

COMPANION

to the

Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process

A Diocesan Guide for an Evangelizing Catechesis

PREPRINT EDITION



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Committee on
Evangelization
and Catechesis

COMPANION

to the

Handbook on the

Catechetical Accompaniment Process

A Diocesan Guide for an Evangelizing Catechesis

PREPRINT EDITION



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Committee on
Evangelization
and Catechesis



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Committee on
Evangelization
and Catechesis

Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, *Chairman*
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Most Reverend Alfred C. Hughes
Archbishop Emeritus of New Orleans

Most Reverend William D. Byrne
Bishop of Springfield

Most Reverend Andrew H. Cozzens
Bishop of Crookston

Most Reverend Thomas A. Daly
Bishop of Spokane

Most Reverend Daniel E. Flores
Bishop of Brownsville

Most Reverend Francis Y. Kalabat
Bishop of Chaldean Diocese of St. Thomas the Apostle

Most Reverend Erik T. Pohlmeier
Bishop of St. Augustine

Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding
Bishop of Nashville



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Subcommittee on
the Catechism

Most Reverend Erik T. Pohlmeier, *Chairman*

Bishop of St. Augustine

Most Reverend Alfred C. Hughes

Archbishop Emeritus of New Orleans

Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron

Archbishop Emeritus of Detroit

Most Reverend John Bonnici

Auxiliary Bishop of New York

Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes

Bishop of Columbus

Most Elias R. Lorenzo, O.S.B.

Auxiliary Bishop of Newark

Most Reverend Michael T. Martin, O.F.M. Conv.

Bishop of Charlotte

Most Reverend Kevin J. Sweeney

Bishop of Paterson

“In relation to the diocese, the national catechetical office, according to the needs and possibilities, is to provide for the formation of directors of the diocesan offices, also by means of conferences, study seminars, and publications. Moreover, it is to organize the events that have to do with catechesis for that national territory, coordinate the activities of the diocesan offices, and especially support the dioceses that are least equipped in terms of catechesis. Finally, it is to attend to the relationships with editors and authors, ensuring that the material published corresponds to the demands of catechesis in the country in question.”

— Directory for Catechesis, no. 414¹

¹ Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis* (DC) (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020).

Contents

Introduction	1
Evangelizing Catechesis	2
Key Themes of the <i>Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process</i>	5
Paradigm shift to evangelizing catechesis	
Expansion of audience in catechetical materials	
Expansion of goals	
Purpose of This Guide	8
Outline	
Implementation	
 Part 1	
A New Moment for Evangelizing Catechesis	13
Opening Prayer	14
Selected Readings	15
Reflection	20
Current Context for the Church in the United States	
Witnesses to the Gospel	
Discuss: Guided Questions and Answers	25
Q: What is the kerygma?	
Q: Does the essential message of the kerygma change, depending on the context?	
Q: What are some cultural challenges facing the proclamation of the kerygma in the United States?	
Q: What opportunities for renewal of the proclamation of the kerygma are there in the present age?	
Respond: Draw Conclusions	27
Closing Prayer	28



Part 2

The Catechumenate as the Model for All	29
Opening Prayer	30
Selected Readings	31
Reflection	36
Discuss: Guided Questions and Answers	37
Q: What principles of the catechumenal process can inspire other moments of catechesis with children, young people, and adults?	
Q: How does the communal character of the catechumenate call us to better involve our parish communities in sharing in the catechetical mission of the Church?	
Q: What are the key elements of the catechumenal model?	
Q: What are the implications of the catechumenal model for catechesis?	
Respond: Draw Conclusions	41
Closing Prayer	42

Part 3

Goals for Evangelizing Catechesis	43
Opening Prayer	44
Selected Readings	45
Reflection	53
Discuss: Guided Questions and Answers	54
Q: How do we assure that the presentation of doctrinal teaching leads to personal appropriation and virtuous behavior?	
Q: What is the role of doctrine in catechesis?	
Q: How does the diocesan catechetical office contribute to evangelizing catechesis?	
Q: What is the role of the diocese and parish in catechesis?	
Q: How is catechesis supposed to be inculcated?	
Respond: Draw Conclusions	60
Closing Prayer	62



Part 4

New Methods, New Ardor, New Expressions	63
Opening Prayer	64
Selected Readings	65
Reflection	69
Discuss: Guided Question and Answer	72
Innovative Methods	
New Ardor	
Creative Expressions	
Q: What can “family catechesis” look like?	
Respond: Draw Conclusions	75
Renewal and Methods	
Beauty in Proclamation	
Integration of Content and Method	
Flexibility and Discernment	
Closing Prayer	77

Conclusion

The Path Forward and the Vision of Evangelizing Catechesis	79
Implementing Evangelizing Catechesis	80
For Bishops	81
A Deeper Dive into Responsibilities	
For Diocesan Directors	83
Expanding the Scope of Action	
Closing Prayer	85

Introduction

“Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.”

— Eph 4:15-16

Evangelizing Catechesis

At the heart of the Church's mission to all people, an evangelizing catechesis seeks to deepen a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.²

- It proclaims the core message of the Gospel, the kerygma;³
- It accompanies people to a response of faith and ongoing conversion to Christ;⁴
- It provides a systematic exposition of God's revelation within the communion of the Catholic Church;⁵ and
- It sends out missionary disciples as witnesses to the good news of salvation⁶ who promote a new vision of life, of humanity, of justice, and of human fraternity.⁷

This definition of evangelizing catechesis,⁸ from the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) focuses on the transformative agency of the Holy Spirit; the importance of proclaiming the kerygma; the need to accompany, apprentice and mentor people in their journey of maturing faith; and the joy of being sent forth on mission. This understanding of

² The *Directory for Catechesis* offers a more expanded description in paragraphs 55 and 56.

³ Cf. DC, no. 2: The kerygma "manifests the action of the Holy Spirit, who communicates God's saving love in Jesus Christ and continues to give himself so that every human being may have the fullness of life."

⁴ Cf. DC, no. 3: The process of accompaniment leads to an internalizing of the Gospel which "involves the whole person in his unique experience of life."

⁵ Cf. DC, no. 4: "The act of faith is born from the love that desires an ever-increasing knowledge of the Lord Jesus, living in the Church."

⁶ Cf. DC, no. 4: "All believers are active participants in the catechetical initiative...and because of this are called to become authentic missionary disciples."

⁷ Cf. DC, no. 60: "Since 'the kerygma has a clear social content'...the efficacy of catechesis is visible not only through the direct proclamation of the Lord's Paschal mystery, but also through its revelation of a new vision of life, of humanity, of justice, of social existence, of the whole cosmos which emerges from the faith and which makes its signs concretely present."

⁸ This definition was approved by the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, in collaboration with the Subcommittee on the Catechism, in 2022 and can be accessed on the Committee's website <https://www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis> or through the Institute on the Catechism website <https://evangelizingcatechesis.com/site/>.



formation points toward ongoing conversion and includes the entire community of the baptized: from the bishop, as the chief pastor of the diocese, to the newly baptized. Therefore, evangelizing catechesis is the work of all the People of God. As such, this approach focuses on deepening the relationship with Jesus Christ, emphasizing both the proclamation of the Good News of salvation and the formation of missionary disciples who authentically live out and share their faith with others. Evangelizing catechesis is intended to be transformative, leading to a vibrant active faith, and a deeper intimacy with Christ that inspires ongoing spiritual growth and an active missionary spirit.

In *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope St. John Paul II gives the following description of catechesis: “The name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ.”⁹

Evangelizing catechesis, at its heart, is a ministry of accompaniment—walking with others toward a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ. This is a much richer process than solely intellectual formation, and includes liturgical, spiritual, and moral formation. Catechesis, which unfolds the beauty and treasures of Church teaching, presupposes evangelization. Evangelization aims to put people in touch with Jesus Christ; catechesis builds upon this relationship and “formalizes” it. In this mission, diocesan directors play a critical role in supporting the office of the bishop as chief catechist and as serving as leaders, mentors, and resources for catechetical initiatives across diverse communities. To support their vital work, this document aims to provide a supplementary resource that fosters discernment and dialogue including best practices and methodologies, fostering the vision of evangelizing catechesis articulated in the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), which serves as the foundation for the *Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process (CAP)*.

⁹ Pope St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT), no. 1.

The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) emphasizes the national catechetical office's responsibility to organize events, provide formation, and support diocesan offices, particularly those with fewer resources.

In relation to the diocese, the national catechetical office, according to the needs and possibilities, is to provide for the *formation of directors of the diocesan offices*, also by means of conferences, study seminars, and publications. Moreover, it is to organize the events that have to do with catechesis for that national territory, coordinate the activities of the diocesan offices, and especially support the dioceses that are least equipped in terms of catechesis. Finally, it is to attend to the relationships with editors and authors, ensuring that the material published corresponds to the demands of catechesis in the country in question.¹⁰

Building on this framework, the following document serves as a companion to the *Handbook on the CAP*, offering practical guidance and inspiration for diocesan leaders and all those involved in evangelizing catechesis within the diocese. The *Handbook on the CAP* is a resource developed by the Institute on the Catechism, an initiative of the Subcommittee on the Catechism, under the direction of the Committee of Evangelization and Catechesis at the USCCB.

¹⁰ DC, no. 414.

Key Themes of the *Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process*

The *Handbook on the CAP* explains the paradigm by which the Subcommittee on the Catechism ensures that catechetical materials remain faithful to the teachings of the Church, relying primarily on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as its basis for authentic and complete doctrinal teaching, and implementing the vision for evangelizing catechesis as explained in the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020).

The Subcommittee has been collaborating with publishers in this work since shortly after the *Catechism* was first published. To guide publishers in developing catechetical texts, the Subcommittee on the Catechism developed three sets of protocols:

1. **Elementary basal series**
2. **Sacramental preparation**
3. **Secondary level framework** (for high school resources, approved by the whole USCCB)

In response to ongoing concerns and the changing landscape for evangelizing catechesis, the bishops of the Subcommittee on the Catechism developed a new process to accompany publishers as they develop catechetical materials: the **catechetical accompaniment process**, which is set forth in the *Handbook on the CAP*. Three significant shifts of the catechetical accompaniment process should be highlighted:

1

Paradigm shift to evangelizing catechesis

The Church situates all catechetical endeavors within the context of evangelization. Pope Francis once reminded catechists, “Never forget the purpose of catechesis, which is a privileged stage in evangelization, that of meeting Jesus Christ and allowing him to grow in us.”¹¹ The Committee on Evangelization

¹¹ Pope Francis, “Address to Participants in the Third International Congress of Catechists” (September 10, 2022).

and Catechesis adopted the definition of evangelizing catechesis (p. 3) as a reminder that truly effective and formative catechesis must always begin with Christ and lead back to him. The initial paradigm for the Subcommittee on the Catechism—which directed its review of catechetical texts—was to ensure the authentic and complete presentation of the faith, appropriate to the audience of the materials.

