Formation for the 21st Century

The Franciscan University Catechetical Institute
“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion and 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.”

— Saint John Paul II, (Catechesi Tradendae, No. 5)
Questions seeking answers...

How, in the midst of a busy, distracted, and ever secularizing culture, can the Church raise up a new generation of catechetical leaders?

How, as dioceses restructure, parishes merge, and budgets shrink, can we provide Catholic priests, deacons, catechists, and parents with the tools they need to form the souls in their care?

How can we engage, inspire, and excite those entrusted with the great task of catechesis, bringing them into more intimate communion with Jesus Christ and empowering them to do the same for others?

Today, these are the questions with which every Catholic diocese must wrestle. They go right to the heart of the catechetical challenges the Church faces, not simply in our diocesan offices and parishes, but also in our institutions, our schools, and, most urgently, in our homes.

Dioceses don't have to face these challenges alone. The Franciscan University Institute of Catechetics stands ready to help, offering diocesan offices (and the parishes and institutions they support) unlimited access to our faithful, flexible, and affordable online catechist formation tools.
Officially launched in 2016, the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute seeks to serve Christ and his Church by forming those Catholics entrusted with the formation of others. This includes priests, deacons, and parents, as well as lay ecclesial ministers, teachers, religious, and parish catechists.

Through conferences, online courses, personal support, and new catechetical resources, we make the riches of the Catholic faith more available and accessible to clergy and lay catechists alike.

To this end, our expert faculty and experienced lay mentors work in close partnerships with both dioceses and catechists, offering individualized formation tools designed to meet a variety of catechetical needs.
The cornerstone of the Institute’s work is our online library of video-based catechetical workshops. Designed to complement and supplement diocesan formation and continuing education programs already in place, the Catechetical Institute’s online programming makes the best of Franciscan University available to dioceses everywhere.

It accomplishes this by offering catechist formation tools that are wide in their reach, designed to help all those Catholics responsible for helping others, not just catechists.

It also accomplishes this by offering a broad range of workshops, making use of Franciscan’s many experts in fields outside of catechetics and theology: counseling, education, life sciences, communication, and more.

And it accomplishes this by offering a degree of formation that goes deep, exploring topics you won’t find in other online formation programs, including basic evangelization skills, mentoring, spiritual guidance, team building, and many others.

In the emerging field of online formation, Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute stands apart.

Here’s why…
Faithful

Rooted in Sacred Scripture, loyal to the magisterium, and guided by the Church’s most foundational documents on catechesis and evangelization, the Catechetical Institute’s work reflects Franciscan University’s charism of dynamic orthodoxy. This means we are both ever faithful to the Church’s wisdom and ever open to the movements of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, following the instructions laid out in documents such as Catechesi Tradendae, Christifideli Laici, and the General Directory for Catechesis, we are committed to following the catechetical example set for us by God himself in salvation history.

This divine pedagogy first prioritizes the spiritual formation of the human person, encouraging growth in Christian maturity through liturgy, prayer, and lectio divina. It then seeks to support other dimensions of formation: human, doctrinal, liturgical, social, pedagogical, and professional.

Franciscan University’s catechetics and theology faculty were the first in the country to take the Oath of Fidelity to the Church’s magisterium in 1989.

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.

— Blessed Pope Paul VI
(Evangelii Nuntiandi, No. 41)
The Franciscan University Catechetical Institute's Online Catechist Formation Is Proven

Franciscan University of Steubenville boasts the largest catechetics program in the United States, with more catechetics students and more catechetics faculty members than any other college or university.

Our world-class faculty of catechists and theologians have taught, presented, and worked in universities, schools, and parishes around the world. Our faculty are practitioners, as well as academics, who bring decades of experience in youth ministry, religious education, faith formation, and higher education to the classroom.

That experience shows in the design of the Catechetical Institute’s online workshops, which balance theory and praxis, while also accommodating a wide variety of learners.

Recognized Leaders

The fruit of our faculty’s excellence is also evident in our alumni. Graduates of Franciscan University’s theology and catechetics programs serve the Church across the country and around the world, holding top administrative posts, not only in diocesan offices and thriving parishes, but also at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Executive Director, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
Director, Promotion and Defense of Marriage Initiative, USCCB
Catechism Specialist, Subcommittee on the Catechism, USCCB
Director of Family Life, Archdiocese of Boston
Director of Catholic Identity and Catholic Education, Diocese of Pittsburgh
Director of Catechesis, Diocese of Lansing
Director of Religious Education, Diocese of Harrisburg
Director of the Institute of Catholic Theology, Diocese of Phoenix
President, The Augustine Institute
Director, Catechesis and Evangelization, Diocese of La Crosse
President and Founder, Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS)
Executive Director, The St. Paul Center
And much more...
The spiritual and catechetical formation of men and women requires more than online workshops. Even the most seasoned presenters and sophisticated videos can only accomplish so much.

