Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

Parish Handbook 2003

Recruitment Strategies for the Parish

Volume 3
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This volume of The Parish Handbook was originally released in August 2001 under the title, Options: A four step plan for the recruitment of catechists in your parish. It was produced in consultation with the parish communities of the Archdiocese of Sydney. The assistance of all involved in the project is acknowledged.
Fundamentally, this document outlines a **process**. The ultimate aim of the process is to:-

a) Identify catechists;

b) Go through the necessary statutory checks;

c) Get the necessary forms signed;

d) Commission the catechists;

e) See that accreditation training takes place.
INTRODUCTION

Catechist recruitment is a key challenge for parish communities. It can often seem that there are never enough catechists for the number of students wishing to receive Special Religious Education in public schools.

Aware of this need, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Archdiocese of Sydney) has developed a number of Archdiocesan initiatives to help parish communities to be more effective in the recruitment of catechists.

In 1994, the Confraternity released *The Parish Handbook*. In this resource, Section B dealt with the issue of recruitment. In 1999, the Term Three newsletter provided parish communities with suggestions for successful recruitment strategies. The Confraternity also held a workshop that explored key issues in recruitment.

Prior to the release of the revised Handbook in 2002 (and aware of the pressing need to recruit catechists), the Confraternity released this document as *Options: A four step plan for the recruitment of catechists in your parish* in August 2001. Developed by the Faith Education Services division, *Options* outlined a recruitment process that most parish communities would be able to implement with their available resources. Since its release, the document has proven to be very effective in assisting parishes in the recruitment process and there has been a noticeable increase in the number of catechists in the Archdiocese (227 new catechists recruited in 2002) (source: *Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Archdiocese of Sydney) Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 17). It is now appropriate that this document is republished as Volume 3 of *The Parish Handbook 2003*.

The Area Faith Education Officer is available to assist parish communities in tailoring this recruitment process to meet their needs.

For further assistance, please contact the Faith Education Services division (☎ 9390 5122, ☎️ 9283 5146).

MISSION STATEMENT

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Called to participate in the mission of Jesus and the Church we are men and women of faith who are committed to sharing that faith with others. We give freely and generously of our time and our talents to this special work of apostolic love.
GOSPEL VALUES

THE ORIGIN OF OUR CONCERN FOR CHILDREN

In recruiting catechists, it is essential that issues pertaining to child protection be raised with those who express interest in becoming a catechist.

Under various pieces of legislation in force in New South Wales, there are two requirements that pertain to any person wishing to become a catechist:

1. Every potential catechist must complete a Prohibited Employment Declaration Form before he / she enters a classroom (the most recent copy of this pro-forma is available from the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Archdiocese of Sydney) (☎ 9390 5122).

2. Every potential catechist must complete a Special Religious Education Teacher Engagement Form before he / she enters a classroom (even if he/she is only accompanying a catechist).

On the basis of a potential catechist giving the assurances required in these documents, the parish priest is then able to issue the potential catechist with an Authorisation Card (currently, this is a green card).

Some parish priests and parish catechist coordinators express the concern that introducing child protection issues at an early stage with potential catechists might scare these people away. It is certainly true that catechists have legal requirements placed on them today that did not exist ten years ago. Yet, regardless of legal requirements of the State, the Church has always sought to protect children and young people from harm.

From this perspective, it is suggested that the starting point for this issue should never be a battery of legal forms that the potential catechist is asked to sign. Instead, parish priests and parish catechist coordinators should introduce child protection issues by reflecting with potential catechists on the gospel values that we hold dear. From the perspective of the gospels, it soon becomes clear that the Church has always had a concern for ensuring the protection and dignity of each child. Indeed, it is a matter of profound regret that some persons in the past have not lived up to these high standards.

In the light of our gospel values, therefore, the Church is fully supportive of current secular legal requirements that help to ensure that these standards are met.

It is also useful to encourage potential catechists to consider this matter from the perspective of a parent. Every parent wants to know that persons to whom their children are entrusted in an unsupervised environment are suitable persons to be working with their children. We have a moral duty to ensure that this is indeed the case to the best of our ability.