Ongoing changes in the catechetical landscape and the publication of the new *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) prompted the Subcommittee to evaluate its work and to discern how it could promote evangelizing catechesis, catechesis based on the *kerygma* and that leads individuals to become missionary disciples in the Church.

2

Expansion of audience in catechetical materials

When the Subcommittee began its review of catechetical materials, its efforts were focused primarily on texts produced for students. While it would occasionally include teacher or catechist supplementary texts, these were the exception. The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) reminds us that parents, teachers, grandparents, and godparents can all play a role in catechesis. Furthermore, we are reminded that even the best catechetical resources will have little success if the catechist himself or herself is not a living witness.¹² The *Handbook on the CAP* includes goals for catechists, parents, and families as well.

3

Expansion of goals

Catechesis requires formation of the whole person, not just his or her intellectual formation. The *Handbook on the CAP* therefore provides goals that consider the whole person. This includes collaborating with publishers to promote best practices for evangelizing catechesis in their catechetical resources. The behavioral and interior life goals underscore how intellectual

¹² Cf. Pope St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), no. 41.



formation must always lead to the person living as a witness to Christ, drawn ever more closely to him by ongoing encounters with him in the sacramental life of the Church.

As noted in the *Handbook on the CAP*, these goals both flow from and build toward a **primary formational goal**:

To form a mature Catholic disciple who is firmly committed to feeling, thinking, and acting like Christ;¹³ who believes, understands and can articulate the truths of the Faith; who joyfully and frequently receives the Sacraments with ever-deepening devotion, especially the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist; who lives the virtuous life with ever-growing charity and wisdom; who is steadfast in ongoing prayer; who faithfully engages with Sacred Scripture; who is active in the Catholic parish and bears witness to the faith in all aspects of life.¹⁴

¹³ DC, no. 77.

¹⁴ *Handbook on the CAP*, p. 13.

Purpose of This Guide

The primary goal of this resource is to inspire and equip diocesan leaders to implement the paradigm of evangelizing catechesis in a spirit of discernment and prayer. As a companion to the *Handbook on the CAP*, this resource aims to help diocesan leaders to explore new methods, to ignite renewed enthusiasm, and to proclaim anew the doctrines of the faith—considering the unique cultural, social, and pastoral contexts of their dioceses—ensuring that catechesis remains both faithful and relevant.

A crucial aspect of this work involves ongoing collaboration with the local ordinary, recognizing the bishop’s role as the chief catechist of the diocese. By working closely with the office of the bishop and all those delegated to support the vision of evangelizing catechesis, diocesan leaders can ensure that their catechetical initiatives align with the broader pastoral vision and priorities of the local Church. This collaboration not only strengthens the unity between catechetical efforts and episcopal leadership but also provides the necessary support and guidance to implement evangelizing catechesis in a way that resonates deeply with the faithful. Bishops and diocesan leaders tasked with fostering this vision of evangelizing catechesis and missionary discipleship might consider utilizing this resource as a guide to their discussions and implementation. This resource is intended to serve as a model for reflection, discussion, and discernment: thus, each section begins and ends with prayer, highlighting the vital need for the Holy Spirit to lead us in our own personal formation as disciples of the Lord and as missionary witnesses.

Outline

Rooted in the vision of the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), and in conjunction with the *Handbook on the CAP*, this document emphasizes the centrality of the *kerygma*—the core proclamation of the Gospel—as the foundation for all evangelizing catechesis efforts. It seeks to address the challenges of secularism, cultural shifts, and the need for ongoing evangelization, particularly in the context of the United States. By offering a structured framework and practical tools, it supports diocesan



directors in navigating these complexities and seizing opportunities for renewal. It also serves to support diocesan leaders as they engage their diocesan colleagues in this conversation and support the bishop in his role as chief catechist of the diocese.

This document is organized into four main parts, each addressing a critical aspect of evangelizing catechesis:

1 A New Moment for Evangelizing Catechesis

This section explores the centrality of the kerygma and the contemporary cultural context, highlighting the need for a renewed focus on the Gospel as the source of all catechetical efforts.

2 The Catechumenate as the Model for All Catechesis

Drawing from the Church's Tradition, this section outlines the catechumenal model's core elements and their application to general catechesis, including adaptations for diverse cultural settings.

3 Goals for Evangelizing Catechesis

This section defines the primary goals of evangelizing catechesis—fostering a personal relationship with Christ, equipping disciples, and building missionary communities—and explores their distinguishing characteristics.

4 New Methods, New Ardor, New Expressions

This final section delves into innovative methodologies, Spirit-led enthusiasm, and creative approaches that respond to the unique challenges and opportunities of our time.

The document concludes with an invitation to encourage catechetical leaders to embrace evangelizing catechesis with renewed passion and creativity, envisioning a future where the Church's mission transforms both individuals and communities with boldness and joy. "There is a pressing need to frame everything in terms of evangelization, as the fundamental principle that guides ecclesial activity as a whole."¹⁵ It is

¹⁵ DC, no. 297.

our hope that this companion resource will serve as a catalyst for dialogue, collaboration, and innovation, strengthening the body of Christ through the paradigm of evangelizing catechesis.

Implementation

For bishops and diocesan leaders, implementation begins with prayerful discernment, followed by dialogue, collaboration and ongoing formation. As the chief catechist of the diocese, the bishop sets the tone for all catechetical efforts. This document, as a companion to the *Handbook on the CAP*, is designed to facilitate that journey and contains insights for prayerful reflection and implementation.

This document is also intended to serve as a catalyst for conversation, and for discernment of how the *Handbook on the CAP* can be of service to diocesan catechetical formation, especially in fostering an evangelizing catechesis and growing missionary disciples. It could be of service in identifying pastoral needs and setting goals for growth.

Suggestions for using this document

- Pray with the document, reflecting on its vision and relevance for the local Church.
- Engage diocesan leadership teams, including directors of catechesis, Catholic school superintendents, and evangelization staff in a shared dialogue around the reflections, prayers, themes, and priorities presented in this document.
- Consider how diocesan efforts can support and facilitate the primary formational objective of the *Handbook on the CAP*, especially through the behavioral and interior life goals.
- Host local study days, workshops, or listening sessions with parish leaders to explore the four main themes of this document.
- Develop diocesan plans rooted in the principles of evangelizing catechesis, while tailoring efforts to the cultural and pastoral realities of the region.

- Collaborate with superintendents, principals, publishers, parish catechetical leaders, and Catholic educators to ensure that content, methods, and resources align with the principle of evangelizing catechesis and utilize the list of resources approved by the USCCB.
- Offer formation and mentorship to parish and school leaders, especially in under-resourced communities, in partnership with the national catechetical office and the Institute on the Catechism.

Potential reflection questions to consider with this document

- What is the current state of catechesis in our diocese?
- Is prayer and the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Holy Eucharist, at the center of all of our catechetical efforts?
- How are we equipping disciples, forming missionary communities, and fostering encounters with Jesus Christ in our faith formation efforts?
- What structural, pastoral, or financial support is needed to strengthen this mission?
- What fruit have we seen from our catechetical efforts in the last year?
- How are we prioritizing the kerygma and fostering a culture of encounter with Jesus through Scripture and the sacramental life of the Church?
- What challenges are we facing in implementing and sustaining a vision of evangelizing catechesis, and how might we address them together?
- What percentage of the Baptized in your diocese/parish are not being catechized?
- What new initiatives might be considered to invite, encourage, and accompany them?
- How can we foster mentoring and accompanying relationships that help to strengthen catechetical, doctrinal, and apologetic knowledge in the faithful, so that they can be missionary witnesses to Christ in the world?

- Are we asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide all our catechetical efforts, and are we open to seeing how he is calling us to serve and grow?

Part 1

A New Moment for Evangelizing Catechesis

“Always be prepared to give a reason (*‘logos’*) for the hope that is in you.”

— 1 Pt 3:15

“The kerygma...is simultaneously an act of proclamation and the content of the proclamation itself, which unveils the Gospel and makes it present.”

— *Directory for Catechesis*, no. 58

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,
pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire me with these words from Holy Scripture.

Stir in my soul the desire to renew my faith
and deepen my relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ
so that I might truly believe in and live the Good News.

Open my heart to hear the Gospel
and grant me the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others.

Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth
and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions.

In moments of hesitation, remind me:

- If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel?
- If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed?
- If not the truth of the Gospel, then what shall I proclaim?

God, our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit
I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith,
grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel
and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

([Prayer for the New Evangelization](#), USCCB)



Selected Readings

Acts of the Apostles

Acts 4:8-12 (Peter Preaches before the Leaders, Elders, and Scribes)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered them, “Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.’ There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”

Gospels of Luke and Matthew

Cf. Lk 1:35, Mt 1:21, 23 (Infancy Narratives)

Jesus is the “Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us.” He “save[s] his people from their sins.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience and Catechesis on the *Year of Faith*, Oct. 17, 2012

God has revealed himself with words and works throughout a long history of friendship with mankind which culminated in the Incarnation of the Son of God and in the Mystery of his death and Resurrection. God not only revealed himself in the history of a people, he not only spoke through the Prophets but he also crossed the threshold of his Heaven to enter our planet as a man, so that we might meet him and listen to him... The Church, born from Christ's side, became the messenger of a new and solid hope: Jesus of Nazareth Crucified and Risen, the Savior of the world who is seated at the right hand of the Father and is the judge of the living and the dead. This is the kerygma, the central, explosive proclamation of faith.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 164

The first announcement or kerygma...needs to be the center of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal. The kerygma is

trinitarian. The fire of the Spirit is given in the form of tongues and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ who, by his death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father's infinite mercy. On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you."

Directory for Catechesis (2020)

Directory for Catechesis, no. 30, footnote 21

"In his manifestation, God joined himself to mortal nature so that through participation in divinity humanity could be divinized together with him" (quoting St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica*, no. 37)

Directory for Catechesis, no. 31

In the process of evangelization, the Church:

- driven by charity, permeates and transforms the whole temporal order, incorporating cultures and offering the contribution of the Gospel so that they may be renewed from within;
- draws near to all humanity with attitudes of solidarity, fellowship, and dialogue, thus bearing witness to the Christians' newness of life, so that those who meet them may be prompted to wonder about the meaning of life and the reasons for their brotherhood and hope;
- explicitly declares the Gospel through the first proclamation, issuing the call to *conversion* ...

