

# Models for Using the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

## *Fostering Adult Faith and Christian Discipleship*

*Adult Faith is confident because it is founded on the word of God and confirmed by the whole Church's supernatural sense of the faith. The adult disciple seeks the clarity and knowledge of faith, so as to find and accept it "with all joy and peace in believing. (OHWB 58).*

*The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith. (CT 61).*

## Introduction

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* is the response of the bishops of the United States to the call of Pope John Paul II to prepare a local catechism based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. This catechism would "need to take into account the local situation and culture, while at the same time preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to Catholic teaching found in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*." (USCCA Introduction).

## How is the Catholic Catechism for Adults Structured?

The format of the Catholic Catechism for Adults follows the four pillars of the universal catechism:

- ✠ **The Creed:** The Faith Professed
- ✠ **The Sacraments:** The Faith Celebrated
- ✠ **Christian Morality:** The Faith Lived
- ✠ **Prayer:** The Faith Prayer

The presentation of the content lends itself to easy planning for a variety of adult faith formation situations.

- ✠ Most chapters begin with the story of a Catholic from the United States
- ✠ The teachings engage our culture.
- ✠ Learners are involved in the content through faith sharing discussion questions that connect faith learning to faith living.
- ✠ Each chapter concludes with brief doctrinal statements and suggestions for meditation and prayer.
- ✠ A helpful glossary at the end of the Catechism provides assistance with unfamiliar terminology.

In November 2006, The National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education (NACARE) invited its 14 regional representatives to collaborate with their regional adult faith formation contacts in developing models for using the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. The following are the results of these gatherings.

## Catechist Training For Current and Potential Parish Catechists

### *Nurturing the Formational Needs of the Catechist*

*The Church entrusts the ministry of catechesis to exemplary followers of Christ with unquestioned personal integrity and moral character:*

*Positive qualities in candidates should be:*

- † *Faith that manifests itself in their piety and daily life;*
- † *Love for the Church and communion with its pastors;*
- † *Apostolic spirit and missionary zeal;*
- † *Love for their brothers and sisters and a willingness to give generous service;*
- † *Sufficient education;*
- † *The respect of the community;*
- † *The human, moral and technical qualities necessary for the work of a catechist, such as dynamism, good relations with others, etc. (NDC, p. 236 with emphasis).*

### **Adult Catechism Topic**

*Chapter One "My Soul Longs for You, O God." Psalm 42:2*

### **Focus**

To understand that we can come to know God through Creation and the human Person;  
To recognize that human beings innately seek God;  
To reflect on one's own search for God in order to share one's faith story with those whom we catechize.

### **Setting**

Participants in small groups at tables

### **Time**

One 2 ½ hour session

### **Material and Resources**

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, *New American Bible*, Cross, Candle, Newsprint, Markers, Name Tags

# Outline of Session

1. **Welcome and hospitality.**
2. **Introductions/Icebreaker.** Use one of the following or another icebreaker to encourage community.
  - a. In pairs ask participants to introduce themselves to one another giving name, catechetical experience and one personal fact. In large group, invite participants to introduce their partner to the group.
  - b. Invite participants to introduce themselves using an adjective with their first name which describes themselves, For example, Thoughtful Ted, Anxious Anne, etc. (This actually enables the group to remember people's names more easily.)
3. **Prayer:** After a moment of silence, the group prays antiphonally Psalm 45:2-6 found on page 9 of USCCA.
4. **Introductory Story:** Elizabeth Ann Seton: One Woman's Quest, pages 1-2.
  - a. Creative presentation by person playing the role of Elizabeth Ann Seton
  - b. Creative presentation by person playing the role of peer of Elizabeth Ann Seton.
5. **Witness Talk:** An experienced catechist shares her/his personal faith story with the group.
6. **Reflection and Sharing: Page 7, "For Discussion", #1.** What are you looking for in life? What are your goals and ideals? How do God and the Church play a part in what you are seeking?
  - a. Allow time for individual reflection and journaling.
  - b. Discuss responses in small groups.
  - c. Spend a few minutes in large group discussion.
7. **Presentation on following topics, p. 2-7.**
  - a. The Universal Desire for God
  - b. Through Creation
  - c. Through the Human Person
  - d. A Generation of Seekers
8. **Application to Ministry**
  - a. Divide group by catechetical focus: grade level, youth, adults.
  - b. Task: Design an interactive activity for those you catechize based on the material presented in this session.
  - c. Allow groups adequate time to complete task and summarize their efforts on newsprint.
  - d. Ask a representative from each group to briefly share their activity with the large group.
9. **Summary of Session**
10. **Closing Prayer: Meditation, p.8.**

