

# ***Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization: Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA***

The following list of Q&A is intended to be informative as the new curriculum is implemented throughout this global Archdiocese. It is not exhaustive. You may direct your questions and concerns to José M. Amaya, Director of Faith Formation, at 202-719-3623 or [jamaya@milarch.org](mailto:jamaya@milarch.org).

## **GENERAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **When does forming Disciples for the New Evangelization become effective for implementation in the AMS?**

- The Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide becomes effective for implementation on August 6, 2013.

### **Why do we need a new archdiocesan curriculum?**

- *To respond to the requests* to have an archdiocesan-wide curriculum guide.
- *To ensure that future generations* of Catholic adults, youth and children are well formed and know the truth that Jesus taught us.
- *To help catechists and parents* to better teach the faith.
- *To help the church* to overcome the current epidemic of ignorance and doubt about the faith.

### **What is the aim of this guide?**

- The primary aim of this guide is to support integrated planning and preparations across all Catholic faith communities and families. This will be done as a part of a diocesan-wide effort to strengthen the teaching of the faith for adults, youth and children. It is directed toward the need to prepare the church (not just children) to overcome the current epidemic of ignorance and doubt about the faith.
- These guidelines focus on the need for mutual collaboration, communication and consultation. They strive to clarify the rolls, responsibilities and mutual accountabilities needed by priests, lay catechetical leaders and all who assist in efforts to put adults, youth and children into communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ through life-long catechesis in and through the Catholic Church. These guidelines are focused to help Catholic faith communities as they both revise and plan their future catechetical efforts. Although this first phase of

the guide focuses on the formation of children, these standards will also provide a framework for future efforts in the faith formation of youth and young adults.

### **How is it organized?**

- Around the Six Key Elements of a lived Catholic Faith while always remembering that the context for catechesis is *evangelization*. The six key elements of a Catholic faith life are: Knowledge of the faith; Liturgical and Sacraments; Morality; Prayer; Education for Living in the Christian Community; Evangelization and Apostolic Life. These are also known as the six tasks of Catechesis.

#### ***For Each Element***

- There are standards or broad headings. All these standards should be covered in every program for adults, youth and children.

#### ***For Each Standard***

- Each standard in turn has age appropriate indicators or knowledge, skills or behavior.
- These indicators should drive instruction and guide or focus use of any text or resources.

### **How are the indicators formatted?**

- **Core items that must be covered in all Catholic faith community programs are in bold print.**
- *Enrichment items that are optional and can be covered if there is time are in italics.*

### **All indicators are numbered noting:**

- First Grade, then Standard then indicator number.
- For example: 1.01.01 indicates: First Grade, Standard 1, Indicator 1

### **What is meant by words being underlined?**

- **Underlining** means this is a vocabulary word to know. These words and their definitions are available on the AMS website as *Appendix 3: Alphabetical Glossary*. When a simpler age appropriate definition is needed it is within the indicator itself.

### **How was this guide created by the Archdiocese of Washington?** Principles embodied in the process: ***Communication, Consultation*** and ***Collaboration***.

- There was an 11 member task force
- 18 readers and subject areas experts reviewed the document
- 21 parish and school programs piloted the document in 2009-2010 academic year
- 250 parish and school catechists were involved in working with the standards.
- The Archdiocesan Religious Education Advisory Board of the Archdiocese of Washington approved it at stage of development.

- The Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA initiated conversation to adopt the curriculum in 2010. The AMS signed the License Agreement on 31 October 2012. The curriculum has been adapted to the language and culture of the religious education programs in military settings. *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization* becomes effective for implementation throughout the AMS on August 6, 2013.

### **What new materials have been incorporated into this guide?**

The task force noted that:

- the context for all our catechesis is *Evangelization, and*
- *that we all need help in seeing the connections between our faith and our lives.*

Therefore every effort was made to incorporate greater focus on:

- the Sacred Scriptures
- Social Justice
- Human Sexuality/Family Life/ Age Appropriate Theology of the Body
- Evangelization
- Ecumenism
- Inter-religious dialogue and understanding.

