



---

## For the Pastor

*by Michael E. Steier, DMin*

*Associate Director, Secretariat of Evangelization &  
Catechesis*

*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

---

### Called to Embrace the New Evangelization

As you probably are aware, Pope Benedict XVI has announced that a Synod of Bishops for the XIII Ordinary General Assembly will be convened this fall to focus on the theme “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” Bishops from around the world are preparing to travel to Rome from October 7 through 28, 2012. By the end of February 2012, the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops had already met seven times in preparation for the meeting. In support of the synod, Pope Benedict XVI will also launch a Year of Faith (October 11, 2012–November 24, 2013) to “help the faithful develop the gift of the faith received from the Lord, to live it and transmit it to others.”

Although this important meeting will be held at an international level, it will soon begin to have an impact at the national, diocesan, and parish levels as the pope prepares and publishes an apostolic exhortation in its aftermath. According to CNA/EWTN News, “The New Evangelization Synod is expected to focus on the family’s role as recipients of the new evangelization,” and the key support they need from catechesis at all levels of church life, “especially through the liturgy with the sacraments and the homily . . . or through parish missions, popular piety, movements and ecclesial communities” (CNA/EWTN News, Rome, Italy, February 28, 2012, [www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/new-evangelization-synod-expected-to-focus-on-family-role](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/new-evangelization-synod-expected-to-focus-on-family-role), accessed February 29, 2012).

## **Explanation of 2012 Catechetical Sunday Theme**

In preparation for this synod, the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis has set as its theme for Catechetical Sunday 2012 “Catechists and Teachers as Agents of the New Evangelization.” A wealth of new resources for 2012 Catechetical Sunday have been prepared for use in September and throughout 2012-2013 by many, especially pastors and parish educational and catechetical leaders; Catholic school teachers; catechists of children, youth, and adults; those involved in sacramental preparation; and RCIA and evangelization teams. Twenty-one original articles have been developed. They include

- A scriptural reflection on the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20)
- Two in-service models for catechist and teacher training on their role as evangelists and the key knowledge, attitudes, and skills they will need in catechizing diverse populations
- Three in-depth articles on the New Evangelization
- Several articles providing useful information for serving the needs of youth, young adults, adults, and families
- Helpful hints and a list of programs for engaging the faithful in the Church’s evangelizing mission
- Articles exploring the importance of engaging national and international lay movements in evangelization
- “Faith in Action” articles by five young adult lay volunteers serving the Church in the United States, South America, and Africa
- A family/intergenerational retreat model

Most of the articles are available in English as well as Spanish. As in past years, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Office of Communications also has provided prayer cards, family commitment cards, posters, and certificates in English and Spanish for parish use.

## **Getting the Word Out**

The ministry of the Word is a fundamental element of evangelization through all its stages, because it involves the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God. Celebrating catechesis and those who participate in it is really celebrating the Church’s universal mission to evangelize. It also affirms the indispensable role the parish has in helping the faithful to deepen their understanding and practice of the faith and engaging them in embracing and carrying out evangelization efforts. This is why it is so important to offer, at least once a year, this opportunity to celebrate catechists and to remind the community that evangelization and catechesis are such an integral part of everything the parish does.

To get the word out, you are invited to first familiarize yourself with the resources. This year, Catechetical Sunday is celebrated on September 16, 2012. It is the twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. The readings remind us that “the Lord God is my help” (Is 50:5-9a); that faith requires and enables each believer to do good works (Jas 2:14-

18); and that once we recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, we, his disciples, must take up the cross and follow in his footsteps (Mk 8:27-35).

Make sure you mark Catechetical Sunday in your parish calendar early on. Plan to build momentum leading up to the celebration itself. Order posters early and display them in prominent locations around the parish and school buildings at least two months in advance. Highlight the coming celebration in pulpit announcements and short reflections in the parish bulletin (see “Sample Bulletin Announcements”) or e-newsletter. Use the artwork and other resources provided on the Catechetical Sunday website ([www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday](http://www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday)) in your different communications with parishioners and parish staff. Don’t forget to order sufficient copies of the printed materials from USCCB Communications. Presiders may go to the Catechetical Sunday website for a copy of the parish catechist commissioning service. Remember to include in the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) on Catechetical Sunday and periodically throughout the year: “All those faithful who, by word and example, participate in the Church’s evangelizing mission.”

If you have a parish website or e-newsletter, display on the main page the art and announcements about Catechetical Sunday several weeks ahead of the celebration. Encourage the faithful to link to the actual materials to provide easy access. All Catechetical Sunday materials, English and Spanish, are available online and are downloadable at no cost. Please remind parishioners that the Catechetical Sunday materials are all available online and list the website address ([www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday](http://www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday)) often so that they can access the materials as needed.

Although the Internet has become a very common way to share information, not everyone has ready access to it. Find creative ways to make the resources available to all.

As in the past, the following print materials will also be available for purchase from USCCB Communications: Prayer for Catechists (English No. 7-306; Spanish No. 7-307), Family Commitment Prayer (English No.7-308; Spanish No. 7-309), Catechist Certificates (English No. 7-310; Spanish No. 7-311), and the bilingual Catechetical Sunday poster (No. 7-312). To order these resources, visit [www.usccbpublishing.org](http://www.usccbpublishing.org) or call toll free 800-235-8722. In the Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call 202-722-8716.