## Catechetical Leaders

### *The Importance of the Catechetical Leader*

*The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader.*

*Preparation for service as a parish catechetical leader should include advanced studies in theology, Scripture, Liturgy, catechesis and catechetical methodology, educational psychology and theory, and administration, as well as practical catechetical experience with adults, youth and children. (NDC, pp224-225)*

### **Adult Catechism Topic**

*Session Two: Chapter 19, “Anointing the Sick and Dying”*

*Session Three: Chapter 34, “God Calls Us to Pray”*

### **Focus**

To introduce concept of the Catechism as a tool for ongoing formation

### **Time:**

Three “brown bag” noontime sessions, two hours each.

### **Setting:**

Parish center convenient to regional catechetical leaders

### **Material and Resources**

USCCA for each participant, Catechism of the Catholic Church, bible, “Our Sunday Visitor” Study Guide for the US Catholic Catechism for Adults” by Jean Sullivan, on-line or reference materials for explanation of history of catechisms in the Church, optional display of historical catechetical materials, such as The Didache, Baltimore Catechism, Catechism of the Council of Trent, etc.

## Outline of Session One

1. **Opening Prayer** to Holy Spirit
2. **Reflection:** What are your experiences with a “catechism”? Share in pairs, then in large group.
3. **Presentation** on history of catechisms in Church history.
4. **Discussion**
  - a. Discuss the difference between a major catechism such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church and a minor catechism such as the Baltimore Catechism.
  - b. Define the relationship between the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.
5. **Exploration of USCCA:** Give participants time to explore the USCCA, reviewing the format, chapter headings, glossary, prayer section and components of chapters. Discuss what they see as particularly helpful or engaging.
6. **Looking Ahead to Session Two.** Examine the format of Chapter 19. Invite participants to read and reflect on chapter 19 in preparation for session two.
7. **Closing:** Read the story of Elizabeth Ann Seton in chapter one. How is she a model for our catechetical ministry today?

## Outline of Session Two

1. **Opening Prayer:** P. 259.
2. **Introductory Reflection:** When have you experience a need for healing, either physical or spiritual? What is your experience with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick? Share in pairs, then in large group.
3. **Discuss** the story of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin found on pp. 249-250. Why did he have such a profound influence on people throughout the Church?
4. **Discuss:** How has your understanding of “sacrament” changed as you mature in faith?
5. **Presentation of material** pp. 251-259. PP. 55-56 in Study Guide.
6. **Response:** In groups of four, share responses to questions in “For Discussion”, p. 257.
7. **Looking Ahead to Session Three:** Invite participants to prepare for the next session by reading and reflecting on chapter 35, “God Calls Us to Pray.”
8. **Closing Meditation:** Good Shepherd Psalm, p. 258.

## Outline of Session Three

1. **Opening Prayer:** P. 480, Psalm 121.
2. **Introductory Reflection:** “For Discussion”, p. 478. Bishop Fulton Sheen found strength and guidance by meditating before the Blessed Sacrament. How do you find time for being silent in God’s presence? Share in pairs, then in large group.
3. **Discussion:** Looking at the various prayer forms described in this chapter, which have you taught in leading others to prayer? What worked in these efforts? What did not work? How do we insure that we present many forms of prayer and not just those which appeal to us personally?
4. **Summary of Sessions:** Allow participants time to explore how they will use the USCCA as a teaching tool in their ministry with adults. How will it be a resource for personal life-long faith formation?
5. **Closing Meditation:** “I Shall Keep the Silence of My Heart”, Mother Teresa, pp.479-480.

## Native Americans

*General Outline for the Meeting*  
*Adapted from “Builders of the New Earth”*  
*By Rev. John Hatcher*

1. *Members of the group prepare for each session by reading the material ahead of time, prayerfully reflecting, and writing their thoughts about the questions.*
2. *Members of the group take turns facilitating the group sessions. The facilitator is not the presenter or the teacher. The members of the group teach each other. The facilitator encourages the other members to share their ideas and reflections. The teaching method will not work if the facilitator dominates or becomes the “answer” person.*
3. *General instructions for group members:*
  - a. *Carefully read the material before the group meeting.*
  - b. *Take time during the week to pray over the material and discuss it with another.*
  - c. *Write out, or have clearly in your mind, your ideas about the material.*
  - d. *Try to answer the questions—the answers are not in the material—the questions are meant to get you thinking.*
4. *Questions for reflecting and discussing each section of Chapter 10 of the USCCA:*
  - a. *What does this section teach me about the Church?*
  - b. *What does this section say to me about my own life?*
  - c. *What do I especially want to remember from this section?*

### **Topic**

*Chapter 10 “The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ”.*

### **Focus:**

To explore various facets of the Church

To enable participants to live out their roles as “Priestly People”

### **Setting:**

The process requires groups of five to eight people. The setting could be a home or parish facility. Each small group works in a separate room or around separate tables in a large room.

