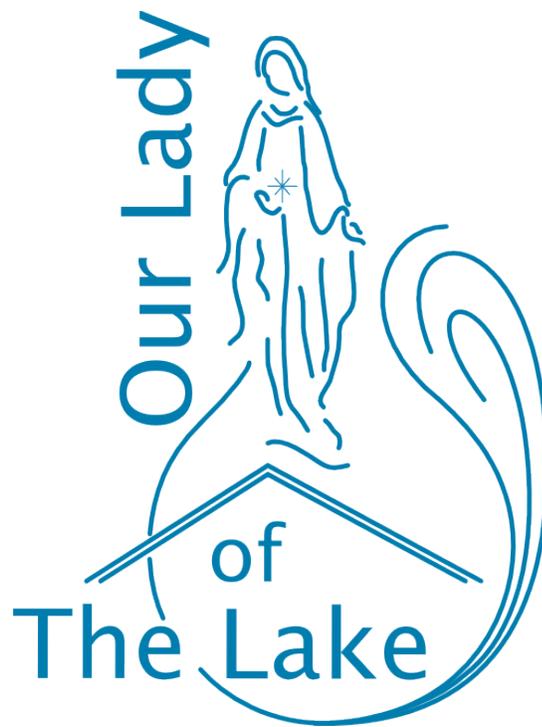


Charter:
Commission on
Christian Education and
Faith Formation



Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church

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Commission on Christian Education and Faith Formation
Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church,
Lake Ozark, Missouri
Charter of Structure, Procedures and Policy

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." —Matthew 28:19-20

1. Mission

1.1. Purpose Statement: The Commission on Christian Education and Faith Formation provides the primary leadership among parishioners in fulfilling the parish's responsibility for handing on the authentic tradition of the Catholic faith to parishioners of every age; facilitating the ongoing conversion of Christian disciples; and preaching the Gospel in the local community by word, sacrament and service.

1.2. Values: The Commission will act in such a manner that the following core values are put into practice in the work of the commission and in the faith formation programs of the parish.

1.2.1. Universal right to education: While every human person enjoys an innate dignity in being created in the image and likeness of God, that dignity cannot reach its fullest potential without the opportunity and means to grow toward our ultimate vocation of unity with God.

1.2.2. The continuing call to conversion: In a world where sin has separated us from our original unity with God, education and faith formation are necessary for the full flourishing of sanctifying grace that is available in the Sacraments of the Church. Sanctifying grace not only leads one to eternal life, but as the Sermon on the Mount teaches us, brings about a life of blessed peace and joy.

1.2.3. Divine Revelation: The first task of all catechesis is to share the knowledge of God that comes through the two sources of revelations: the Scripture and Tradition of the Catholic Church.

1.2.4. Liturgical Catechesis: Knowledge of God is most directly and necessarily experienced through entering into the mystery of God as encountered in the liturgies and the sacraments of the Church.

1.2.5. Moral formation: Catechesis must be concerned with the formation of the conscience of the human person to assist all in loving God with our whole heart and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

1.2.6. **Prayer is the defining relationship in the life of a disciple:** Catechesis assists all believers in learning how to talk to God and in recognizing the voice of God in their lives.

1.2.7. **Education for Community Life:** Human nature requires community to perfect the human person. Society is not a limitation on individual freedom but is the necessary context for the full flourishing of humanity. In addition to sanctifying grace, baptism makes the disciple a member of the Church and the Body of Christ.

1.2.8. **Evangelization is the core mission of the Church:** The Church exists to evangelize the world, to bring the Good News of salvation to every part of the world. No catechetical effort of the parish is complete unless it leads the disciple to share the Gospel to others outside the parish in word and in deed, through preaching and the example of Christian service.

1.2.9. **Catholic Schools:** The Catholic Church teaches that Catholic schools are the most effective means to attend to the rights of young people to a Catholic education worthy of their baptismal calling. When possible the commission examines ways that the school-age children of the parish can attend a Catholic school, either by assisting in transportation and material support, or even to the point of planning for a parish or inter-parish sponsored Catholic school itself.

1.3. Vision: The Commission envisions a community where the person and message of Our Lord Jesus Christ is consistently and constantly proclaimed in such a way that wherever parishioners are gathered together, all may encounter the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ, in their midst.

1.4. Key Responsibilities: The Education Commission fulfills its mission by being the primary resource for identifying and prioritizing the catechetical needs and objectives of the entire parish; assisting the pastor in establishing and reviewing policies, programs, and initiatives designed to meet these needs and accomplish these objectives; and assists the other parish commissions in the faith formation and educational aspects of their respective areas of concern.

