



Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute

“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn. 2:5)

A Formation Program for
Adults of the Diocese of Madison

Parish Catechists & Volunteers



Diocese of Madison
www.madisondiocese.org



**Diocese of Madison
Office of Evangelization and Catechesis**

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I. Importance of Certification

Since the time of Christ it has been the mission of the Church to bring all into communion with Jesus Christ through the broad mission of Evangelization including the more specific mission of catechesis—handing on the Gospel Message and “echoing down” a deeper understanding of the faith through ongoing and systematic instruction. This commission of Christ is witnessed to in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus told his apostles, “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 commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20). St. Paul heeds this instruction by an initial proclamation of faith followed by ongoing instruction to the early Christian Communities. Early Church documents such as the *Didache* point to catechetical materials used for systematic instruction of the Christian doctrine in the first centuries. As we learn from our forefathers in the faith, lifelong study and ongoing formation should be the priority of every adult in the Church. It is even more important for those charged with the responsibility of handing on the faith to others.

As “one of the most important fruits of the Second Vatican Council” (Benedict XVI), the Catechism of the Catholic Church is our “sure norm for teaching the faith” (St. John Paul II) and thus our universal foundation and the framework for the perennial mission of studying and handing-on the Gospel and Person of Jesus Christ to future generations. In response to Vatican II’s call for intentional training of catechists, the Wisconsin Catholic Conference of Bishops (WCC) issued a document entitled “Standards for Educators in Catholic Parishes & Schools” in 1975 with the most recent update being in 2008. This recent set of standards lays out the expectations of the Wisconsin bishops for all Catholic school and parish personnel in the state as well as catechists and volunteers who teach the faith which includes a process of Catechetical Certification. The process of certification seeks to ensure the continual increase and solidifying of one’s faith knowledge while naturally enhancing their spiritual life and thus encouraging them to become more effective witnesses and heralds of the Gospel.

Desiring to fulfill these responsibilities on behalf of the Diocese of Madison, the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis (OEC) with the help of the Catholic Schools, Parish Catechetical Leaders and Pastors, designed the *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* to provide and manage a fruitful process for adult faith formation and catechetical certification.

II. Objective

The objective of this document is to provide parish catechists and volunteers with an overview of catechetical certification along with options and instructions for completing their certification process.

III. Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute

The *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* is a program of Adult Faith Formation and Catechetical Certification in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin. St. John Paul II so eloquently reminds us of the importance in forming adults, “*The catechesis of adults ... is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form. The Christian community cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults, whether as receivers or as promoters of catechetical activity*” (St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 43).



“*Seat of Wisdom* is one of the titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the Son of God, the Eternal Wisdom, took flesh from her womb and as an infant rested in her arms. In pondering her divine Son, Jesus Christ, Mary, “*became the model of all those who hear the word of God and keep it (Lk 11: 28), and merited the title, ‘Seat of Wisdom’*” (St. John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth*, 120).

With Mary as our Model, the *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* seeks to serve the catechetical mission of the Church in leading the faithful to study and ponder the “mystery of Christ” and accordingly, put them “*not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity*” (St. John Paul II, *CT*, 5).

The fundamental objective of this program, therefore, will be to study all doctrines in light of Jesus of Nazareth, “*the only Son from the Father...full of grace and truth*” (Jn 1: 14). Whether we are studying how Christ fulfills the Old Testament, His words and actions in the Gospels, His founding and abiding presence in the Church and sacraments, Catholic moral teaching, prayer, the saints, cultural trends, other religions, etc., we seek to systematically explore all in light of Jesus Christ who is “*the way, and the truth, and the life*” (Jn 14:6).

In addition, we wish to answer such questions as: How do these realities relate to living as a disciple of Jesus today? How will these truths assist me in drawing others to Christ in my role as a teacher, catechist, principal, parent, friend, or simply as a baptized Catholic? How will this assist me in raising my family in the Faith?

The primary sources and reference points for our program are Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (and its *Compendium*), the *General and National Directories of Catechesis*, and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Our Blessed Mother, Seat of Wisdom, invites all to accept and grow in deeper communion with her Son, Jesus Christ, “*the Eternal Word of God, who perfectly reveals and accomplishes the will of the Father (cf. Heb 10:5-10) ... To us too she addresses the command she gave to the servants at Cana in Galilee during the marriage feast: ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (Jn 2:4)*” (St. John Paul II, *Splendor of Truth*, 120).

IV. Certifications & Policies

A. Ordinary Certifications for Employees of the Diocese & Interested Adults

Accommodating the objectives of both Adult Faith Formation and catechetical certification, the Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute will offer the following certifications for Principals, Teachers, Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education and Youth Ministry, parish catechists and simply any interested adult.

