



CATECHIST Magazine  
and the  
National Society for Volunteer Catechists  
present

## The Annual CATECHIST Magazine Honors

Our selection committee has chosen 24 outstanding catechetical ministers for recognition. Each of the stories we received demonstrates the enduring power for good in the call to be a catechist. The story of every nominee gave witness to just how vital faith can be in the lives of ordinary people. It is our hope that sharing the stories of these honorees can be an inspiration either to persevere in the call to be a catechist or to answer that call for the first time. We were inspired by how energetic and engaged in parish and diocesan life these selectees are.

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 about 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  
2014 CLASS OF CATECHIST MAGAZINE HONOREES!**



THE CATECHIST MAGAZINE  
**HONORS**  
*celebrating spirit, creativity, and outreach*

**Kathleen Springer**

Church of St. Anne  
 Garden City, NY

Nominated by Lyn Beck



**KATHY WAS AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE FOR OUR PARISH.**

She taught both teens and toddlers and, most recently, Confirmation candidates. Her greatest test came when she was teaching twin boys, one of whom grew more sick daily as his brain cancer worsened. Not only did Kathy minister to the young boy and his brother, she shepherded the whole class through the death of this classmate. Her gift of time and energy was all the more amazing because she was suffering from cancer herself. Kathy did not miss a class and offered to substitute on days when she had no class scheduled. She lost her battle against cancer on August 8. What a gift she has been to St. Anne's!

**Kim Hang Pham**

Our Lady of La Vang  
 San José, CA

Nominated by Brother Anthony  
 Nguyen, FSC



**FOR ALMOST 30 YEARS, KIM HANG PHAM HAS BEEN A CATECHIST FOR HER COMMUNITY.**

She began by serving the RCIA program in the Vietnamese Community Center. Since then, she has dedicated herself to preparing students every year for Confirmation. In addition she prepares special needs students for their First Communion. She also organizes the parish liturgy program. During the Year of Faith, Kim provided special faith formation sessions for the parishioners. She also coordinated the Divine Mercy Feast—a popular feast for the Vietnamese community. Her evident love for Christ gives her great strength and patience.

**Lillian Hoerdemann-Twiss**

Holy Family Parish  
 Lincoln, IL

Nominated by Kathy Buse



**LILLIAN HAS BEEN THE FIRST-GRADE CATECHIST AT HOLY FAMILY FOR OVER 20 YEARS.**

She makes sure the children know their prayers and even prays a decade of the Rosary with her class. She makes an Advent wreath for each of her students every year. Although in her eighties, Lillian attends many of the diocesan offerings for catechist formation. When she lost her husband in 2008, she started a parish food drive in his honor that collects food for the poor every day during Lent. Lillian is also a Eucharistic minister for the homebound and helps with Vacation Bible School and the preschool group, and she prays the Rosary every Friday with the residents of St. Clara's Manor—a senior home.

**Gloria Boesch**

St. Anne's Parish  
 Ortonville, MI

Nominated by Marianne Gdowski  
 and Annette Thompson



**GLORIA IS A MOST INSPIRING CATECHETICAL MINISTER.**

She has worked for the Church for over 35 years. She has been a catechist, a DRE, and a Christian Service Director. She began as an art volunteer at the Catholic school. As her children grew older, she knew that God was calling her to a life of ministry. She went to school and got a master's degree in religious studies. Gloria's passion for ministry is amazing. No one ever forgets a class Gloria teaches because she is funny, challenging, and well informed. Illness has kept her from the formal classroom, but she continues to be a catechist by mentoring new DREs.

**James Tambasco**

Espiritu Santo Parish  
 Safety Harbor, FL

Nominated by Ellen Jones



**JAMES TAKES HIS CLASS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALLS.**

In a thriving parish with over 100 volunteer catechists, Jim is a standout. Not only does he have a knack for communicating the faith in ways that his eighth-graders can understand, but he also makes sure that every one of the students knows that faith is not just for church—that it needs to shine out to the world. Jim joins his students on many service projects during the year. They visit orphanages and feed and clothe the homeless. For Jim, faith does not consist of words trapped in a book. It consists of faithful lives in service of others.