2. **Structure**

2.1. Membership: Recruitment of the members of the commission necessarily takes into account the various age groups, special interests and variety of experiences that make up the whole parish. In order to focus the efforts of the commission effectively, members will be chosen through a process of discernment. An executive committee will work with the pastor in arriving at a consensus on core team membership on the commission. Discernment takes place in the summer of the year and new terms begin on September 1.

2.1.1. Number: The commission will have six core team members to ensure that the key responsibility areas enumerated in the Commission Charter have adequate oversight

without undue hardship. To avoid conflict of interest, parish employees may not serve as members of the core team.

- 2.1.2. **Terms:** Core Team Members will be commissioned in a public ceremony for three-year terms, renewable for second consecutive term. Terms will be staggered in such a way to ensure that only one-third of the core team ends their term each year. The commission chair in consultation with the pastor will appoint interim members to fill out the term of members unable to finish their term.
- 2.1.3. **Associate Members:** Other parishioners will be invited to serve as associate members of the commission according to the need and their desire to serve.
- 2.2. **Leadership:** There is an executive committee that provides leadership for the commission and is the public face of the commission for the rest of the community. The executive committee serves from October to October after discernment in the first meeting after new commission members are present.
 - 2.2.1. **Chairperson:** The chairperson of the executive committee formulates commission goals, prepares for and chairs commission meetings, consults with the pastor and other parish leadership on key issues and activities, and in general ensures that the commission charter is put into practice in such a way that the abundant parish resources of people and material goods are effectively engaged in evangelization and faith formation. The chair serves for a one year term after having been chosen through a consensus deliberation of the commission. The chair may serve only for two consecutive years.
 - 2.2.2. **Vice-Chairperson:** The vice-chairperson of the executive committee assists the chair in his or her duties, prepares in consultation with the commission a budget for commission work to present to the Finance Commission according to assessed needs and identified priorities, facilitates commission meetings in the absence of the chair, and heads the membership discernment committee that ensure a full complement of commission members. The vice-chair ensures that the meeting place is arranged and appropriate hospitality is provided for those attending.
 - 2.2.3. **Secretary:** The secretary serves to document the work of the commission, to communicate to parish staff and the whole community the workings of the commission, to assist in communication among the various members of the commission, to prepare publications that are necessary to the work of the commission, and issues and collates the self-study instrument each year to assess the commission's work.
- 2.3. **Oversight:** the hierarchical governance of the Catholic Church requires that the pastor assume the final responsibility of pastoral leadership. In effect, all activities which the commission engages in must enjoy the implicit—and where stipulated, explicit—approval of the pastor. Nevertheless, the commission enjoys a certain

freedom in that the gifts and talents of the laity are essential to the material and spiritual well-being of the parish. The commission designates one of its members to serve on the parish pastoral council which is the main consultative body for the pastor.

- 2.4. Accountability:** As the principle resource for leadership in evangelization and faith formation in the parish, the commission will assist the pastor in identifying and prioritizing the needs of the community in regard to faith formation. The commission will also understand that its work is a service to the entire community and that personal preferences and tastes are subordinate to the good of all. The commission will work closely with the administration commission and the finance commission of the parish to ensure that good stewardship of parish resources is practiced.
- 2.5. Universal, United States, and Diocesan Policies and Norms:** The commission's work must at all times be in keeping with the universal norms, policies and teachings that are published by the Universal Church in regard to the deposit of faith, especially as detailed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Care must be given to the policies and guidance that comes from the U.S. Bishop's Conference, especially the USCCB Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis. The diocesan bishop is the chief teacher in the diocese. The commission will look to him and his practices for guidance, especially as to setting goals and clarifying expectations. The diocesan offices of education and youth ministry will be a resources to consult frequently, especially in procuring resources for programs and training for catechists.
- 2.6. Patronage:** The communion of saints is a powerful resource for the work of the commission. Their intercession and example, especially that of Our Blessed Mother Mary, will provide a supernatural grace that no mere human effort can achieve. The patron saint of the Religious Education Commission is St. Hildegard of Bingen. Recently named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI, St. Hildegard's intelligence, breadth of knowledge and talents, administrative skills, visionary leadership, and personal holiness allowed her to be a key figure in the renewal of the Church that took place in what has been termed the Medieval Renaissance. Her feast day is September 17.