Directory for Catechesis, no. 102

Christian culture is born from the awareness of the centrality of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel, which transforms the life of humanity. By slowly permeating different cultures, the Christian faith has adopted, purified, and transformed them from within, making the evangelical style their essential feature, contributing to the creation of a new and original culture, the Christian culture, which over the course of the centuries has produced true masterpieces in all branches of knowledge. It has acted as a support and as a vehicle for the proclamation of the Gospel and, despite historical changes sometimes marked by ideological and cultural conflicts, has succeeded in preserving genuine evangelical values such as, for example, the uniqueness of the human person, the dignity of life, freedom as a condition of human life, equality between men and women,

the need to “refuse the evil and choose the good” (Is 7:15), the importance of compassion and solidarity, the significance of forgiveness and mercy and the necessity of being open to transcendence.

Pope Leo XIV

Pope Leo XIV, Homily at the Holy Mass *pro Ecclesia*, May 9, 2025

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God: the one Savior, who alone reveals the face of the Father. In him, God, in order to make himself close and accessible to men and women, revealed himself to us in the trusting eyes of a child, in the lively mind of a young person and in the mature features of a man (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22), finally appearing to his disciples after the resurrection with his glorious body. He thus showed us a model of human holiness that we can all imitate, together with the promise of an eternal destiny that transcends all our limits and abilities.

Pope Leo XIV, General Audience, May 20, 2025

The parable of the sower talks precisely about the dynamic of the word of God and the effects it produces. Indeed, every word of the Gospel is like a seed that is thrown on the ground of our life. Jesus uses the image of the seed many times, with different meanings. In chapter 13 of the Gospel of Matthew, the parable of the sower introduces a series of other short parables, some of which talk precisely about what is happening on the terrain: the wheat and the weeds, the mustard seed, the treasure hidden in the field. What, then, is this soil? It is our heart, but it is also the world, the community, the Church. The word of God, in fact, makes fruitful and provokes every reality.

At the beginning, we see Jesus who leaves the house and gathers a great crowd around him (cf. Mt 13:1). His word fascinates and intrigues. Among the people there are obviously many different situations. The word of Jesus is for everyone, but it works in each person in a different way. This context allows us to understand better the meaning of the parable.

A rather unusual sower goes out to sow, but does not care where the seed falls. He throws the seeds even where it is unlikely they will bear fruit: on the path, on the rocks, among the thorns. This attitude surprises the listener and induces him to ask: how come?

We are used to calculating things – and at times it is necessary – but this does not apply in love! The way in which this “wasteful” sower throws the seed is an image of the way God loves us. Indeed, it is true that the destiny of the seed depends also on the way in which the earth welcomes it and the situation in which it finds itself, but first and foremost in this parable Jesus tells us that God throws the seed of his Word on all kinds of soil, that is, in any situation of ours: at times we are more superficial and distracted, at times we let ourselves get carried away by enthusiasm, sometimes we are burdened by life’s worries, but there are also times when we are willing and welcoming. God is confident and hopes that sooner or later the seed will blossom. This is how he loves us: he does not wait for us to become the best soil, but he always generously gives us his word. Perhaps by seeing that he trusts us, the desire to be better soil will be kindled in us. This is hope, founded on the rock of God’s generosity and mercy.

Pope Leo XIV, Address to Superiors and Officials of the Secretariat of State, June 5, 2025

We are incarnate in time and history since God chose the human condition and the languages of humanity. The Church, therefore, is called to follow the same path, in order that the joy of the Gospel may reach everyone, mediated through today’s cultures and languages. At the same time, we always seek to maintain a Catholic, universal outlook that allows us to appreciate different cultures and sensibilities. In this way, we can be a driving force committed to building communion between the Church of Rome and the local Churches, as well as friendly relationships in the international community.

Pope Leo, Angelus, August 24, 2025

Jesus calls into question “the security of believers.” He tells us that it is not enough to profess the faith with words, to eat and drink with him by celebrating the Eucharist or to have a good knowledge of Christian doctrine. Our faith is authentic when it embraces our whole life, when it becomes a criterion for our decisions, when it makes us women and men committed to doing what is right and who take risks out of love, even as Jesus did. He did not choose the easy path of success or power; instead, in order to save us, he loved us to the point of walking through the “narrow gate” of the Cross. Jesus is the true measure of our faith; he is the gate through which we must pass in order to be saved (cf. Jn 10:9) by

experiencing his love and by working, in our daily lives, to promote justice and peace.

Pope Leo, Angelus, August 31, 2025

Sisters and brothers, when we sit together at the table of the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, we too should be willing to let Jesus speak. He becomes our guest and he can tell us how he sees us. It is very important that we see ourselves through his eyes: to see how frequently we reduce life to a competition, how anxious we become to obtain some sort of recognition, and how pointlessly we compare ourselves to others. Stopping to reflect, letting ourselves be taken aback by a word that challenges our hearts' priorities, is to experience freedom, the freedom to which Jesus calls us.

Pope Leo, Homily for the Jubilee of Catechists, September 28, 2025

In this regard, as catechists you are those disciples of Jesus who become his witnesses. The name of your ministry comes from the Greek verb *katechein*, which means “to teach aloud, to make resound.” This means that the catechist is a person of the word – a word that he or she pronounces with his or her own life. Thus, our first catechists are our parents: those who first spoke to us and taught us to speak. Just as we learned our mother tongue, so too the proclamation of the faith cannot be delegated to someone else; it happens where we live, above of all in our homes, around the family table. When there is a voice, a gesture, a face that leads to Christ, the family experiences the beauty of the Gospel.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Jubilee of Catechists, September 25, 2025

Without being first evangelized by an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ through the witness and preaching of the kerygma—namely, his passion, death, and resurrection—catechesis remains without authentic impact on the person. So, it is with all who seek to lead others to Jesus Christ through the teachings of the Catholic faith. Evangelization must take priority. Yet, we rarely if ever do one task without the other.

Evangelization and catechesis go together like hand and glove. While we need a hand for the glove, we must remember that the glove is not meant for anything else but the hand. It is this conviction of *evangelizing catechesis*, a both/and rather than either/or, that underlies our focus on *missionary transformation and pastoral conversion*.

Reflection

The Church proclaims Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and gloriously triumphant. She does not preach herself and her power, but rather preaches him who came to renew us to the core of our humanity and to elevate us to share his own Divine Life. He who in his very Person reunites humanity and divinity is the reason and message (*Logos*) for the hope in us. Indeed, the whole of the Church's teaching on faith and morals comes from her confession of him. For Jesus Christ, the fullness of revelation, does indeed fully reveal God to man. But also, Jesus "by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown."¹⁶ Thus at the heart of every catechesis and disciple must be the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Knowing him is the key to Scripture, tradition, creation, and to understanding the human person. In this way, "Catechesis, which cannot always be distinguished from the first proclamation, is called to be in the first place a proclamation of the faith, and must not pass on to other ecclesial actions the task of assisting in the discovery of the beauty of the Gospel" (*Directory for Catechesis*, no. 57).

Current Context for the Church in the United States

Signs of Vitality in the current US Context

The Church in the United States shows significant signs of vitality in the dynamics of catechetical ministry. On the national level, the USCCB discerned for its 2025–2028 Mission Directive,

Responding even more deeply to the call of Christ to proclaim the Gospel and form Missionary Disciples, the Committees and Staff of the USCCB, submitting to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will prioritize the work of the Conference to help equip bishops, clergy, religious, and the laity in evangelizing those who are religiously

¹⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

unaffiliated or disaffiliated from the Church, with special focus on young adults and the youth.¹⁷

The USCCB has also established the Institute on the Catechism—an initiative of the Subcommittee on the Catechism and the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis—to foster and accompany the growth of evangelizing catechesis in our country. At the diocesan level, many serious and comprehensive efforts have been undertaken, such as the revision of curriculum, policies on catechetical ministry, and formative entities. Formation of catechetical teams continues to be a priority for most dioceses and parishes. Lay men and women are generously involved in ministry and assume significant responsibility and leadership. Adult faith formation has been identified as the central form of catechesis and various initiatives throughout the country continue to foster adult faith formation.¹⁸ Catechetical resources continue to grow, incorporating diverse models of catechesis and innovative methodologies, including the usage of the latest communication technologies.

Challenges in the Current US Context¹⁹

The contemporary world is largely detached from a lived ecclesial and faith experience. Even among those who profess the name “Christian,” daily life often does not reflect the demands of Baptism. Yet, the Holy Spirit continues to arouse thirst for the Gospel. Indeed, as St. Augustine reminds us, God has created us for relationship with him, and our hearts are unsatisfied by anything less.²⁰ Unfortunately, modern society has compartmentalized faith in such a way that many do not hear the message of faith. The pervasive secularism and individualism of our culture continues to force our witnessing of the Gospel to the private sphere. Contemporary western society is skeptical even of the idea that there might be an objective truth, preferring instead to call truth subjective, or “personal.” In this context, religious faith becomes simply one of many ways to look at the world, and no religion is objectively more “true” than another. People become increasingly indifferent to

¹⁷ USCCB, “Mission Directive,” <https://www.usccb.org/about/mission-directive>.

¹⁸ See, for example, the USCCB’s pastoral plan, *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1999).

¹⁹ Cf. *Handbook on the CAP*, p. 9 - 38, especially “Secular Culture,” p. 20 - 21.

²⁰ Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1.1.

religion or they attempt to reduce all world religions to beliefs they share in common regarding a few values on which many people can agree. The extreme political polarization in our country in recent years has resulted in fewer places of respectful dialogue with opposing views, and the phenomenon of viewing every issue, even moral ones, through the lens of political party first and faith second. This has resulted in an inconsistent application, even among Catholics, of the most fundamental moral principles, such as respect for all life and the dignity of every human person.²¹

Witnesses to the Gospel

Giving witness to our hope in Jesus Christ and sharing our story of faith is essential for implementing the paradigm of evangelizing catechesis, as personal witness makes the Gospel tangible, relatable, and fruitful in the life of the believer and the hearer. Pope Francis reminded us that “every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus.”²² Each of us should be encouraged to reflect on our journey of faith, identifying key moments of encounter with Christ and how the Church supports and nourishes us in our growth in holiness.

By sharing our testimony with joy, authenticity and humility, we embody the call of St. Peter: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Pt 3:15). When catechists integrate their personal story into their teaching, they not only pass on doctrine: they also invite others into a living relationship with Christ and his mystical body, the Catholic Church.

