



The Spotlight Program

Spotlight on the Catechism

Spotlight on the Scriptures

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The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark offers the SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM, a series of six short courses that provide an adult oriented introduction to basic themes of the Catholic faith. These courses are coordinated by the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese. The first four courses in the series are based on the four parts of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the main doctrinal reference for Catholics, published in 1992. Two additional courses offer an introduction, respectively, to the Old Testament and the New Testament. SPOTLIGHT courses are not intended as exhaustive treatments of their subjects but as introductions that offer some basic insight into the material and will allow the participants to pursue further learning on their own.

THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Following the Second Vatican Council a number of bishops called for a new compilation of Catholic teachings that would gather in one place the perennial teaching of the Church and the particular insights that the Council and other recent documents had brought to that teaching. The result was the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, a comprehensive volume with over 600 pages of text and another 200 pages of indices, glossary and other study aids. The *Catechism* was first issued by the Vatican with the approval of Pope John Paul II in 1992. It was released in its official English translation in 1994.

More recently the Church has provided two other resources to complement the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* was issued by Pope Benedict XVI in June of 2005. It is a 200 page summary of the main *Catechism*, using a question and answer format and illustrated by a number of full color reproductions of great works of Christian art. As it turns out, prior to his election as pope, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger was President of the special commission designated by Pope John Paul II to develop the *Compendium*. So the *Compendium* represents the desire of two popes but is particularly the work of Benedict XVI. Although the *Compendium* lacks the richness of references to scripture and early Church writings, as well as the extensive indices and glossary of the main *Catechism*, it is considerably more concise than the 688 page text of the latter.

In June, 2006, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. With 500 pages of text plus an extensive index and glossary, this work resembles the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on which it is based. It is organized into 36 chapters of about 15-20 pages each, which makes it a less intimidating work than the universal *Catechism*. In addition, each chapter is introduced by a brief biographical sketch. Some of these tell of canonized saints. Others focus on less well-known members of the communion of saints whose lives are illustrative of our faith tradition. Many of those profiled are Americans. Each chapter is also augmented with sidebars, some discussion questions and brief passages suggested for prayer and meditation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is divided into four parts, each concerned with a major area of faith. Part one examines the Profession of Faith or Creed, the statement of core Christian beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church that Catholics recite at Mass each Sunday, and that has guided the Church for sixteen centuries. Part two explores the Mass and the seven sacraments. Part three focuses on moral life, including an extended treatment of the ten commandments. Part four discusses prayer, different forms of prayer, and the Lord's Prayer as a central prayer of Christians.

Since the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was first published, the Archdiocese of Newark has offered a series of courses to present the essentials of the *Catechism* to those who are not theologians. This series, SPOTLIGHT ON THE CATECHISM, has been conducted by the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese in cooperation with several local parishes. In Fall of 2008 two new courses were added to the series to create SPOTLIGHT ON THE SCRIPTURES offering introductory courses on the Old and New Testaments.

THE SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM

The six SPOTLIGHT courses rotate through a number of parish centers in various parts of the Archdiocese. Courses are offered in two series, one in the fall and one in the spring, with an occasional winter offering. Participants at a single location can take the entire six course sequence over a three year period. These courses are of general interest to all who might want to learn more about the Catholic faith. They may be of particular interest to parents or those active in parish activities. Catechists can also fulfill the requirements for doctrinal certification by completing all six SPOTLIGHT courses. Doctrinal certification is important for catechists who work with adults in RCIA, Bible study, small faith sharing communities and other forms of adult faith formation, those who work with children in parish religious education programs and teachers in Catholic elementary schools.

SPOTLIGHT SCHEDULE

THE SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM courses are offered in each of the four counties of the Archdiocese of Newark, Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Union. All courses are offered as six hour Saturday sessions, 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM. A list of current dates and a brochure are available on line at : <http://rcan.org/office-and-ministries/catechetical-office>. (Scroll down to find the SPOTLIGHT section). Many parish, religious education and school offices will also have the brochure available.

Advance registration is required. Courses are open to the general public. A certificate is issued for participants after completing each course. For more information, to request a brochure, or to register call Ron Pihokker at the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of Newark, at 973-497-4285 or e-mail pihokkro@rcan.org.