their ministry in the parish over an agreed time period (typically 9 months). This reflection is both practical and theological and is based on what is known as the Pastoral Cycle.



### ***Local Support from an Experienced Catechist***

During this period of reflection catechists are asked to identify a priest, deacon or experienced catechist in their own parish who can support them in this process.

### ***Journaling and Report***

As part of the course catechists are asked to record some of their reflections. At the end of the course catechists also submit a written report which summarises their experience and what they have learned.

### ***Accessing and Delivering New Forms of Faith Formation***

As part of the learning process catechists are also asked to access and help deliver additional formation in their local area. For example, they may start or join a group offering a course such as: The Great Adventure Bible Timeline or related scripture courses, a CAFÉ course, or an Alpha course. Alternatively, they may arrange for a Catholic Basics course to be run. A menu of some of the available options will be offered and catechists can join others locally who may already be involved in formation projects.



### ***A Final Session for Each Cohort***

At the end of the process each cohort gathers to share, pray and celebrate. During this final session participants who have passed are awarded their certificates.

## **Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Levels 3 & 4**

Theological formation is offered by means of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). For catechists undertaking the Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 3 or 4 this will include a specialist module in catechesis.

For full details of the CCRS course please see [www.nores.org.uk](http://www.nores.org.uk) and select the Adult Education and CCRS section or contact the NORES office.

Participants who audit the course (i.e. attend without undertaking the assessment by essays) will gain the Bishop's Certificate in Catechesis Level 3.

Catechists who complete the essays and are awarded the CCRS will gain the Bishop's Certificate level 4.



# Support for Catechists

A series of **Catechetical Gatherings** has been established on a parish, pastoral area and diocesan level in order to bring catechists together for mutual support and resourcing. These meetings help catechists to stay in touch with each other and also enable us to be connected with our Bishop and diocesan vision on an ongoing basis. An outline of the Catechetical Gatherings is given below:

## **PARISH CATECHETICAL GATHERINGS** *(Every year in the Pentecost Term)*

- A gathering of all parish catechists with their clergy to review catechesis taking place in the parish, in order to affirm and celebrate achievements and identify needs.
- Each parish nominates 2 catechists who are willing and able to represent the parish at pastoral area and/or diocesan meetings\*.
- If they are able, parishes may wish to cover travel expenses and other reasonable costs for catechist representatives who have limited financial means.

\*Where catechetical provision is shared between more than one parish the above gathering and representation can be worked out locally to reflect this arrangement.



## **PASTORAL AREA CATECHETICAL GATHERINGS** *(Every year in the Advent Term)*

- Every pastoral area hosts a Catechetical Gathering that brings together 1 or 2 catechist representatives from every parish in that pastoral area.\*
- The aim of this gathering is to enable the fruits of the parish catechetical conversations to filter up so as to help the Dean and those in leadership in the pastoral area identify common catechetical needs and relevant issues that are coming to the fore in parishes.
- A short formal report (1-2 sides of A4) should be produced summarising the main points raised during each Pastoral Area Catechetical Gathering. This should be sent to NORES c/o Alex Heath. As well as the Dean and any members of the clergy who are able to attend, 2 catechists from each pastoral area should be officially nominated by the pastoral area as catechetical representatives to attend and report to the Diocesan AGM.

## DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL AGM WITH OUR BISHOP *(Every year in the Lent Term)*

- Hosted by the Bishop and/or Episcopal Vicar for Education and Formation it brings together the Bishop (or his representative), NORES, the Deans (or their representatives), clergy, catechetical representatives nominated from each of the pastoral areas, and any interested parties in common purpose to support the catechetical mission of the local Church.
- The AGM provides the opportunity for the Bishop, as chief catechist, to communicate his vision for the diocese and for catechesis.
- The Diocesan Catechetical AGM also provides a forum for dialogue and exploration of key issues facing catechists.
- Since each pastoral area submits their report in advance, delegates are able to speak to these issues and share about some of the catechetical issues they are facing in their work as catechists.
- It also provides a forum for sharing information about diocesan training opportunities and other means of ongoing support and formation that are available.



### Catechetical Support and Advice

NORES also offers specific support and training for sacramental preparation, including ideas and support for family catechesis. We also offer bespoke training sessions for your particular catechetical needs. In addition to the catechist courses outlined in this brochure other events and courses are regularly advertised in NORES News, our monthly newsletter, as well as in other publicity that comes from the NORES office.

***This brochure is also available online via the catechesis section of the NORES website  
[www.nores.org.uk](http://www.nores.org.uk)***

***For further information about catechist support and training or to book  
any of the courses for your parish or pastoral area please contact:***

***Alex Heath, Adviser for Adult Faith Formation via the NORES Office.***

## Prayer for Catechists

*God our Father, in your love you continually call catechists  
to serve in your Church.*

*We ask you to bless all catechists,  
that they may be filled with your love.*

*Strengthen them by the power of your Holy Spirit  
so that they may be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ.*

*Enlighten them, so that they may grow in their own understanding of  
and commitment to the Word of God.*

*By the power of your grace, at work in their weakness,  
make them authentic teachers of the Catholic Faith.*

*Through their word and example may current and future generations  
know the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord (Ph 3:8)  
and the salvation and life that is found in Him  
through His Body, the Church.*

*We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*



**NORES, Diocese of Northampton**  
***Supporting Catholic Education and Formation***

Diocesan Pastoral and RE Centre, 33 Westbourne Road, Luton LU4 8JD  
Tel: 01582 723312      heath@nores.org.uk      www.nores.org.uk