A simple and effective framework to structure our story of faith follows the “Before, Encounter, After” model, which aligns with the narrative of conversion found in Scripture and Church tradition. This approach ensures that our testimony is clear, compelling, and evangelizing:

²¹ Cf. Pope Leo XIV, Message to Participants in the Seminar “Evangelizing with the Families of Today and Tomorrow: Ecclesiological and Pastoral Challenges,” May 28, 2025.

²² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), no. 120.

1 Before

- Life Before Encountering Jesus Christ
- Describe what life was like before experiencing a (deeper) relationship with God.
- Highlight struggles, questions or suffering that took place during this time and what was missing from your life. Be prudent about what you share.
- Avoid excessive detail—focus on the deeper longing for meaning, love, or truth.

2 Encounter

- A Moment (or Process) of Conversion
- Share the key event(s) that led to a deeper faith—this could be a personal crisis, a sacramental moment, a retreat, encountering Scripture, or the witness of another person.
- Emphasize how God made himself present, bringing clarity, peace, or transformation.
- Reflect on the role of Jesus, the Church, and the sacraments in this encounter. Highlight any witnesses of faith who accompanied you along the way.

3 After

- Life Transformed by Jesus Christ
- Describe how faith has changed your outlook, decisions, behavior and daily life.
- Share ongoing struggles, but emphasize the hope and strength found in Christ and his body, the Church.
- Encourage others to seek their own encounter with Jesus and find refuge, support and consolation in the mystical body of Jesus Christ, through the sacramental life of the Church.

This framework mirrors St. Paul's testimony in Acts 22:1-21, where he recounts his life before conversion, his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and how this encounter transformed his mission. It is

helpful also to note that the “before,” “encounter,” and “after” phenomena may be less dramatic for some, but rather an experience which invites a more serious or deeper response to the Lord. It also aligns with Pope St. Paul VI’s insight: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”²³ Sharing our stories of faith and praying with others are concrete ways to bring the Gospel to life no matter what situation we find ourselves in.

²³ EN, no. 41.

Discuss: Guided Questions and Answers

These questions are not intended to be an exhaustive list but an aid to foster discernment and conversation.

Q: What is the kerygma?

A: The *kerygma* is that most basic and fundamental *proclamation and content of the proclamation* at the heart of the Catholic Faith. It is the Good News—that Jesus Christ, by his Paschal Mystery, has defeated death and offers us salvation; he now sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us, and he has sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins—and the announcement of that same Good News to others. “We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection until you come again.”²⁴ As the Lord announces, he has come “to proclaim liberty to captives,” (Lk 4:18) - by virtue of the Fall, we have all inherited Original Sin and need the grace of Baptism and the life of grace in the Church. “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). We are called to announce this joy anew in every time and place, as the Lord has commanded, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).

Q: Does the essential message of the kerygma change, depending on the context?

A: No. The content of the *kerygma* is always the same—“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8)—however, the proclamation of this Good News can take many forms. Peter’s speech in Acts 4:8-12 is often cited as *the* formula of the *kerygma*, and it is certainly a very good example! There are, however, other expressions of the *kerygma* that we can consider. The Apostles Creed encapsulates a very early expression of belief that involves the kerygma and some initial catechesis.

²⁴ English translation of *The Roman Missal*, 2010.

Q: What are some cultural challenges facing the proclamation of the *kerygma* in the United States?

A: The United States has been affected by political, racial, and geographical divisions. Distinctions such as rural and urban communities are also noteworthy. Larger numbers of people have reported disaffiliation, agnosticism or atheism. Secularism, especially elements of relativism and consumerism, has become a default world view, creating a sometimes-hostile environment. People are often not aware that they *need* to be set free from the bonds of sin, and therefore, are not ready to receive the Good News that Christ is the victor.

Q: What opportunities for renewal of the proclamation of the *kerygma* are there in the present age?

A: Because society has become more secular than in past generations, the proposition of the *kerygma*, when lived to its full as both the content of teaching and the action in response to that teaching, encounters and is mediated through cultures. The *kerygma* transforms, purifies, elevates, and, at times, provides a counter witness to the culture. In short, saints, who live by the Word of God and cling to the Cross in hope of beatitude in Heaven, stand out among the crowd. Being called to this holiness means we are called to hold firm to the Truth, and allow our light to shine before men (Mt 5:16). In the past few years, the US has seen a Eucharistic Revival, a stronger community of young adult and college-age Catholics, and liturgical renewal which stand out and draw others towards them because of their boldness. One set of opportunities for discussion and evangelization provided by recent events were the funeral of Pope Francis followed by the conclave and election of Pope Leo XIV. As individuals, by being bold in our Faith, we can continue to draw those around us, whom we know are looking for the happiness of God.



Respond: Draw Conclusions

The Lord is calling us, his children, his flock, to follow him - every day, in all aspects of our lives, and in the very core of who we are. He yearns for our hearts to burn with the Holy Spirit, that zeal for his house would consume us.

How do we begin? Where can we practice silence, meditation on the Scriptures, and listening to the Lord speak to us, so that we can give him our response of “yes, Lord!” How do we help our diocesan leaders, catechists, pastors and parish communities to foster this practice of openness to the Lord’s voice?

St. Paul urges us, “But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!’...Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (Rom 10:14-15, 17)

Let us keep in mind that if we are the Lord’s disciples, we will continue to have “before, encounter and after” experiences as we journey on our own path to sanctity. We will have more conversion moments, and more opportunities to bear witness to the Lord’s abundant grace and mercy. Let us never grow weary of announcing his goodness!

Closing Prayer

Sweet Holy Spirit,
enflame us with the fire of your love,
that we may burn with holy zeal for souls.

Grant us the grace to be submissive to you in all things.
May we courageously announce the freedom from slavery to sin
that Christ has won for us by his Cross.

Adorable Jesus, conform us to you.
May we never be separated from you.

Heavenly Father, may our lives declare your praise,
and may we one day worship you
in the glory of your heavenly kingdom.

O God, we are unprofitable servants:
do with us as you will.

Amen.

Part 2

The Catechumenate as the Model for All

“Then, having been delivered from the powers of darkness through the sacraments of Christian initiations (see Col 1:13), and having died, been buried, and risen with Christ ... they receive the Spirit of adoption of children (see 1 Th 3:5-7; Acts 8:14-17) and celebrate with the whole people of God the memorial of the Lord’s death and resurrection.”

— Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, no. 14.

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, help us to embrace the catechumenal process as a model for all catechesis. Teach us to accompany and form people of every age and background as they embark on the journey of real and lasting conversion. Lead us to foster a deep and abiding intimacy with Christ, so that all may become missionary disciples, living witnesses of his love and truth, following the example of the Blessed Mother, who responded to God's call with courage and faith.

Come, Holy Spirit, help us to inspire and strengthen catechetical leaders, catechists, and all those who come to us seeking the Truth, the Divine Teacher, Jesus Christ. Show us how to follow his Divine Pedagogy: A progressive journey that respects the rhythm of each person, guiding them step by step. Help us to cooperate with God's grace, and to balance the pastoral, catechetical, and liturgical dimensions that are essential in each stage of the catechumenal process.

Come, Holy Spirit, help every community to be active in embracing and accompanying those entrusted to their care. Guide us to act with the wisdom of the Holy Mother Church, who nourishes Her children with love and truth, embracing each one as they are and helping them grow in communion with the Blessed Trinity and the Body of Christ, the Church.

Come, Holy Spirit, help us to open our hearts to the mystery of the Incarnation, where we see the perfect model of evangelization. Help us to recognize the beauty of cultural diversity as a sign of your perennial fecundity. Teach us to proclaim the Gospel in ways that speak to every heart and culture, transforming and purifying all people through the saving power of Your truth and grace.

Come, Holy Spirit, help us remain faithful to the mission You have entrusted to us. Guide us on our own journey of conversion, filling our hearts with the fire of your love, so that we may become joyful witnesses to the Gospel. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.



Selected Readings

The Gospel of Luke

Lk 24:13-35 (Road to Emmaus)

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.

And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?”

And he replied to them, “What sort of things?”

They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel...”

And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Pope St. Paul VI

Pope St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41

As we said recently to a group of lay people, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” St. Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word. It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus- the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.

Directory for Catechesis (2020)

Directory for Catechesis, no. 35

Pastoral action nourishes the faith of the baptized and helps them in the Christian life’s ongoing process of conversion. In the Church, “the baptized, moved always by the Spirit, nourished by the sacraments, by prayer and by the practice of charity, and assisted by multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith, seeks to realize the desire of Christ: ‘Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.’” In this consists the call to holiness for entering into eternal life. The beginning of this stage corresponds to the period of mystagogy in the catechumenal program.

Directory for Catechesis, no. 65

Catechesis in a kerygmatic and missionary vein requires a pedagogy of initiation inspired by the catechumenal journey, responding with pastoral wisdom to the plurality of situations. In other words, according to an understanding that has been developed in various Churches, this is a matter of the catechesis of initiation into Christian life. It is a pedagogical journey offered in the ecclesial community, which leads the

believer to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the word of God, liturgical action, and charity, integrating all the dimensions of the person so that he may grow in the mentality of faith and be a witness of new life in the world.

Directory for Catechesis, no. 242

The need to make the process of Christian initiation an authentic experiential introduction to the entirety of the life of faith leads to looking at the catechumenate as an indispensable source of inspiration. It is entirely appropriate to configure Christian initiation according to the formative model of the catechumenate but with criteria, contents, and methodologies adapted for children. The gradation of the process of Christian initiation for the young inspired by the catechumenate provides for times, rites of passage, and active participation at the Eucharistic table that constitutes the culmination of the initiatory process. In carrying it out, catechists are committed to overturning the traditional vision that predominantly sees the child as the object of the pastoral care and attention of the community and to adopting the perspective that educates him gradually, according to his capacities, to be an active participant inside and outside the community. Catechumenal inspiration also makes it possible to reconsider the primary role of the family and of the entire community with regard to children, activating processes of reciprocal evangelization among the different ecclesial subjects involved.

Pope Leo XIV

Pope Leo XIV, Address to Neophytes and Catechumens from France, July 29, 2025

What a joy it is to see the youth committed to the faith and wanting to give meaning to their lives, allowing themselves to be guided by Christ and his Gospel! Baptism makes us full members of the great family of God. The initiative always comes from him and we respond gaining the experience of his love, which saves us. In your journey as catechumens and newly baptized, each of you personally encountered the Lord in the community that embraces you. We identify ourselves personally as daughters and sons of God through our baptism “in the name of the Father,” who offers us adoptions, “and of the Son” who incorporates us into his life and into his relationship with his Father, “and of the Holy Spirit,” the source of every gift (cf. Gal 4:6). St. Paul reveals the essential effect of baptism, when he writes to the Galatians: “For all of

you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (3:27).