### **Time:**

Four 2-hour sessions

## Material and Resources:

USCCA for each participant, General Outline for the Meeting—a handout explanation of the methodology used in Native American study groups.<sup>1</sup>

### Outline of Session One

#### 1. Gathering Prayer

- a. Begin by lighting a candle, inviting participants to reflect on the meaning of “The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ.”
- b. After a few moments of silence, pray aloud together several times, “Christ be our light.”

#### 2. Study

- a. The facilitator asks a volunteer to read the first section aloud (The Church as Mystery, USCCA p. 112.)
- b. Each person gives their prayerful reflection about what was read.
- c. When all have shared, the facilitator or another participant summarizes the important points of the material.
- d. The next session is read and discussed in the same manner until all six sections (USCCA pp113-115) have been discussed.

#### 3. Closing Prayer: Pray together the “Prayer” at the end of the chapter, p.123,

#### 4. For Next Session: The facilitator reminds the participants to prayerfully read and reflect on the assigned readings and questions for Session Two, writing down their reflections or answers to the questions.

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<sup>1</sup> General Outline for the Meeting, adapted from Builders of the New Earth, Reverend John Hatcher.

## Outline of Session Two

### 1. Gathering Prayer

- a. Begin by lighting a candle, inviting participants to reflect on the meaning of “The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ.”
- b. After a few moments of silence, pray aloud together several times, “Christ, be light for the Earth.”

### 2. Study

- a. The facilitator asks a volunteer to read the first section aloud (“The Church as Sacrament of Salvation,” p. 115)
- b. Each person gives their prayerful reflection on what was read.
- c. When all have shared, the facilitator or another participant summarizes the important points of the material.
- d. The next section is read and discussed in the same manner until all five sections (pp. 115-118) have been discussed.

3. **Closing Prayer:** Pray together the “Prayer” at the end of the chapter, p. 123.

4. **For Next Session:** The facilitator reminds the participants to prayerfully read and reflect on the assigned readings and questions for Session Three, writing down their reflections or answers to the questions.

## Outline of Session Three

### 1. Gathering Prayer

- a. Begin by lighting a candle, inviting participants to reflect on the meaning of “The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ.”
- b. After a few moments of silence, pray aloud together several times, “Christ, be light for the Church.”

### 2. Study

- a. The facilitator asks a volunteer to read the first section aloud (“The Church as Communion, p. 118).
- b. Each person gives their prayerful reflection on what was read.
- c. When all have shared, the facilitator or another participant summarizes the important points of the material.
- d. The next section is read and discussed in the same manner until all three sections (pp. 118-121 and 111-112) have been discussed.

3. **Closing Prayer:** Pray together the “Prayer” at the end of the chapter, p. 123.

4. **For Next Session:** The facilitator reminds the participants to prayerfully read and reflect on the assigned readings and questions for Session Four, writing down their reflections or answers to the questions.

## Outline of Session Four

### 1. Gathering Prayer

- a. Begin by lighting a candle, inviting participants to reflect on the meaning of “The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ.”
- b. After a few moments of silence, pray aloud together several times, “Christ, be light for every nation.”

### 2. Study

- a. The facilitator asks a volunteer to read the first section aloud (Doctrinal Statements, p. 123).
- b. Each person gives their prayerful reflection on what was read.
- c. When all have shared, the facilitator or another participant summarizes the important points of the material.
- d. The next section (“Meditation,” p. 123) is read and discussed in the same manner.

### 3. Final Reflection: The facilitator invites the participants to share their thoughts on studying the meaning of Church.