The Faith Education Services division is able to provide further information on this subject if needed (☎ 9390 5122).
OVERVIEW: FOUR STEP PLAN FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF CATECHISTS

Step 1: Planning

Step 2: Catechist Awareness Month

Step 3: Orientation

Step 4: Commissioning
RATIONALE AND OUTCOMES

STEP ONE  ~ Plan the recruitment strategy

Before the Recruitment begins, plan what the parish wants to achieve. A planning meeting will help by:

- Getting key parishioners involved;
- Brainstorming qualities of a catechist for this parish;
- Calling for support from appropriate parishioners in marketing or business.

When you know what you are looking for then you are ready to proceed with the next step.

STEP TWO  ~ Involve the parish

A "Catechist Awareness Month" will highlight the work of this ministry in the parish, show parishioners what is already being done and highlight the need for new catechists.

Week 1 - Advertising - notices, foyer display, inform parishioners;
Week 2 - Appeal from the pulpit;
Week 3 - Prayers of the Faithful and Notices;
Week 4 - Inform parishioners of the outcome.

At the end of this month, your new recruits will have identified themselves and are ready to receive specific information about being a catechist.

STEP THREE  ~ Introduction of potential catechists to SRE

It is important that the parish priest / administrator discerns whether interested people are appropriate for the role of catechist. Potential catechists also need to understand what is required of them. For this reason, a session is arranged with the CCD Faith Education Officer and parish catechists to:

- Invite potential catechists to share their readiness for wanting to be involved;
- Explain what is involved in SRE in this parish;
- Welcome them to this ministry;
- Let them know what their role will involve;
- Give them the chance to ask any questions they may have.

STEP FOUR  ~ Commissioning of new catechists

Before catechists go into the school the parish commissions them. In this way public acknowledgment is given for their role. The parish priest / administrator presents the new catechists with their program and calls for the support of the whole parish.
STEP ONE

Plan the recruitment strategy

This step is often the most neglected and yet most crucial element of the recruitment process.

Planning meeting

Suggested meeting members:-

- Parish priest / administrator
- REC (if appropriate);
- Catechist coordinator;
- Interested Parishioners (who would be available to help in this project?);
- Area Faith Education Officer;
- Parish Council Representative.

The purpose of this meeting is to brainstorm ideas for a recruitment process for the
parish (see attached Planning Meeting Agenda, page 11).

Ideas for the meeting to consider would include:-

- What are the needs of the parish regarding catechists?
- What may be the needs of potential volunteer catechists?
- What are the needs of the students?
- A role description for catechists. (see attached suggestions, page 15)
- Are there parishioners who could be approached personally to become catechists?
- What will be the focus of a parish appeal for catechists?
- What plans will be made for the appeal?
  - Speakers to call for volunteers;
  - Arranging a display in Church foyer;
  - Prayers of the Faithful, Prayer Cards;
  - Poster, flyer;
  - Newsletter and bulletin inclusions;
  - Arrange Orientation meeting for Catechists;
  - Your parish requirements.
STEP TWO

Involve the Parish

This step seeks to involve the whole parish in working towards the success of the recruitment process.

STEP TWO ~ Week 1

At Mass

- Inform the parish of a four week "Catechist Awareness" period to highlight the work of catechists and call for volunteers. Ask parishioners to pray for the success of "Catechist Awareness Month";
- Include prayers for catechists and catechist-related support in Prayers of the Faithful (see attached suggestions, page 12);
- Make prayer cards and invite people to take one and pray the prayer for catechists and the work of SRE (see attached suggestions, page 13);
- In notices, ask parishioners to put their name on clipboard as prayer supporters for catechists;
- Bulletin notice highlighting SRE in the parish.

At School

- Invite SRE students from State Schools and their families to come and see the display in the church;
- Draft and send a newsletter inclusion about catechist recruitment to State School(s) and Catholic School(s) in the parish, asking for volunteers (see suggested inclusion notice, page 14).

In Church Foyer (to be left for the four weeks)

- Prepare a brochure about the role of a catechist, including a contact telephone number for further enquiries. Display these prominently in the foyer of the church or pew racks;
- Display images and captions showing catechists at work;
  N.B: Obtain permission from parents and the school to take and use photos of children in SRE classes (Be aware of Child Protection issues).
- Display CCD poster and other CCD information (e.g. recruitment brochure). (Available from CCD ☎️ 9390 5122);
- Provide clipboard for names of prayer supporters for the success of SRE in state schools.
STEP TWO (WEEK 2)

- At an appropriate time during mass, give a talk to highlight the work of catechists.