Pope Leo XIV, General Audience, October 22, 2025

Sadness robs life of meaning and vigor, turning it into a directionless and meaningless journey. This very current experience reminds us of the famous account in the Gospel of Luke (24: 13-29) of the two disciples of Emmaus. Disappointed and discouraged, they leave Jerusalem, leaving behind the hopes they held in Jesus, who has been crucified and entombed. In the opening lines, this episode presents a paradigm of human sadness: the end of the objective to which so much energy has been invested, the destruction of what seemed to be the essence of their lives. Their hope is dashed; desolation has taken hold of their hearts. Everything has imploded in a very short space of time, between Friday and Saturday, in a dramatic sequence of events.

The paradox is truly emblematic: this sad journey of defeat and return to ordinary life occurs on the same day as the victory of light, of the Pasch that has been fully consummated. The two men turn their backs on Golgotha, on the terrible scene of the cross, still imprinted on their eyes and their hearts. It seems that all is lost. They must return to their former lives, keeping a low profile and hoping not to be recognized.

At a certain point, a traveler joins the two disciples, perhaps one of the many pilgrims who have been to Jerusalem for Easter. It is the risen Jesus, but they do not recognize him. Sadness clouds their gaze, erasing the promise that the Master had made several times: that he would be killed and that on the third day he would rise again. The stranger approaches and shows interest in what they are saying. The text says that the two “stood still, looking sad” (Lk 24:17). The Greek adjective used describes an all-encompassing sadness: the paralysis of the soul is apparent on their faces.

Jesus listens to them, allowing them to unburden their disappointment. Then, with great frankness, he rebukes them for being “foolish … and slow of heart to believe that all the prophets have declared!” (v. 25), and through the Scriptures he shows that Christ had to suffer, die and rise again. The warmth of hope is rekindled in the hearts of the two disciples, and then, when night falls and they arrive at their destination, they invite their mysterious travelling companion to stay with them.

Jesus accepts, and takes his seat at the table with them. Then he takes the bread, breaks it and offers it. At that moment, the two disciples recognize him... but he immediately disappears from their view (vv. 30-31). The gesture of the breaking of the bread reopens the eyes of the heart, illuminating once again the vision clouded by despair. And then everything becomes clear: the shared journey, the tender and powerful word, the light of truth... Immediately, joy is rekindled, energy flows back into their weary limbs, and gratitude returns to their memory. And the two hurry back to Jerusalem to tell the others everything.

“The Lord has risen indeed” (cf. v. 34). In this adverb, indeed, the certain outcome of our history as human beings is fulfilled. It is no coincidence that this is the greeting Christians exchange on Easter Day. Jesus did not rise in words, but in deeds, with his body bearing the marks of his passion, a perennial seal of his love for us. The victory of life is not an empty word, but a real, tangible fact.

May the unexpected joy of the disciples of Emmaus be a gentle reminder to us when the going gets tough. It is the Risen One who radically changes our perspective, instilling the hope that fills the void of sadness. On the paths of the heart, the Risen One walks with us and for us. He bears witness to the defeat of death and affirms the victory of life, despite the darkness of Calvary. History still has much goodness to hope for.

To recognize the Resurrection means to change one’s outlook on the world: to return to the light to recognize the Truth that has saved us, and that saves us. Sisters and brothers, let us remain watchful every day in the wonder of the Pasch of the risen Jesus. He alone makes the impossible possible!

Reflection

It is necessary for us to consider anew how Holy Mother Church walks along the path of Christian life with her children. How can we help one another, and those we are called to serve, to not only walk the path of Christian discipleship, but to run to proclaim that *our hearts are burning within us* to our community? We must begin with meeting Christ in the Scriptures, and allow him to teach us how our lives are part of the story of salvation history, and how we have hope because of his persistent and tireless love for us.

Discuss: Guided Questions and Answers

These questions are not intended to be an exhaustive list but an aid to foster discernment and conversation.

Q: What principles of the catechumenal process can inspire other moments of catechesis with children, young people, and adults?

A: As emphasized in the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), looking to the catechumenal model as inspiration for all catechesis should not imply “reproducing the catechumenate in a servile manner, but taking on its style and its formative dynamism.”²⁵ With this in mind, the following are identified as inspirations from the catechumenate for our catechetical work namely: the catechumenate’s paschal character, initiatory character, liturgical character, Scriptural and sacramental foundation, community character, the character of ongoing conversion and witness, and the progressive character of the formative experience.²⁶ We must evaluate all our catechetical models to ensure each of these characters of the catechumenate are employed and properly executed as we strive to accompany souls to deeper encounter and communion with Christ and his Church.

Q: How does the communal character of the catechumenate call us to better involve our parish communities in sharing in the catechetical mission of the Church?

A: The catechumenal process, by its nature, takes place within the context of a particular community as catechumens and candidates are led to more profound communion with Christ’s Church. When properly implemented, the catechumenate calls for the community to embrace its

²⁵ DC, no. 64.

²⁶ These elements are explained in further detail in *The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, nos. 1-7.

Baptismal responsibility to accompany, form, intercede, and witness to the faith to their new brothers and sisters. Similarly, by virtue of our Baptism, and strengthened through Confirmation, all the faithful are called to share in the Church’s catechetical mission. Parishes, catechetical leaders, and catechists are called to consider in what ways the faithful can be involved in the catechetical work with children, youth, and adults. This involvement, however, must begin with proper formation of the faithful on their Baptismal responsibility to evangelization and catechesis. It is only through greater awareness of the community’s shared responsibility for the catechetical mission of the Church that a renewed desire and creative means for involvement may begin to arise.

Q: What are the key elements of the catechumenal model?

A: The essential elements of the catechumenal model are: the Paschal character; the initiatory character; the liturgical, ritual, and symbolic character; the community character; the character of ongoing conversion and of witness; and the progressive character of the formative experience.²⁷

The catechumenal model demonstrates the vital need for personal accompaniment of each individual in the life of faith. This accompaniment must be tailored to follow the specific needs of the individual: understanding his or her state in life, considering the specific challenges to the faith that he or she might face, responding to possible doubts or fears, and guiding the individual in detaching from sin, so that he or she can truly grow and thrive in the life of grace. This accompaniment is embedded in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. We must help cultivate a liturgical and sacramental worldview, so that the faithful understand that participating in the *liturgy* of the Church, as described by the *Catechism* as the very life of the Church, is a work that transforms their whole lives into the prayer and worship of the people of God. Flowing from the Eucharist, the “source and summit” of our faith, we are called to participate in the liturgy throughout each day,

²⁷ See also DC, no. 64.



in our prayers and works, in the Liturgy of the Hours, in private devotions, in the meditation on Scripture, and in service to the poor. The *Catechism* states, “Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is ‘*mystagogy*.’) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacraments’ to the ‘mysteries.’”²⁸ We must discover how this can be applied to our *entire lives, our very existence*.

Q: What are the implications of the catechumenal model for catechesis?

A: Five implications of the catechumenal model are:

1 A Process, Not a Program

Implication: Evangelizing catechesis should be a gradual and personalized journey rather than a one-size-fits-all program. The OCIA unfolds in stages—pre-evangelization, catechesis, purification/enlightenment, and mystagogy—each respecting the individual’s readiness to receive and respond to the Gospel.

2 Encounter Before Explanation (Kerygma First!)

Implication: The catechumenal model prioritizes the proclamation of the kerygma—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—as a preamble and preparation for authentic and complete doctrinal instruction. We must also continue this announcement throughout our lives, as we are continually invited into a deeper relationship with Christ and greater holiness, so that our formation in faith is received in a relational context.

3 Community-Centered Formation

Implication: OCIA emphasizes that faith is not purely a private endeavor but a communal journey. Catechumens are accompanied by sponsors, catechists, the parish community, and

²⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1075.

indeed the whole Church, making the process relational, relatable and immersive.

4 Liturgy as the Primary Context for Formation

Implication: The catechumenal model is deeply liturgical and sacramental, with each stage marked by rites, blessings, and public celebrations within the Church's worship.

5 Life-Long Conversion

Implication: OCIA fosters conversion of heart and life. The goal is to form disciples who continue to grow in their knowledge and love of Christ throughout their lives, ever deepening in faith, hope and love.

Evangelizing catechesis cannot allow faith formation to be a static experience, but rather, must incorporate transformative experiences—such as mission trips, social justice engagement, prayer encounters, and testimonies—where the faithful can see and live the Gospel in action. Catechists can further unpack key teachings in and through these experiences, and also allow the experiences to lead to new questions and discoveries of the beauty and richness of the Church's teaching.

Considering the implications above, what do you need to re-enforce or do differently in your local context?



Respond: Draw Conclusions

The catechumenate was the ancient and apostolic way whereby seekers were welcomed as catechumens and led to full incorporation in the Church. Its revival in the twentieth century coincides with the renewed focus on adult catechesis. The *Directory for Catechesis* teaches that the catechumenate is indeed the model for effective catechesis. This does not mean that catechesis must be constrained by the specific order, circumstances, and rites of the catechumenate, but that the catechumenate contains the fundamental aspects of effective catechesis. Evangelizing catechesis should therefore be characterized by accompaniment and discernment with those being catechized, and it expects conversion to be a gradual journey that occurs differently for each individual. It incorporates the liturgical life of the Church and her great tradition of prayer and reflection on Sacred Scripture. It involves the whole community and leads those being initiated into the life of the community around the Eucharistic celebration and deep personal fellowship with other members. It cultivates ongoing lifelong encouragement and formation in the faith. Adopting the catechumenal model for evangelizing catechesis means integrating didactic elements that focus on learning fundamental doctrines with relational, experiential, and mission-driven formation. It recognizes that the handing on of the faith flows from the individual vocation of each person to become not only a disciple, but a heroic saint. The people of God will flourish in faith when they are accompanied, engaged in liturgy, and invited into authentic relationships with Christ and His Church.

Closing Prayer

O Mary, Mother and Model of the Disciple,
you who first received the Word in faith,
teach us to listen with humility to the voice of the Divine Master.
Form us as authentic disciples,
that we may lead others to Christ through the catechumenal path,
becoming bold witnesses of God's infinite love.