1. Basic (Core) Catechetical Certification

Awarded to those completing the Basic (core curriculum) courses, or their approved equivalents, in the categories of Sacred Scripture (12 credit hours), Doctrine (14), Christian Spirituality (12), and Methods (12).

As is the current policy for all Catholic dioceses of the Province of Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin,¹ this certificate is required, within the applicable timeframe of appointment (see page 6), for certain individuals who participate in the catechetical mission of a diocese, including but not limited to Catholic school teachers.

2. Intermediate Catechetical Certification

Awarded to those completing all the Basic Catechetical Certification described above and the necessary advanced² course credit hours in the categories of Sacred Scripture (12), Doctrine (14), Christian Spirituality (12), and Methods (12).

3. Advanced Catechetical Certification

Awarded to those completing the Basic and Intermediate Catechetical Certifications described above and the necessary advanced course credit hours in the categories of Sacred Scripture (12), Doctrine (14), Christian Spirituality (12), and Methods (12).

As is the current policy for all Catholic dioceses of the Province of Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin, this certificate is required, within the applicable timeframe of appointment (see page 6), for leaders who participate in the catechetical mission of a diocese, including but not limited to: parish catechetical directors and

¹ These dioceses include the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the Dioceses of Madison, Green Bay, La Crosse, and Superior. All five have collaborated to develop these standards through their collaborative organization, the [Wisconsin Catholic Conference \(WCC\)](#), which serves the bishops of the State of Wisconsin.

² The “Intermediate” certification simply marks the half-completion of the “Advanced” certification requirements. Thus, all “Advanced” (generally elective) courses are applicable toward both Intermediate and Advanced certifications.

coordinators, school presidents and principals, and religion teachers in Catholic schools.

B. Certificates for Parish Catechists & Volunteers

Parish Catechists may seek certification in a number of ways. It is up to the individual (with guidance and support of their Parish Catechetical Leader) to determine the type of certification that will best suit their own lives and circumstances. The options for Parish Catechist Certification include:

1. A Seat of Wisdom Basic/Advanced Certification (expected for Employees of the Diocese – shown above).

- Catechists that already have the above certifications are not expected to seek a Parish Catechist Certificate. But can use the Coursework as renewal hours for their current certification.

Or

2. A Parish Catechist Certificate offered through the Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute

- Six hours of coursework each year for no more than 5 years totaling 30.0 hours

Or

3. Certification from an approved outside source (the following are accepted in the Diocese of Madison):

- **Catechist Certification** from another Diocese in Wisconsin,
- A **Certification** offered through Franciscan University at the St. John Bosco Catechetical Conference (Offered in the Summers in content areas of Catechist, DRE, Youth Ministry & RCIA),
- **Catechist Certification** through the Augustine Institute
- Fr. John Hardon **Basic Catechism Course** (Marian Catechist Certification)

Other Certifications may be considered but are subject to the approval of the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.

Parish Catechist Certificate: Awarded to those who complete all the requirements needed for Basic Parish Catechist Certificate which includes an annual minimum of 6 hours of coursework each school year. Certificates will be awarded following the completion of 30 hours of coursework within 5 years of participation.

Renewal of Parish Catechist Certificate: Those who are awarded a Parish Catechist Certificate are expected to maintain certification by completing a minimum of 6 hours of coursework each year.

C. Policies

1. Particulars of Participation in the Seat of Wisdom Certification Program

For those seeking ordinary certifications, the normative means to begin the process is to attend Seat of Wisdom Basic courses as they are offered in various locations throughout the Diocese of Madison. Due to the systematic nature of catechetics, the first four courses (CAT 101 through CAT 111) are designed to be taken sequentially. Therefore, new participants seeking certification are to complete these courses in proper order.

Those seeking a Parish Catechist Certificate should see their local parish catechetical leader.

2. Time Frame Requirements

Parish catechetical directors and coordinators, school presidents, principals and teachers, should have earned Basic Catechetical Certification within three years of being appointed by a Catholic school or parish in the diocese.³

Parish catechetical directors and coordinators, school presidents, principals and teachers who teach a Religion class, should have earned Intermediate Catechetical Certification within five years of being appointed by a Catholic school or parish in the diocese, and Advanced Catechetical Certification within seven years of being appointed by a Catholic school or parish in the diocese.⁴

Parish Catechists should have earned at least a Parish Catechist Certificate within 5 years of their appointment by a Catholic parish in the Diocese of Madison, completing a minimum of 6 hours of coursework per year.⁵

V. Participation

The primary objective of the *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* is to help put adults “*not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ,*” that His joy may be in us, and our joy may be complete (cf. Jn 15:11). Understanding that this supernatural joy experienced in authentic discipleship “naturally inclines and charges the faithful, as members of God’s family, to continue the mission of Christ the Redeemer through

³ Participants in all of these categories appointed prior to June 30, 2012, may consider the start date for this timeframe requirement to begin July 1, 2012.