  This talk could be from any of three people:

  - Catechist as witness to his / her work in SRE;
  - Student as witness in having SRE time regularly;
  - Catechist coordinator, representative from the parish or Area Faith Education Officer;
    - affirming the work of catechists / personal story;
    - explaining support for catechists from CCD;
    - asking for people to become involved in a number of ways:
      - friend - talk about work as a catechist;
      - prayer partner - pray for the success of SRE;
      - class helper - extra pair of hands to support the catechist*;
      - co-teacher with another person, each taking responsibility for preparing class lesson*;
      - teacher, taking class once a week*;
      - resource people.

- Following the homily and prior to the Creed, catechists are called forward by name to receive a blessing (see Parish Book of Blessings). (This stresses the connection between the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of Catechesis).

- Special prayer for catechists included in Prayers of the Faithful, clipboard for potential catechists (see Step 2, Week 1, page 6).

- Bulletin notice calling for catechists.

- Clipboard for potential catechists.

- Morning tea after Mass for interested people (remembering students from SRE classes may be in attendance).

*(Child protection procedures apply to these persons).
STEP TWO (WEEK 3)

- A general notice calling for catechists is placed in the bulletin or among the parish notices.

- A talk could be given from a parish representative, catechist coordinator or catechist, about the work of catechists and calling for volunteers.

STEP TWO (WEEK 4)

- Inform parishioners of the outcome of the recruitment drive:-
  - involvement of people who prepared the program;
  - prayer supporters;
  - potential catechists;
  - friends and supporters;
  - thank people for their prayers, involvement and interest shown.

- Bulletin notice thanking people for their involvement and informing parish of numbers of prayer supporters and potential catechists.
STEP THREE

Introduction to potential catechists to SRE

This step helps to discern appropriate people for different roles.

Prior to Session 1

- Send an invitation to potential catechists, and all those who have expressed an interest in being involved in some way in SRE, to attend an introductory meeting with experienced catechists. Ask current catechists to be prepared to answer questions that may arise and help potential catechists to feel at ease.

Session 1

- Catechist coordinator and Area Faith Education Officer meet with potential and current catechists and other interested people to explain what is expected of catechists and helpers. Potential catechists and others are then invited to ask questions of current catechists and assistants to clarify queries.

- Topics to cover at this meeting include:
  - Mission and ministry of catechists;
  - What is expected of a catechist;
  - Child Protection procedures explained.

- Feedback on this meeting is given to the parish priest to ensure that appropriate people are appointed as catechists and assistants.

- Arrangements are made for any potential catechist to visit a class if required (ensure that Child Protection requirements are met).

Prior to Session 2

- Parish priest / administrator meets with potential catechists, assistants and catechist coordinator to explain parish requirements (job description). Prohibited Employment Declaration Form and SRE Teachers’ Engagement Forms are signed, allowing for relevant statutory requirements (i.e. 30 days for Prohibited Employment Declaration Form). A copy of each of these forms should be given to the catechist to sign, with the declaration retained in the parish office. The parish priest / administrator is responsible for this (i.e. it must not be delegated to the catechist Coordinator).

Session 2

- Potential catechists and assistants attend "Catechist Orientation" workshop. Invitation extended to others interested (friends and prayer supporters).

- Catechist assistants are given declaration form to sign.

- Once statutory requirements are met, offer prayer of blessing giving thanks to new catechists and assistants for their commitment.
STEP FOUR
Commissioning of New Catechists

This step publicly endorses the sending out of the catechists in the name of the parish community.

At the end of the orientation process

- At Mass, prior to the Creed, there could be an induction and blessing for the new catechist(s). The Parish Book of Blessings provides appropriate suggestions.

  As well as the catechists' pledge, parishioners pledge to support the catechist by prayer and interest in their work.

- Parish priest presents the catechist(s) with their Teachers' Manual.

- Morning tea for catechists, supporters and parishioners.

When catechists are going into school for the first time

- The parish priest / administrator ensures that all catechists going into the school have a signed authorisation card (green card). These cards could be presented at the Mass.

- The catechist coordinator ensures that the names of new catechists are given to the school.
PLANNING MEETING AGENDA

• Welcome and prayer;

• General introductions;

• Brainstorm - "What are the needs of our parish in relation to catechists?" Ideas are recorded for everyone to be able to see;

• Brainstorm - "What are the needs of the students?"

• Formulate guidelines for catechists for this parish; (What this parish would like from a catechist. See suggestions for catechist role description attached. These suggestions are helpful in identifying appropriate parishioners).

