BE NOT AFRAID...
ANSWERING THE CALL FOR A NEW EVANGELIZATION

LEARN, LOVE, TEACH THE CATHOLIC FAITH

MARIAN CATECHIST APOSTOLATE
Father John A. Hardon, S.J.
with His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke,
then-Bishop of La Crosse, on the grounds of the
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Crosse, Wisconsin
November 29, 1999
THE HISTORY OF THE MARIAN CATECHIST APOSTOLATE

Pope Saint John Paul II was the first to call for a New Evangelization in response to the loss of faith in God in our time. Lamenting the fact that so many people live and die with no knowledge of Jesus Christ, he declared the work of this New Evangelization to be the proclamation of the Good News in such a way as to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ by means of the transformation of their hearts (cf. Novo Millennio Ineunte 38-40).

One of the actions taken by Pope Saint John Paul II to reverse the dismal global trend of declining faith in God was to ask Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta to prepare her Sisters, the Missionaries of Charity, not only to care for the immediate material needs of the poor, but also to evangelize them, to teach them about God’s immeasurable love for them and about His desire to be united with them in Heaven for all eternity.
Mother Teresa depended on Servant of God Father John A. Hardon, S.J. for the help she needed to prepare her Sisters to evangelize the poorest of the poor. Father Hardon was an eminent theologian and master catechist (one who teaches the Faith), the author of over forty major works of theology, spirituality and catechesis, and one of the world’s most respected authorities on the Catholic Faith. He began to teach the Missionaries of Charity; at the same time, he began to prepare the texts that would eventually become a set of home study courses used to teach the rich truths and beauty of the Catholic Faith and its practice to the lay faithful. Still today, the Missionaries of Charity, along with countless lay members of the Church, use Father Hardon’s courses to prepare themselves to be effective witnesses of the Faith to all they meet.
Father Hardon was responding to the Holy Father’s call for a New Evangelization when he founded the Marian Catechist Apostolate. He established the Marian Catechist Apostolate in order to form catechists, both spiritually and doctrinally, for the teaching of the Faith. He was elated when His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, then-Bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin, decided to use his home study courses to form catechists in the Diocese of La Crosse. On December 12, 1999, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, then-Bishop Burke established the Marian Catechist Apostolate as a Public Association of the Faithful. The Apostolate has been placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of all America and Star of both the first and the new evangelizations.
In the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Father Hardon completed and published the *Marian Catechist Manual*, which sets forth the nature and structure of the Apostolate.

Shortly before his death on December 30, 2000, he asked Cardinal Burke to assume leadership of the Marian Catechist Apostolate. Cardinal Burke accepted and remains today the Episcopal Moderator and International Director of Father Hardon’s apostolate of catechesis.

Servant of God  
Father John A. Hardon, S.J.

**BIRTH**  
June 18, 1914

**PRIESTLY ORDINATION**  
June 18, 1947

**DEATH**  
December 30, 2000
Answering the Call for a New Evangelization: Pray, Study, Live, Teach

The secular culture in which we live has produced a gaping wound in the heart and soul of humanity. Many doubt or deny the existence of God. Even many who profess to be Christians live as though God does not exist. This has created a deep-rooted spiritual void in the lives of countless individuals and families, and in society as a whole. And yet, in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “The door of faith is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church” (Porta Fidei 1).

How is the New Evangelization of our secular society to be carried out? The answer is not a matter of inventing a new “program.” The program already exists. Found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition of the Church, this program first calls each of us to know, to love and to serve Christ and to bear witness to Him by an authentic holiness of life that is so extraordinary that hearts and souls are won for Him (cf. Novo Millennio Ineunte 29). It calls us to union with Christ through daily prayer, meditation on Sacred Scripture and frequent reception of the Sacraments, particularly the Holy Eucharist and Confession. It calls us to the habitual expression of selfless charity, in imitation of Christ, toward all we meet.

Secondly, because “a Christian may never think of belief as a private act,” we must take upon ourselves
the responsibility of proclaiming the Faith fearlessly (cf. Porta Fidei 10), uniting ourselves with Christ’s Church to “lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance” (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily during the Mass for the Inauguration of his Pontificate, 24 April 2005). Of course, we must be wary of how the best things are corrupted by Satan. Pope Saint John Paul II warns that we must never forget the perennial temptation which besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our own ability to act and to plan. In reality, only by cooperating with God’s grace can we accomplish anything, because “without Christ we can do nothing” (Novo Millennio Ineunte 38).

