



CATECHIST Magazine
and the
National Society for Volunteer Catechists
present

The First Annual CATECHIST Magazine Honors

From the scores of nominations we received, our selection committee has chosen 24 outstanding catechetical ministers for recognition. Each of the stories we received was compelling, inspiring, and hopeful. Each story was a testimony to the vitality of the family of faith because of the participation of an energetic and engaged laity in the Church. If there is a common thread in all the stories submitted, it is that each of the nominees is active in many areas of parish and diocesan life.

All nominees were deserving of recognition. Each of the selectees, therefore, stands as a representative for a host of dedicated servants. Enjoy the brief digest of the ministry of each honoree. Offer a prayer of thanks for them all and for the other nominees listed.

**PLEASE JOIN THE STAFF OF CATECHIST AND NSVC
IN RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING THE
2013 CLASS OF CATECHIST MAGAZINE HONOREES!**



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HONORS
celebrating spirit, creativity, and outreach

Kathie Nicley
 St. Barnabas Parish
 Hudson, Ohio

Nominated by Rose Rambacher

KATHIE ALWAYS GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND IN HER ROLE AS CATECHIST.

Her creativity is legendary. Each year she offers her sixth-graders a retreat day. She plans the whole day. At the end of the retreat day, everyone in the program says that the youngsters show a greater joy and a deeper faith. Her joy is infectious and her energy boundless. She has a deep faith and a beautiful heart. One yearly ritual for Kathie's students is receiving Bibles from their parents—demonstrating the handing on of faith from parents to children. Above all, Kathie is an awesome teacher.



Mary Jo Thomas-Day
 St. Monica Parish
 Indianapolis, Indiana

Nominated by Father Todd Goodson

MARY JO IS A PARISH DRE WHO MINISTERS TO OVER 10,000 PARISHIONERS. For 36 years, she has been a team member of one of the largest and most diverse parish communities in the archdiocese. She is responsible for baptismal preparation, sacramental preparation, and religious education for three-year-olds through grade eight, Liturgy of the Word for Children, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and SPRED for the developmentally disabled. She trains and assists 125 youth and adult catechists. She also mentors new DREs for the archdiocese. Mary Jo has received many awards, but her greatest award is the love and respect of her parish family.



Andrew Morzello
 Our Lady of Mount Carmel
 Parish

White Plains, New York

Nominated by Rev. Albert Asrak, SSS

ANDREW IS A VETERAN OF NEARLY 60 YEARS OF CATECHETICAL MINISTRY. He has served the parish as a teacher's aide, a teacher, a program director and, for over 26 years, a DRE. Andrew has reliably and consistently dedicated himself to the religious enrichment of all the families in the parish. Everyone recognizes his love, compassion, competence, generosity, and kindness. Another of Andrew's passions is parental involvement. He has consistently increased registration—growing the program from 80 to 240 families. In 2004, he received the New York Archdiocese Catechetical Medal of Honor for 50 years of service. He shows no signs of stopping.



Karla Morales
 Sacred Heart—St. Louis Parish
 Gervais, Oregon

Nominated by Sandi Belleque

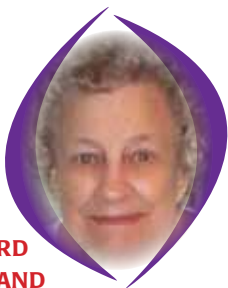
KARLA IS A YOUNG ENERGETIC MOTHER WHO LOVES HER CULTURE AND HER CHURCH. She is a quiet, get-the-job-done gal. She has a passion for sharing the Hispanic Mass and the cultural aspects of Hispanic Catholicism. Besides teaching, she can be seen helping with quinceañeras, Lenten soup suppers, lectoring and singing at Mass, and producing the live Stations of the Cross. While performing so great a ministry, she also holds a full-time job in the public school district. She brings diverse groups together to work for a common goal. Most important to Karla is the image of Christ in each person she serves.



