



DIOCESE OF PATERSON

Diocesan Center
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Office of
THE BISHOP

May 8, 2012

Dear Brothers and Friends in Christ,

Over the past several years, the Diocese of Paterson has increased its level of dedication and doubled its efforts in the work of the Church's primary mission of evangelization. As we continue to move forward as a diocese in this direction, it is essential for us to consider carefully every dimension of this great mission. Presently, I feel it is particularly necessary to give renewed impetus and more attention to one of the most crucial and irreplaceable phases of evangelization: Catechesis.

For more than a decade, the Church in the United States has committed herself with new energy to the mission of evangelization. To be more effective in our mission, the bishops have surveyed and analyzed the reasons as to why people are leaving the Church, why there is a decline in Mass attendance and to the reception of the sacraments, and why there is a prevailing ignorance of the basic tenets of our Catholic faith among younger generations. It is, therefore, opportune for us as a diocese to ensure that we, too, have embraced the same fervor and dedication for every dimension of evangelization, including catechesis, and that our catechetical efforts are truly bearing good and lasting fruit.

If meaningful solutions are to be found to the challenges we face in the specific area of catechesis, then the first step toward genuine renewal involves a fair, but unsparingly honest assessment of the actual state of affairs. Given the great cultural, socio-economic, and educational variances present in the Diocese, care must be taken both to discover the effectiveness of our catechetical programs and to interpret accurately the results of such an inquiry.

For this reason, as part of our response to the Year of Faith called for by our Holy Father, I am mandating that this coming year every parish religious education program and Catholic school in the Diocese of Paterson will administer the National Catholic Educational Association's ACRE Assessment (Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education) to all 5th grade, 8th grade, and 2nd year Confirmation (10th grade) students during the month of January 2013. This will become a normative part of every

catechetical program in the diocese and will, therefore, need to be administered annually to the grade levels mentioned above.

The ACRE Assessment is a nationally recognized standardized test and is meant to provide each parish with critical data to help evaluate the effectiveness of its evangelical and catechetical efforts. In addition to discovering where our children and teenagers are in terms of their basic religious knowledge, the ACRE Assessment will give us a deeper insight into their prevailing religious beliefs, attitudes, practices, and perceptions. The ACRE Assessment is not a judgment on the work of our catechists, DREs, or pastors. Rather, it is an instrument meant to provide useful information and meaningful feedback to parishes and the diocese which will help us enhance the quality of our catechetical programs and therefore our service to younger generations.

I am certain you will have many questions regarding the ACRE Assessment (timing, available training sessions across the diocese, costs, administration of the test, results, etc.) These and other practical concerns have been discussed and worked out by our ACRE Committee made up of Catholic school principals and DREs. More information can be found on the NCEA website (www.ncea.org) under "Religious Education Assessments" and our Director of the Diocesan Office of Catechesis as Evangelization, Fr. Derek Anderson, will also provide you with further timely information and materials. Fr. Derek can be reached at 973-437-9740.

As we begin to assess together the effectiveness of our catechetical program, I ask for your support in the implementation of the ACRE Assessment. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all of you who have worked so hard to see that our younger generations are truly being formed and transformed by the Person and Message of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Arthur J. Serratelli". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a small cross symbol at the beginning.

Most Reverend Arthur J. Serratelli, S.T.D., S.S.L., D.D.

Bishop of Paterson