⁴ The policy articulated in the previous footnote applies here as well.

⁵ Parish Catechists may simply consider the start date for this timeframe requirement to begin July 1, 2014, or the date of their appointment, whichever is later.

evangelization and catechesis,”⁶ it is the natural expectation that such formation will not only serve the spiritual benefit of participants, but all those they touch in their lives and serve in an official instructive capacity.

The simple procedures for participation in the certification program below are aimed at helping participants get started in the program, track their progress, and apply for certification once particular milestones are achieved. There is also an explanation on how *Seat of Wisdom* courses may be requested, or other resources approved.

A. Getting Started in the Program

1. Previous Degrees in Theology and Certification from our Diocese & Certifications from Other Dioceses

Many people who teach, work and catechize in the Diocese come with a history of education and study. It is important for the Diocese to acknowledge the time and effort made in the area of Theology and Religious Studies. If you have **completed college credit from a Theology Department at a Catholic College or University** and are seeking certification please complete the following instructions:

- Obtain or Copy an official College Transcript and Submit it to the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis.
- The OEC will review the transcript and award credits for courses which comply with the *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* program. When seeking a Core Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Certificate the credits will apply to intermediate and advanced. When seeking a Parish Catechist Certificate, credits may apply to the certificate but completion & renewal of the Parish Catechist Certificate will be expected.

If you hold a **current certification in the Diocese of Madison** you are not expected to achieve any additional certification to serve as a catechist. Renewal and maintenance of your current certification is still expected.

Finally if you are **moving to the Diocese of Madison from another Diocese** and have achieved a certification there, please follow the following instructions:

- For another Diocese in the state of Wisconsin: submit a copy of your certification to the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis and a Diocese of Madison Catechetical certificate that is the equivalent of your certification will be issued.

⁶ *Standards for Educators in Catholic Parishes and Schools*, Wisconsin Catholic Conference, 2008, Preamble.

- For all other Dioceses: Please submit a copy of your certification with a list of courses that were completed in obtaining the certification. The OEC will review the courses and determine the credit that will be granted for those which are complementary to the Seat of Wisdom program. The OEC reserves the right to decline the awarding of Seat of Wisdom course credits for diocesan certification programs outside the State of Wisconsin.

2. Start at the Beginning

If you are starting the *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* from the beginning:

- Begin by **choosing the certification** you intend to complete
- Obtain from your director/coordinator the appropriate **paperwork** and materials to begin the certification process (binder or folder). Forms for tracking and participation are available on the Diocesan Webpage.
- **Establish an account on the Diocesan data system** which can be accessed on the Seat of Wisdom page on the Diocesan Website. Just click the large button titled “Register For Available Courses!”
- **Begin taking** courses: take 6 hour live courses for the Core Basic Certificate (see Diocesan data system for available courses) or 6 hours of coursework for a Parish Catechist Certificate (can be live courses, video or self study options). Keep in mind the expectations for a Parish Catechist Certificate is 6 hours each year. A certificate is awarded at the completion of 30 hours.
- Be sure to **complete all study guides** and necessary coursework that accompanies a course. A course may be considered incomplete if the study guide or additional requirements are not complete.
- When an individual attends any *Seat of Wisdom* Coursework (live courses, video courses, or self study) upon completion of the course, there will be a **Course Credit Form issued** to each participant. The form is signed by the facilitator or instructor and verifies the participant’s completion of the coursework. In the event that a participant completes “self study” coursework the Seat of Wisdom coordinator at the parish will be responsible to issue the Course Credit Form.

B. Keeping Records and Tracking Your Progress

1. Personal Records

Any participant taking Seat of Wisdom Coursework is expected to maintain their own personal records for certification. The Diocesan data system will maintain records in an online format, but it is always important to keep a paper copy of all coursework that is complete. The Diocese will not keep a paper record of courses for individuals. As it has been in the past, parish or school staff may keep records on file at the parish for teachers or catechists.

For effective record keeping of Seat of Wisdom Coursework:

- Keep a copy of all study guides and signed course credit form in your binder/folder
- Keep a tracking form current with courses and dates. Instructions on how to apply for certification are on the second page of the tracking form or the Participant information card.
- When the time comes to apply for certification make a copy of all records to be submitted to the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for review.