Father Hardon understood this well. He often said that if our world is to be saved, the Faith must be lived and taught with the enthusiasm and energy of the first Christians. He also understood that the evangelization of society would require that catechists be securely grounded in their own understanding of the Catholic Faith. They must first know the Faith if they are to love, to live and to proclaim it. To this end, Father Hardon taught the Faith tirelessly. He developed courses to help prepare a corps of catechists for our time, insisting upon the spiritual and doctrinal formation of this corps of catechists, which he eventually came to call the Marian Catechist Apostolate.
THE MISSION OF THE MARIAN CATECHIST APOSTOLATE

The mission of the Marian Catechist Apostolate is to form catechists doctrinally and spiritually for the teaching of the Catholic Faith. Simply put, it is to help others to know, love and serve God in this world in order to be happy with Him forever in Heaven. Marian Catechists have as their motto the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana: “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5).

Marian Catechists must be heroic souls, trained catechists who are committed to the conversion of our secularized society through the New Evangelization advanced by Pope Saint John Paul II and his successors.

THE FORMATION OF MARIAN CATECHISTS

The formation of each Marian Catechist has both doctrinal and spiritual components, culminating in one’s Solemn Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Consecration bestows particular graces on the Marian Catechist, graces that assist him or her in teaching the Faith. (Read more about the Consecration on page 15.)
Doctrinal Formation

Doctrinal formation for members who hope to make the Solemn Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary is comprised of three home study courses that are required, and one that is optional but highly recommended. The required courses include Father Hardon’s Basic and Advanced Catholic Catechism Courses and Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke’s Commentary on the General Directory for Catechesis. The Basic and Advanced Courses, both written originally by Father Hardon, are the foundation for learning well the Catholic Faith. The Basic Course has been revised and updated by Cardinal Burke. The Masters of the Spiritual Life Course, also written by Father Hardon, is recommended for continuing education, though it is not required for Consecration.

This four-part doctrinal formation is both challenging and deeply rewarding. There is no “teacher” in the traditional sense. The “teacher” is the textbook, though students may also consult other reliable and orthodox sources. Each lesson contains a challenging set of thought-provoking questions to be completed independently and mailed in for correction.

Because all of the courses are home study, each individual is able to work at his own pace. There is no time limit for completion; nonetheless, it is a good idea, for the sake of continuity, to work consistently until each course is completed. No additional fees are required of those who take a break in their studies.
Following independent study and completion of the open book tests, it may be beneficial to be involved in a discussion group. Before meeting in a discussion group, each participant is to have answered the questions for the lessons to be discussed and mailed in the answer sheets for grading. Help with questions is also available from the Marian Catechist Apostolate upon request.

**Course Number One:**
*Basic Catholic Catechism Course, Revised and Updated by Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke*

This course contains sixteen lessons covering the essentials of the Faith (Salvation History, *The Apostles’ Creed*, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Seven Sacraments and *The Lord’s Prayer*). Completion of two lessons per month has been found to work well for this course, although each person is free to determine his own study schedule.

**Course Number Two:**
*Advanced Catholic Catechism Course*

This course contains thirty-six lessons (Teaching the Catholic Faith, What We Believe, The Channels of Grace, Christian Morality and Prayer). Completion of two or three lessons per month has proven to be a manageable timetable of study and prayer for most students of this course.
Course Number Three:
Masters of the Spiritual Life Course

This course contains seven lessons covering seven masters of the spiritual life found in Father Hardon’s *Catholic Lifetime Reading Plan* (St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Thomas à Kempis, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Louis de Montfort, St. Peter Julian Eymard and St. Thérèse of Lisieux).

Commentary on the
General Directory for Catechesis (CGDC)

This is the final doctrinal requirement for those who desire to make the Consecration. It is a well-organized tool designed to help catechists to effectively teach the Faith. Written by Cardinal Burke, the CGDC can be downloaded from the Marian Catechist Apostolate website (www.MarianCatechist.com) or ordered in booklet form from the Bookstore (Bookstore@MarianCatechist.com). The answered questions are to be submitted to the Marian Catechist Apostolate for evaluation.
Spiritual Formation and Marian Catechist Spirituality

Father Hardon understood that we cannot offer to others what we ourselves do not possess, that we cannot lead others into communion with Christ unless we ourselves are in communion with Him. With this in mind, he insisted that the foremost preparation for each Marian Catechist be the development and ongoing progress of a sound and vibrant spiritual life, a life marked by an intense love for the Holy Eucharist, a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and an unswerving loyalty to the Holy Father as Successor of Saint Peter.