Magdalen Stahl
 Our Lady of Grace Parish
 Avon Park, Florida

Nominated by JoMarie Grinkiewicz

MAGDALEN TEACHES THE WORD OF GOD WITH PASSION, LOVE, AND CREATIVITY. "Ms. Maggie," as her second-graders call her, has just received official catechist certification. What she means to her students is best captured in the words of one of them spoken to a substitute when illness kept Magdalen from class: "I miss Ms. Maggie. She reminds me of peace and love. It's empty here without her." Peace and love define her life. She is a woman who has always walked in the footsteps of Christ. By the way, Ms. Maggie is 90 years old and has been teaching children about Jesus for over 70.



Mary Oelklaus
 St. Robert Bellarmine Parish
 St. Charles, Missouri

Nominated by Carol Breckle

MARY IS SHORT OF STATURE BUT GREAT OF HEART. The best image of her is sitting in the middle of her first-grade class telling a story or helping with a craft. She wants each child to know Christ personally. She builds a scrapbook for each child at year's outset. By year's end, the pictures and activities show the child's spiritual growth. She goes out of her way to give each child attention. Mary never gives up on herself and challenges herself to constantly learn more and to be a more effective teacher. For her, "good enough" is not acceptable.



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Geraldine Simbahon

St. Joseph Parish
 Waipahu, Hawaii

Nominated by Jayne Mondoy



GERI CREATES A CHRIST-LIKE, WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT.

She is extremely competent in all the programs she runs, but Geri is best known for the atmosphere she creates. From the moment one sets foot on parish grounds, he or she is embraced by the enthusiastic welcome of the catechetical ministers. Geri's office feels like a comfortable living room where people tend to the needs of the program while sharing life stories, praying together, and supporting one another. The fellowship spills out to all the students, the parents, and the parish community. Geri has inspired many to make a life-long commitment to catechesis and parish life.

Peter Picciano

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
 Windsor, New York

Nominated by Nancy West



PETE'S CALLING TO CATECHESIS IS BASED IN HIS WORK WITH TROUBLED YOUTH.

He has been known to show up for Sunday classes after doing an overnight shift at a safe house for young people. His day job is teaching in the bi-county Board of Cooperative Educational Services. As a ninth-grade catechist, he is preparing his students for Confirmation. Besides his teaching, he is also a lector, and he drives over 30 miles every weekend to fulfill those ministries. Pete also helps young men in the Boy Scouts work to attain Eagle Scout status. He is creative, knowledgeable and, above all, trustworthy.

Robert Barrilleaux

St. Mary's Nativity Parish
 Raceland, Louisiana

Nominated by Ray Babin



ROBERT IS A TRUE CATECHIST IN THE CLASSROOM AND IN THE WORLD AROUND HIM.

He not only excels in the classroom but he leads a life that is the epitome of Christian charity. He is the retreat leader for his parish. His words and his actions have led people closer to Christ. One of his passions is to show the beauty of the Mass and encourage regular—even daily—Mass attendance. Robert lives the lessons he teaches and is a true role model for his students. The last thing he wants is to be honored for his ministry—making him all the more deserving.

Carmen Maldonado

St. Anthony Parish
 El Segundo, California

Nominated by Donna Scaltrito and Mary Baum



CARMEN IS A MOST DEDICATED AND INSPIRATIONAL PERSON.

She gives of herself and her spirituality to every child who comes to her in need of direction or guidance in the Catholic faith. She gives her life to not only teaching children but also to keeping them in the Church and practicing their faith. Her passion and love for God is demonstrated in the endless hours and amazing creativity that she brings to her ministry. All who know her see how the Holy Spirit moves freely through Carmen, and she shares that gift with all. She is the soul of catechetical ministry in her parish.

Danielle Pitcher

St. Mary Parish
 Wimberley, TX

Nominated by Dan Pitcher



DANIELLE BRINGS THE ENTHUSIASM AND INITIATIVE OF YOUTH TO PARISH CATECHESIS.

She alarmed her family when at 16 she announced that she was going to teach religion. With so much else going on in her life—studies, varsity volleyball, varsity soccer, church events—she also felt a call from God to share her faith and to take on a class of eighth-graders. Each week, Danielle thoroughly prepared her lessons and kept her class's interest. She is off to college, but her legacy in the parish is the courage and responsiveness to God's call that can be found in youth as well as in age.

