



Catholic Biblical School
Office of Religious Education • Archdiocese of Hartford

HARTFORD CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOOL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Topic 1

Questions about the *benefits* of attending the Hartford Catholic Biblical School:

- What will I get out of attending the Biblical School? (A lifetime of deeper faith.)

The Catholic Biblical School will help you read and understand the Bible and will teach you skills and give you practice in interpreting and praying with the Bible. These practices will enrich your faith not only for a day or a weekend, but for a lifetime.

The nationally-acclaimed *Catholic Biblical School* curriculum focuses on balancing faith formation, knowledge, Bible study and prayer skills. You'll increase your knowledge of the meaning of the Bible within its cultural and literary context.

Our more than 300 graduates tell us that because of their studies in the Catholic Biblical School they get more out of Sunday and daily mass and their faith is deeply enriched by reading and understanding the Bible.

- Can I receive college credit for my work in the Biblical School? (Yes.)

As part of St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, CT, the Hartford Catholic Biblical School is licensed by the State of Connecticut Department of Higher Education to grant 4.5 undergraduate credits per thirty-week course. Students who successfully complete four years of study in the St. Thomas Certificate in Biblical Studies program can receive up to 18 academic credits.

Topic 2 Questions about how the Biblical School *works*:

- Where are classes held? (Hint: You don't have to travel to Bloomfield.)

We offer a variety of locations throughout the Archdiocese of Hartford, (Hartford, New Haven and Litchfield Counties). Currently classes are held in the Connecticut towns of Bloomfield, Cheshire, Hamden, Milford, and West Hartford. Check our webpage at <http://www.orehartford.org/cbs.htm> for more detailed information.

- How many class meetings are there every year? (30.)

Thirty classes, organized into three units that are each ten weeks in length, plus two intensive sessions called "Scripture Days" held in the fall and spring.

- How much time will I spend in class each week? (2 hours.)

Each Catholic Biblical School class meets once a week for two hours each week.

- What are CBS classes like? (Hint: Our graduates never want to stop attending.)

Every class includes time for prayer, small group discussion with other adult students, and information presented by the instructor.

Students will be responsible for leading prayer at least once per year and for arranging any refreshments desired. (Snacks are optional; each class makes its own choices about how to handle refreshments.)

- What is the average time spent on homework each week? (It depends.)

Every student brings different goals and abilities to the Biblical School, and this affects how much time they choose to spend on homework assignments. Some students spend as little as 2-3 hours per week on homework; others spend much more. CBS students report, on average, spending about five hours per week on homework.

What it takes for you to achieve your learning goals will determine how much time you choose to spend preparing for class.

Homework assignments are not graded, and "memory exercises" are reviewed on a Pass/Fail basis, with 60% required to pass. (Students are *rarely* unable to pass a "memory exercise," and are encouraged to take the same test as often as needed to pass.)

The academic requirements for students who enroll as students in St. Thomas Seminary's Certificate in Biblical Studies program have additional requirements and should expect to spend a *minimum* of five-hours per week on course work. (See the St. Thomas Seminary catalogue or course syllabus for details.)

- Will there be tests in the Catholic Biblical School? (Yes, but with a difference.)

"Tests" in the Biblical School are better known as "memory exercises"; the purpose of these exercises is to help you remember the material covered when you're reading the Bible on your own.

You don't need to pass any tests to continue forward in the Biblical School, but to achieve the Archdiocesan Basic and Advanced Certificates in Biblical Studies you need to complete successfully all course requirements, including passing all "memory exercises."

“Memory exercises” are graded on a Pass/Fail basis, with 60% required to pass. It is *very rare* for a student not to pass, and students are allowed to take the *exact same* test as often as needed to pass. Other standards, though, apply to students taking courses for college credit. (See the St. Thomas Seminary catalogue or course syllabus for details.)

- What is a “memory exercise”? (A test... sort of.)

“Memory exercises” are sometimes called “tests” or “non-tests” in the Hartford Catholic Biblical School. They occur three times per year at the end of each Unit (ten-week period of study). The third memory exercise is cumulative for the year.

- What if I should fail a “memory exercise” (aka, test)?!

It is *very rare* for a student not to pass a “memory exercise.”

Any student who does not pass the “test” the first time is encouraged to take the *exact same* test as often as needed to pass.