### 4. Closing Prayer: Pray together the “Prayer” at the end of the chapter, p. 123.

## Parish Staffs and Committees

### *Catechetical Formation of Parish Staffs and Committees*

*Parish staff, committees such as the Parish Council, Education Committee, Finance Committee, etc., and parish groups are asked to use the USCCA as a catechetical component of their regular meetings. Members need to read the designated chapter ahead of the scheduled meeting. The role of facilitator is rotated among committee members.*

#### **Topic:**

Taking one chapter per month, covering USCCA in a three year cycle

#### **Focus**

Year 1—Part I; Year 2—Part II; Year 3—Parts III and IV

#### **Setting:**

Regularly scheduled committee meeting

#### **Time:**

15-20 minutes

#### **Resources:**

USCCA for each member, bible

### **Outline of Session**

1. **Gathering Prayer:** “Prayer” or “Meditation” found at the conclusion of each chapter.
2. **Discussion:**
  - a. In pairs, members discuss one of the “For Discussion” questions.
  - b. In large group each pair shares its insights.
3. **Faith to Life:** Personal/shared reflection on how the insights gleaned might impact each participant’s life or the work of the group that is gathered.

## Parish Web Site

### *Connecting to Parishioners On-line*

*Many parishioners wishing to learn about the Catholic faith find it difficult, due to their schedules and family responsibilities, to participate in adult faith formation offerings. They cannot commit to multiple sessions over several weeks at a fixed time and location away from home. This model provides the flexibility that enables participants to join in study for one session or all session at whatever time works best for them without leaving their homes. Two options are provided for using the parish web site to dialogue with others on Catholic teaching using the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.*

### **Material and Resources**

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (purchased by participants from sponsoring parishes), printed schedule of themes to be treated and corresponding USCCA chapters, access to internet.

### **Process**

#### **Option One**

**(Requires oversight by pastor, DRE, adult faith formation leader)**

1. **Distribute** adult catechisms to all interested parishioners.
2. **Promote** on-line participation, providing a timeline for treatment of each chapter.
3. **Ask** participants to post answers to the discussion questions for the assigned chapter on the parish run bulletin board.
4. **Address** any questions raised by participants as they surface.

## Option Two

### (Requires homilist collaboration)

1. Parish leader and/or **homilist review and rearrange** selected USCCA chapters to correlate with themes from the lectionary cycle.
2. **Homilist** uses the indicated chapter each week as a resource in preparing the homily.
3. **Parish distributes adult catechisms** to any interested persons. (This model does not require parishioners to have the catechism. It relies on the homilist to communicate the message drawn from the Scripture readings and USCCA resource chapter.)
4. **The homily** or summary of the homily is posted on-line with a “question of the week.”
5. Participants **reflect** on the homily and question of the week at home.
6. Participants go to parish web site to **post their reflections** and review the shared reflections of others.

# RCIA Catechetical Sessions during Catechumenate

## *A Resource for the Catechumenate*

*Along with weekly sessions to break open the Word of God after the Dismissal rite focused on the Sunday readings, use the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults as primary resource for separate weekly catechetical sessions. These extended catechetical sessions take place either immediately following the Dismissal session or on a weeknight. The following illustrate how USCCA may be used.*

## **Adult Catechism Topic**

Chapter Seven “The Good News God Has Sent His Son”

## **Time**

Two and a half hours

## **Material and Resources**

Bible (NAB version), USCCA for each participant, prayer resources such as “Magnificat” with Morning and Evening Prayer

## **Outline of Session**

- 1. Opening Prayer**
- 2. Shared reflection** on the life of Pierre Toussaint as model for today’s Catholic. (pp77-79)
- 3. Catechetical session built around doctrinal content** (pp79-86)
- 4. Discussion** (p. 85)
- 5. Meditation/prayer** during following week (pp86-87).

## II. Submitted by: Region III

### Adult Catechism Topic

*Chapter Fifteen "Baptism: Becoming a Christian"*

### Focus

To help catechumens understand and prepare for the Sacrament of Baptism

To foster a greater appreciation of the Sacrament of Baptism in the lives of the candidates

### Setting

Circle of chars with prayer table in center

### Time

Two hours

### Material and Resources

The bible, Copy of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, USCCA, DVD: "Come to the Water", (Catholic Communications Campaign, USCCB) or "This Is the Night," (LTP), water, oil, white garment, candle.

### Outline of Session

1. **Gathering:** Gather around table which displays the symbols of Baptism—water, oil, white garment, candle.
2. **Opening Prayer:**
  - \* Sing or listen to the song, "Come to the Water."
  - \* Proclaim Luke 3:15-16, 21-22.
3. **Introductory Reflection:** Explore the use of the symbols of baptism in everyday life.
4. **Presentation:**
  - \* Brief overview of Sacrament of Baptism focusing on the dying and rising with Christ. Explain the necessity and effects of the sacrament using pp. 183-184, 187, 192-195.
  - \* Discuss: Invite candidates, sponsors and catechists to share a memory from their baptism.
  - \* Using symbols discuss each part of the Rite of Baptism, pp184-187.
  - \* Show DVD "Come to the Water," or "This Is the Night".
  - \* Discuss Baptism as a "Call to Holiness", p. 195-196
5. **Closing Meditation:**
  - \* Relate the story of John Boyle O'Reilly (p. 181) to the baptismal call to mission /witness.
  - \* Blessing Prayer over catechumens, RCIA 95 G.

