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Catholic Courier

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Diocese revising how catechists are certified

Can your ears hear God calling you to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Does your heart palpitate when you think of sharing the church's teachings with others?

Is your mind open to learning more about Scripture, the sacraments and church doctrine?

Is your soul nourished by regular prayer and dialogue with the Holy Spirit?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you might be interested in becoming a catechist, according to catechetical experts in the Diocese of Rochester. They noted that the church needs people to teach everyone from small children to grown adults about the faith.

"If anybody really feels called to help pass the faith on, there's a place for them," said Sister Patricia Flass, SSJ, director of Christian formation at St. Helen's Church in Gates.

Catechetical issues were highlighted the week of April 7 when Guardian Angels Church in Henrietta hosted a diocesan-sponsored catechist formation institute titled "Alive In Christ." The institute offered more than 40 two-hour presentations on praying with adolescents,

Scripture and daily life, faith in families and other topics. Catechists who participated fulfilled requirements for certification as catechists in this diocese.

But who is a catechist?

In its latest documents on catechist formation, the Diocese of Rochester defines a catechist as "one who enhances the process of faith formation for adults or children by engaging in a variety of teaching, formation and learning programs, classes, retreats, study clubs and similar activities designed to foster growth in faith."

Catechists can be found serving as religious education teachers in Catholic schools, or in a number of capacities in parishes.

Some catechists, for example, prepare adults for initiation into the church, whereas others prepare children for initiation into the sacraments. Some catechists teach children and adolescents in religious education programs, work as youth ministers or run adult education programs.

But, at their core, catechists are people of faith whose life in God is apparent to those around them, according to Mary Britton. Britton serves as catechetical consultant for the diocesan Department of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Catechists embody the church's call to all Catholics to witness to the Gospel, Britton noted.

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What makes a good catechist?

Story by Rob Cullivan • Photograph of Mary Britton by Matthew Scott