



Press Release

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Archdiocese of Cincinnati Scores 1,000 Online Students

During last week's **VLCFF (*Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation*)** Diocesan Partners Convocation held at The University of Dayton, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati was acknowledged as the second diocese among 40+ VLCFF Diocesan Partners to reach 1,000 participants in online adult faith formation courses! In January 2008, the Diocese of Cleveland was the first diocese to receive this distinction.

The VLCFF, created by The Institute for Pastoral Initiatives of the University of Dayton, serves the catechetical, adult faith and lay leadership formation needs of the Church. The VLCFF is one of the Catholic Church's largest online ministries serving the grassroots ministry formation needs of the Church in the United States and around the world.

The VLCFF currently offers more than 60 online courses in seven cycles each year; in any given year, over 400 sections of courses are offered. As members of a VLCFF Partner Diocese, adults in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati pay a reduced rate of only \$40 per course (\$90 is charged for non-Partner dioceses). The Catholic Education Collaborative (Dayton area) covers a significant portion of the fee for its member parishes and schools.

Why do Catholic adults in the Archdiocese participate in Catholic online learning? Time, distance and interest! The asynchronous (not in "real time") learning experience enables adult e-students to participate in the class at times that best fit into their lifestyles and availability. Many adults don't want to travel at night or on winter roads to a course offered at the

parish or across town. E-students are interested in learning more about their faith without having to leave home, yet seek to be part of an online faith community that supports and shares their journey. A qualified e-facilitator navigates the e-students through the course, enhancing depth learning and animating the online community or social-networking spirit. Catholic adults today have a vast assortment of faith interests, and courses or seminars related to their interests may not be offered within the parish or close driving distance. Furthermore, Catholic school educators and administrators, who are eager to renew their certificates, find online learning more conducive to their academic and personal lives.

Testimonials from students speak of their positive experiences of these online courses: “I loved communicating with others in my class on various questions. It gave me great insights. So often in classroom situations we just listen to lectures. In this online class, we were able to hear *everyone’s* voice,”; “The VLCFF program is easy to navigate...even for a first-timer!”; “There was more ‘classroom’ discussion online than in any class I have physically participated in”; and [VLCFF courses] “provide a wonderful balance of learning with the flexibility of study I need.”

In a recent interview with Archbishop Pilarczyk, he states: “[W]hat the VLCFF offers is a real opportunity for people to deepen their knowledge of the faith, deepen their interest in the faith and grow up in the faith...The courses that are offered are good solid courses and probably give more than we require for our certification courses...I have never gotten one single complaint about the orthodoxy of anything in this VLCFF. I would like to see it spread to become part of the ordinary Catholic life of the ordinary Catholic believer.”

Ken Gleason, Archdiocesan Director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis, says, “The VLCFF is of great benefit to our Archdiocese because it allows catechists, other ministers and “people from the pew” to increase their knowledge of the faith and their skills in ministry. Many of these people would not otherwise be able to take part in such quality formation because of a lack of time, the need to travel some distance or a lack of funds.” Dave Riley, Regional Director (Dayton), concurs and adds, “Online learning has exploded in our culture in recent years, and the VLCFF has participated in that remarkable growth.”

One significant highlight of the 2009 VLCFF Diocesan Partners Convocation was the announcement of the new Online Certificate in Catechesis and other certificate programs under construction: Adult Faith Formation, Foundation of Ministry Formation, Media Education/Literacy, and Digital Catechesis. New tracks in Liturgy and Catholic Education Culture and Identity are being expanded to meet the emerging needs of the Church in the Archdiocese and beyond.

For more information about joining in the rapidly growing online Catholic learning community, go to **vlc.udayton.edu**.