3. Procedures

- 3.1. Meetings:** Each year in the fall, the commission will publish a schedule of meetings. Meetings should happen at least every other month, with extra meetings to be called with clear notification to the pastor and other parish leadership. All parishioners should consider themselves welcome to attend the meetings; however, meeting agendas should be organized in such a way to ensure that discussion and decision is efficient and effective. In coming to a consensus on commission goals and parish policy, care must be taken to ensure that sufficient members of the commission are present to represent all points of view.

- 3.2. Communication:** The time, date and location of the meetings should be published each year. If other meetings dates are required throughout the year, the secretary ensures that all commission members, parish leadership, and parishioners are well-informed. The secretary works with parish staff in providing for a summary of the meeting highlights and activities of the commission for the bulletin. The commission regularly reviews the policies and practices that are in effect regarding the catechesis and faith formation in the parish and ensures parishioners and leadership are aware of their particulars. The commission will make flyers and brochures available for detailing the programs and events, as well as possibilities for leadership roles for catechists and facilitators to ensure that all parishioners know what opportunities for faith formation are available.
- 3.3. Goal Setting and Review:** In the spring of the year, the commission will review the progress of previous goals and set new goals for the coming year. These goals will guide the process of budget formation and assist the other parish commissions and parish leadership in their own key responsibility areas.
- 3.4. The Scripture and the Sacraments:** The Holy Eucharist itself can serve as a model for all faith formation. Faith begins when the Word of God takes upon human flesh in the minds and hearts of those who hear the Gospel. That faith is sealed, celebrated, and deepened in the sacramental life of the Church. Therefore the two poles that support and shape all faith formation efforts are Sacred Scripture and the Sacraments. Formation for the celebrations of the sacraments will be a primary duty of the commission; however, the continued development of the faith for persons in any stage of life will be just as important a duty.
- 3.5. Program Design and Implementation:** All programs, classes, initiatives and events directed by the commission will be grounded in national standards for Christian education, catechesis and faith formation. Curricula and materials will be chosen from those offered reputable Catholic publishers and approved and endorsed by the religious education office of the Diocese of Jefferson City and the National Directory for Catechesis. New initiatives and programs should be thoroughly discussed, documented and communicated in such a way that the various leadership groups in the parish have ample time and opportunity for input and consultation.
- 3.6. Operational Values:** While we can be assured that wherever two or three are gathered in the Lord's name, he is present, we also know that collaboration in ministry does not happen without intentional preparation and purposeful action. The following values are essential qualities that inform all the activities of the commission to ensure harmony among the members and effectiveness in their work.
- 3.6.1. Collaboration:** All planning, discussion and action by the commission members or the commission as a whole is collaborative. Policies, programs and events are to be organized in such a way as to invite maximum participation and the sharing of duties and responsibilities. Finding oneself feeling alone in a responsibility

indicates a lack in two areas: we haven't communicated our need for assistance effectively and others have not recognized their own responsibility to offer help.

- 3.6.2. **Communication:** Sharing information in such a way that others can respond effectively and authentically requires effort. This means that one doesn't assume that others will understand, support or assist an individual's project and duty. Careful research, consultation, and documentation ensure that one's efforts are understandable by others. Modern technology and social media are to be used effectively and responsibly to assist the commission's communication among themselves and throughout the parish.
- 3.6.3. **Orthodoxy:** In world of relativism and uncertainty, the Light of Christ is a clear beacon of truth. That truth must not be obscured by personal preference, indifferentism, or neglect. The materials and content of catechesis must be published with ecclesiastical permission. The speakers and leaders invited to the parish must be credentialed by reputable organizations within the church, such as a diocese, a religious order, or national organization which enjoys the favor of the church. At the same time, catechists and facilitators must understand that faith formation is a gradual growth into the fullness of the truth. We reach out to people wherever they may be in their own faith journey and make a commitment to walk with them, especially through times of doubt, confusion and darkness, to a deeper faith and understanding of the Church's timeless teaching.
- 3.6.4. **Charity:** The theological virtue that binds all our efforts together is Christian charity. As we have been given, so we generously give to others without expecting anything in return. In fact, catechesis can be seen as a supreme example of true charity. We teach and we preach and we give an example to others, doing what is right and holy, regardless of what reward, response or effect we might have in the life of another. It is good to consider the beautiful parable of the sower and the seed. That there would be rocks, and drought, weeds and insects did not deter the sower from the mission. Our duty is to be generous in sowing the word of God in the lives of others. It is an act of faith to sow the word for we know that God will bring about the harvest he wishes in his own time according to the need he determines.
- 3.6.5. **Fidelity:** Catechesis is always in danger of being abstracted from the daily life of the believer. Learning becomes a rote repetition of words and facts that make no impact in the heart of the disciple. The psalms are filled with criticisms of those who can recite the laws and ordinances of the Lord yet neglect the work of charity. While we so often consider faith to be an act of the intellect, what we "know" about God, in the Scriptures faith is primarily seen as fidelity and an act of the will. It is the wise virgin who remains vigilant with a flask filled with oil waiting for the bridegroom. It is the worker who toils in the vineyard each day. It is Mary saying "yes" to the Incarnation, a yes that continues to the very end at the foot of the Cross. All catechesis finds its fulfillment in bringing the disciple out of the

