

**“Getting Up To Today”**  
**An Online Religious Studies Program for Catholics**  
**A Foundational Reflection and Study of the Catholic Faith**  
**Through the Wisdom and Vision of the Second Vatican Council**

**Program Goals and Objectives**  
**Basic Catechist Certification Courses**

**Course Title: Foundational Principles and Practices for Catechists**

**Goal:** Form catechists who are prepared to fulfill the aim of catechetical activity, which is to “encourage a living, explicit, and fruitful profession of faith” (GDC #66).

**Objectives:**

1. Assist catechists in understanding and carrying out the six fundamental tasks of catechesis as outlined in the *National Directory for Catechesis*:
  - Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.
  - Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the Sacraments.
  - Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.
  - Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.
  - Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
  - Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.
2. Ensure that catechists understand that the six tasks of catechesis are interdependent and develop together.
3. Offer an opportunity for catechists to reflect on the *Gifts of the Spirit* received at Baptism and identify how the Spirit is working in their catechetical ministry.
4. Assist catechists in identifying and unwrapping particular Christian gifts that are meant to be shared with others:
  - The gift of faith received at baptism and recapped in the Church’s Creed
  - The gift of prayer and ritual, expressing a faith that goes beyond words
  - The gift of community, in which faith is nurtured, strengthened, and challenged
  - The gift of self as a unique and precious member of God’s family called to serve
5. Provide a method through which catechists can explore and identify their own personal spiritual gifts and reflect on the ways their particular gifts enrich their catechetical ministry.
6. Within four catechetical contexts provide practical and appropriate methods and techniques for teaching and learning:
  - A. Sharing the Gift of Faith:
    - Look at the big picture
    - Set objectives
    - Know your topic
    - Vary methods and techniques
    - Check out resources
    - Know who you are teaching
    - Teach through example
    - Set guidelines
    - Share feelings
    - Apply lessons to life
    - Importance of prayer

- B. Sharing the Gift of Prayer and Ritual:
- Pray together
  - Ask others to pray
  - Introduce songs and prayers from the Liturgy
  - Talk about the meaning of familiar prayers
  - Introduce a variety of prayer forms
  - Take time for quiet prayer
  - Establish prayer rituals
  - Worship together
  - Celebrate the Liturgical Year
  - Read the Sunday readings
  - Tour the church
  - Build a sense of community

- C. Sharing the Gift of Community:
- Build trust
  - Establish a Christian environment
  - Recognize and affirm each other
  - Appreciate the larger community
  - Engage in parish activities
  - Build Missionary Initiative
    1. Highlight parish outreach
    2. Facilitate group projects
    3. Share faith at home
    4. Identify Christian witnesses, past and present
  - Discuss role models

- D. Sharing the Gift of Self:
- Giving the greatest gift: A living witness to the faith
  - Giving your time, energy, and compassion
  - Taking time to fully prepare
  - Seeking opportunities to nourish your own faith
  - Putting personal problems aside
  - Committing time to know your students
  - Patiently mentoring your students
  - Seeking the support of community

7. Familiarize catechists with excerpts from Sacred Scripture, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which reflect the Church's vision for catechesis.

## **Course Title: Getting to Know Vatican II**

Part 1: The Antecedent Historical Context of the Second Vatican Council

Part 2: Vatican II Reform – The Basic Principles

**Goal:** Form catechists who understand that the Second Vatican Council remains the fundamental event in the life of the contemporary Church and is the constant reference point for pastoral action.