O Virgin of Pentecost,
intercede for the Church in this time of renewal.
May we become instruments of the catechetical springtime,
igniting hearts with a thirst for truth and holiness.

O Mother, first among catechists,
make us living catechisms,
inspiring others to encounter Jesus,
who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Amen.

Part 3

Goals for Evangelizing Catechesis

The Church has received this solemn command of Christ from the apostles, and she must fulfill it to the very ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Therefore, she makes the words of the apostle her own, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16), and accordingly never ceases to send heralds of the Gospel until such time as the infant Churches are fully established, and can themselves continue the work of evangelization. For the Church is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God, who has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world. By her proclamation of the Gospel, she draws her hearers to receive and profess the faith, she prepares them for baptism, snatches them from the slavery of error, and she incorporates them into Christ so that in love for him they grow to full maturity.

— Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 17

Opening Prayer

Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith: as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own “yes” to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Filled with Christ’s presence, you brought joy to John the Baptist, making him exult in the womb of his mother.

Brimming over with joy, you sang of the great things done by God. Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding faith, you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection, and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit so that the evangelizing Church might be born.

Obtain for us now a new ardor born of the resurrection, that we may bring to all the Gospel of life which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.

Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God’s kingdom.

Star of the new evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones, pray for us.

Amen. Alleluia!

(Closing prayer from *Evangelii Gaudium*)



Selected Readings

Gospel of Matthew

Mt 28:19–20 (Great Commission)

All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.

Gospel of John

Jn 1:35-42 (Call of the First Apostles)

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

Letter to the Galatians

Gal 2:19-20 (Christ in Me)

I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.

Pope St. John Paul II

Pope St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 5

Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.

Pope St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, nos. 19-20

The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion - bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in catechetical practice, this model order must allow for the fact that the initial evangelization has often not taken place. A certain number of children baptized in infancy come for catechesis in the parish without receiving any other initiation into the faith and still without any explicit personal attachment to Jesus Christ; they only have the capacity to believe placed within them by Baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit; and opposition is quickly created by the prejudices of their non-Christian family background or of the positivist spirit of their education. In addition, there are other children who have not been baptized and whose parents agree only at a later date to religious education: for practical reasons, the catechumenal stage of these children will often be carried out largely in the course of the ordinary catechesis. Again, many pre-adolescents and adolescents who have been baptized and been given a systematic catechesis and the sacraments still remain hesitant for a long time about committing their whole lives to Jesus Christ - if, moreover, they do not attempt to avoid religious education in the name of their freedom. Finally, even adults are not safe from temptations to doubt or to abandon their faith, especially as a result of their unbelieving surroundings. This means that "catechesis" must often concern itself not only with nourishing and teaching the faith, but also with arousing it unceasingly with the help of grace, with opening the heart, with converting, and with preparing total adherence to Jesus Christ on the part of those who are still on the threshold of faith. This concern will in part decide the tone, the language and the method of catechesis.

Catechesis aims therefore at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's word, so that the whole of a person's humanity is impregnated by that word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to.



Pope Francis

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 33

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.” I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. [...] The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 165

We must not think that in catechesis the kerygma gives way to a supposedly more “solid” formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart. The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental.

Directory for Catechesis (2020)

Directory for Catechesis, no. 3

In the light of these features that characterize catechesis from the missionary perspective, the goal of the catechetical process is also reinterpreted. The present understanding of the formative dynamics of the person requires that intimate communion with Christ, already indicated in the existing Magisterium as the ultimate end of the catechetical initiative, should not only be identified as a goal but also

brought about through a process of accompaniment.¹¹ In fact, the overall process of internalizing the Gospel involves the whole person in his unique experience of life. Only a catechesis that strives to help each individual to develop his own unique response of faith can reach the specified goal. This is the reason why the present Directory reiterates the importance of having catechesis accompany the development of a mentality of faith in a dynamic of transformation, which is ultimately an action of the spirit. This is an original and necessary form of inculcation of the faith.

Directory for Catechesis, no. 50

In this renewed awareness of her vocation, the Church is also re-envisioning catechesis as one of her works in a missionary going forth. This means being willing to seek out the glimmers of truth that are already present in various human activities, trusting that God is mysteriously active in the heart of the human being before this has been explicitly reached by the Gospel. In this sense, she will find ways to draw near to the people of our time, walking alongside them wherever they happen to be. Catechesis, moreover, forms believers for mission, accompanying them in the maturation of attitudes of faith and making them aware that they are missionary disciples, called to participate actively in the proclamation of the Gospel and to make the Kingdom of God present in the world: “The Church’s closeness to Jesus is part of a common journey; ‘communion and mission are profoundly interconnected.’”

Directory for Catechesis, no. 68

In many ecclesial contexts, the first proclamation also has a second meaning. “This first proclamation is called ‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.” The first proclamation, the task of every Christian, is based on that “go” (Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19) which Jesus gave as an instruction to his disciples and which implies going out, making haste, accompanying, thus becoming true missionary disciples. It therefore cannot be reduced to the conveying of a message, but is first of all sharing the life that comes from God and



communicating the joy of having met the Lord. “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

Directory for Catechesis, nos. 75-77

Communion with Christ is the center of the Christian life, and as a result the center of catechetical action. Catechesis is oriented toward forming persons who get to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel of liberating salvation ever better; who live a profound encounter with him and who choose his own way of life and his very sentiments (cf. Phil 2:5), striving to realize, in the historical situations in which they live, the mission of Christ, which is the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

The encounter with Christ involves the person in his totality: heart, mind, senses. It does not concern only the mind, but also the body and above all the heart. In this sense catechesis, which helps in the internalization of the faith and thereby makes an irreplaceable contribution to the encounter with Christ, is not alone in fostering the pursuit of this goal. It is joined in this by the other dimensions of the life of faith: in liturgical-sacramental experience, in affective relationships, in community life and the service of one’s brothers, something essential in fact takes place for the birth of the new man (cf. Eph 4:24) and for personal spiritual transformation (cf. Rom 12:2).

Catechesis makes the initial conversion ripen and helps Christians to give a complete meaning to their existence, educating them in a *mentality of faith* in keeping with the Gospel, to the point of gradually coming to feel, think and act like Christ. On this journey, in which a decisive contribution comes from the participant himself with his personality, the capacity to receive the Gospel is commensurate with the person’s existential situation and phase of growth. It must however be noted that “catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it. This implies that the catechesis of other age groups should have it for a point of reference.”

Pope Leo XIV

Pope Leo XIV, Prayer Vigil with the Young People, August 2, 2025

Dear young people, Jesus is the friend who always accompanies us in the formation of our conscience. If you truly want to encounter the Risen Lord, then listen to his word, which is the Gospel of salvation. Reflect on your way of living, and seek justice in order to build a more humane world. Serve the poor, and so bear witness to the good that we would always like to receive from our neighbors. Be united with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. Adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the source of eternal life. Study, work and love according to the example of Jesus, the good Teacher who always walks beside us.

As we seek what is good, let us ask him at every step: stay with us, Lord (cf. *Lk* 24:29). Stay with us, because without you we cannot do the good we desire. You want what our good; indeed Lord you *are* our good. Those who encounter you also want others to encounter you, because your word is a light brighter than any star, illuminating even the darkest night.

Pope Leo XIV, Homily for the Jubilee of Catechists, September 28, 2025

We have all been taught to believe through the witness of those who believed before us. From childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and even old age, catechists accompany us in our faith, sharing in this lifelong journey, similar to what you have done in these days on this Jubilee pilgrimage. This dynamic involves the whole Church. As the People of God brings men and women to faith, “the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down [grows]. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 8). In this communion, the *Catechism* is the “travel guidebook” that protects us from individualism and discord, because it attests to the faith of the entire Catholic Church. Every believer cooperates in her pastoral work by listening to questions, sharing in struggles, and serving the desire for justice and truth that dwells in the human conscience.

This is how catechists teach – literally in Italian, by “leaving a mark.” When we teach the faith, we do not merely give instructions, but we place the word of life in hearts, so that it may bear the fruits of a good life. To Deacon Deogratias, who asked him how to be a good catechist, Saint Augustine replied: “Explain everything in such a way that the one who listens to you, by listening may believe; by believing may hope; and by hoping may love” (*Instructing Beginners in Faith*, nos. 4, 8).

Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process

Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process, p. 13

The primary formation goal of evangelizing catechesis is:

To form a mature Catholic disciple who is firmly committed to feeling, thinking, and acting like Christ; who believes, understands and can articulate the truths of the Faith; who joyfully and frequently receives the Sacraments with ever deepening devotion, especially the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist; who lives the virtuous life with ever-growing charity and wisdom; who is steadfast in ongoing prayer; who faithfully engages with Sacred Scripture; who is active in the Catholic parish and bears witness to the faith in all aspects of life.²⁹

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Jubilee of Catechists, September 25, 2025

The role of the catechist, as implied in the notion of *Evangelizing Catechesis*, necessarily involves the kerygmatic formation of people as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ. First and foremost, the catechist must be a witness, one who has encountered the person of Jesus Christ and seeks to bring others to him. Credible witness is predicated on being ourselves, keeping before us the example of John the Baptist, readily acknowledging that we are not saviors but merely voices for the living Word of God, the Savior of the world. Such credible witness must be rooted in prayer, ongoing discernment, steeped in Scripture, and drawing from sacramental grace. The catechist does not merely transmit the contents of Catholic teaching but forms the heart while educating the mind, through accompaniment and encounter. As with all the baptized,

²⁹ *Handbook on the CAP*, p. 13.

as Pope Francis exhorted us in this Jubilee Year, so the catechist is called to be a “Pilgrim of Hope.” Above all, the catechist must be Christ-centered rather than ego-centered or agenda-driven. Theology, in pastoral measure, must prevail over ideology.

Reflection

As children of God and co-heirs with Christ to an eternal kingdom, we cannot settle for earthly goods, nor can our time on earth be spent without the fervor and zeal for the Gospel that the Holy Spirit pours forth upon us in the sacramental life. One who is catechized is increasingly conformed to Jesus so that he or she comes to “feel, think, and act” like him. Catechesis is therefore oriented to the transformation of the whole person. Achieving this goal requires engaging not only the mind, but also the heart. It involves gradual concrete changes in thought and action in response to the recognition of and encounter with the love of God, which overflows so that it is shared with others. Consider, for example, St. Andrew. Our Lord’s invitation to “come and see” results not only in learning but in an encounter with Jesus that convinces him that Jesus is the Messiah and impels him to seek out his brother to bring him to the Lord as well. If we are proclaiming the joyful news that we have been redeemed by Christ, are known and loved by him and have discovered that our whole purpose in this life is to be with the Lord in eternal life, then we recognize that we are on a journey of ongoing personal conversion. Seeing the tapestry of salvation history, the love story of the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church, we welcome others to realize their own part in the mystical body and to pray for the missionary zeal poured out by the Spirit on the Bride. The goal of evangelizing catechesis is to be sought in our catechetical efforts, but we should also regularly turn a discerning eye on our own situations: have I cultivated my relationship with Christ in this way for my own salvation as well as for witnessing the joys of this relationship to others?