Other standards apply for students taking courses for college credit.

- Do you assign grades in the Biblical School? (Yes, but with a difference.)

“Memory exercises” are graded on a Pass/Fail basis, with 60% required to pass.

Homework assignments are marked “complete” or “incomplete” and are not assigned grades.

Other standards apply for students taking courses for college credit. (See the St. Thomas Seminary catalogue or course syllabus for details.)

- Will I have to write papers in the Biblical School? (Only St. Thomas Seminary students write traditional papers.)

Assignments and “memory exercises” for non-credit students do *not* take the form of standard college “papers.” All written assignments are organized in a question-and-answer format. Weekly homework assignments typically feature six open-ended questions.

- Do I need to commit to all four years of the program when I enroll? (No.)

We encourage students who enroll in the Biblical School to commit to the *first two* years—Basic Certificate level. However, students enroll for one year at a time and have the opportunity each year to continue in the Biblical School without having to reapply for admission.

- Are there scholarships available? (Yes.)

The Sr. Jewel Renna, CND, Scholarship Fund offers partial tuition scholarships (up to half of total tuition). Scholarships are based on financial need. Applications are available beginning May 1 each year.

- When are scholarship applications due?

First-year students must apply by August 15 each year—but the earlier, the better. Continuing students must apply by June 1 *each year*.

- When do classes meet?

We offer morning and evening classes that meet once a week between mid-September and mid-May each year. Current locations and times are available at www.orehartford.org/cbs.htm

- What are “Scripture Days”? (...besides being lots of fun!)

Scripture Days are part of each year-long course and are a required component of the Biblical School and St. Thomas Seminary Biblical Studies curriculum.

Twice a year in late summer (Aug or Sept) and again in spring, students attend a “Scripture Day.” These programs take place on a Saturday or Sunday and feature top biblical scholars who lead us in study, reflection, and prayer.

- Is there an additional cost for “Scripture Days”? (No.)

Your tuition pays for two “Scripture Days” each year. Scripture Days typically last 4-6 hours on a weekend. Six-hour Scripture Days include lunch (no additional charge) and a liturgy.

- Who attends the Scripture Days?

All students who wish to receive Archdiocesan Basic and Advanced Certificates are required to attend two Scripture Days per year. (Participant’s Certificates can be achieved without attending all Scripture Days.)

Students enrolled through St. Thomas Seminary who wish to progress toward the *Certificate in Biblical Studies* are required to attend two Scripture Days per year.

- What is involved in the Summer Reading Assignment?

Every year, including Year One, begins with a summer reading assignment. This assignment asks students to read a specific book and to answer approximately six questions about the contents of that book. Assignments are made by June 1 each year and are due at the Opening Scripture Day each fall.

- Do I always have to attend class in the same location? (No.)

Students have a “home” class where they are assigned to a student discussion group for the year. (There are 5-8 students in each group.)

Students are, however, free to attend any class in the same curriculum year they’re enrolled in—in any location, at any time. It is not necessary to let the instructor know you will be attending, but doing so will allow the instructor to prepare materials for you.

To let an instructor know you will be attending a class other than your “home” class, call Ms. Jill Costa in the Office of Religious Education (860-243-9465 or jcosta@adh-ore.org).

A Key Point: Classes in each curriculum year are kept “synchronized” so that the same material is being covered each week in the various class locations.

- What if I have to miss class sometimes?

Two classes can be missed *without consequence* in each class unit of ten weeks, for up to six excused absences per year. If a student misses more than two classes in a single unit, they

can make up the missed classes in subsequent years if they wish to progress towards a certificate.

And remember, students who miss their regularly scheduled classes, can attend another class that week, in the same curriculum year, at another location. If possible, let the instructor know you will be attending by calling Ms. Jill Costa in the Office of Religious Education (860-243-9465 or jcosta@adh-ore.org).

- How do I make up missed assignments?

Missed assignments can be made up at any time prior to the last class meeting of the year. Students should make arrangements with their instructor.

Topic 3 Questions about costs associated with the Catholic Biblical School:

- How much is the yearly tuition?

Tuition for the upcoming academic year remains at \$250.

The Archdiocese of Hartford Office of Religious Education supplements student tuition to provide the Catholic Biblical School at very low cost, compared to other Catholic Biblical Schools across the country.

- When is tuition due?

