



Catechists and Teachers as Agents of the New Evangelization

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Purpose

To offer ministers of faith formation the opportunity to (1) reflect together on the vision of Jesus' mission as he proclaims it and the Church's commitment to that mission by being sign and instrument of communion with God and unity among all peoples, and (2) consider the catechetical implications of such commitment through the "New Evangelization" promoted by Pope John Paul II.

Schedule

This in-service may be offered in one 3-hour session or two 1.5-hour sessions. This model describes a two-session format.

- Welcome, Introduction, and Prayer Service (20 minutes)
- First Session (60 minutes)
- Break (20 minutes)
- Second Session (60 minutes)
- Closing (15 minutes)

Preparation for the First Session

Days Before the Gathering

- Have the participants read the article by Fr. Leo Walsh, "Proselytism and Evangelization: Important Distinctions for Catholic Catechists," found in the Teaching Aids section of this resource. Instruct them to highlight the five central themes Fr. Walsh finds in Pope John Paul II's encyclical *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (Redemptoris Missio)* (RM). These will aid them in identifying practical ways to be better ministers of catechesis.
- Ask them to bring their Bible to the in-service.

- Gather two or three volunteers to prepare the opening prayer service.

For the Gathering

- It would be advantageous to have the group sit in a circle to enhance participation and sharing.
- You may want to prepare a suitable environment by placing in the center of the circle the following: a Bible, a cross, Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)* (EN), and Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. In addition, prepare three long strips of paper, each displaying one of the following sentences: "We Have a Story to Tell," "We Have a Story to Live," and "We Have a Story to Celebrate." Finally, depending on the size of the group, prepare one or more sets of sixteen cards, each card containing one of the following quotes: (1) Mt 5:14-16; (2) Lk 6:47-49; (3) Mk 2:21-22; (4) Mt 13:31-32; (5) Mt 13:33; (6) Mt 13:45-46; (7) Lk 15:1-7; (8) Mt 18:23-35; (9) Mt 20:1-16; (10) Lk 10:30-37; (11) Lk 11:5-13; (12) Mt 21:28-32; (13) Mt 22:2-14; (14) Lk 16:19-31; (15) Lk 18:1-8; (16) Mt 25:14-30.
- **Suggested Songs**
 1. "All Are Welcome" by Marty Haugen (GIA Publications)
 2. "Witness" by Paul Hillebrand (Oregon Catholic Press)
 3. "Make Us True Servants" (World Library Publications)

First Session

Welcome the group and introduce the session by sharing with the participants the purpose of the in-service as it appears above. Explain that this session will include personal and group reflections on Jesus' vision of his mission and on the commitment of the Church to be a *visible sign* of this mission. The second session will include conversations about the commitment of the Church to be an *instrument* of Jesus' mission, paying particular attention to its catechetical ministry.

Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

- Opening song
- Opening prayer
- Scripture reading (Lk 4:16-19)
- A few minutes of silent reflection
- Prayers of petition
- Concluding prayer
- Concluding song

For the Facilitator: Sharing of Stories (20 minutes)

Begin by saying that evangelization primarily concerns telling the Good News of Jesus through words and deeds (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], 2nd ed. [Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000], no. 3).

- To ready ourselves to delve into this, let us first share some stories, either from our personal life or world events—stories worth telling and retelling for the benefit of our children and grandchildren. Here are some examples:
 1. First moon landing, July 20, 1969
 2. Fall of the Berlin Wall, symbol of the Cold War, in 1989
 3. Rescue of the Chilean miners in October of 2010 after they spent sixty-nine days underground
 4. “The Miracle on the Hudson,” the successful ditching of a US Airways plane on the Hudson River in 2009
- Gather the participants in groups of two or three to share a story they have told and plan to continue telling. “Good stories,” tell them, “contribute to creating ties with the past and to providing vision for the future. They may inspire, challenge, and promote positive reflections and actions.”
- When the groups are finished, invite some of the participants to share briefly *a story they just heard*.

Jesus Shares His Stories (40 minutes)

- Pick the set of Scripture cards from the center and distribute them, one for each group of three or four participants. Ask them to read the selection and share one thought or image worth remembering.
- Gather the large group back together and ask several groups to share their findings.
- Ask: How many of you find that one or more of these parables of Jesus has a great influence in the way you think or conduct yourself? Allow time for this important sharing.

Wrapping Up This Activity (5 minutes)

At this point you may want to make the following observations:

- Jesus’ proclamation of his mission as recorded in Luke 4:18-19—“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the

Lord”—*is the mission of the Church as well*. She is entrusted with bringing this news to all people by telling and retelling it and providing opportunities to encourage the conversion Jesus envisioned.

- “Evangelizing,” says Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: ‘Now I am making the whole of creation new’” (EN, no. 18).
- The Church community, blessed with the Spirit of the Lord, is pressed to continuously reflect on and recommit herself to being a visible sign and instrument of intimate relationship with God and union among all peoples (see Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]* [LG], no. 1, in *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery [Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996]). A vibrant Church witnesses to the past and to the future that the Kingdom of God is among us now, in the present (Lk 17:20-21).