Marian Catechists seek to evangelize society by living each day in the presence of Christ, by faithfulness to the spiritual practices of the Marian Catechist and by the ongoing, disciplined study of the Catholic Faith. Father Hardon insisted on these practices because he knew that, by our fidelity to a life of prayer, we would be drawn into deeper communion with Christ. We would become authentic witnesses capable of drawing others into communion with Him. Father Hardon’s wisdom echoes that of Pope Paul VI, who said, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Evangelii Nuntiandi 41).
The Marian Catechist’s love for Christ and fidelity to His Church are sustained by the following spiritual practices, which have long been a beautiful part of Catholic life and tradition.

**Spiritual Practices**

1. Holy Mass and Holy Communion ................................................ daily
2. Holy Rosary ........................................................................... five decades daily
3. *Morning Offering to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* ............................ daily
4. *Memorare* for our Episcopal Moderator/International Director . daily
5. *Angelus* ................................................................................ twice daily
6. *Stations of the Cross* ................................................................... daily
7. Spiritual reading ................................................................. fifteen minutes daily
8. Meditation ............................................................................ fifteen minutes daily
   Meditation on Sacred Scripture using *Lectio Divina* is recommended; a helpful guide is available from the Marian Catechist Apostolate.
9. *Examination of Conscience* and *Act of Contrition* .............. each evening
10. Sacrament of Confession ..................................................... every two weeks

**Thirty-Day At-Home Ignatian Retreat**

Prior to making one’s Consecration as a Marian Catechist, each candidate is required to make a thirty-day Ignatian retreat, also called the *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*. The retreat is made at one’s home and coordinated through the International Office of the Apostolate.

This retreat is designed to build within the retreatant a strong and lasting friendship with God, to “remove our sinful addictions . . . to dispose us to want to learn what God expects of us, discover His will, and then determine to put it into practice” (*Retreat with the Lord*, p. vii). The concentrated
and intense routine of prayer required during the Spiritual Exercises is both an introduction to and an application of the deep prayer life practiced by Consecrated Marian Catechists.

Making the retreat at home enables retreatants to fulfill their work and vocational obligations. Information about this retreat may be requested from the International Office after the successful completion of the Basic Catholic Catechism Course.

Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Consecration is the final stage in the formation of Marian Catechists. The Consecration is made through the Immaculate Heart of Mary because her heart is perfectly united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Being so united, Mary is at once the gate of Heaven to earth and the gate of earth to Heaven. She is the gate through which Jesus’ saving love passes to us and the gate whereby our loving gratitude passes to Jesus.

Being God’s Mother, Mary is also our spiritual Mother, given to us by Christ as she stood at the foot of the Cross. As our spiritual Mother, she shares the unfailing, inexhaustible love of her Son for us, and desires to help us attain a deeper love for her Son. She is the channel of all grace and most capable of helping us.

Through our Consecration, we beg Our Lady to place our heart with hers into the Sacred Heart of
Jesus so that, by means of the Consecration, she can draw us closer to her Son and make of us true and loyal co-workers with Him in bringing His truth and love to a broken world.

Our Blessed Mother, the first and best catechist, is the catechist par excellence, the advocate of all catechists. Marian Catechists strive to emulate her and to follow her counsel to “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5). We beg her assistance as we try to live and teach the Catholic Faith so that others will come to love God, and to follow His will in and through His Catholic Church.

A formal request is required of members who desire to make the Solemn Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This request may be made upon completion of the required courses with an average score of 75% for each course, and upon completion of the thirty-day Ignatian retreat and sufficient progress in the spiritual life (that is, habitual fidelity to the spiritual practices of the Marian Catechist). The request is to be made in writing and submitted to the International Director for his approval. Information about how to write this letter is sent to all members of the Apostolate several months prior to the Consecration date each year.

**Consecration Commitment**

By virtue of this Consecration, one makes a one-year commitment to be faithful to the spiritual practices of the Marian Catechist, to continued study and to
some form of catechetical or apostolic activity. The Consecration does not possess the canonical status of a solemn vow. Should a person become unable, for whatever reason, to fulfill his commitments as a Consecrated Marian Catechist, neither penalty of sin nor any other canonical sanction is incurred.

