

# CATECHIST MANUAL



## ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA

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**INTRODUCTION:** Thank you for your interest in serving with the religious education programs within the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. Contained in this guide, you will find the requirements for becoming a certified AMS catechist and instructions on how to do so. May Our Blessed Lord guide you in your ministry.

“ Like all Christians, catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation. The catechist should continue his or her own spiritual formation through frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, through spiritual direction, and through continued study of the faith. ”

-NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS<sup>1</sup>



## AMS CATECHESIS:

The religious education program is one of the most important activities on any installation. No matter how well organized and staffed, it should be something in which the chaplain is intimately involved. The senior priest-chaplain, whether military or contractual, is the *Director of Religious Education* (DRE) for the Catholic program and is the authority on all matters Catholic.

The *Coordinator of Religious Education* (CRE) is expected to complete the Basic Minimum Certification in order to participate in the coursework that is required of all catechists. Any CRE who does not have a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies must also pursue the full VLCCF Certificate in Catechesis (described further on page 3).

*Volunteer and contract catechists and youth ministry leaders* must complete the Basic Minimum Certification (described further on page 2) and are highly encouraged to register for additional courses or seminars that will enhance their catechetical ministry. The Basic Minimum Certification is valid for 5 years, and is renewable (*see FAQ's for more information*).

## CATECHIST REQUIREMENTS:

Below are the requirements for AMS catechists as described in Chapter 3 of the AMS Priest's Manual.

1. Must be a practicing Catholic who has received the sacrament of Confirmation
2. Must be recommended by the senior priest-chaplain at the installation
3. Must have satisfactorily completed a 4-6 week course through the University of Dayton Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation
4. Must apply for certification using the appropriate form
5. Must have completed a favorable background check as determined by local base/post policy
6. Must have completed a training program on the protection of children and young people as called for by the *Dallas Charter*

## HOW TO BECOME A CERTIFIED AMS CATECHIST:

Once you are certain that you meet all of the requirements to become a certified AMS catechist, which are listed above, you should begin the certification process by completing the Basic Minimum Certification, the first step to completing the VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis. Everyone who is involved in catechesis is highly encouraged to continue on to complete the full VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis. (Coordinators of Religious Education who have not earned a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies are required to pursue the VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis.) Continue reading below to learn more.

### BASIC MINIMUM CERTIFICATION:

All who are involved in catechesis at a military installation must complete the Basic Minimum Certification in order to be a certified AMS catechist. The Basic Minimum Certification can be completed in four basic steps:



- Complete a 4-6 week VLCFF course.**
- Complete child and youth protection training.**
- Complete a favorable background check.** (As determined by local base/post policy.)
- Submit the AMS application signed by a priest-chaplain.**

1. **Complete a 4-6 week VLCFF course.** The Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA is a diocesan partner with the University of Dayton, Institute of Pastoral Initiatives, Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF). Members of this archdiocese may register for courses and seminars at reduced fees. VLCFF enables catechists and volunteers in the U.S. Military Catholic Faith Communities to grow in faith by gathering catechists virtually to learn in settings conducive to their varied time commitments and locations throughout the world.

- Register as a student with VLCFF to create a username and password.  
<http://vlc.udayton.edu/profile/agreement.php>
- Register and complete one **4-6 week course**. It is suggested that new catechists complete a course in Catholic Beliefs or Catholic Doctrine while seasoned catechists choose a course which will best enhance their own faith formation as well as that of those they serve. Members of AMS pay \$40.00 per course, as opposed to the non-partner price of \$90.00 per course. *When registering please note the difference between 4-6 week courses, worth 2.0-3.0 CEU's, and 3 week seminars, which are worth only 1.5 CEU's. 3 week seminars do not fulfill the requirements for AMS catechist certification.*
- When your course has been completed, AMS will receive your certificate from VLCFF. At this point, AMS will send you your VLCFF certificate and record your progress.

- 2. Complete youth protection training.** All catechists utilized on military installations shall have completed a training program on the protection of children and young people as called for by the *Dallas Charter*. Applicants may participate in such training in the local diocese where their base/post is located or take a free online course offered by the BSA Online Learning Center: <http://olc.scouting.org/info/ypt.html> Please provide a copy of your certificate of completion with your AMS application.
- 3. Submit the AMS application signed by a priest-chaplain.** Send a copy of the completed Catechist Certification Application signed by yourself and the priest-chaplain at your installation. Please remember to include a copy of your certificate of completion of Child and Youth Protection Training with your application. Applications may be mailed to:



Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA  
 Attn: Catechist Certification  
 P.O. Box 4469  
 Washington, DC 20017

The Basic Minimum Certification is valid for five years and is renewable (*see FAQ's for more information*). Volunteer and contract catechists and youth ministry leaders are highly encouraged to both register for additional courses or seminars that will enhance their catechetical ministry and to pursue the VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis (required for CRE's who have not earned a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies).