Discuss: Guided Questions and Answers

These questions are not intended to be an exhaustive list but an aid to foster discernment and conversation.

Q: How do we assure that the presentation of doctrinal teaching leads to personal appropriation and virtuous behavior?

A: “The Church, therefore, bears in mind that in order to reach the human heart the proclamation of the Risen One must shine forth with goodness, truth, and beauty.”³⁰ In a way integrated to the clear and accurate presentation of doctrine that shows its connection to the kerygma, the beauty of the faith must be demonstrated to the catechized in the Christian works of art that are truly beautiful, in the compelling presentation of the lives of the saints, in the liturgies of the Church, and the appropriate contemplation of the beauty of creation.³¹ The catechized must also be invited toward Christian behaviors in order that their actions both form the proper habits worthy of the Christian life and cultivate the inner dispositions. Preeminent among these behaviors, the catechized must be taught to pray and given ample opportunities to do so and to discuss their experiences with those suitably gifted and trained in discernment.

The *Handbook on the CAP* integrates the doctrinal teachings of the Church with key interior life and behavioral goals that must be fostered so that the whole person, body and soul, mind and heart, is captivated with the love of Christ and thus intentionally and demonstratively lives as his disciple. For example, one of the catechist behavioral goals is to “study and practice the Beatitudes, and aid learners in growing in actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life.” This is much more than only being familiar with the Beatitudes or memorizing them for a class, while such familiarity is of course vital. It speaks to the reality that catechesis without a living witness is not evangelizing.

³⁰ DC, no. 108.

³¹ Cf. EG, no. 167.



Q: What is the role of doctrine in catechesis?

A: Doctrine serves as a sure entryway into the mysteries of Christ. Authentic and complete doctrinal teaching serves the faithful so that they can truly pattern their lives on Christ, and be able to give an explanation for their missionary witness. In addition, as the one who is catechized enters more fully into the life of the Church, doctrine provides a common language in the faith that helps to join him or her to fellow Christians, both contemporary and the Christian community that extends from its inception and beyond the veil of this world to the heavenly assembly. Doctrine is also necessary for Christians as a framework by which their experiences in the Christian life can be interpreted. Conversely, these experiences deepen understanding of the doctrine.

Catechesis is insufficient if it accomplishes “growth in knowledge” without that knowledge directly impacting the interior life and behavior of the individual who is learning. One may be able to respond that Jesus Christ is one Divine Person, with both a divine nature and a human nature, true God and true man, but knowing this definition must cut to the heart of the individual, so that he or she joyfully and faithfully adheres to living like Christ and for Christ. Catechists must be capable of teaching the truths of the faith with the purpose and intention of evoking the interior pondering that asks, “what does this mean for my life / what does this mean for who I am / what kind of response does this demand of me / how must I change because I know that this is true?”

Q: How does the diocesan catechetical office contribute to evangelizing catechesis?

A: In order to promote an evangelizing catechesis, diocesan catechetical offices must first assess with “evangelical discernment” the socio-cultural and religious situation of the people within the diocese in order to address properly catechetical efforts in ways that are relevant and comprehensible—and therefore compelling.³² Diocesan personnel coordinate the catechetical efforts within the diocese, collaborating with

³² See DC, nos. 418-419.

national initiatives and in accordance with the directives of the Holy See.³³

Pope St. Paul VI taught that “it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole.”³⁴ Pope St. John Paul II similarly declared that catechesis is “a work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible.”³⁵ Evangelizing catechesis therefore is an “ecclesial act”³⁶ and “concerns everyone.”³⁷ Diocesan catechetical offices must therefore be accompanied by the bishop, who is “the chief management of catechesis,”³⁸ and coordinate with pastors, who are the “first catechists” in the parish and “catechist of catechists,”³⁹ catechists, to whose formation they must contribute,⁴⁰ and publishers, who provide “suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops.”⁴¹ In addition to the above, the *Directory for Catechesis* also describes deacons, consecrated persons, parents, godparents, and grandparents as essential partners in catechesis.⁴²

The *Handbook on the CAP* serves to provide key goals for the formation of parents and catechists. The diocesan catechetical office has the opportunity to provide formation for catechists that seeks to accompany them in ongoing formation such that they are meeting those goals and outcomes in their daily lives and in their ministry, and thus, bearing greater fruit in the Lord’s vineyard.

³³ See DC, no. 417.

³⁴ EN, no. 15.

³⁵ CT, no. 16; cf. CT, no. 60.

³⁶ DC, no. 55.

³⁷ DC, no. 288.

³⁸ CT, no. 63, cf. EG, no. 31, DC, no. 114.

³⁹ DC, no. 116.

⁴⁰ DC, no. 425.

⁴¹ EN, no. 44.

⁴² See DC, nos. 117-120 and 125-126.

Q: What is the role of the diocese and parish in catechesis?

A: Particular Churches (e.g., dioceses) “evangelize by rooting themselves in the history, the culture, the traditions, the languages, and the problems of their people,”⁴³ while, at the same time recognizing that they are only fully the Church when in communion with all the Churches.⁴⁴ Catechetical initiatives will therefore be specific to their areas yet also connected to the wider initiatives of the universal Church.

The parish is to be a “Christian community that, even in the weakness of its members and in the paucity of its resources, lives out this mystical fraternity, itself becomes the first and natural proclamation of the faith.”⁴⁵ Parishes, like dioceses, must therefore be renewed under the aspect of evangelization, catechesis, and missionary zeal. Pope Francis taught that we must “abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way.’ I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.”⁴⁶ The *Directory for Catechesis* similarly teaches: “Parishes today are engaged in renewing their relational dynamics and making their structures open and less bureaucratic.”⁴⁷ The parish can cultivate a missionary community of those who both faithfully come to the Eucharist, the center of the Christian life, but also who go out with courage to witness to their neighbors and associates living in a fallen world.

Generally, “the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.”⁴⁸

⁴³ DC, no. 295.

⁴⁴ See DC, no. 293.

⁴⁵ DC, no. 303.

⁴⁶ EG, no. 33.

⁴⁷ DC, no. 301.

⁴⁸ CT, no. 24.

The goals of the *Handbook on the CAP* for catechists, parents and families are especially helpful, for within the parish community there will be many different resources that help to foster the behavioral goals, instruct on the cognitive goals, and hence, form the interior life goals within the Body of Christ. It is precisely *in the parish community* where the faithful of all ages and states of life can engage in catechetical endeavors and participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. For example, a behavioral goal is to “Spend time in prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.” This does not need to be only when the catechetical class is able to schedule a special time for adoration during the year, although that is certainly an laudable practice; rather, the parish should foster a desire for and ability to be with the Lord in silent prayer throughout the week, whether in Eucharistic adoration with the Lord, whether he is exposed in the monstrance or reserved in the tabernacle, and parishioners should engage in this prayer time as they are able to because they hunger and thirst for the Lord. Thus, the community will encourage one another to grow in love and fidelity to the Lord by their witness to being his disciples, choosing to be with him and receive from him. This will allow more of the faithful to respond to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and offer their own charisms to the service of the parish community. More members of the Body growing as disciples means that there are more brothers and sisters able to accompany and mentor those who are coming to the faith, seeking truth and seeking love. We see how the work of evangelizing catechesis continues to bear fruit, both for the individual and then in the wider community.

Q: How is catechesis supposed to be inculturated?

A: The Gospel must be “preached in categories proper to each culture” so as to lead to the “subjective appropriation of the faith.”⁴⁹ In essence, this means taking catechesis seriously as a journey in the faith, beginning with the categories and experiences of those to be catechized. We should be clear about the distinction between “enculturation” and “inculturation.” We use the term “enculturation” when we speak of bringing the Gospel message to the culture, while we use the term

⁴⁹ DC, nos. 395-396

“inculturation” when we speak of re-expressing the Gospel message in light of the culture.⁵⁰

The *Directory for Catechesis* provides helpful instructions on the intersection between evangelization and inculturation, which can also inform how catechesis ought to engage the culture.⁵¹ Catechesis, in order to foster a personal relationship with Christ, must cut to the heart of culture itself, “reaching the deepest core of individuals and of societies in order to illuminate them from within with the light of the Gospel.”⁵² Elsewhere the *Directory for Catechesis* explains,

Together with fidelity to the message of the faith, the catechist is called to understand human beings in the concrete and in the sociocultural context in which they live. As all Christians do, even more so should catechists “live in very close union with the other men of their time and may they strive to understand perfectly their way of thinking and judging, as expressed in their culture” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 62). This knowledge is gained through experience and continual reflection on it, but also thanks to the valuable contribution of the human sciences, in the light of the principles of the Church’s social doctrine.⁵³

⁵⁰ Cf. There is also a helpful discussion regarding inculturation in the *Handbook on the Catechetical Accompaniment Process*, pp. 19 – 21.

⁵¹ See DC, nos. 43-44.

⁵² DC, no. 43.

⁵³ DC, no. 146.

Respond: Draw Conclusions

New syntheses between particular cultures and the Gospel enrich the experience and understanding of the Gospel, even giving rise to new expressions. It must be remembered that this is not merely juxtaposing the Gospel with cultures, but activating the “seeds of the Gospel” already present in the cultures.⁵⁴ Culture provides opportunities to rearticulate faithfully the Gospel, and the Gospel purifies the culture of what is contrary to the faith and enhances compatible elements. This is parallel to the way that preaching the Gospel to an individual entails illuminating the activity of God that has already taken place in the person’s life.

Catechesis is one of the primary tasks of the Church, commanded by Christ just before he ascended into heaven:

Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt. 28:18-20).⁵⁵

At the heart of catechesis, then, is Jesus Christ: he is both the content of what is taught and the Teacher, as Pope St. John Paul II reminds us,

Christocentricity in catechesis also means the intention to transmit not one’s own teaching or that of some other master, but the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Truth that he communicates or, to put it more precisely, the Truth that he is. We must therefore say that in catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught - everything else is taught with reference to him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. Whatever be the level of his responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus.

