



August 30, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for answering your parish leaders' call to serve as catechists. Some of you may be new, while many of you have been catechists for years. Please accept my gratitude for your willingness to say "yes" to this important role, one the Church regards as a sacred vocation even though it may be temporary.

Serving as a catechist is more than being 'just a volunteer'. It is more than just teaching facts about the Catholic faith by means of a textbook. The catechist's call arises from Baptism, is strengthened by Confirmation, and is a special charism from the Holy Spirit. It is a call to be a witness, to enable people to meet the living God and to form a relationship that can continue to grow through a lifetime. This is what Pope Francis has called being a "missionary disciple."

Any vocation comes with responsibilities. Certainly, you will put a great deal of time to prepare for and to be present for your sessions. But there is more. A catechist who is not also learning and growing him or herself does not have much to offer his/her students. A good catechist, one who provides the kind of evangelizing catechesis and personal witness that transforms lives, is a lifelong learner and a person intentionally engaging in spiritual growth.

I encourage you first to be attentive to your own spiritual life. Regular prayer, participation in the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation will not only make you a better catechist but will allow those you teach to see you as authentic, because you live what you teach. Your witness to the importance of the sacraments, the community and your relationship to God is primary. More than that, I believe you will find great personal benefit in taking time for God and the community.

Finally, I ask that each of you participate in at least six hours of ongoing catechist formation each year. This is a small thing to ask, but an important one. It will help you grow in your effectiveness when teaching. Ongoing formation is a responsibility that comes with saying "yes" to the ministry of catechist.

I thank you for your willingness to serve and for joining me in the apostolic mission of the Church. Today, more than ever, we need well-equipped missionary disciples willing to share the Good News with our young people.

May the Lord bless you, your families and your students as you begin this catechetical year.

Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon
Bishop of Joliet