Break (20 minutes)

Second Session

Preparation

- Review Fr. Leo Walsh’s article “Proselytism and Evangelization: Important Distinctions for Catholic Catechists,” which the catechists should have read and highlighted before the first session of the in-service.
- Prepare a set of cards with the following Scripture passages: (1) Jn 14:6; (2) Mt 8:5-7; (3) Lk 13:10-13; (4) Jn 6:24-27; (5) Mt 5:1-12; (6) Mt 23:1-4; (7) Lk 11:1-4; (8) Lk 12:49; (9) Mt 28:16-20; (10) Jn 4:9-10; (11) Mt 5:23-24; (12) Mt 6:2-3; (13) Mt 6:19-21.
- Make copies of the six goals of the New Evangelization quoted from the *National Directory for Catechesis* [NDC] [Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005], no. 17 (listed below).
- Use the same setting used during the first session.
- Have a flip chart and markers available.

For the Facilitator

Before the session begins, distribute among some participants the cards with Scripture quotes. Ask each person to find the quote in the Bible, read it, and be ready to share it in his or her own words with the group.

Jesus as Evangelizer and Catechist (30 minutes)

- Begin with a song.
- Read, or have a couple of participants reenact, John 21:15-17.

With this simple request Jesus hands over his mission to the first disciples.

- The task was daunting, because the disciples needed to keep in mind that the “lambs” were many and from different origins, interests, and needs. The proclamation of the Good News called, then, for a careful modeling of Jesus’ methods. Let us hear some passages from Scripture that illustrate his different methods. (Have those who read the passages share the particular segment you gave them.)
- After each person shares the assigned passage, ask: What method did Jesus use here?

The New Evangelization (30 minutes)

- Many and varied were the people Jesus encountered. We have seen how he evangelized or catechized them depending on their need. Our ministry as catechists encompasses both activities as well. As evangelizers we proclaim Christ, we preach Christ, we witness to Christ, we teach Christ, and we celebrate Christ (see EN, no. 17). As catechists we strive to bring that initial conversion to maturity by making it a living, explicit, and fruitful confession of faith (NDC, no. 19).
- Pope John Paul II summoned the Church community to recommit its energy to evangelize and catechize in a manner reflecting Jesus’ approach. To direct the Church’s attention to this important mission, he named this initiative the New Evangelization (see RM, no. 3). As quoted in NDC, he addressed the proclamation of the Word to the following groups of people:
 1. To the baptized who were never effectively evangelized before
 2. To those who have never made a personal commitment to Christ and the Gospel
 3. To those formed by the values of the secularized culture
 4. To those who have lost a sense of faith
 5. To those who are alienated
 6. To all human cultures so that they might be open to the Gospel and live in harmony with Christian values (NDC, no. 17)

- Our catechetical sessions, whether in schools or in parish settings, have ample representations of these different stages of faith development. How do we deal with them?
- At this point, divide the participants into groups of four or fewer people, depending on the size of the group, and distribute copies of the above quote from the NDC. Ask them to have Fr. Walsh's article on hand for reference. They may gather as catechists of same-age students or as catechists of mixed-age students. Give each group a large piece of newsprint paper and some markers.
- Direct the group to take no more than five to seven minutes to read again the quote from the NDC and the central themes highlighted in Fr. Walsh's article. Then spend the rest of the time sharing the group's impressions and writing practical ways for addressing each of the six situations, paying special attention to those most common in their particular catechetical group. The readings from Scripture discussed earlier and the catechetical text they are presently using may give them some inspiration. Have them post their suggestions on the wall when they are finished.
- Invite representatives to stand and share each group's ideas. Inform them that you will take the most significant ones for their implementation in the catechetical program.
- Take note of these and plan some follow-up activities either with the entire group or in small groups.

Conclusion and Evaluation (15 minutes)

- It was the intention of our time together to reflect on the privileged vocation of being ministers of faith formation in our school and parish. We've looked at Jesus' methods of evangelization and catechesis and at the Church's commitment to his mission by being a visible sign and instrument of union with God and with one another. We've identified specific ways to be more effective ministers by taking a closer look at the New Evangelization promoted by Pope John Paul II.
- Do you have an insight from today that you would like to share with the group?
- Thank everyone and finish with a song and this prayer:

O God of light and wisdom, today we look to you.

As we prepare to witness to your message with our teaching,
 give us vision, imagination, inspiration, and enthusiasm
 to reach the hearts and minds of our students.
 May they hear in our classes what you want to tell them,

and may we tell them what you want them to hear.
Keep us faithful to the mission entrusted to us
and embrace us with your eternal love, the Holy Spirit.
We ask you this in Christ's name. Amen.

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