### **Objectives: Part 1**

1. Assist catechists in understanding the link between the transmission of Western culture and the spreading of the Gospel message prior to, and after, Vatican II.
  - a. Prior to Vatican II, the Church's efforts at evangelization were very much linked to the diffusion of Western culture.
  - b. [Since Vatican II] ... the Church has declared that no one culture has "the corner" on the best expression of the Christian faith.
  - c. All cultures are capable of expressing the "Good News" of Christ.
  - d. All cultures are in need of being continually evangelized — even those that have a long history of contact with Christianity.
2. Familiarize catechists with the antecedent historical context of the Council.
  - a. Rise of the Third World and an end of colonialism in Africa and Asia
  - b. Worldwide industrialization
  - c. The advent of television
  - d. Increased involvement of the laity in Catholic Action Movements
  - e. Growth and promotion of a "theology of the laity" in Catholic journals
  - f. The idea of religious freedom as an essential right of the human person
  - g. The pressure of Communism and Socialism
  - h. Social Encyclicals which warn against treating human beings as commodities of the state and speak up for the rights and dignity of workers
3. Present the catechist with other influential trends present in the world and in the Church prior to the Council.
  - a. Openness to the world
  - b. Dialog with science
  - c. Liturgical renewal
  - d. Renewed interest in anthropology
  - e. Better presentation of the Christian message
  - f. Emphasis on the specific character of Christianity in comparison with other world religions
  - g. Relationship between Church, Gospel, and culture
3. Familiarize catechists with the Popes behind Vatican II.
  - a. Pope John XXIII had the inspired idea of a council, decided to convoke it, and promoted it during the period of preparation and during the first session.
  - b. Pope Paul VI, who was in charge of the other three sessions, was the principal maker of the council and the effective agent of its application for a renewal of the spirit and structures of the Church.
  - c. The purpose of Pope John XXIII for calling the council was to enable the Church to respond better to the needs of the contemporary world, but in the framework of a deep respect for tradition.
4. Clarify the attitude of Vatican II.
  - a. An attitude of dialogue: The Council maintained an attitude of openness to others, and one of mutual acceptance and self-giving, after the example of God himself, who took the initiative in emerging from his hiddenness and entering into dialogue with the world.
  - b. An attitude of service: The Council offered a new image of pope and bishops, one in which the dominant element is the role of pastor. The Magisterium itself is defined as servant of the Word of God; it is not above the Word but in its service.
  - c. An attitude of seeking for meaning: The conciliar documents are broad instructions aimed at enlightening the people of God, whose chief desire is for meaning and recognized as being capable of intellectual comprehension.

## Objectives: Part 2

1. Assist catechists in understanding that Vatican II addressed an extraordinary number of issues, and familiarize them with ten basic principles of reform.
  - a. **Aggiornamento** (Italian term for updating, modernization, adaptation): This became the theme of the Second Vatican Council.
  - b. **The Reformability of the Church:** Vatican II depicted the Church in terms of the biblical image of the people of God, and this people, though always sealed by its covenant relationship with God, was sometimes unfaithful.
  - c. **Renewed Attention to the Word of God:** Vatican II, especially in its *Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*, recovered the primacy of Scripture as the Word of God consigned to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (DV 9).
  - d. **Collegiality:** This principle runs through the documents of Vatican II like a golden thread, and when understood in a wide sense, may be viewed as pervading all levels of the Church.
  - e. **Religious Freedom:** Vatican II approved of civil tolerance for all faiths and rejected, on theological grounds, any coercion in the sphere of belief.
  - f. **The Active Role of the Laity:** Vatican II recognized that “all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence” (GS 62).
  - g. **Regional and Local Variety:**
    1. “The variety of local churches with one common aspiration is particularly splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church” (LG 23).
    2. “The accommodated preaching of the Gospel ought to remain the law of all evangelization” (GS 44).
    3. Each nation must develop the ability to express Christ’s message in its own way, and must foster a living exchange between the Church and the particular culture (ibid).
  - h. **Ecumenism:** The Second Vatican Council, in its *Decree on Ecumenism*, expressed reverence for the heritage of other Christian churches, called attention to their salvific importance for their own members, and acknowledged that they possess true elements of the Church of Christ.
  - i. **Dialogue with Other Religions:** While recognizing elements of truth and goodness in all great religions, and hence the desirability of respectful dialogue, the Council insisted on the God-given uniqueness of the Church of Christ and consequently on the “absolute necessity” of missionary activity so that Christ may be acknowledged among all peoples as universal Lord and Savior.
  - j. **The Social Mission of the Church:** With Pope John XXIII and Vatican II, the apostolate of peace and social justice came to be seen as a requirement of the Church’s mission to carry on the work of Christ, who had compassion on the poor and the oppressed.

## Course Title: An Introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

**Goal:** Both the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* and the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* state that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults provides the norm for catechetical as well as liturgical practice for the sacraments of initiation. Thus, the adult baptismal catechumenate — the process by which the Church brings new believers into its communal life — is seen as the inspiration for all catechesis, all passing on of the faith. With the above in mind, the goal for this course is to form catechists who understand not only the adult baptismal catechumenate, but also the rich heritage and profound meaning of the initiation process as a whole, so they can apply these principles in their own catechetical ministry.