To flourish—both as disciples and catechists—people need formation that is rooted in human community and shaped by personal engagement.

Accordingly, the Catechetical Institute doesn't seek to replace the diocesan community with distant experts. Rather, we work with dioceses to establish local, on-the-ground mentoring programs, which connect participants to veteran catechists living and working in their diocese. These mentors are handpicked by their diocese and trained in cooperation with the Catechetical Institute. The extent to which the Institute assists with this training is determined by the diocese and can be tailored to accommodate local needs, timetables, and the number of individuals in need of training.

If, for some reason, a sufficient number of mentors are not yet readily available in a diocese, the Institute (to the greatest degree possible) can provide mentors in the interim.

Once trained, mentors provide advice and feedback to participants. This personal engagement helps participants become more effective ministers and leaders, while also helping mentors grow as teachers and witnesses.

Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

— Pope Benedict XVI (Deus Caritas Est, No. 1)
When partnering with the Catechetical Institute, dioceses can tailor-make a curriculum or plan of study to suit their specific formational needs. With Franciscan, there is no minimum or maximum number of workshops a diocese must require for participants, nor is there a required schedule they must follow. Rather, every diocese that chooses to work with the Catechetical Institute can select any of our workshops from our entire corpus of online programming to add to any aspect of their existing certification programs or continuing education requirements. They also can choose to have participants follow our recommended schedules for certification or establish their own schedule for completion.

“The Franciscan University Catechetical Institute’s Online Catechist Formation Is

“Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings.”

Saint John Paul II
(Catechesi Tradendae, No. 23)
Franciscan University understands that catechesis doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Priests, youth ministers, and Catholic school teachers at all levels share in the catechist’s work of formation, while parents remain the primary educators of their children.

To this end, we offer a wide variety of certification tracks designed to meet the formational needs of all those involved in the great work of catechesis. These tracks include:

- Priestsly Catechetical Renewal
- Ministry of Parenting
- Catechist
- Parish Catechetical Leader
- Catechumenal Ministry
- Culture of Life
- Catholic Schools
- Youth Ministry
- Campus Ministry
- Pastoral Accompaniment
- First Proclamation
- Music Ministry
- And more

Within each track are dozens of one-hour workshops divided into “core” areas and “electives.” Our large and growing library of workshops touch upon almost every aspect of catechesis, ranging from catechetical theory and Christology, to public speaking, evangelization, and vocational discernment.

Each of these workshops has been professionally filmed with a live audience. Art, innovative media, music, and other creative elements have also been incorporated, recognizing both the importance of catechizing the whole person and beauty’s enduring witness to truth.

Likewise, all source material is provided in a user-friendly manner, designed for those not used to online learning platforms, while each one-hour workshop is broken up into 10-15 minute segments for ease of viewing.
The Franciscan University Catechetical Institute’s Online Catechist Formation is Affordable—St. Francis of Assisi

“For it is in giving that we receive.” — Saint Francis of Assisi

In founding the Catechetical Institute, Franciscan University desires to serve the Church and, more specifically, to serve diocesan bishops. In both this spirit of service and in the spirit of Franciscan poverty, we have priced our workshops and related resources at a level that ensures any diocese, any parish, and any individual can afford to participate.

For partner dioceses, a token yearly subscription paid by the parish (or parochial institution) grants all catechists, catechetical leaders, and parents in that parish (or institution) full access to the entire corpus of Institute offerings. There is no other cost to a diocese, other than whatever ways a bishop would like Franciscan University to assist in the training of local mentors.

Outside of an existing diocesan partnership, individuals may take any workshop for enrichment (essentially auditing) for a nominal monthly fee and enjoy the same access to resources and discounts as other registered participants.
We form all those charged with forming others in the faith.

We offer maximum flexibility to accommodate each bishop’s priorities.

We work to complement—not replace—local catechetical efforts.

We facilitate relationships between catechists and nearby mentors, keeping the heart of catechist formation personal and local.
Congregavit nos in unum
Christi amor.

The love of Christ has gathered us into one.

Franciscan University of Steubenville admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, disability, age, and sex to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school as required by Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments.

To learn more about how the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute can help form faithful, joyful, and effective catechists in your diocese, contact:

The Catechetical Institute
740-283-6754
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