### **What is the Basic Timeline for implementation?**

- **Spring-Summer 2013** is the time for orientation and to initiate ongoing catechist training using the catechetical methodology course online. Three curriculum orientation presentations are archived on the AMS website to help you get familiarized with the curriculum.
- **Academic year 2013-2014** is the year of full implementation beginning August 6, 2013.

### **What exactly is *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization*?**

- *A document that clearly states what participants in Catholic faith community religious education programs should be able to know, understand and do at each grade level (Pre-K to 8th).*

### **How is it different?**

- *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization* is: Standards-based, tied to its own assessment and spiral in scope and sequence.

### **What is meant by Standards Based?**

- In the field of education, a **standard** is a term which defines a cumulative body of knowledge and set of competencies that is the basis for quality education.
- They express what all program participants should *know, understand and do at each grade level* but do not dictate how they are to be taught.
- This can help the different partners (for example: priests, parents, lay catechetical leaders and catechists) involved in the process of teaching the faith.

### **Should we be assessing religious education?**

- Many people don't believe that one should or can assess religious education efforts.
- It may be more proper to say that one cannot assess *faith*.
- What can be assessed is how well one has learned the language, practices and general knowledge of the faith tradition.

### **Why tie our new Archdiocesan Religious Education Guide to its own assessment?**

Because when such an assessment is tied to a guide and offered by the Archdiocese:

- Each program participant's progress towards attaining the standards can be measured.
- Those who are not achieving the standards can also be provided with early, effective assistance.
- This is tied to our partnership with the family: Catholic faith community religious education programs need to be accountable to the parents of those who are enrolled. The assessment results follow the participant when they move from installation to installation.

### **What will this new assessment help us to do?**

This new assessment will help:

- To align language to be learned with assessment and instruction.
- To promote accountability.
- To measure success.
- To improve instruction for all.

### ***What is meant by a spiral scope and sequence?***

- The learners return to each topic each year, in an ever deeper fashion
- By following the same sequence of ideas, one after the other, a learner has a better chance of getting it all right!
- In a single Catholic faith community – all ages can be studying the same theme at the same time

### **What are the implications of the new curriculum for teaching the faith?**

- Clear expectations
- Accountability through assessment equals greater opportunity for all the partners in the catechetical process.
- Opportunity for true alignment of language, instruction and assessment

### **What does this mean for textbooks?**

- Catholic faith communities will continue to use the textbook of preference chosen from the USCCB Conformity List.
- New texts will be reviewed in light of how well they align with archdiocesan standards and therefore help to teach the faith.

- Publishers will be asked to do a correlation of the textbook series to the curriculum guide. The correlations will be made available to you on the AMS website [www.milarch.org](http://www.milarch.org).

### **How will this curriculum guide help catechists who are not professional teachers?**

- The standards will help catechists to know what to focus on in the textbook.

### **What additional resources have been created to support catechists and parents?**

To help implement the curriculum guide there will be:

- A Catechetical Methodology course online through the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Communities of Faith Formation (VLCFF) to help catechists to learn how to use the curriculum guide, to know how to do effective lesson planning using five core methodologies, *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization* and the textbook as a supporting resource.
- Catechist Segments to help catechists to get acquainted with their grade level indicators.
- Parent Segments to help parents be the primary educators in the faith of their children.
- Appendices 1, 2, 3 to help both parents and catechists to focus on age appropriate Key Practices and Prayers for Catholics and the key terms participants should be learning at their grade level.
- *Forming Disciples Blog* [www.milarch.org](http://www.milarch.org)

### **Will the AMS provide a forum for catechetical leaders to share best practices and converse about the curriculum guide online?**

- *Forming Disciples Blog* is a forum located on the AMS website [www.milarch.org](http://www.milarch.org) for Catechetical Leaders to share best practices and converse about the curriculum. An article is published on the blog every other week to initiate conversation.

## **EMERGING QUESTIONS FROM CURRICULUM ORIENTATIONS**

### **When will the Assessment be available?**

- The Assessment will be available by catechetical year 2014-2015. The Assessment will be administered online for grades 3-8 through a third party company.