classroom and into the world to put into action, faithfully, day after day, the teaching of the Gospel.

3.6.6. Outreach to the Poor and Marginalized: Catechesis is most effectively managed according to schedules and standards; however, the Gospel demands that we seek out the lost and those whose lives do not conform to the norm. The poor, the sick, the immigrant, and those whose lives are complicated by sin. Care must be taken when designing programs to think of those who might not be able to attend the normal classroom or regularly scheduled meeting or may not speak English.

4. Key Responsibility Areas

The commission will name one ministry coordinator for each of the following ministries chosen from either the core team, associate members or parish staff. Each ministry has a brief description of the key responsibilities of that ministry. The ministry coordinator will be charged with keeping a binder with policies and best practices to guide the work of the commission and the catechists themselves regarding their particular area of concern. The ministry coordinator will ensure that there are resources to assist catechists and facilitators in their service. The ministry coordinator will ensure that all catechists are duly commissioned in a public ceremony and appropriately honor their service, usually on Catechetical Sunday in September.

- 4.1. Order of Christian Initiation:** The preparation for initiation into the Church for adults and children of catechetical age will be a special ministry of the commission, ensuring that there are catechists and sponsors to accompany the catechumens on the way to full initiation in to the sacramental life of the Church. Programs also must be designed as to allow those baptized in another Christian denomination to be received into full communion as soon as they are properly disposed, and not according to a calendar or schedule.
- 4.2. Christ Renews His Parish and Renewal Movements:** The coordinator for renewal programs identifies, introduces and supervises the various renewal programs that are available to parishioners. CRHP is one such program the management of which comes from the education commission. Marriage Encounter, Cursillo, Teens Encounter Christ and Awakenings retreats are some examples of other renewal programs which ought to be encouraged by the commission.
- 4.3. Marriage Preparation, Baptism of Infants and Formation for Family Life:** The coordinator for marriage preparation, infant baptism and formation for family life serves a foundational role in building up the domestic church in the home. While the pastor has a particular responsibility to assist those preparing for marriage and family life, especially the baptism of infants, the coordinator's role in this area is to ensure that sacramental preparation takes place in the context of community. Sponsor couples for marriage preparation, group sacramental preparation, and mentorship in family life are especially fruitful ways to assist in sacramental preparation and strengthen the bond of unity with the Church and parish. Finally, the coordinator ensures that every family knows the traditional prayers of the Catholic church, especially the Holy Rosary,

prayers at meals, morning and evening offerings, prayers to be said at night before bed, and prayers for special occasions.

- 4.4. K-12 Religion Classes:** The coordinator for the religious education of the youth has one of the most essential roles to play in faith formation. While this role is often fulfilled by a salaried staff position; nevertheless, the religious education coordinator looks to the education commission for a vision, helpful resources and true colleagues in ministry. The coordinator for religious education must not be one who merely makes schedules, procures resources, and informs the parish about religious education. The primary role of the coordinator for religious education is to be the catechist for the catechists. That means the coordinator's constant concern will be assisting the catechists themselves in fulfilling their responsibilities, especially when it comes to certification, classroom management, and effective teaching strategies.
- 4.5. Sacramental Preparation for Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation:** The primary duty of sacramental catechesis belongs to the catechists for the appropriate grade levels for the sacraments. The coordinator for sacramental preparation also plays a significant role. The coordinator serves as an advisor, a facilitator and leader especially in ensuring that every person has access to sacramental catechesis at the appropriate time or remediating situations where a sacrament is lacking in the lives of the faithful. The coordinator also has a special role in assisting the entire parish community in fulfilling its own role in the preparation for and celebration of the sacraments.
- 4.6. Adult Faith Formation:** The Coordinator for adult faith formation initiates programs that invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in holiness of life; promote and support active membership in the Christian community; and call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world. The coordinator especially initiates programs that respond to the distinct needs of the various age groups, genders, or states in life. The coordinator will not only organize parish missions, scripture and catechetical courses, and workshops on timely and relevant topics, but also make every effort to make available the material and human resources necessary for parishioners to engage in ongoing faith formation.
- 4.7. The New Evangelization:** The coordinator for the new evangelization seeks out those who have forgotten, ignored or rejected the Christian message. This ministry must be a primary concern of the whole commission since so many who were baptized Catholic and received the sacraments are no longer involved in the life of the Church. Every effort must be given to seek out the lost sheep through systematic and comprehensive calls for Catholics to return to the community.
- 4.8. Parish Faith Formation Library:** The Church has been and will continue to be a people of The Book. Therefore it is essential that literary, spiritual and catechetical materials be made available for all parishioners of all ages. The parish librarian ensures that these materials are available for free circulation to all. In addition to the physical books that

make up the library, the librarian also manages the digital and online resources that are essential to catechesis today. The parish librarian ensures that all parishioners have authentic and excellent catechetical materials wherever they may be. Some of these materials may be in the form of daily devotionals, online content or in house publications made specifically for our parishioners. Especially important will be discussion groups and book clubs where parishioners assist each other in breaking open the word in their daily lives.

4.9. Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life: The coordinator for vocations to the priestly and religious life informs, organizes and leads the parish in regard to ensuring that the Lord's call to pray for more workers in the vineyard is heard by each parishioner. The coordinator for vocations especially works with the religious education catechists in participating in the many Diocesan vocation activities, such as 6th Grade Vocation Day in May, Camp Maccabee and Camp Siena in the summer, and vocation reflection days for those in confirmation class. The coordinator also inspires the parishioners to greater awareness of the need for priestly and religious vocations in the church and to pray constantly that many answer the call to particular service in the church in ordained or consecrated ministry. The coordinator ensures that all religion and faith formation classes contain a vocation component and that all the youth have every opportunity to reflect seriously and personally on their own vocation as a disciple and possible vocation to service in the Church.

5. Resources

5.1. Budget: The commission will provide the finance commission in the spring of the year a detailed plan for costs to be incurred for projects to be completed in the upcoming fiscal year.

5.2. Purchase Requests: All items and programs that incur an expense for the work of the commission are to be submitted along with a purchase request to be reviewed by the pastor. Commission members are strongly encouraged to submit purchase requests rather than paid bills for reimbursement.

5.3. Training and Continuing Formation: The commission will regularly bring into the parish knowledgeable persons to assist in forming the commission in its work and the parish as a whole. It is suggested that each year one area of education become a focus for a more thorough workshop and a presentation to the parish with guest speakers.

5.4. Resource Materials: *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*; The USCCB document on adult catechesis, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, will especially guide the priorities and initiatives of the commission. United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.

6. **Assessment**

The Education Commission provides ongoing evaluation of every aspect of the catechetical efforts of the parish. Listening to the people will help to guide the work and direction of the Committee.

- 6.1. Significant Structural or Policy Change:** Major projects and policy change should happen only after significant time for communication, study and feedback has occurred. Feedback must be intentionally solicited using concrete tools such as surveys or interviews. Experts in the field under study should be consulted on a diocesan or national level. All projects costing over \$10,000 must follow the guidelines for facilities published by the Diocese of Jefferson City.
- 6.2. Parishioner Input:** In order to solicit effective and comprehensive parishioner input, the commission will from time to time assess their work using surveys designed to elicit concrete feedback and reflections of parishioner and visitor experience. An open forum after a Sunday mass is a good time to allow both parishioners and guests to offer feedback.
- 6.3. Self-Study:** In preparation for yearly goal setting, the commission core team, associate members and representative parishioners will complete a self-study instrument to guide their work. The instrument will solicit answers to questions as to how the commission is implementing its charter and note any points that need updating, clarification or additional policy.
- 6.4. Charter Changes and Adaptations:** This charter is a guide to the working of the worship commission. Additions, adaptations or changes are to be adopted only after consultation and deliberation, and are to be thoroughly documented. Policies, norms and descriptions of the ministries should be clearly defined, regularly updated, approved, published, and archived as part of the regular work of the commission.

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Approved by the Pastor and Adopted by consensus of the Formation Group

Pastor

date

Core Team Members