**Margaret Rasmussen**

St. Bernard's Parish  
 Thief River Falls, MN

Nominated by Shelly Lantz



**MARGARET TEACHES THE CHILDREN IN HER PROGRAM TO BE THE HANDS AND FEET OF CHRIST.**

To that end, she not only directs the program at the parish but she also teaches in the Bible camp. She engaged Cross Catholic Outreach—an organization dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor—for help with ideas she had for a Works of Mercy program. This program etched forever in the children's hearts the need to provide food, shelter, and medical care in Jesus' name. Margaret is filled with love, zeal, and commitment to her students as well as to caring for the poor.

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**Ronda Venable**

St. Bernadette Parish  
 Appleton, WI

Nominated by Shirley Riley



**TRULY, RONDA IS A ONE-WOMAN RECRUITMENT POSTER FOR INSPIRING NEW VOLUNTEER CATECHISTS.**

When Ronda was called to be a catechist, she was fairly fresh out of the initiation process. It took her a year to say “yes,” but when she did, a catechetical star was born. In a list of great attributes and skills, she always teaches the importance of family attendance at Sunday Mass. Year after year, Ronda’s enthusiasm has never waned. She has always put the needs of other volunteer catechists above her own. When offered the job of parish secretary, she took it on the condition that she could keep teaching. Even when injury limited her mobility, she made sure to arrive early to set up her room and to stay late to clean up.

**Letty Bartoszek**

Holy Family Church  
 New Rochelle, NY

Nominated by Sister Christina Dougherty



**LETTY KNOWS THAT LEARNING THE FAITH IS A LIFE-LONG PROCESS.**

She is the secretary of the parish religion program and the volunteer catechist for the four- and five-year-olds. Letty has a passion for sharing the faith and is a marvel to see in the classroom. She comes up with countless ways to keep in touch with the families because she believes that faith is caught in the family. Letty attends Bible study during the summer and has completed the first two levels of catechist formation in the archdiocese. It is impossible to talk about faith formation with Letty without becoming inspired and committed to catechesis. She is considered one of the wisdom figures in the parish.

**Teresa Shields**

Our Lady of the Lake Parish  
 Seattle, WA

Nominated by Mary A. Romer



**TERESA TEACHES AT ALL TIMES AND USES WORDS WHEN NECESSARY.**

Her whole life is a catechetical lesson. She is physically disabled and it takes great effort for her to move. With her disability, even small movements are difficult and speech is taxing. Yet, she never complains. Teresa is a beloved veteran catechist. She creates a fun, welcoming, and wonderful faith sharing experience with her class. In the words of one of her students, “She lets every kid feel involved and nobody goes home feeling sad.” Everyone in the parish learns about Jesus from the life of this master teacher.

**Eileen Hanrahan**

St. Peter the Apostle Parish  
 River Edge, NJ

Nominated by Lauren DiGennaro and Diane Dunleavy



**EILEEN BELIEVES THAT FAMILIES NEED TO BUILD CATHOLIC MEMORIES TOGETHER.**

Five years ago, she changed the structure of the catechetical program to include GIFT—Generations in Faith Together. Along with traditional classes, families attend gatherings throughout the year. Each gathering is innovative and filled with fun, moments of conversion, and learning for all. Her innovative approach has changed the parish for the better. The parish is growing and families are more attentive to their faith journeys. Many hearts have been converted to Christ, and more people (young and old) are involved in ministry thanks to Eileen’s enthusiasm, humble spirit, and generosity.

**Rebecca Culver**

All Saints Catholic Church  
 Taylorsville, KY

Nominated by Diane Black



**REBECCA IS A MENTOR TO OTHER VOLUNTEER CATECHISTS.**

Not only has she pursued certification as a master catechist in the archdiocesan program, she continues to seek educational opportunities to improve her ministry. She generously gives of her time to mentor catechists and develop in them a catechetical spirituality. Two areas in particular are imbedded in all her teaching—prayer and service. Rebecca sees as essential to her ministry helping students make prayer part of every day. One virtue she wants all her students to have is compassion. She stands as a model for all the catechists in her parish.