### VLCFF CERTIFICATE IN CATECHESIS:

While only Coordinators of Religious Education (CRE's) who do not already have a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies are required to pursue the full VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis, everyone is encouraged to do so. Details for the Certificate in Catechesis are listed on the VLCFF web site: <http://vlc.udayton.edu/certificates/catechesis.php>

#### LEVEL I COURSES

##### Theology:

1. Survey of Catholic Doctrine
2. Introduction to Scripture
3. Images of Jesus
4. Sacraments

##### Method:

1. Introduction to Catechesis

##### Formation:

1. Introduction to Prayer

#### LEVEL II COURSES

##### Theology:

1. Old Testament
2. New Testament
3. Ecclesiology: Beginnings of the Church
4. Introduction to Practical Morality

##### Method:

1. Faith and Human Development

##### Formation:

1. Vocation & Discipleship



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is VLCFF?
2. Do I have to complete the full VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis?
3. Does it matter which VLCFF course I take?
4. What is the difference between a VLCFF course and a VLCFF seminar?
5. Will the VLCFF seminar satisfy the requirements for certification as an AMS catechist?
6. Is there a fee involved in becoming an AMS certified catechist?
7. Why doesn't the AMS have one basic course for all catechists?

### 1. What is VLCFF?

The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) is a growing initiative to offer adult religious education and faith formation anytime and anywhere via the internet. The VLCFF is coordinated and sponsored by the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at the University of Dayton, a Catholic Marianist Institution. The Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA has become a diocesan partner with VLCFF in order to support religious education and faith formation among its catechists. To learn more, visit <http://vlc.udayton.edu/>.



### 2. Do I have to complete the full VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis?

Only Religious Education Coordinators who do not have a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies are *required* to pursue the Certificate in Catechesis. However, everyone involved in catechesis is encouraged to pursue the certificate, as it is an excellent means of supporting ongoing faith formation.

### 3. Does it matter which VLCFF course I take?

The AMS catechist certification process is designed so that adult learners discern which area of their own faith knowledge they should develop further in order to enhance their own faith formation as well as that of those they serve. In light of this, AMS catechists may choose any course offered by VLCFF. AMS suggests the following guidelines:

- **New Volunteer Catechists:** Catholic Beliefs or Catholic doctrine course recommended.
- **Seasoned Volunteer Catechists:** Ongoing faith formation encourages continual engagement and growth. Choose any course that meets these needs. (*Continued on next page.*)

- **Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE):** A CRE who *does not* have a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies should pursue Level I and Level II of the Certificate in Catechesis. If an CRE does have a Masters Degree in Theology or Religious Studies, it is recommended that he/she take one VLCCFF course for basic certification to participate in and become familiar with the coursework required for all catechists.

#### 4. What is the difference between a VLCCFF course and a VLCCFF seminar?

A VLCCFF course takes 4-6 weeks to complete and as such is worth 2.0-3.0 CEU's (Continuing Education Units) whereas a seminar, which takes only 3 weeks to complete, is worth only 1.5 CEU's.

#### 5. Will the VLCCFF seminar satisfy the requirements for certification as an AMS catechist?

Because a VLCCFF seminar is shorter than a course, it does not fulfill the requirements for AMS catechist certification. However, AMS encourages catechists who have already undergone certification to continue taking both additional classes and seminars as part of their ongoing spiritual formation.

#### 6. Is there a fee involved in becoming an AMS certified catechist?

The cost for each VLCCFF course is \$90.00. However, because AMS is a diocesan partner with VLCCFF, AMS catechists pay the discounted price of \$40.00 per course.

#### 7. Why doesn't the AMS have one basic course for all catechists?

AMS does not assign one specific course for all catechists so that adult learners can choose courses based on which area of their own faith knowledge they think needs development. This is in keeping with the National Directory for Catechesis which explains, "[catechist training] should be adapted as much as possible to the specific needs of the individual catechist."<sup>ii</sup> Thus, by allowing catechists to choose which VLCCFF course they participate in, AMS hopes to better support the faith formation of catechists as well as those they serve.



## 8. How do I renew my AMS Catechist Certification?

The AMS Catechist Certificate expires after five years. To renew, catechists must either complete an additional VLCFF course or have already completed the VLCFF Certificate in Catechesis (Levels I or II). After completing one of these requirements, the catechist should submit the Application for Renewal to the AMS Catechetical Office. (The Application for Renewal can be found on the AMS Web Site in the Evangelization section.) *Note: To fulfill the requirement for renewal, additional VLCFF courses should be taken during the year before the AMS Catechist Certificate expires in order to promote the catechist's ongoing formation.*

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<sup>i</sup> National Directory for Catechesis. USCCB, 2005. 55, C.