Marie Masiello

St. Gabriel Parish
 Marlboro, New Jersey

Nominated by Dr. James Bridges



MARIE EXCELS IN CATECHESIS FOR THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

In January of 2007, she began a new program at the parish called Gabriel's Angels. The program was for those who had not yet received first Sacraments for a variety of reasons, including autism and learning disabilities. She currently has nine angels in the program, and is working on a Confirmation program. The parents of these children are overjoyed that their children are becoming fully initiated members of the community. Marie is also the parish youth minister, serving high school students, and she facilitates *Virtus*—a child-protection program.

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Ruth Pisano

St. Jude Parish
 Blairstown, New Jersey

Nominated by Marie Scocca-Draghi

RUTH TRULY ENJOYS HER VOCATION AND LOVES HER FAITH.

She has been a catechist for 30 years while raising a family and working part-time so her children could attend Catholic school. She is a lector at Mass and is a Eucharistic minister who takes the Sacrament to the homebound. She is an active lay Franciscan. She always finds the time for the catechist formation opportunities afforded by the diocese. Her second-graders are always on her mind. Ruth arrives two hours early for class to prepare individual lesson folders for each child. She provides spiritual support to her DRE and fellow catechists.



Daniel Maul

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish
 Chicago, Illinois

Nominated by Robert Sutherland

DANIEL HAS RENEWED AND REINVIGORATED PARISH CATECHESIS AT IHM.

In three years, he has expanded the program from 100 to 250 students. Daniel stresses that the program is not just for one-time instruction or to receive the Sacraments, but is part of an adventure of life-long learning for followers of Christ. He guides catechesis in English and Spanish. He expanded the program to provide special catechesis for altar servers. Daniel runs a vacation program and takes teenagers on summer trips to help people in disaster areas. As if he had nothing else to do, last year he started a Liturgy of the Word program for children.



Carol Serafin

Holy Trinity Parish
 Ligonier, Pennsylvania

Nominated by Robert Sherwin

WHATEVER NEEDS TO BE DONE AT THE PARISH, CAROL DOES IT.

She carries out her ministry in a pastoral manner that combines love for the faith with care for the person. She started as a teacher in Catholic school and moved into faith formation. In addition to the parish program, she collaborates with the regional Catholic school and works extensively with families forming the faith at home. Carol also serves as parish sacristan. She has a special outreach to families who feel alienated from the Church and has brought many of them back to full participation in the parish—liturgical, social, and catechetical.



Rob Vanden Noven

SS. Peter and Paul Parish
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Nominated by Ralph Stewart

ROB LEADS HIS YOUNG CHARGES

WITH PRAYER, CONVERSATION, AND EXAMPLE. He is completing his eighteenth year as a volunteer catechist at East Side Child and Youth Ministry—a collaborative catechetical program of four parishes on the East Side of Milwaukee. For most of that time, Rob has been teaching kindergarten using wonderful creativity, a passion for his faith, and love for the children. Rob incorporates many activities that are fun, faith-filled, and effective. Parents comment that their children are excited to come to class, to have fun while they are there and, most all, to learn.



Mary Lynn Cavanaugh

St. Mark Parish
 Indianapolis, Indiana

Nominated by Ken Ogorek

MARY LYNN TAUGHT WITH

INFECTIOUS LAUGHTER. She passed away recently, and for the members of St. Mark's parish, hers was an untimely death. She was widely acclaimed as one of the finest catechetical leaders in the history of the archdiocese. Her combination of orthodoxy, joy, love, enthusiasm, and effectiveness was unique. She was loved and respected by all who knew her because she taught the faith—and so often helped others to do so—clearly and compellingly. She was a gift and a blessing to the parish, to the archdiocese, and to the ministry of catechesis.



Jody Arabie

Our Lady of Light Parish
 Fort Myers, Florida

Nominated by Lori Crawford

JODY IS A QUIET LEADER WITH A GENTLE SPIRIT—OVERFLOWING WITH CREATIVITY.