**Linda Cummer**

Stella Maris Parish  
 Egg Harbor, WI

Nominated by Father David Ruby



**LINDA IS A RETIRED PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER WHO USES HER GIFTS IN SERVICE OF GOD’S CHILDREN.**

From the first moment of her ministry, she showed great care and compassion for the children. She knows how to make the content interesting and appealing for the youngsters. She is known for her engaging and enjoyable activities that bring the Good News of the Gospel to her students. She has never had any discipline problems in her classroom either. The parish recognizes that Linda is a great catechist. When the faith formation leader left in the middle of the year, Linda stepped up and added leadership to her classroom teaching.

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**Michele Mehringer**

Church of the Nativity  
 Utica, OH

Nominated by Theresa Mehringer



**MICHELE'S LIFE IS A RESPONSE TO THE CALL "GO AND TEACH."** She is the fifth sister in a family of seven sisters, and she sees herself as a true sister to all in Jesus Christ. She immerses herself completely in all she undertakes. Primary for Michele is helping her students incorporate the weekly Gospel into their lives—all week long. Always ready to share herself, she plans church programs, puts on plays, teaches regularly, and takes responsibility to clean the church. She has the ability to see the "God side" in all situations. Her talents are always at the service of others.

**Ida Leonelli**

St. Patrick Parish  
 Hubbard, OH

Nominated by Karen Bartos



**IDA HAS AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE AND A SERVANT'S HEART.** At 82, she considers the Church her life. For most of her 28 years as a catechist, Ida has taught second grade and has prepared hundreds of children for First Communion. Ida participates in most of the parish ministries and organizations and is a Eucharistic minister. Teaching, however, is her passion. When she was taken seriously ill, her biggest fear was that she would not be able to teach. However, she made a remarkable recovery and is back in the classroom. Although she never had children of her own, Ida has shared her love for Christ with the children of the parish. She shares her genuine and joyful self with the children week after week.

**Mary Allen**

Our Lady of the Angels Parish  
 Scottsdale, AZ

Nominated by Patty Tafolla



**MARY KNOWS THAT PERSONAL ATTENTION IS WHAT EACH OF HER YOUNG CHARGES NEEDS.** She works in the children's initiation program. In a Franciscan parish that is dedicated to family catechesis, Mary stands out because her infectious love engages both the children and their parents. Every one of her lessons is carefully planned, creative, and hands-on. She uses technology, including DVDs and websites. Most important of all is the attention Mary pays to each child and parent—walking with them during sacramental preparation and keeping in touch with them when her time with them is over. This personal approach helps families and students draw closer to Christ.

**Jacqueline Froehlich**

Our Lady, Mother of the Church  
 Chicago, IL

Nominated by Fran Klus



**JACKIE DEFINES HERSELF AS A "FOREVER" CATECHIST.** She realizes that no catechetical program is successful unless it is centered in the family. In addition, it is her passion to see that the children identify with the parish and that the parish sees the children as full members. To that end, Jackie has established and coordinates a family Mass to celebrate the faith of the parish's younger members. Jackie also provides monthly faith formation sessions for the catechetical team because she is convinced that the spiritual growth of the team is essential to the success of the parish program.

**Sister Christella Emano**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
 Parish; Kenner, LA

Nominated by Sister M. Michaeline Green



**SISTER CHRISTELLA FOSTERS A SPIRIT OF PRAYER AND ADORATION IN HER YOUNG PEOPLE.** She knows that a life of prayer must be a by-product of all catechesis. Her catechetical ministry includes both the parish program and the parochial school. She provides retreat opportunities for the young people and holds a day of recollection for each grade in the programs. Sister is also in charge of the young people's choir, and they have taken their singing evangelism to a local hotel and to the shopping mall during the Christmas season. Every child looks forward to Sister's prayer services because they are both creative and inspiring. She has brought many children and their parents back to the Church.

**Joan Dierkes**

St. Alphonsus Parish  
 Maple Glen, PA

Nominated by Linda Tonelli



**JOAN IS A WIFE, A MOTHER, AND A VERY UNASSUMING VOLUNTEER CATECHIST.** The Holy Eucharist is very close to her heart, and so for 10 years, she has prepared children for First Communion. She also conducts the retreat day for the youngsters. Whenever a new catechist joins the team, Joan takes him or her under her wing. She coordinates the Children's Liturgy of the Word and trains parents and Confirmation candidates to share the Gospel with the little ones each week. Joan also teaches the grade school children in Our Lady of Mercy regional school how to make rosaries, and they have donated thousands of them to the Holy Childhood Association.