## Sacramental Preparation for Parents

### ***Preparing Parents to Be Primary Educators in Faith***

*This session is a general introductory session for parents who are preparing their children to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Eucharist or Confirmation. It precedes two more sessions related directly to one of the above sacraments. Refer to USCCA chapters 24 and 18 for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, USCCA chapter 17 for Eucharist, and USCCA chapters 9 and 16 for Confirmation. Follow-up sessions follow a similar format.*

### **Adult Catechism Topic**

*Chapter 14 “The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ*

### **Focus**

To update parents and sponsors in their understanding of sacraments in the lives of Catholics.  
To renew and inspire adults to better appreciate the sacramental life of the Church.  
To support parents and sponsors in the preparation of their children for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and/or Confirmation

### **Time**

90- 120 Minutes

### **Setting**

Parents and sponsors gather at round tables in parish hall

### **Material and Resources**

USCCA, bible, Power Point handouts, prayer service aids, glossary, prayer table with symbols of sacraments, handouts of discussion questions for each table, Shorter Book of Blessings

## Outline of Session

1. **Opening Prayer:**
  - a. Gathering Song: One familiar to community, such as “Holy Ground,” “We Are Called,” “Sing a New Song”, etc.
  - b. Reading from Scripture: John 20: 19-23
  - c. Meditation USCCA 178, Pope John Paul II.
2. **Introductory Reflection:** In pairs, participants discuss, “What do you remember of your own reception of sacraments as a child?” “What do you wish for your child as he/she prepares for and receives this sacrament?”
3. **Presentation**
  - a. Relate the story of Martin Hellriegel, USCCA p. 165. In pairs, ask participants to complete the statement “To me, liturgy is...:”
  - b. Power Point presentation on material in chapter 14.
4. **Small Group Discussion:** “For Discussion,” USCCA p.176
5. **Large Group:** Sharing of key elements from discussion.
6. **Closing Prayer:** Blessing of a Family taken from “Shorter Book of Blessings, ICEL, p. 60; or other blessing of parents.

# Small Group Gatherings

## *Small Christian Communities: A Way of Being Church*

*It seems timely, therefore, to form ecclesial communities and groups of a size that allow for true human relationships (in) the parish to which such groups belong and with the entire diocesan and universal church. In such a human context, it will be easier to gather to hear the Word of God, to reflect on the range of human problems in the light of this Word, and gradually to make responsible decisions inspired by the all-embracing love of Christ (Ecclesia in America, 141).*

## **Adult Catechism Topic**

*Chapter Three “Handing on the Faith”*

## **Focus**

To examine the roles of Tradition and Scripture in transmitting God’s revelation.

To familiarize participants with role and interpretation of Scripture in the life of the church today

## **Setting**

Small groups in homes or parish

## **Time**

90 Minutes

## **Material and Resources**

The U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults, National Directory for Catechesis, New American Bible for each participant

Optional: One or more Catholic Updates (St. Anthony Messenger Press) for each participant

\* “Choosing and Using a Bible: What Catholics Should Know” by Ronald D. Witherup

\* “How to Understand the Bible: Examining the Tools of Today's Scripture Scholars” by Norman Langenbrunner

# Outline of Session

## 1. Gathering Prayer

1. Call to Prayer, awareness of God's presence.
2. Reading from Jeremiah 15:16.
3. Reflection: Describe a time in your life when Scripture had a significant impact on you, your outlook, your faith, or your relationship with God. Share a scripture passage that has special meaning for you.
4. Reading from St. Augustine, p. 33.

## 2. Discuss:

1. What are examples of the practice of our faith that come from Tradition?
  2. How do Catholics interpret Scripture?
3. **Activity:** Find examples in the bible of different forms of literature.
4. **Read** the story of Blessed John XXIII. Allow time for reflection on Question 1 in For Discussion, p. 31.
5. **Faith to Life:** Ask participants to spend 15 minutes a day this week in reading and reflecting on Scripture.
6. **Closing Prayer:** Reading from 2 Thes. 2:15.