

Forming Catechist Enrichment Groups

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In her book, *Cultivating Your Catechists: How to Recruit, Encourage, and Retain Successful Catechists* (*The Effective Catechetical Leader* series), Jayne Mondoy reminds us that corporate America invests millions of dollars in coaching groups of individuals (employees or clients) to work together toward a common goal and to be fully engaged. The truth is, without engagement, people (especially volunteers) tend to burn out more quickly. In his book, *Growing an Engaged Church* (Gallup Press), Albert L. Winseman identifies three ways to make an immediate impact on the level of engagement of church members:

1. Clarify the expectations of membership.
2. Help your members discover what they do best.
3. Create small groups.

I think these can (and should) be easily applied to catechists, who, without engagement, do indeed burnout quickly. Those catechists who persevere the longest are the ones who become more deeply engaged in the faith community. The best safeguard against constant turnover of catechists is to care for and nurture them. The three strategies above are helpful.

1. Catechists need to have clarity on what is expected of them (more than just “teach the fifth grade”) in this vocation, as well as what they can expect in return!

2. Catechetical leaders need to help catechists discover and develop their gifts through ongoing formation—not just completing courses to get a certificate, but true attention to personal growth.
3. Catechists should be encouraged to form small enrichment groups (perhaps four to six catechists), dedicated to working together on their faith formation. In fact, if *anyone* in the parish should be in small faith groups, it should be catechists!

Such enrichment groups can meet informally at the catechists' homes to select books to read and discuss together, seminars and workshops to attend, and online courses and webinars to participate in together. To get started, here are some resources I would recommend from the Loyola Press library for catechists to use in their small groups. The resources are organized according to categories normally required for catechist certification.

Teaching Skills

- *The Catechist's Toolbox*
- *Beyond the Catechist's Toolbox*
- *Getting Started as a Catechist* webinar series

Jesus

- *Christology: True God, True Man*
- *Under the Influence of Jesus: The Transforming Experience of Encountering Christ*
- *Jesus of Nazareth*
- *Praying the Way Jesus Prayed*
- *Embracing the Way of Jesus*

The Catholic Faith

- *A Well-Built Faith*
- *Practice Makes Catholic*
- *A Living Faith* (DVD)
- *Positively Catholic*
- *May Crowning, Mass, and Merton*

Scripture

- *The Stories of the Old Testament*
- *The Bible Blueprint*
- *Six Weeks with the Bible*
- *Meeting St. Mark Today* (also, *St. John*, *St. Luke*, *St. Matthew*, and *St. Paul*)

Liturgy and Sacraments

- *Living the Mass*
- *Means of Grace, Ways of Life: Sacramental Theology*
- *Living the Sacraments: Finding God at the Intersection of Heaven and Earth* (Joe

Paprocki's newest book, available Fall, 2018)

Prayer and Spirituality

- *Inner Compass*
- *The Catechist's Backpack: Spiritual Essentials for the Journey*
- *The Prayer List*
- *Busy Lives and Restless Souls*
- *Sanctuary*
- *The 15-Minute Prayer Solution*
- *A Simple, Life-Changing Prayer*
- *7 Keys to Spiritual Wellness*
- *A Friendship Like No Other*
- *The Power of Pause*
- *Close to the Heart: A Guide to Personal Prayer*
- *Praying with Jesus*
- *The Words We Pray*
- *Meaningful Conversations About Prayer: How and Why We Pray* (DVD) (also *Praying with Our Own Words*; *Praying with Scripture*; and *Praying with the Church's Words*)
- *On Hope*
- *The Rosary*
- *The Sign of the Cross*

Mary and the Saints

- *Mary: Jesus' Mother—and Ours*
- *Mary, the Compassionate Mother*
- *Mary and the Saints*
- *Mystics and Miracles*
- *My Best Teachers Were Saints*
- *My Life with the Saints*
- *Saints at Heart*
- *Voices of the Saints*
- *Little Lessons from the Saints*
- *Saint Peter*

Morality and Social Justice

- *Christian Morality*
- *Radical Compassion*
- *Living for a Just Society*
- *Thrift Store Saints*
- *Mercy in the City*

Church

- *Church History: Faith Handed On*
- *Ecclesiology: The Church as Communion and Mission*
- *A Church on the Move: 52 Ways to Get Mission and Mercy in Motion*