### Objectives:

1. Assist catechists in understanding four essential characteristics of the RCIA process.
  - It restores the original order of the Sacraments of Initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist.
  - It stresses the need for a living experience of the Church, and not just knowledge about the Church.
  - It makes the welcoming of new Christians a public community event.
  - It stresses that conversion is begun by the Holy Spirit and is an extended process.
2. Provide a historical perspective by outlining the initiation practices of the early Church, so catechists understand that the RCIA is part of our rich Catholic tradition, not necessarily something new.
3. Clarify the underlying principles of the RCIA.
  - The RCIA is first and foremost a process.
  - The RCIA is a community event.
  - The RCIA ministry is basically one of witness and hospitality.
  - The RCIA is ongoing and multi-dimensional.
  - The RCIA restores the baptismal focus of Lent, and reinstates the Easter Vigil as the honored time for initiation.
  - The RCIA is a step-by-step journey punctuated by corresponding rituals.
4. Provide a “walk” through the RCIA process for catechists, describing each stage of the journey.
  - First step: The Pre-Catechumenate
  - Second step: The Catechumenate
  - Third step: The Lenten Period Before Initiation (Scrutinies) and Initiation at the Easter Vigil
  - Fourth step: The Post-Initiation Phase or Mystagogia
5. Stress that the initiation of new believers is for the life of the whole Church, in that we all experience God’s call to turn around, change our lives, and improve our relationship with the Lord. Conversion is a life-long process.

**Course Title: Catechesis - Passing on the Faith**  
**An Overview of the *General Directory for Catechesis***

**Goal:** Prepare catechists to continue the Church's mission of proclaiming the Good News of Christ Jesus:

1. By introducing people to the person and story of Jesus;
2. By leading them to believe in him and to follow his way;
3. By inviting them to profess their faith and live as disciples of Christ, thus nurturing the growth of that faith.

**Objectives:**

1. Assist catechists in understanding the definitive aim of catechesis: To put people not only in touch with, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.
2. Clarify that all evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ.
3. Emphasize that catechesis (communicating the faith) is truly the work of the entire parish.
4. Help catechists realize that the parish forms a living faith in its members through proclamation, teaching, worship, service, and community: through every dimension of parish life.
5. Point out that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *General Directory for Catechesis* are two distinct but complementary instruments at the service of the Church's catechetical activity. Where the *Catechism* is a point of reference for the authentic presentation of the content of faith, the *GDC*, and thus the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* along with it, are official aids for the transmission of the Gospel message and for the whole of catechetical activity.
6. Explain the three levels of evangelization as outlined in the *GDC*:
  - a. When people have never heard the Word of God;
  - b. When people have heard the Word of God and are hungry to grow in maturity of faith needing patient guidance and direction;
  - c. When people have been baptized, yet live as if they don't know Christ.
7. Stress that all three of the above groups are different and thus need to be evangelized in different ways.
8. Emphasize that all catechesis is formational, is aimed at personal conversion and full participation in the Church's sacramental life, involves the entire life of the parish, and is ongoing. The adult approach to initiation "must be considered the chief form of catechesis" (*GDC* #59). Other religious education, even for children, should be in some way connected to adult faith formation.
9. Point out that catechists must see themselves as being more than teachers, and must strive to make Christ and his life come alive in the minds and hearts of seekers today, thus becoming the living texts for their students.
10. Clarify that inculturation is more than adapting the Christian message to make it understandable or attractive to people of other cultures; it also means finding a way for the Gospel to penetrate to the very heart of people — who they are, what they believe, and how they act.
11. Encourage catechists to celebrate the diversity of God's gifts, to be open to learn about those they catechize, and to learn from them.
12. Help catechists to preach the Word of God in a way that it can be heard and understood, while protecting the integrity of the message.

# Program Goals and Objectives: Intermediate Catechist Certification Courses

## Course Title: Building A Culture of Life - The Church's Social Teachings

**Goal:** Form catechists who understand that “to work for social justice is embedded in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, who came ‘to bring good tidings to the poor / ... liberty to captives / and recovery of sight to the blind’” (NDC #42-C).