## **Use Catechetical Sunday Materials Throughout the Year**

The Catechetical Sunday materials offer a variety of articles and options that lend themselves to different uses. The resources can give you clues about who in your parish might benefit from them the most. You are invited to read them and make them part of your homilies, reflections, and pastoral ministry throughout the year.

## 1. Catechists and Catholic School Teachers

Offer your catechists and Catholic school teachers the benefit of the opening in-service training session using the teaching aids by Fr. Wehner and Fr. Walsh and the lesson plan provided by Sr. Rose Monique Peña, OP. Consider providing an in-service with prayer, a shared meal and refreshment breaks, time to practice using the “Building Cultural Competencies and the Call for a New Evangelization” article by Fr. Allan Deck, SJ, and words of appreciation by the pastor and parish catechetical leader and/or school principal. Invite them to a special retreat session in the fall or spring, or encourage them to join fellow parishioners in the intergenerational retreat prepared by Mr. David Spesia or Lupita Vital Cruz (for Spanish-speaking participants). These experiences are valued by catechists and teachers and provide ongoing training, affirmation, and support for these most valued agents of evangelization and catechesis. Such support greatly maximizes their chances to be effective in their areas of ministry, reduces burnout, and speaks volumes to parish volunteers who so generously share their time and talents in hopes of serving God and their parish communities.

## 2. Adult Faith Formation

Develop one or more adult faith formation programs lasting a few hours or all day, using 2012 resource materials. Consider using the materials listed below by author to develop and offer one or more of the following Ministry Formation Days (MFD). Promote these days as special opportunities to help participants understand the New Evangelization and how they can be evangelists in their particular areas of service. As time allows, pray together, provide refreshments for break times, share a meal, and lead the groups in brainstorming and making commitments to incorporate the best evangelization ideas into their respective area of parish ministry. If possible, the parish catechetical leader or principal might check in with MFD participants individually or in their ministry groups a few times during the year to see how they are doing with becoming better evangelists.

- MFD for **All Engaged in Parish Ministry**: Fr. James Wehner (two articles), Fr. Leo Walsh, Fr. Michael Montoya
- MFD for the **Youth Ministry** team: Fr. John Serio
- MFD for **Young Adults**: Barbara McCrabb, the Faith in Action articles by Genevieve Jordan, Katie Muller, Bart Hisgen, Mary Oldham, and Kenny Latta
- MFD for the **Adult Faith Formation** team: Fr. Allan Deck, John and Therese Boucher, Lupita Vital Cruz (for Spanish-speaking group), Fr. Anthony F. Krisak, Fr. Larry Swink
- MFD for the **Evangelization** team: Fr. Anthony Krisak, Fr. Michael Montoya, John and Therese Boucher, Lupita Vital Cruz (for Spanish-speaking group), Richard McCord

### **3. Staff Development**

Consider using the 2012 Catechetical Sunday materials to help parish staff, pastoral council members, and other parish leaders to better understand and embrace Pope Benedict XVI's invitation to be nourished by and be agents of the New Evangelization. For more details about the New Evangelization, I urge you to read "Evangelization and the Ministry of the Word" (*National Directory for Catechesis* [NDC] [Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005], no. 17). Another wonderful resource is the *Lineamenta* for the 2012 synod, which may be found on the Vatican website at [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/re\\_synod\\_doc\\_20110202\\_lineamenta-xiii-assembly\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/re_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html).

### **4. Independent Learning**

Besides these small or large group options, many parishioners may wish to learn on their own. Have your adult faith formation team develop a plan for promoting use of these Catechetical Sunday materials for independent study. Articles of general interest can be printed and inserted periodically in parish bulletins. Parishioners can be encouraged to go online to select articles of personal interest. Be sure to include the Catechetical Sunday website address often in the bulletin and other communications options ([www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday](http://www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday)).

Online training opportunities can be developed using the articles from 2012 Catechetical Sunday for those who cannot attend the MFDs outlined above. Use the MFD options to develop an adapted version for individual use.

### **5. Outreach to Inactive Catholics**

Many parishes provide small- or large-group programming during Advent and Lent in outreach to inactive Catholics. As you plan for this outreach, consider using recommendations by Fr. Krisak ("A Review of the Best Evangelization Methods and Resources Available for Parish Outreach Efforts") and ideas from the Bouchers' article ("Keys for Welcoming Catholics Back to the Lord's Table") or Lupita Vital Cruz's Spanish article ("Puntos Claves Para Dar La Bienvenida A Los Católicos, Nuevamente A La Mesa Del Señor") with your planning group.

### **6. Family/Intergenerational Retreat**

Consider offering a family/intergenerational retreat. Use Mr. David Spesia's retreat model or Dania Junco's retreat model (for Spanish-speaking individuals).

However you are able to use the 2012 Catechetical Sunday materials, it is the committee's hope that these materials will help the faithful develop the gift of the faith they have received from the Lord, commit to live that faith, and learn how to transmit it to others. Best wishes for a wonderful year of evangelization and catechesis in 2012-2013.

“May the Virgin Mary, whose intercession was once responsible for strengthening the faith of the first disciples, obtain for the Church in the United States the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as she once did for the early Church” (NDC, no. 74).

---

Copyright © 2012, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. Permission is hereby granted to duplicate this work without adaptation for non-commercial use.

Synod of Bishops, *XIII Ordinary General Assembly*, The New Evangelization for the Transmission for the Christian Faith, *Lineamenta*, copyright © 2011.

Scripture texts used in this work are taken from the New American Bible, copyright © 1991, 1986, and 1970 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC 20017 and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved.