



ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON

STEP
THEOLOGY ONLINE

CATECHIST CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

In the Fall of 2016, the Archdiocese of Portland and the Department of Catholic Schools partnered with the University of Notre Dame and implemented the *Satellite Theological Education Program (STEP)* to provide a catechist certification and continuing education program based upon university-level coursework.

Just as subject-area teachers must demonstrate subject-area expertise through TSPC licensure (and subsequent renewals), catechist certification provides the professional development and content knowledge necessary to teach religion in a Catholic school. Additionally, this program includes an introductory course on the Catholic faith for elementary and secondary teachers who do not teach a religion class. All teachers, whether they teach religion or not, are responsible for maintaining current catechist certification as a condition of employment.

BASIC PROGRAM INFORMATION

- † *STEP* initial catechist certification consists of five online courses (*non-religion teachers take one course*)
- † Courses are taken one per year, over a five-year period
- † Courses run six to seven weeks
- † Courses are offered multiple times throughout the year with both summer and school year options
- † Upon successful completion of each course *STEP* issues a completion certificate directly to the teacher
- † Upon successful completion of all courses, certification is earned and is valid for five years
- † Certification renewal consists of completing an additional course every five years
- † The school will reimburse each teacher for the cost of each course upon successful completion

TRANSITIONING FROM *CATHOLICISM* TO *STEP*

Teachers Hired Prior to the 2016-2017 School Year

- † Catechist certification was earned through Bishop Robert Barron's *Catholicism* series by June 30, 2017
- † *Catholicism* certification is valid for three years through June 30, 2020
- † Teachers who did not complete *Catholicism* must complete *STEP*

Teachers Hired for the 2016-2017 School Year or Later

- † Catechist certification is earned through the *STEP*

Catechist Certification Renewal

- † All subsequent catechist certification renewals are earned through *STEP*

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

There are three distinct groups: religion teachers seeking initial certification, religion teachers seeking certification renewal, and non-religion teachers.

Required Textbook

Each course participant needs a copy of the [United States Catholic Catechism for Adults](#) published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Please note that this book has a red cover.*

Religion Teachers Seeking Initial Certification

For any teacher who teaches religion in our Catholic elementary and middle schools, completion of the initial catechist certification through *STEP* will provide solid content understanding and ongoing professional development in Church Teaching.

Required Courses

The following are the required courses:

1. Doctrine: [Catholic Faith and Tradition for School Teachers](#)
2. Scripture: [The Old Testament - The Pentateuch](#)
3. Scripture: [Introduction to the New Testament](#)
4. Liturgy: [Liturgy: A Guide for the Perplexed](#)
5. Choose one of the following from Christian Life:
[Catholic Social Teaching](#)
[The Christian Conscience and Ethical Dilemmas: Guidance from the Catholic Tradition](#)

Please note:

- ✠ With principal approval, a teacher may substitute a course from the [Complete STEP Catalog of Courses](#)

Religion Teachers Seeking Certification Renewal

- ✠ Renewal is earned through successful completion of **one** additional course offered through *STEP*
- ✠ The course must be approved by the school principal
- ✠ Renewal is valid for five years
- ✠ The renewal process repeats every five years

Non-Religion Teachers (Elementary and Secondary)

Catholic school educators must possess an understanding of the basic beliefs and traditions of the Catholic faith regardless of whether they teach formal religion class. Non-religion teachers complete only the introduction course:

- ✠ Doctrine: [Catholic Faith and Tradition for School Teachers](#)

HOW TO REGISTER

Please follow these steps to register for each course:

- ✠ Go to: step.nd.edu
- ✠ Click: **Course Registration** → **Catalog of Courses** → **Register Now**
- ✠ Select your desired session dates and click: **Continue**
- ✠ On the PRICING page, select: **Standard Fee** and click: **Continue**
- ✠ On the CART page, select: **Proceed to Checkout**
- ✠ On the ADDRESS page, enter your name, address and required fields and click: **Continue Unregistered**
- ✠ On the PAYMENT METHODS page, provide required payment information
- ✠ On the BUYER INFO page, provide required information and click: **Review Your Order**
- ✠ On the REVIEW page, look over your order information and click: **Submit Your Order**
- ✠ Check your email for a receipt to confirm that *STEP* processed your order

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is responsible?

- † All teachers, whether they teach religion or not, are responsible for maintaining current catechist certification as a condition of employment.
- † A course completion certificate is granted directly by *STEP* to the teacher upon successful completion of each course. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide each completion certificate to the school principal.
- † All principals are responsible for ensuring that each teacher of religion is catechist certified and that non-religion teachers have completed the one-course requirement.

How long is my catechist certification valid before I must renew?

- † Initial catechist certification (for religion teachers) earned through *Catholicism* is valid for **three years**.
- † Initial catechist certification (for religion teachers) earned through *STEP* is valid for **five years**.
- † Certificate renewal is valid for **five years**.
- † Completing the one-course requirement for non-religion teachers is valid **indefinitely**.

I never finished the Catholicism series, where do I stand and what do I do?

- † If you teach religion, you must obtain catechist certification through *STEP* by completing the five courses
- † If you do not teach religion, you must complete the introductory course: ***Catholic Faith and Tradition for School Teachers***

Once my certification expires how do I renew it?

- † When initial certificate expires (from either *Catholicism* or *STEP*), renewal is earned through successful completion of **one** renewal course offered through *STEP*. The course must be approved by the school principal.

What if I hire a teacher from another (Arch)diocese and they did catechist certification already?

- † If an incoming teacher has received Catechist Certification from another diocese which was earned through an accredited Catholic university, it will be recognized by the Archdiocese of Portland.

What if I have a teacher on staff or I hire a new teacher that has a degree in theology?

- † Incoming teachers who have earned an undergraduate major or minor in Theology, Religious Studies, or equivalent from an accredited Catholic university within the past five years, or who have earned a master's degree in these disciplines at any time, will be considered Catechist Certified for five years.

What sort of commitment can be expected for each course?

- † *STEP* courses run six to seven weeks and may require up to three to five hours per week, planned around your personal schedule. You engage the course work at the times each week that fit best with your other obligations. Work may include readings, written discussions, and/or live chat discussions of the material.

I would like more information or I have a question, who should I contact?

- † Please feel free to contact:

Gary Beckley, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent
Department of Catholic Schools
gbeckley@archdpdx.org

Lisa Orchen, M.Div.
Catholic Schools Outreach Coordinator
STEP at The University of Notre Dame
lorchen@nd.edu