

## NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS

### *Chapter 7. Catechizing the People of God in Diverse Settings*

#### *48. Catechesis According to Readiness and Age Levels*

##### *C. Catechesis of Young Adults*

Some special consideration should be given to the catechesis of young adults. Young adults are persons in their late teens, twenties, and thirties who represent diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, educational, vocational, social, political, and spiritual backgrounds. They are college and university students, workers, and professionals; they are persons in military service; they are single, married, divorced, or widowed; they are with or without children; they are newcomers in search of a better life.

Young adults have many gifts to offer the Church: their faith, their hope, their desire to serve, their spiritual hunger, their vitality, their optimism and idealism, their talents and skills. The world also looks with hope to young adults to bring about a better future. Many young adults have vast reservoirs of goodness, generosity, and enthusiasm. They earnestly search for meaning in their lives; they value solidarity with the rest of humanity and seek to commit themselves to the cause of social justice. On the other hand, many young adults have been captivated by the consumerism and materialism of the society in which they grew up and have become apathetic and cynical. Young adulthood is sometimes a world of boredom, disillusionment, and indifference to the Church.

Young adults are often “the first victims of the spiritual and cultural crisis gripping the world.” Nevertheless, Pope John Paul II confidently exhorted the young people of the world, “do not be afraid to go out on the street and into public places like the first apostles, who preached Christ and the good news of salvation in the squares of the cities, towns and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops.”

The inspiration for catechesis for young adults is Christ's proposal to the young man: "Come, follow me." Many young adults welcome Christ's invitation. They are looking for opportunities to grow in the knowledge of their faith and in their ability to make good moral decisions. They need a non-threatening place where they can freely express their questions, doubts, and even disagreements with the Church and where the teachings of the Church can be clearly articulated and related to their experience. A series of evening or weekend sessions, special one-time presentations, days of recollection, retreats, discussion groups, Scripture study groups, mentoring relationships, hands-on social justice programs, and mission education projects can all be attractive means for involving busy young adults. But dioceses and parishes are challenged to develop new and creative ways to provide significant points of contact for young adults with the Church.

Ordinarily, in the period of early adulthood, young adults make some of the most important decisions in their lives about their Christian vocation, their career, and their choice of spouse. These choices condition and often even determine their futures. Effective catechesis will assist

young adults in examining their lives and engaging in dialogue about the great questions they face. Catechesis with young adults helps them to make these crucial decisions in accord with God's will and their Catholic faith.

Catechesis with young adults should form them in Christ, helping them to make moral decisions in light of the teachings of Christ and the Church. "Good and evil, grace and sin, life and death will more and more confront one another within them, not just as moral categories but chiefly as fundamental options which they must accept or reject lucidly, conscious of their own responsibility."

Catechesis with young adults draws them into the liturgical life and mission of the Church. It invites them to commit themselves to Christ, live fully Christian lives, and carefully consider their vocational call, whether it be to the priesthood, diaconate, religious life, married life, or chaste single life. This can also be an opportunity to consider a future of lay ecclesial ministry in the Church. Young adults should also be given the opportunity to receive formation and training to serve as liturgical ministers.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is an especially fruitful experience for young adults. It provides the opportunity for some young people to enter into the Catholic faith and for others to be sponsors or catechists. It is especially important that parishes and campus ministry programs offer sacramental preparation to young adults who have been baptized but have not made their First Penance, received their First Communion, or received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Outside of Sunday Mass, marriage preparation often is the most significant point of contact for young adults and the Church. It is a crucial moment for their evangelization and can be a "journey of faith which is similar to the catechumenate." Marriage preparation is a significant opportunity to learn more about the Church, especially the teachings of the Church on marriage and family life. For some, marriage preparation marks their first experience of church life in many years. Regardless of why they come, the Church and its ministers need to welcome them as Christ welcomes them, with understanding, love, and acceptance, challenging them with the gospel message, and giving them hope that a lifelong commitment is possible."

Preparation for the Baptism of their children is also an important opportunity to evangelize young adults and draw them closer to Christ and the Church. Effective baptismal preparation programs offer parents a chance to continue their formation in the Catholic faith and ordinarily include a more developed catechesis on the Sacrament of Baptism and on the Church's teachings on marriage and family life.

The distance some young adults feel from the Church can often be bridged by an adaptation of and approach to the language (mentality, sensibility, tastes, style, and vocabulary) employed in catechesis for them. Retreat experiences are often very effective ways to bring young adults to Christ and the Church. If young adults have been away from the Church, the Gospel message should be specifically addressed to them in imaginative ways that encourage their return. Parish and diocesan programs of evangelization and outreach should actively seek out young adults, enthusiastically welcome them, and facilitate their homecoming. In addition, young adults should

be encouraged to articulate any questions, difficulties, or concerns that they have that may contribute to their distance from the Church.

The most effective catechesis for young adults is integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral care that understands the concerns of young adults and candidly addresses the questions they ask and the problems they face. The goals of such a comprehensive program of young adult ministry are as follows:

- To connect young adults with Jesus Christ through spiritual formation/direction, religious education/formation, and vocation discernment
- To connect young adults with the Church through evangelizing outreach, formation of the faith community, and pastoral care
- To connect young adults with the mission of the Church in the world through forming a Christian conscience, educating and working for justice, and developing leaders for the present and the future
- To connect young adults with a peer community through developing peer leadership and identifying a young adult team for the purpose of forming faith communities of peers.

In catechesis with young adults, several important themes need to be emphasized: the formation of conscience, education for love, vocational discernment, Christian involvement in society, missionary responsibility in the world, the relationship between faith and reason, the existence and meaning of God, the problem of evil, the Church, the objective moral order in relation to personal subjectivity, the relationship between man and woman, and the social doctrine of the Church.

It is important that the Church find attractive ways to let young adults know that Christ loves them and needs them and that they are vital members of the body of Christ, the Church. Young adults are the hope of the Church. In a letter to the youth of the world, Pope John Paul II said, “the Church looks to the youth, indeed the Church in a special way looks at herself in the youth, in all of you and in each all of you. It has been so from the beginning, from apostolic times.”