2. On the Diocesan Data System

- All participants should have an established account with correct personal information on the Diocesan data system.
- Periodically, check the system to verify that coursework is reflected on the data system account. If coursework is not listed contact your parish Seat of Wisdom Coordinator to adjust personal accounts.
- Some courses may have been taken prior to the Diocesan data system and course credit forms are available to prove attendance. Please include course credit forms when applying for certification. The OEC will adjust the data system accounts when reviewing individual packets for certification.

C. Applying for Certification

When a person has completed a level of certification, he or she submits their well organized packet to the *OEC* according to the directions below. The documents are reviewed by the *OEC*, and if the requirements have been fulfilled, the *OEC* recommends certification to the bishop and the certificate is issued. The applicant's packet is then returned to them with their new certificate. A record of certification level achieved is maintained by the *Office of Evangelization and Catechesis*.

1. If you are completing the *Parish Catechist certificate*: Thoroughly and legibly complete the respective Tracking Sheet. If you have chosen to complete the *Core Basic Curriculum &/or Intermediate and advanced*: please complete the participant identification card in the binder and all corresponding tracking sheets.
2. Compare the Course Credit Forms and Tracking Sheets to the Seat of Wisdom Data system and be sure it is up to date and accurate. If all of your credits are not listed online, proceed by submitting the packet, our office personnel will work with you to adjust your online account when we receive your packet.
3. Make a copy of the Tracking Sheet(s) and include a copy of all the Course Credit Forms for each class listed *in the order* they appear on the tracking sheet. It is our recommendation that you do not send the original copies to the OEC.
4. Slide it into a 9 X 12 or 10 X 13 inch envelope and mail it to:
 Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute
 Office of Evangelization and Catechesis
 (At the time of this printing the Diocese of Madison was in the process of relocating offices with the outcome uncertain.
 Please check the Diocesan website at www.madisondiocese.org
 For the current mailing address and phone number.)
5. Certification applications will be reviewed and approved in the months of July and August. Please submit your application by July 1st of the respective year.
 NOTE: All needed forms for such applications can be located at the Seat of Wisdom home web page on the left panel (www.madisondiocese.org/seatofwisdom).

VI. Options for Course Delivery

A participant who is seeking Parish Catechist Certification is expected to complete 6 hours each year. Those 6 hours may be achieved in a number of different ways. It is recommended that participants work with parish catechetical leaders to determine the manner in which certification will be achieved. The different options to achieve coursework hours include:

A. Regularly Scheduled Courses

Utilizing the gifts and efforts of several experienced and qualified teachers, a certain number of Core Basic Courses and Advanced Courses will be offered at several locations around the diocese. Both Core Basic and Advanced courses are appropriate options for Parish Catechist Certification expectations. Listings of available courses will be available at the *Seat of Wisdom* web page on the Diocese of Madison web site in the data system. Participants may register on

line. For classes requiring an instructor, a minimum of 12 registered participants is necessary.

D. Sponsoring Your Own Basic Course

Should parishes wish to host and schedule *Seat of Wisdom* Core Basic & Advanced Courses at their own locations they can download and complete the “Course Request Form” on the *Seat of Wisdom* web page and send it to the OEC office, via regular mail, fax, or e-mail. For this option, monetary fees will normally apply to the sponsoring entity (parish or school). If there are courses or presentations that you would like to get approval for Parish Catechetical Certification, please fill out the Application for Course Approval Form on the Diocesan web page and return it to the OEC.

E. Audio & Video Coursework

Other means for completing the Parish Catechist Certification hours will be identified and selected by the *Office of Evangelization and Catechesis*, including online studies, DVD presentations, audio presentations, or some combination thereof. For a complete list of Audio & Videos that approved for catechetical certification see the Diocesan Web page.

If at all possible, DVD presentations should be hosted by a competent coordinator (for example, a parish catechetical leader). The role of the parish coordinator is to personalize the formation process, guide discussion and application, facilitate written assignments, etc. Parishes or schools may simply purchase the DVD presentations and use them indefinitely, or they can be checked out from the Audio and Video Library of the *Office of Evangelization and Catechesis*. The list of selected DVD programs and online studies will be developed on an ongoing basis, and available on the diocesan website at the *Seat of Wisdom Diocesan Institute* page.

Audio selections may be done in a group setting accompanied by discussion and a study guide. A standard study guide for any video or audio selection is available on the *Seat of Wisdom* Diocesan web page under the sections marked *Coursework & Documents for Parish Catechists*.

D. Self Study Option

At the present time, self study options are available for Parish Catechetical Certification and Intermediate & Advanced credit in the Diocesan Certification Program for Employees and interested adults. Self Study options may be reading approved study options and completing a personal reflection/study guide. Each document or book will be assigned course hours. Audio selections may be used as a self study option and must be used in cooperation with a study guide to achieve credit for the designated hours with the help of a parish catechetical leader.