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**Sandra Lopez**  
 Mary Immaculate Parish  
 Pacoima, CA

Nominated by Brenda Padron  
 and Roxana Contreras



**SANDRA FOSTERS LEADERSHIP IN THE PARISH PRETEENS AND TEENS.**

Starting off as an assistant catechist, she now is head of the parish post-Communion program. The program is designed to emphasize the fact that catechetical formation does not end with sacramental preparation. Sandra also makes sure that all students feel welcome and appreciated in all they do. Her work has a wonderful effect on the young people in the parish, which results in their involvement in all areas of parish life—as readers, altar servers, teen leaders, and the like.

**Diane Baylerian**  
 Lumen Christi Church  
 Thiensville, WI

Nominated by Joan Kress



**DIANE IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A ROLE MODEL.**

She has served as a dedicated catechist and her level of preparation for each session is an inspiration to all. Diane also has a real and personal thirst for a greater knowledge of the faith, and she takes advantage of every adult formation opportunity the parish offers. She has also crafted presentations for her fellow catechists. She is a dedicated member of the parish worship commission and is in charge of the environment for one of the worship spaces. She also is a Eucharistic minister and sacristan when needed. She is a servant role model for the children, their parents, and all who have the joy of working with her.

**Emily Guilherme**  
 St. Mel Catholic Church  
 Norco, CA

Nominated by Thomas P. Jenkins



**EMILY IMPLEMENTED AN ONLINE PILOT PROGRAM TO REVOLUTIONIZE CONFIRMATION PREP.**

She works six days a week and attends every Mass on Sunday so that her young charges experience her presence in the worshipping community. Emily sees herself as an evangelizer of youth. She counsels both students and parents and is a forward thinker who empowers catechists. She understands that the contemporary young person's life revolves around social media and all the available electronic tools. So she wants to see that technology is used in her evangelizing mission. If the worth of a catechetical minister were to be measured in the time spent with the learners, Emily is a champ.

**Cathy Carlin**  
 St. Augustine and the Church  
 of the Ascension; Elkridge, MD

Nominated by Karan Bevers



**CATHY'S GREAT JOY IN LIVING CALLS ALL WHO MEET HER TO "FALL IN LOVE WITH JESUS."**

First of all, Cathy coordinates all catechetical programs for two linked parishes and is a whirlwind of ministerial zeal. Her leadership style is that of a mentor who deeply cares for each member of her catechetical teams. She provides workshops and formation programs for them. In addition, Cathy cares for learners (and her catechists) with special needs, even meeting one of her catechists and helping her carry her material and opening doors for her. Her goal is for all to see themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ. She really opens doors for all in the parish.

**John Concannon**  
 St. Clement Parish  
 Johnstown, PA

Nominated by Sister Dolores  
 Partsch, CSJ



**JOHN ENLIVENS HIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES WITH VIDEO, ACTIVITIES, AND DISCUSSIONS.**

He knows how to make the faith relevant to today's teen. His class has made a Christmas video that was shared with the whole parish. For All Saints, each of his students dressed as a particular saint and taught a lower class about the saint. John prepares his teens for Confirmation as well. In addition to his eleventh-grade class, he helps with adult education each Lent. He also has set up the parish website. He truly witnesses to the gospel and brings the Good News right into the present day.

**Dennis Hetrick**  
 St. Agnes and St. Felix Parish  
 Wabasha, MN

Nominated by Pat Kolb



**DENNIS IS A HUMBLE DAIRY FARMER WHO HAS SHARED HIS LOVE FOR JESUS FOR OVER 35 YEARS.**

He shares his faith with not only words in class but by the way he lives. He brings the traditions of the Church to life for his students. He is well versed in the gospel and very knowledgeable about the faith. But anyone who has experienced the teaching of this catechist knows that he or she needs to live the faith, love the Lord Jesus, and be faithful to the Church. Dennis has led a yearly Confirmation retreat for the candidates, parents, and sponsors for over 20 years. That retreat is the highlight of the preparation period. Dennis helps the whole parish be "on fire for the Lord."