### Objectives:

1. Assist catechists in understanding and carrying out the seven key themes at the heart of Catholic social teaching articulated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:
  - Life and dignity of the human person
  - Call to family, community, and participation
  - Rights and responsibilities
  - The option for the poor and vulnerable
  - The dignity of work and the rights of workers
  - Solidarity
  - Care for God's creation
2. Familiarize catechists with 13 Social Justice terms and how they apply to the work of catechizing for social justice:
  - Social Encyclical
  - Human Dignity
  - Distributive Justice
  - Catholic Social Teaching
  - Option for the Poor
  - Common Good
  - Social Justice
  - Subsidiarity
  - Just War Theory
  - Work
  - Solidarity
  - Social Sin
3. Present an exploration of the contributions of five Popes who played an important role in formulating, articulating, and expanding the Church's social teachings:
  - Pope Leo XIII: 1878 – 1903
  - Pope Pius XI: 1922 – 1939
  - Pope John XXIII: 1958 – 1963
  - Pope Paul VI: 1963 – 1978
  - Pope John Paul II: 1978 – 2005
4. Provide an examination of eight social documents (six Social Encyclicals and two USCCB Pastoral Letters) and stress the key points of each:
  - *Rerum Novarum* – The Condition of Labor
  - *Quadragesimo Anno* – The Reconstruction of the Social Order
  - *Pacem in Terris* – Peace on Earth
  - *Populorum Progressio* – The Development of Peoples
  - *Octogesima Adveniens* – A Call to Action
  - *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* – The Social Concerns of the Church
  - *The Challenge of Peace* (USCCB)
  - *Economic Justice for All* (USCCB)
5. Clarify the distinction between “social justice” and “private charity,” leading catechists to understand how and why the Church's social teaching “seeks to apply the Gospel command of love to and within social systems, structures, and institutions” (NDC #43-C).

6. Establish a Biblical foundation for the Church's social teachings, one which clarifies the framework through which both the Old and New Testaments have established a "living tradition of social justice in thought and action" (NDC #43-C).
  
7. Provide an overview of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes - The Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* so that catechists can consider and answer these questions regarding the major points of this document:
  - What main features of the modern world did the Second Vatican Council highlight in this document?
  - In what is the dignity of the human person rooted?
  - What is the Church's attitude toward atheism?
  - How is Christ's saving act offered to all people?
  - What are some of the basic truths about human society that the Council emphasized in this document?
  - What does the preaching of Christ add to the community of mankind?
  - What goal does the document envision for human activity?
  - What is the role of the laity in regard to the world?
  - How has the Church benefitted from the modern world?
  - What is the Church's single intention in regard to the world?
  - What responsibilities do Christians have in regard to using the tools of modern culture?
  - Why did the Council call for reforms of economic systems?
  - What is the role of the Church in relation to the political community?
  - What concerns did the Council emphasize regarding the Arms Race?



## Course Title: Living Vatican II Today

**Goal:** Form catechists who understand the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel, welcoming those who seek to know the Lord, inviting men, women, and children to conversion and discipleship, celebrating the sacraments, and motivating the faithful for apostolic witness in the world — a living vision of faith inspired and founded on the teachings of Vatican II and carried out in a way that “fosters a common language of the faith so that it may be proclaimed, celebrated, lived, and prayed in words familiar to all the faithful” (NDC #25-I).

**Note:** This is a twelve lesson course which explores vital Church teachings and practices, first through a historical examination of the vision set forth by the major documents of the Second Vatican Council and then in light of the Church's contemporary life and practice. The objectives for this course will be presented in the context of the themes of the twelve lessons.