### **By assessment, do you mean testing the children?**

- Yes, grades 3-8 by fall 2014

### **Who and how will the assessment be administered?**

- The Assessment will be administered online. Each catechist should be instructed on how to administer the assessment. Guidelines will be provided to catechetical leaders when the assessment becomes available.

### **Will the assessment results be reported to the AMS on a yearly basis? Who will receive the results of the Assessment?**

- The results of the Assessments will be used to strengthen the teaching of the faith both at the local and at the Archdiocesan levels. The Catholic faith community catechetical leaders will receive a report for each participant. The report will be shared with parents. The AMS will also receive a comprehensive report.

### **What if a participant fails the Assessment?**

- The results of the Assessment will generate important information to focus faith formation in the needed areas. The report information will help to identify the areas of growth and need of improvement.

### **The passing of assessments seem to tie into the annual attendance of religious education classes. What happens to the students who show up just to receive their sacraments?**

- It is up to the priest-chaplain as the Director of Faith Formation to make the decision regarding the readiness of the person for the celebration of the sacraments. Although the child may have skipped a grade level, the child will learn the same topics the previous grades have covered because the curriculum is spiral in scope and sequence.

### **How to invite parents to be actively involved in the faith formation process of their children? What happens if the parents are not involved as the curriculum requires?**

- Family catechesis is one way of inviting parents to be educated in the faith to be effective at forming their children in the faith. Start small and invite using the chapel webpage, emails, facebook, texting, and the most effective is personal invitation at the point of entry to the program. The bulleting announcements and from the pulpit. If parents do not get involved in the faith development of their children it will be harder to encourage them to attend Mass. Knowledge of the faith should lead to active and conscious participation in the life of the Catholic faith community. If space is a challenge provide faith formation opportunities online through blog or facebook.

**How many parents will pull their children out of faith formation until they move to the new duty station and then just start them in their current grade?**

- Do not expect families to rush in at the first invitation. Helping others understand the value of faith formation takes time and creative efforts. Provide, feed them and they shall come. Excellent programs are successful. People share their experiences and the word gets out.

**If catechists want to create their lesson plan around the guide objectives, would it be necessary to use textbook or allow them to use the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible for lesson plans?**

- Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization curriculum is the starting point for the lesson plan. Once the catechist has identified the topic and the indicators, he or she goes to the correlated resources such as the Bible, the textbook and the catechism to find supporting materials to develop the topic.

**Are we going to lose our catechists to off base parishes?**

- If you have a great program with good resources, catechists will prefer to stay with you. *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization* will help catechists grow in their knowledge of the Catholic faith. Good programs increase participation at all levels.

**How detailed will be the textbook correlations?**

- The correlations will provide unified details to ease the lesson planning process. It will connect the indicators with the resources needed from the textbook.

**Will there be (or should there be) a requirement for parents to pass the assessment as well?**

- That might a) encourage adults to get educated on their faith or b) chase them away to off-base. Parents are not required to take the assessment. However, parents should be provided faith formation. The 14 standards are the same for grades Pre-K to 8. The eighth grade level indicators could be adapted to design a faith formation program for parents. The same topics children are learning should be covered by adults.

**Will there be training for the Catholic faith community coordinators?**

- There will be ongoing training for all involved in the catechetical process. The Online Curriculum Orientation generated three videos that are posted on the AMS Faith Formation page on the website. You can view the three orientation

videos with your team of catechists at the preparation meeting prior to the start of religious education program. Should you need my assistance during these meetings, I can conference call for questions and answers or for further clarifications. The Catechetical Methodology course online is another training opportunity for catechetical leaders and catechists alike. The AMS will have a Forming Disciples Blog for catechetical leaders to share best practices and resources.

**Will the Catechetical Methodology course become the only course for basic catechist certification or will other classes still be allowed?**

- The Catechetical Methodology course counts to meet the basic certification requirements. **It is not** the only course you can take. In fact both CDU and VLCFF have a variety of courses you can take for continuing faith formation. You cannot give what you do not have! Therefore, you are encouraged to continue to learn about your faith by taking additional courses.

**What if some catechists take the course through local diocese?**

- The AMS will consider courses taken at the local civilian diocese. The preferred options are CDU and VLCFFF online.