She was hesitant at first, but she has blossomed into a qualified catechist who is warm and approachable. She involves all the children's senses in the catechetical process. One of the literally hundreds of creative things Jody does is to attach all the children's nametags to a colorful centerpiece. When the children arrive for class, they take their nametags from the centerpiece. The class then prays for the children whose nametags are still on the centerpiece. What a message to all the learners: They are kept in prayer, whether present or absent.



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Elaine Valdez

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish
 Abiquiu, New Mexico

Nominated by Emilia Vigil



ELAINE IS A MUSIC CATECHIST WHO INSPIRES WITH HER VOICE AND MUSIC.

Elaine's family has been performing a music ministry in the parish for over 40 years through three generations. Elaine understands that she can touch both the minds and the hearts of children and adults alike with song. Each season of the year, she sings the familiar songs so that children and others can learn them. So beautiful are her voice and spirit that she often brings adults to tears. As a music catechist, Elaine instructs and inspires. Her music proclaims that all is well and that God is present here.

Anne Marie Casale

St. Joseph Parish
 Mendham, New Jersey

Nominated by Annette Tracy



ANNE MARIE WANTS CHILDREN'S FIRST EXPERIENCE OF RELIGION CLASS TO BE POSITIVE.

For many children, the first experience with religion class is in the first grade. Anne Marie sees to it that that experience is welcoming and uplifting. Year after year, she takes on a new crop of first-graders. She is dedicated and motivated. She uses a vast assortment of activities, props, crafts, and incentives to ensure positive results. Anne Marie is the first to arrive and the last to leave—even cleaning the classroom. She is a well-prepared and inspirational catechist.

Pat Cowgill

St. Joseph Parish
 Manchester, Missouri

Nominated by Michelle Foster



FOR PAT, IT IS NOT HOW MANY SHE TEACHES BUT HOW WELL.

For years she was a parish coordinator, but she is now happily a parish catechist. She teaches two classes of second-graders and the RCIA for children. She wants her students to know that they are part of the parish family. She makes every lesson about the heart as well as the head. She forms these youngsters in the faith with grace and joy. Pat has the heart and soul of a catechist and keeps the Lord at the center of all she does. Like Mother Mary, she always points people toward Jesus Christ.

Sandra Kluun

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish
 Norwalk, Connecticut

Nominated by Jeanne Bisson



SANDRA USES HER SKILL AS AN ARTIST TO ENLIVEN HER JUNIOR HIGH CLASSES.

She became a Catholic as an adult. From the day she was fully initiated, she has exercised a catechetical ministry. For a while she served as DRE for the diocese, but now teaches junior high students in the parish and prepares the young teens for Confirmation. She has a gift for showing the love of God through art, music, and media. Sandra is always ready to lend catechists a hand by providing formation, mentoring, and help with lesson planning. She is an essential member of the parish team.

Julie Clayton

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
 Madison, Mississippi

Nominated by Mary Catherine George



SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION IS JULIE'S CATECHETICAL SPECIALTY.

She is the lead catechist for the Sacrament team and has been preparing children for 15 years. She also coordinates and trains the volunteers who help with this important parish program. She is well-versed in the do's and don'ts in the faith formation of young children and is a patient and generous coach on the matter. Julie participates in the planning of the parish VBS and serves as an RCIA sponsor and a member of the team. She is also one of the parish sacristans.

Catherine Metsker

St. Mary Parish
 Bloomington, Illinois

Nominated by Tina Boettcher



IN ADDITION TO HER OWN TEACHING, CATHERINE MENTORS OTHER CATECHISTS.

Even though her own children attended Catholic school, Catherine sees teaching in the parish religion program and helping to form other catechists as part of her vocation. Also important in that vocation are bringing Communion to the homebound, leading a women's devotional group, and providing meals for families in need. Her fifth-graders love being in her class, and she rarely has a discipline problem. Every lesson plan is centered on bringing Jesus into the hearts and lives of her class. Catherine and her class also support missionaries serving along the Amazon River.