For first-year students, half the yearly tuition is due upon enrollment, as a deposit to hold your place in the Biblical School.

For returning students, half the yearly tuition is due with the registration form, by June 1 of each year.

The remaining tuition is due for all students by October 1 of each year.

Special payment plans are available by arrangement with the Coordinator of the Catholic Biblical School.

- What does tuition cover?

- Thirty weekly classes
- Two Scripture Days
- All printed materials *except* books (i.e., class and Scripture Day handouts, memory exercises, calendars, etc.)
- Receipt of monthly newsletter, *ORE Connections*
- *Subscription to the CBS "Bible Blog" at <http://bjdhorehartford.blogspot.com/>*

- Are books included in tuition?

No. Books are the only essential materials that are *not* covered by CBS tuition. Access to all Biblical School texts is available in the St. Thomas Seminary library.

- What books do I need?

Textbooks must be purchased each year. A complete book list for each curriculum year is available by contacting Ms. Jill Costa in the Office of Religious Education (860-243-9465 or jcosta@adh-ore.org)

- Where do I purchase books?

Student workbooks must be purchased from the Biblical School for \$16.95. The Biblical School office is located at St. Thomas Seminary, second floor, in the Office of Religious Education.

Other texts are available through the Catholic Bookstore, located at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, CT. Most texts can also be purchased online. *Student workbooks*, though, need to be purchased from the Biblical School.

- How do I purchase student workbooks?

First-year student workbooks are available for purchase at your initial interview. We recommend you bring your checkbook with you at that time. We do not have the capacity to honor credit cards. Checks should be made out to "ORE."

In subsequent years, students will be given the opportunity to purchase student workbooks for the next academic year when they register each spring. Student workbooks will also be available for purchase at the Office of Religious Education at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and at the Opening Scripture Day each year.

- How do I purchase other required textbooks?

Other textbooks may be purchased through the Catholic Bookstore at St. Thomas Seminary, online, or through most bookstores.

The Catholic Bookstore at St. Thomas Seminary offers a 10% discount on all Catholic Biblical School textbooks, except for the students workbooks which must be purchased directly from the Biblical School.

- How much am I likely to spend on books each year?

Book prices vary and are subject to change. Total cost at list price for all texts, at the time of this posting, ranges from \$75 to \$125 per year. Some second-hand books may be available at reduced cost from the Biblical School.

Topic 4 Questions about *enrolling* in the Biblical School:

- Do I have to be Catholic to enroll? (No.)

The Biblical School welcomes students of *every* faith affiliation and of *no* faith affiliation.

Methods and instruction will follow Catholic guidelines, focusing on the insights and methods of contemporary biblical scholarship as followed by most Christian and Jewish exegetes (scholars).

The Catholic Biblical School does not promote a literal approach to the Bible.

Instructors are Catholic and will address questions of faith and spiritual practice from a Catholic perspective. They will also be happy to engage other faith traditions to the extent they are able.

- Are there age guidelines for attending the Biblical School?

Students must be 18 or have completed High School (or the equivalent) before they are eligible for enrollment in the Catholic Biblical School.

Students applying to enroll for college credit through St. Thomas Seminary must have completed High School (or the equivalent), or be enrolled as a full-time student in a college or university.

Current students in the Biblical School range in age from 18 to 98 years old.

- Does the Catholic Biblical School make sense if I have *no previous knowledge* of the Bible? (Yes.)

The Biblical School requires *no previous knowledge* of the Bible. Students of all backgrounds have found a home at CBS.

- Does the Biblical School make sense if I *have* studied the Bible before? (Yes.)

Some prior knowledge of the Bible will help you advance your level of faith and understanding. Even though you may experience some repetition, especially in the first unit of the first year, most students are able to adjust their self-study (weekly assignments) to their own level, even at the beginning. Students who have done extensive work in the Bible on a college or graduate level may want to discuss their situation with BJ Daly Horell, the Coordinator of the Catholic Biblical School and Chair of St. Thomas Seminary's Biblical Studies program. Email or call at cbs@orehartford.org or 860-243-9465.

Topic 5 Questions about Biblical School *requirements*:

- What are the requirements for advancing toward a Biblical School certificate?