• Develop a program for recruitment, using appropriate elements from the enclosed package. Copies of the package will be available for all present;

• Identifying the time frame for recruitment;

• Nominate a follow-up meeting date.
PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

These prayers are only suggestions. One or two might be chosen to be inserted with the other Prayers of the Faithful for that Sunday.

• For our catechists, who present the Good News of Christ. May they always be worthy ministers of the Gospel.

  We pray to the Lord.

• For the catechists of our parish. May they impart knowledge and truth with conviction and responsibility.

  We pray to the Lord.

• For the catechists. May the catechists through their witness and teaching continue to spread the Good News of Jesus.

  We pray to the Lord.

• For the recruitment of catechists. May more members of our parish community respond to the call to teach children to know and love God.

  We pray to the Lord.

• For our children in State Schools. May they and their families grow in love and knowledge of Christ.

  We pray to the Lord.

• For the Parish community. May we all accept the responsibility of spreading the Good News of Christ in our parish through our prayers and support for those who volunteer to work among the children in the State Schools.

  We pray to the Lord.
PRAYER CARDS

A prayer card can be printed on parish stationery for use in conjunction with the parish appeal Step 2, Week 1. The following prayer is a suggestion.

Prayer for Catechists

God, our Creator,
We thank you for our precious
Gift of Faith.
May our faith continue to
grow through the power of
the Holy Spirit within us.
Lead us to share our faith with
others; lead us to be open
to the ministry of spreading
the Good News to
Catholic children in State Schools.
We ask this prayer
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.
SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

Are you interested in working as a volunteer?

Maybe you might like to teach Religion / Scripture to the Catholic students in our local State School.

If so, please contact ___________________________, our parish priest / administrator on telephone number: ______________________ or ____________________________, our catechist coordinator on telephone number: _____________________

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

Are you interested in working as a volunteer catechist with the Catholic students in our school?

At present Year ______ is without a catechist. If you can help please contact: ____________________________, our parish priest / administrator on telephone number: ______________________ or our catechist coordinator on telephone number: _____________________
ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR A CATECHIST

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

It is essential that all volunteer catechists carry out their tasks in accordance with the principles and values of the Catholic Church and:-

1) Exercise due care for the safety and good behaviour of students when they are teaching and supervising them.

2) Exercise due care for the quality of the teaching given.

3) Be aware of and accept guidelines of Child Protection Legislation and any other relevant legislative provisions.

4) Cooperate willingly with the parish priest / administrator and / or parish assistant and with those he has appointed to share his responsibilities in fulfilling his duties for catechesis.

5) Attend accreditation workshops.

6) Use the authorised programs – Joy For Living and Signs of the Times.

7) Be available for half an hour each week of school terms for SRE lessons.

8) Be able to spend half an hour a week on lesson preparation.

DEVELOPMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (in working with parents, parish and fellow catechists)

1) Manage a group of students with support from the coordinator, class helpers, your CCD Faith Education Officer and other catechists.

2) Be aware of the role of a catechist as a partner with parents and parish in the religious education of the child.

3) Maintain and develop relationships with fellow catechists and others in the educational ministry of the parish and community of the school by attending catechist meetings for support information.

4) Be a representative of the parish community, to communicate with parents concerning relevant parish feasts and celebrations.

5) Have an interest in the students’ overall development including faith and the ability to enthuse students about God in the story of the Catholic Religion.
CHECKLIST

Have you done the following:

- Have those involved in SRE in the parish sat down to plan a process to follow? □
- Has the parish priest or designated persons made an appeal at Mass? □
- Has a notice calling for catechists been put up? □
- Have parishioners been informed of catechists needs? □
- Have invitations been sent to potential catechists? □
- Have the weekly prayers of the faithful included prayers for catechists? □
- Have potential catechists met with the parish priest / administrator and catechist coordinator? □
- Have potential catechists signed the Prohibited Employment Declaration? □
- Have potential catechists signed SRE Teacher’s Engagement Forms? □
- Has the parish priest / administrator signed authorisation cards? □
- Has the new catechist signed an authorisation card? □
- Has the parish priest submitted confirmation of all approved catechists to the school? □
- Have potential catechists attended an orientation meeting? □
- Has commissioning taken place? □
- Have accreditation workshops been arranged with your Area Faith Education Officer? □
- Have catechists been given newsletters and dates for workshops? □