Active or Contemplative Consecrated Marian Catechists

There are two types of Consecrated Marian Catechists: *active* and *contemplative*. The two types are not mutually exclusive. Those engaged in the active apostolate need the prayers and sacrifices of the contemplative members, and vice versa. Without the work of active catechists, the Marian Catechist Apostolate would lack the scope and purpose for its existence. Without the prayer and sacrifice of contemplative members, it would lack the supernatural means and resources to reach souls.

✧ **Active Marian Catechists** are engaged in catechetical work, that is, in teaching and sharing the Faith. Some, for example, are Parish Directors of Religious Education, some teach catechism classes to children and young people, some are youth ministers, some help with RCIA, and some lead Bible studies, while the focus of attention for others is the conversion of their own family, friends and coworkers.

✧ **Contemplative Marian Catechists** offer their prayers, sacrifices, sufferings and self-surrender to God’s will for the extension of the
Kingdom of God on earth, most specifically for the fruitfulness of the work of active members of the Apostolate. Contemplative members are often homebound or have health limitations that impede active catechesis.

**BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE MARIAN CATECHIST APOSTOLATE**

We invite you to participate in the New Evangelization by becoming a member of the Marian Catechist Apostolate. Membership is open to adult Catholic lay people (whether single, married or widowed) who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation and are in good standing with the Church.

While most people join the Apostolate in order eventually to become Consecrated Marian Catechists, many also join as Associates. Associate members are faithful Catholics who desire to participate in the work of the Apostolate, but because of time or other constraints, are unable to complete the courses or fulfill the spiritual obligations of the Consecrated Marian Catechist. We welcome the help offered by Associates, which takes the form of prayers for the Apostolate, practical assistance or financial support, to whatever degree possible.

To join the Marian Catechist Apostolate, simply fill out the membership application and return it to the International Office of the Apostolate, along with your annual fee. If you have further questions,
please visit www.MarianCatechist.com, contact us online at Prayer@MarianCatechist.com or call us at (608) 782-0011.

Please pray for Cardinal Burke and all who are trying to implement our founder’s plan to provide good and holy catechists to bring the Good News and the light of Christ into the new millennium. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization and model for all catechists, help you to discern if this is an apostolate which God wishes you to undertake.

GOVERNANCE OF THE APOSTOLATE

The Statutes of the Marian Catechist Apostolate govern its activity. The Advisory Council responsible for the governance of the Apostolate is composed of the Episcopal Moderator/International Director, the Spiritual Advisor and the International Coordinator. Of these, the Episcopal Moderator exercises supreme authority in the governance of the Apostolate. The Spiritual Advisor is a priest appointed by the Episcopal Moderator to oversee the spiritual formation of Marian Catechists. The International Coordinator is a Consecrated Marian Catechist appointed by the Episcopal Moderator to oversee the day-to-day operation of the Marian Catechist Apostolate.
Dear Friends,

I am deeply concerned about sound catechesis which is foundational in the life of the Church. It was my desire to renew and strengthen the teaching of the Catholic Faith in the Diocese of La Crosse which first led me to Servant of God Father John A. Hardon, S.J., who introduced me to the Marian Catechist Apostolate, his apostolate of catechesis. When he became gravely ill, Father Hardon asked me to assume the direction of the Marian Catechists upon his death.

I invite you to give yourself to the service of Christ as a Consecrated Marian Catechist. Those who are unable to complete the doctrinal studies and the spiritual formation are invited to participate in the work of the Apostolate as Associate members. All members receive the special graces which come from
participation in the Apostolate. However, becoming a Consecrated Marian Catechist by making the *Solemn Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary* bears much fruit in the life of the person who hands over his or her life to the Lord by this special act. The one who makes the Consecration can be assured of an abundance of graces in order to live the Consecration through the intercession of the Mother of God, especially under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The Consecration involves a one-year commitment to lead an exemplary Catholic life, according to the principles set forth in the *Marian Catechist Manual*. This commitment does not have the canonical status of a solemn vow, and is not binding under penalty of sin. It is, however, a most serious public commitment in the Church. The Consecrated Marian Catechist commits to:

- carrying out all of the Spiritual Practices listed in the Marian Catechist Apostolate Statutes to the best of one’s ability according to one’s state in life;
- deepening one’s understanding of the Catholic Faith, as contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and as taught by the Church’s Magisterium under the Vicar of Christ;
- devoting some time each week to the apostolate of catechesis, that is, sharing the Catholic Faith with others;
- cooperating with other Marian Catechists in disseminating the revealed truths of the Faith to others;
following the directives given by me as the Episcopal Moderator of the Apostolate and by my delegates.