For students *not* enrolled for credit through St. Thomas Seminary, there are five yearly requirements:

1. Scripture Day Attendance (2)
2. Class attendance (8 out of 10 weekly classes per unit; 24 out of 30 classes per year)
3. Summer reading assignment completed and turned in
4. All written homework completed and turned in (9 per unit/27 per year)
5. "Memory exercises" (3 per year) passed with 60% or greater.

Other standards apply to students taking courses for college credit. (See the St. Thomas Seminary catalogue or course syllabus for details.)

- What are the requirements for continuing enrollment if I don't want to receive a certificate?

Students can continue to attend all classes and advance through the four-year sequence of courses, whether or not they complete all requirements for Basic and Advanced Certificates—provided they participate fully in class and have paid tuition. At the end of four years these students will achieve a Participant's Certificate.

- What if I don't meet all the requirements toward a certificate? (It's okay!)

Please don't worry. Many students choose not to advance toward a certificate and yet benefit greatly from their faith journey in the Biblical School. If, at the end of four years of

study, you have not completed all yearly requirements, you will still graduate with a “Participant’s Certificate” that indicates your active participation in CBS.

If at any time in the future you wish to re-enroll to complete missed requirements and obtain a certificate, arrangements can be made by contacting BJ Daly Horell, the Coordinator of the Catholic Biblical School and Chair of the St. Thomas Biblical Studies program. Email or call at cbs@orehartford.org or 860-243-9465.

Topic 6 Questions about *certificates* awarded through the Archdiocese and St. Thomas Seminary:

- What is the Archdiocesan Basic (two-year) Certificate in Biblical Studies?

Students who receive the Basic Certificate in Biblical Studies have completed a careful study of the foundational texts of the Old and New Testaments, have engaged these texts in prayer and discussion, and have had the opportunity to lead their small group discussion sessions.

Basic Certificate holders are recognized by the Archdiocese of Hartford as having successfully completed basic formation in the understanding and reading of key biblical texts.

- What is the Archdiocesan Advanced (four-year) Certificate in Biblical Studies?

Students who receive the Advanced Certificate in Biblical Studies have completed a careful study of the entire Bible (including the deuterocanonical texts), have engaged these texts in prayer and discussion, and have had the opportunity to lead their small group discussion sessions.

Advanced Certificate holders are recognized by the Archdiocese of Hartford as having successfully completed advanced formation in the understanding and reading of every book in the Bible.

Students who complete the Advanced Certificate are encouraged to become leaders in their faith communities, bearing witness to the Scriptures and enabling others to encounter the Word of God in a variety of ministries.

- What is the St. Thomas Seminary *Certificate in Biblical Studies*?

Students who receive the St. Thomas Seminary *Certificate in Biblical Studies* have achieved everything required for the Archdiocesan Advanced Certificate, plus the following additional academic requirements.

- Memory exercises are assessed on a scale from A to F and must be passed with a grade of C or better to progress toward the St. Thomas Seminary certificate.
- Up to 7 additional assignments (written papers of 2-3 pages or other substantive projects) are assessed on a scaled from A to F and must be passed with a grade of C or better to progress toward the St. Thomas Seminary certificate.

(See the St. Thomas Seminary catalogue or course syllabus for details.)

- What is a “Participant’s Certificate” in Biblical Studies?

Students who receive the Archdiocesan Participant’s Certificate in Biblical Studies have taken part in four years of study in the Bible and have had the opportunity to study all the books in the Catholic Old and New Testaments, have had the opportunity to engage these texts in prayer and discussion, and have had the opportunity to lead their small group discussion sessions. They have not, however, completed all academic exercises required to receive the Advanced Certificate in Biblical Studies.

Students who hold a “Participant’s Certificate” are often profoundly knowledgeable about scriptural texts and methods and have encountered the Word of God in prayer.

Many Participant Certificate holders are well-equipped for leadership in their faith communities, bearing witness to the Scriptures and bringing a deep commitment to the Word of God to all that they do.

- What does it mean to be a “Graduate” of the Catholic Biblical School?