<sup>ii</sup> National Directory for Catechesis. USCCB, 2005. 55, D.

**Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA**

Post Office Box 4469, Washington, D.C. 20017-0469

Record ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Application for AMS Catechist Certificate**

Upon completion of the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation required course, mail this completed form together with a copy of your **certificate of completion of Child and Youth Protection Training** as called for by the Dallas Charter.

**A: PERSONAL:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Last Name First Name Middle Name Suffix

Present Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street / RFD, City, State, Zip Code

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Catholic Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_ (Place): \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date: dd-mmm-yyyy) (Name of Catholic Church, City, State)

**B: INSTALLATION:**

Name of this military installation: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate date I started teaching at this installation : \_\_\_\_\_

Catholic chaplain at this installation: \_\_\_\_\_

My particular catechetical ministry at this installation: \_\_\_\_\_

**C: PRIOR CERTIFICATION:**

If you have already been certificated by a civilian (arch)diocese as a catechist, kindly enter the date and name of the (arch)diocese, and provide a copy of the letter/certificate: (A special Track will be provided to you specific to AMS concerns.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Certificate issued by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of issuance:

**D: ATTESTATION:**

I am a practicing Catholic, have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and desire to assist in the catechetical ministries within the Archdiocese for the Military Services. I have completed the Child & Youth Protection training as called for by the Dallas Charter, and have received a favorable background check/assessment as called for by local authorities. I will remain faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church as promulgated by the Holy See, and will instruct my students in those same and authentic teachings.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

**E: RECOMMENDATION:**

I have reviewed the data on this application and recommend this individual for the AMS Catechist Certificate upon successful completion of the program. A favorable background check for this individual is on file per our chapel policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of priest-chaplain at this installation

*For use by AMS Catechetical Office:*

**F: AMS TRAINING RECORD:**

**VLFFF Course - required:** \_\_\_\_\_

**VLFFF Course - encouraged:** \_\_\_\_\_

VLFFF Course - additional: \_\_\_\_\_

VLFFF Course - additional: \_\_\_\_\_

VLFFF Course - additional: \_\_\_\_\_

**Child and Youth Protection:** \_\_\_\_\_

Approved for issuance of Certificate by: \_\_\_\_\_

Certificate Printed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Certificate mailed (date): \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) *The information requested on this form is used for internal records at the AMS, and will not be given out to any other individual or organization unless required by legitimate legal authorities.*
- 2) *Only practicing Catholics who have also received the sacrament of Confirmation may apply for an AMS catechist certificate.*
- 3) *All AMS Catechists will adhere to the authentic teachings of the Catholic Church as promulgated by the Holy See, and will present in class only such authentic teachings.*
- 4) *The AMS Catechist Certificate is normally valid for five years (renewable), and may be used anywhere within the Archdiocese for the Military Services. It does not grant access to any military installation.*
- 5) *Catechist Certification requirements are listed on the AMS Web Site in the Evangelization section.*
- 6) *For those who have already received certification as a catechist from a civilian (arch)diocese:*

The AMS may accept such documentation in lieu of the AMS program with the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) at the University of Dayton, Institute of Pastoral Initiatives. The individual must provide a copy of the letter/certificate stating that the certification/training has been satisfactorily completed. The AMS will waive its VLCFF requirement, but may require a short special track that addresses the specific and unique parameters of the catechetical ministries within the AMS, and the impact that frequent moves and assignment changes have on our students.

- 7) *The priest-chaplain at your installation must review and sign this application form before it can be submitted to the AMS Catechetical Office. This signature indicates that the applicant has participated in a favorable background check (see Chapter 3 in the AMS Priests' Manual: 3.4.2. All catechists utilized on our military installations shall have completed a favorable background check as determined by local base/post policy.)*
- 8) *You need to complete and submit this application form only once. Upon satisfactory completion of all requirements, the AMS Office of Evangelization may issue you the AMS Catechist Certificate.*

**Education ministries:**

- *Catechist (RE instructor – includes 1<sup>st</sup> Communion and Confirmation);*
  - *Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE);*
  - *RCIA Team Member;*
  - *Youth Group Leader/Volunteer;*
- 9) *Thank you for your interest in assisting with the catechetical ministries within the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. May Our Blessed Lord guide you in your ministry.*
  - 10) *Please mail this completed and signed form after you complete your coursework with the VLCFF along with a copy of your certificate of completion of Child and Youth Protection Training to:*

**Catechetical Office**  
**Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA**  
**Post Office Box 4469**  
**Washington, DC 20017-0469**