Once again, I urge you to commit yourself to participate in the mission of the Marian Catechist Apostolate for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls. Registration in the Apostolate is the most effective means of assuring uniformity in the spiritual and doctrinal formation of all who call themselves Marian Catechists, in accord with Father Hardon’s directives. It is my hope that you will become a member of this Apostolate.

Be assured that I pray each day for all members of the Marian Catechist Apostolate. Please keep the Apostolate, and me, in your prayers.

Invoking God’s blessing upon you, while confiding your intentions to the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, I remain

Yours devotedly in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke
Episcopal Moderator and International Director of the Marian Catechist Apostolate
“Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him.”

(Novo Millennio Ineunte 40)

Pope Saint John Paul II

“I urge you to commit yourself to participate in the mission of the Marian Catechist Apostolate for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.”

Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke
ORDERING INFORMATION
The courses and other orthodox books and materials can be ordered from the Marian Catechist Apostolate Bookstore:
Bookstore@MarianCatechist.com or (608) 782-0011

MARIAN CATECHIST APOSTOLATE
P.O. Box 637  •  La Crosse, WI 54602  •  (608) 782-0011
E-MAIL: Prayer@MarianCatechist.com
WEBSITE: www.MarianCatechist.com

On the front cover: Icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe written by Rev. Paul Gerard Czerwanka. Copyright © 2005. All rights reserved. Used with permission.
Layout/design by Des Sikowski-Nelson, RiverEdge Design
Marian Catechist Apostolate
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete this form and submit, with the appropriate annual fee, to the address listed above. Checks should be made payable to Marian Catechist Apostolate. Membership renewals will be mailed to all members near the end of each year. We are unable to pro-rate fees; all renewals are due by January 1st of each year, regardless of the month in which you join.

**ANNUAL FEE (U.S. Funds Only):**
- United States $25
- Canada $35
- International $50

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1. Are you in the Formation Stage or are you ready to enter the Commitment Stage of becoming a Consecrated Marian Catechist?
   - **In the Formation Stage:** During this stage, members begin or continue to work on the Basic and Advanced Courses, begin gradually to adopt the spiritual practices as described in the Marian Catechist Manual, and make the Thirty-Day At-Home Retreat through the Marian Catechist Office.
   - **Ready to enter the Commitment Stage:** By the time members are prepared to enter this stage, they have completed the Basic and Advanced Courses and the Commentary for the General Directory for Catechesis (CGDC). In addition, they have made the Thirty-Day At-Home Retreat through the Marian Catechist Office and are faithful to the spiritual practices. These members are ready to make their Solemn Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

2. Father John A. Hardon’s *Basic Catholic Catechism Course, Revised and Updated by Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke* (16 Lessons)
   - Have you started it?  ☐ No  ☑ Yes
   - Have you completed it?  ☐ No  ☑ Yes If yes, please send a copy of your Certificate of Completion for our records.

3. Father John A. Hardon’s *Advanced Catholic Catechism Course* (36 Lessons)
   - Have you started it?  ☐ No  ☑ Yes
   - Have you completed it?  ☐ No  ☑ Yes If yes, please send a copy of your Certificate of Completion for our records.

4. Have you studied Cardinal Burke’s *Commentary on the General Directory for Catechesis* (CGDC), answered the test questions, and sent the test to the Marian Catechist Office for grading?
   - ☐ No  ☑ Yes

5. Please describe the catechetical work in which you are currently involved or hope to be involved this year.

6. For continuing formation, have you completed Father Hardon’s *Masters of the Spiritual Life Home Study Course*?
   - ☐ No  ☑ Yes

If you hope to become either an Active or a Contemplative Consecrated Marian Catechist, please complete the remainder of this form.

Please return this form and membership fee to:
Marian Catechist Apostolate
P.O. Box 637  |  La Crosse, Wisconsin 54602-0637