All Advanced *and* Participant Certificate holders, as well as St. Thomas Seminary graduates of the Certificate in Biblical Studies program are considered graduates of the Catholic Biblical School and are eligible to participate in all programs offered to CBS graduates, including but not limited to:

- The CBS graduation ceremony in June of their fourth year
- Graduate continuing education opportunities, including Mt. Nebo Day of Reflection at the end of their fourth year
- Graduate retreats and reunion celebrations
- CBS graduate courses and auditing privileges for CBS regular courses
- A free subscription to the *ORE Connections* newsletter for ongoing information about the Catholic Biblical School
- A free subscription to the CBS “Bible Blog” at <http://bjdhorehartford.blogspot.com/>

Basic Certificate holders are *not* considered graduates of the Catholic Biblical School.

Topic 7 Questions about the Catholic Biblical School’s authority and teacher credentials:

- What authority does the Catholic Biblical School have for teaching Scripture?

- Archbishop of Hartford Henry J. Mansell, D.D. has approved the Catholic Biblical School curriculum, published by Paulist Press, for adults in the Archdiocese of Hartford and students enrolled in St. Thomas Seminary.
- Archbishop Mansell *recommends* the Catholic Biblical School as “an excellent means for providing adults with an understanding of God’s Word, prayerful reflection on that Word, and the means to share that knowledge with others.”
- The Catholic Biblical School curriculum is authorized and is offered for study in the dioceses across the United States, including but not limited to: Buffalo, Dallas, Detroit, Hartford, Indianapolis, New York City, Omaha, Saint Louis, and San Diego.

- The Hartford Catholic Biblical School is licensed as the St. Thomas Seminary Certificate in Biblical Studies program by the Board of Governors of the State of Connecticut.
- St. Thomas Seminary's Chair of Biblical Studies and the Archdiocesan Coordinator of the Catholic Biblical School, Barbara Jean (BJ) Daly Horell, holds two degrees in biblical studies from Harvard and Gonzaga Universities, as well as a post-graduate certificate in spirituality from Boston College. Since 1981, she has guided adults, youth, and children as they engage the Word of God in Scripture in diocesan communities and on college campuses throughout the United States.

● Who are the instructors and what are their credentials?

All faculty members of the Hartford Catholic Biblical School hold at least a master's degree and have done extensive study in the area of Sacred Scripture. Several of our instructors hold doctoral degrees in theological and educational disciplines.

CBS instructors are all Catholics in good standing, have the ability to connect biblical interpretation with Catholic tradition and doctrine, and can communicate their expertise on an introductory level.

All faculty members and their credentials are listed in the St. Thomas Seminary catalogue.

● What is the method of study used in the Biblical School?

The Catholic Biblical School teaches the modern Catholic approach to Bible study, which is identical with the methods used by most mainline Christian traditions around the world. CBS does *not* promote a literalist/fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible.

CBS provides an integrated learning experience involving both the "head" and the "heart." A variety of methods of instruction appropriate to adult learning are used, including:

- Reading and writing assignments
- Small group discussion
- Input from professionally trained teachers
- Prayer services
- "Memory exercises" (aka, tests) to consolidate learning

Topic 8 Questions about Catholic Biblical School *texts*:

● Is the cost of books included in tuition? (No.)

Books are the *only* essential materials that are not covered by CBS tuition. Access to all Biblical School texts is available in the St. Thomas Seminary library.

● What books do I need?

Textbooks must be purchased each year. A complete book list for each curriculum year is available by contacting Ms. Jill Costa in the Office of Religious Education (860-243-9465 or jcosta@adh-ore.org).

● Where do I purchase books?

Student workbooks for all four years must be purchased from the Archdiocesan Office of Religious Education for \$16.95. Other texts are available through Catholic Bookstore located at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, CT.

Some texts can be obtained at bargain prices online. *Student workbooks*, however, must be purchased from the Biblical School.

Checks should be made to "ORE" and directed to Ms. Shirley Morris in the Office of Religious Education (860-243-9465 or smorris@adh-ore.org).

- How do I purchase books?

First-year student workbooks are available for purchase at your initial interview. We recommend you bring your checkbook with you at that time.

We do not have the capacity to honor credit cards. Checks should be made to "ORE."

Other required textbooks are available at the Catholic Bookstore at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield. The Catholic Bookstore extends a 10% discount on CBS textbooks to students enrolled in the Biblical School or as students in the St. Thomas Seminary *Certificate in Biblical Studies*.

- How much am I likely to spend on books each year?

Book prices vary and are subject to change. As of this posting, cost per year ranges from \$75 to \$125 per year. Some second-hand books may be available at reduced cost.