**Will the AMS provide in-person training/workshops in remote areas (i.e. Japan)?**

- The AMS will provide in-person trainings upon request and availability. There have been four online trainings for various time zones including one for Japan. The Catechetical Methodology course online is an excellent training tool to learn about how to use the new curriculum and to do effective lesson planning.

**In light of the new curriculum will the age of Confirmation be standardized?**

- According to the Priests' Manual 4.2.11, "Those children who are baptized Catholic, practicing their faith, attending religious education formation, and are to be confirmed, should be at least in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Therefore, Confirmation is to be conferred between 13-16 years of age."

**Will the AMS mandate a common grade level for Confirmation?**

- Those to be confirmed "should be at least in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade"

**Training packages...in addition to web site...a DVD format?**

- There are three curriculum orientation videos posted on the AMS Faith Formation webpage [www.milarch.org](http://www.milarch.org). The videos can be used for catechist orientation at the catechetical leaders' discretion.

### **Will there be a standardized grade level for other sacraments?**

- The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist should be conferred in second grade and Confirmation in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Note that there will be youth and children who for one reason or another skipped the celebration of the sacraments in the preferred grade. The sacrament of reconciliation or penance should be celebrated prior to the reception of First Holy Eucharist. This sacrament can be made available at least one or twice a year for grades 3-8, especially prior to the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

### **Is there a way for the AMS to make the VLCFF courses free?**

- The AMS pays a partnership fee to both Catholic Distance University and the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation so that each catechist or catechetical leader may participate in faith formation for certification at the discounted registration fee of \$30 for CDU and \$40 for VLCFF. Note that the format of course dynamics may vary between CDU and VLCFF.

### **What money do you use to fund catechist formation at the installations?**

- It is up to the local leadership to decide which kind of funding is made available for catechist formation: CTOF or ROF. It is the responsibility of the military to provide funding for the training of those coordinating and teaching the faith.

### **This curriculum in order for it to truly be interchangeable for families as they PCS, needs an actual timeline/order of teaching the curriculum...is there a plan for that?**

- The ideal would be to write a thematic pacing guide. This is not yet available.

### **Will there be an open book and a closed book section on the assessment?**

- The assessment will be closed book.

### **Can we make the workshops a PTDY?**

- The interested person needs to discuss this option with the priest-chaplain at the local level.

## **Is family catechesis a good model for parental involvement in the catechetical process of the child?**

- Family catechesis is a good option to get parental involvement in the faith formation of their children. Whole community catechesis is another good option to get not only the parents but all the community involved in faith formation. Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization provides parent pages for parents to reinforce faith formation at home.

## **Are the videos going to be re-broadcast?**

- The curriculum orientation videos are posted on the AMS Faith Formation webpage.

## **Will the catechist certification process change?**

- The 14 standards in Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization are based on the four pillars of the catechist and the six tasks of catechesis. It is strongly recommended that catechists consider pursuing faith formation beyond the basic requirement of one course for certification.

## **Can we download the videos?**

- The videos can be downloaded.

## **Are we going to have the same textbook?**

- No. Each Catholic faith community has the freedom to choose a textbook that meets the needs of the families from the USCCB Conformity List.

## **Does it matter if the chapters in the textbook are not taught in order?**

- The standards and indicators are the starting point for the development of a lesson plan using *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization*. The textbook, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible are some of the resources you can use to support the teaching of the faith.

## **What about our special needs children?**

- This seems to be a greater need each year. The introduction to *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization* has a section regarding the adaptation of the curriculum indicators to special needs children.

### **Are religious education programs to be at full 30 hours of catechesis?**

- The minimum instruction requirement is 30 hours. There are programs that provide more than the minimum requirement. Those programs providing less than the minimum required hours should be encouraged to comply with the minimum 30 hours per catechetical year.

### **How should we distribute the curriculum guide?**

- Catechists are encouraged to download their grade level standards and indicators or to print them.

### **Do you recommend having sessions with parents based on the appendices? What are the implications for adult faith formation?**

- Take the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level indicators to adapt to parents faith formation. Time and space permit, parents can be encouraged to attend faith formation while their children are in class.