### Objectives:

- 1. Road Map for the Future - Teachings of Vatican II:** This inaugural lesson summarizes the key themes of the Second Vatican Council and introduces topics that are explored in greater detail in upcoming lessons.  
**Theme:** The momentum behind the Church's ongoing renewal is found in the teachings of Vatican II. It is found in a Church re-centered on the Gospels and the Eucharist and in constant dialog with the world.
- 2. The Mass - Our Greatest and Best Prayer:** This lesson explores the changes to the Mass instituted following the Second Vatican Council, examining our developing understanding of its primary symbols.  
**Theme:** The essence of the Mass is timeless and changeless.
- 3. Seven Sacraments - One Mystery:** This lesson summarizes changes in our understanding of the sacraments brought on by Vatican II. It explains that sacraments are the visible, tangible manifestations of God's plan of salvation. Sacraments reveal what God is about and who God is. The fullness of this revelation is found in Jesus of Nazareth.  
**Theme:** Our understanding of sacrament starts with Jesus, then includes the Church, the Eucharist, the other sacraments and sacramentals, until all creation is caught up in the wonderful revelation of the Creator.
- 4. Sacred Scripture - Light for our Path:** This lesson explains that Vatican II, in its document *Dei Verbum*, recommended that “easy access to Sacred Scripture be provided to the Christian faithful (DV #22) and that a warm and living love for Scripture” be promoted (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #24). Scripture provides the starting point, foundation, and norm of catechetical teaching (NDC #24-B).  
**Theme:** Catechesis should take Sacred Scripture as its inspiration, its fundamental curriculum, and its end because it strengthens faith, nourishes the soul, and nurtures the spiritual life (NDC #24-B).
- 5. Catholicism Welcomes the World:** Unity, especially among Christians, was a theme of the papacy of Pope John XXIII. He wanted to change the long-standing attitude of Catholic triumphalism that stood in the way of better relations with other Christians.  
**Theme:** The *Decree on Ecumenism* and the *Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* require two things from all religious persons of good will: to understand *accurately* and respect other religious traditions, and to reflect in our own lives an authentic image of our own faith tradition.
- 6. Called to Holiness and Service - Ordained Ministry:** This lesson explores the changes in the role of the priest in the life of the Church. The Second Vatican Council gave major consideration to the ordained ministry of deacons, priests, and bishops in three of its 16 documents. In them the Council Fathers looked intently at both the life and ministry of those ordained for service to God's people.  
**Theme:** Priests need to ground their lives in prayer and ministry. By serving people with love and compassion they will build up the Body of Christ. Connected to the Lord through prayer and sacraments, their spiritual life will flourish, leading to service of people and the glory of God. Priests, acting in the name and person of Jesus, must maintain a deep relationship with the Lord if their ministry is to be fruitful and joyful. In doing this, they need the support and cooperation of the lay faithful.
- 7. Called to Holiness and Service - Lay Ministry:** This lesson summarizes the changes in our understanding of the role of the laity that came out of Vatican II. As more individuals claim their rightful roles as members of the People of God, the Church, and indeed the world, are being transformed.

**Theme:** Holiness is not primarily an individual undertaking ... Christ calls “a people” (LG #9) and incorporates them “into the Church by Baptism.” All the baptized are “obliged both to spread and to defend the faith” as “true witnesses.” Baptism binds us to Christ and to each other.

8. **Marriage and Family Life - The Domestic Church:** This lesson explores the changes in our understanding of marriage and family life as experienced in the Second Vatican Council. The family is the most intimate experience of Church, the place where love, forgiveness, and trust should first be encountered.

**Theme:** The Council moved from the older contractual view of the Sacrament of Marriage to one of covenant. God’s covenant of love and fidelity to his people through Christ “now encounters Christian spouses through the Sacrament of Marriage” (GS #48). Marriage is understood more as a dynamic symbol of Christ’s power in marriage, a reality that only begins at the ceremony and then must be nurtured and strengthened throughout the marriage.

9. **Today’s Church - A Look in the Mirror:** Fundamental to Vatican II’s vision is an emphasis on the Church as the “People of God.” This lesson clarifies that all the baptized are the People of God. All are called to build up the Church: the members of the hierarchy in their way and the rest of the baptized in theirs.

**Theme:** Giving priority to people fits well with the derivation of the word used for *Church* in the New Testament. The Greek word for Church is *ekklesia*. Its literal meaning is “those who are called together by God.” This shift in focus meant a return to the principle of collegiality — so important in the first millennium of Christianity.

10. **Our Church - Called to be a Sign of Joy and Hope:** This lesson explores how the Second Vatican Council moved Catholics to look at the world outside of the Church, develops Church teachings about the vocation of human beings, and focuses on questions and problems of special importance in today’s world.

**Theme:** To identify what is “genuinely human” in today’s world and to discern the Church’s role in supporting it are tasks that are essentially incarnational. The Incarnation means that Christ did not redeem the world from afar, but by involving himself in the human situation and becoming one of us. This incarnational principle is at the heart of the Church’s mission of evangelization.

11. **Sharing Our Heritage of Faith:** This lesson explores changes in our experience of faith formation that grew out of the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II replaced the static view of the Catholic faith with a more dynamic understanding. The Church—and faith formation—were re-centered on the Gospels and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist; and on service to the world.

**Theme:** We need to encourage our parish communities to provide resources, programs, small groups and activities to nurture faith growth from birth through the later years in life.

12. **Jesus Christ - The Model for All Humanity:** This final lesson revisits the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Jesus Christ as the model by which all of us are called to live. Each of us who has become a disciple of Christ and a member of the Church through Baptism is called to play a part in the saving mission of Christ and the Church.

**Theme:** The Second Vatican Council brought about a new understanding of discipleship and what it means to imitate Jesus. The Council fathers called all of us to be disciples in the modern world by being servants to humanity, seeking union with Christ, showing concern for the poor, struggling to build peace, and believing in God’s love.