⁵⁴ DC, no. 397.

⁵⁵ See also CT, no. 1.



Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me” (Jn 7:6).⁵⁶

Though catechesis includes instruction and education in the truths of the faith, these are meant to enable the one who receives them to enter into a truly Christian life. In order to do so, a catechist must also live an authentic Christian life, filled with charity, and must work to bring the one catechized into intimacy and communion with Christ.

⁵⁶ CT, no. 6.

Closing Prayer

God of infinite Mercy,
you sent your Risen Son
to encounter the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

Grant us today a missionary spirit
and send us forth to encounter
our sisters and brothers:

to walk with them in friendship,
to listen to their hopes and dreams
with compassion,
and to proclaim your Word with courage,
so that they might come to know you once again
in the breaking of the Bread.

Make us all missionary disciples, and stay with us always,
as we seek to share the joy of the Gospel
with people of all generations,
from every race, language, culture, and nation.

We ask you this with burning hearts,
filled with the Holy Spirit,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and through the loving intercession of
our Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Star of the New Evangelization in the Americas.

Amen.

(Prayer for the Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry)

Part 4

New Methods, New Ardor, New Expressions

What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

— 1 Jn 1:3

This is the mission of the Church: this is the mission of every Christian. Dear brothers and sisters, this is our vocation as baptized persons, and so we must pass on what we have in turn received, so that we all may become one in Christ.

— Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Members of the
'Escuelas de Evangelización San Andrés,' August 29,
2025

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit,
Fill the hearts of your faithful,
And kindle in us the fire of your love.

As we seek new methods, fresh ardor, and inspired expressions to proclaim your truth and share the Good News of Jesus Christ, we ask for your guidance and presence.

Grant us creativity to meet the needs of our time,
boldness to witness to your saving love,

faithfulness to proclaim your truth,
and humility to discern your will in all we do.

Open our hearts to your presence,
that we may lead others to encounter the living Christ.

Come, Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
Spirit of counsel and fortitude,
Spirit of knowledge and piety.

Renew the face of the earth.

May all we undertake be for your glory
and the salvation of souls.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Selected Readings

Pope St. John Paul II

Pope St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 17

Finally, catechesis needs to be continually renewed by a certain broadening of its concept, by the revision of its methods, by the search for suitable language, and by the utilization of new means of transmitting the message. Renewal is sometimes unequal in value; the synod fathers realistically recognized, not only an undeniable advance in the vitality of catechetical activity and promising initiatives, but also the limitations or even "deficiencies" in what has been achieved to date. These limitations are particularly serious when they endanger integrity of content. The message to the People of God rightly stressed that "routine, with its refusal to accept any change, and improvisation, with its readiness for any venture, are equally dangerous" for catechesis. Routine leads to stagnation, lethargy and eventual paralysis. Improvisation begets confusion on the part of those being given catechesis and, when these are children, on the part of their parents; it also begets all kinds of deviations, and the fracturing and eventually the complete destruction of unity. It is important for the Church to give proof today, as she has done at other periods of her history, of evangelical wisdom, courage and fidelity in seeking out and putting into operation new methods and new prospects for catechetical instruction.

Pope Francis

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 167

Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the "way of beauty" (*via pulchritudinis*). Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus. This has nothing to do with fostering an aesthetic relativism which would downplay the inseparable bond between truth, goodness and beauty, but rather a renewed esteem for beauty as a means of touching the human heart and enabling the truth and goodness of the Risen Christ to radiate within it. If, as Saint Augustine says, we love only that which is beautiful, the incarnate Son, as the revelation of infinite

beauty, is supremely lovable and draws us to himself with bonds of love. So a formation in the *via pulchritudinis* ought to be part of our effort to pass on the faith. Each particular Church should encourage the use of the arts in evangelization, building on the treasures of the past but also drawing upon the wide variety of contemporary expressions so as to transmit the faith in a new “language of parables”. We must be bold enough to discover new signs and new symbols, new flesh to embody and communicate the word, and different forms of beauty which are valued in different cultural settings, including those unconventional modes of beauty which may mean little to the evangelizers, yet prove particularly attractive for others.

Directory for Catechesis (2020)

Directory for Catechesis, no. 179

In the face of current challenges, it is ever more important to be aware of the reciprocity between content and method, as much in catechesis as in evangelization. The original pedagogy of the faith is inspired by the self-abasement of God and in concrete terms follows on from a twofold fidelity—to God and to humanity—and therefore from the development of a judicious synthesis of the theological and anthropological dimensions of life and faith. In the journey of catechesis, the principle of *evangelizing by educating and educating by evangelizing* recalls, among other things, that the work of the catechist consists in finding and drawing attention to the signs of God’s action already present in the lives of a person and, by using these as an example, present the Gospel as a transformative power for the whole of existence, to which it will give full meaning. The accompaniment of a person on a journey of growth and conversion is necessarily marked by gradualness, in that the act of believing implies a progressive discovery of the mystery of God and an openness and entrustment to him that grows over time.

Directory for Catechesis, nos. 195-196

Although the Church upholds the primacy of grace, she has a sense of responsibility and sincere educational passion when it comes to catechetical processes and methods. Catechesis does not have a single method, but is open to evaluating different methods, engaging in pedagogy and didactics and allowing itself to be guided by the Gospel necessary for recognizing the truth of human nature. Over the course of Church history many charisms of service to the word of God have



opened different methodological paths, a sign of vitality and richness. ‘The age and the intellectual development of Christians, their degree of ecclesial and spiritual maturity and many other personal circumstances demand that catechesis should adopt widely different methods’ [CT, no. 51]. The communication of the faith in catechesis, which also passes through human mediation, nonetheless remains an event of grace, brought about by the encounter of the word of God with the experience of the person. The apostle Paul states that ‘grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift’ (Eph 4:7). Grace is therefore expressed both through perceptible signs that open us to the mystery and through other ways unknown to us.

Since the Church does not have a method of her own for proclaiming the Gospel, an effort of discernment is needed so as to test everything and keep what is good (cf. 1 Thes 5:21). Catechesis can evaluate, as it has done repeatedly throughout history, methodological approaches centered more on the realities of life or based more on the message of faith. This depends on the concrete situations of the subjects of catechesis. In both cases it is important to employ a *principle of interrelationship* that connects both aspects. The personal and social events of life and history find a light of interpretation in the content of the faith; this [content], on the other hand, must always be presented by showing the implications it has for life. This procedure presupposes a hermeneutic capacity; existence, if interpreted in relation to the Christian proclamation, is manifested in its truth; the *kerygma*, on the other hand, always has a value of salvation and fullness of life.

Pope Leo XIV

Pope Leo XIV, Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, May 16, 2025

For her part, the Church can never be exempted from speaking the truth about humanity and the world, resorting whenever necessary to blunt language that may initially create misunderstanding. Yet truth can never be separated from charity, which always has at its root a concern for the life and well-being of every man and woman. Furthermore, from the Christian perspective, truth is not the affirmation of abstract and disembodied principles, but an encounter with the person of Christ himself, alive in the midst of the community of believers. Truth, then, does not create division, but rather enables us to confront all the more

resolutely the challenges of our time, such as migration, the ethical use of artificial intelligence and the protection of our beloved planet Earth. These are challenges that require commitment and cooperation on the part of all, since no one can think of facing them alone.

Pope Leo XIV, Homily for the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, June 29, 2025

Every day, at every moment in history, we must always take this question to heart. If we want to keep our identity as Christians from being reduced to a relic of the past, as Pope Francis often reminded us, it is important to move beyond a tired and stagnant faith. We need to ask ourselves: Who is Jesus Christ for us today? What place does he occupy in our lives and in the life of the Church? How can we bear witness to this hope in our daily lives and proclaim it to those whom we meet?

Brothers and sisters, the exercise of a discernment born of these questions can enable our faith and the faith of the Church to be constantly renewed and to find new paths and new approaches to preaching the Gospel. This, together with communion, must be our greatest desire.

Reflection

At every age, the Church is called to model and support dynamic catechesis—faithful to the Gospel and responsive to the needs of the human person. Across the teachings of Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Francis, and the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), a shared vision emerges: catechesis must be constantly renewed, rooted in truth, and creatively expressed. Catechesis must reflect both God’s self-giving and a deep respect for the human journey, shaped by grace and marked by gradual growth. The catechist is called to discern the signs of God already at work in people’s lives and to reveal the Gospel as a source of transformation and meaning. This requires a hermeneutical approach—interpreting life through the lens of the Christian message and vice versa. The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) continually reminds us that method and content are inseparable.

It is important to note that in implementing the paradigm of evangelizing catechesis there is no single methodology that will fit every scenario and community. Instead, the Church encourages a discernment of context—evaluating what approach best serves the formation of each person or community. Whether emphasizing lived experience or doctrinal proclamation, the goal remains the same: to communicate the *kerygma* as the saving and life-giving encounter with Christ.

Pope St. John Paul II emphasizes the importance of balancing tradition and innovation.⁵⁷ He warns against both rigid routine that resists change and careless improvisation that leads to confusion and disunity. True renewal requires prayerful discernment, evangelical wisdom, courage, and fidelity—remaining grounded in the integrity of the faith while seeking new methods and language to proclaim it effectively.

New expressions of evangelizing catechesis must also be attentive to the “way of beauty” (*via pulchritudinis*) as Pope Francis reminds us.⁵⁸ Faith must be shown not only as true and good, but also as beautiful and life-giving. Beauty—especially through the arts—can awaken hearts and communicate the Gospel in ways that transcend instruction.

⁵⁷ See CT, no. 17.

⁵⁸ EG, no. 167.

Evangelization must therefore be bold and imaginative, drawing from tradition while embracing new symbols and appropriate cultural expressions that resonate today.

Pope St. Paul VI teaches us that “evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.”⁵⁹

Finally, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that truth is not an abstract concept; rather truth brings us into communion with God, for God is truth itself.⁶⁰ Knowing what is true, then, is directed at strengthening our relationship with Christ. Yet as we grow closer to Christ, we cannot help but notice that truth is intimately connected with charity. The fullness of God’s revelation was made manifest in Christ through his Paschal Mystery—his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. This is the heart of the *kerygma* that we are called to proclaim and it is this truth that best enables us to respond to the needs of the world today.

While the entire Gospel message constitutes a harmony, we should be mindful of ongoing efforts to emphasize a wider variety of issues such as the following:

- Gratitude for and stewardship of Creation
- Racism
- Just wages and fair working conditions
- The effects of sin on social structures and oppression
- The interconnectedness of life issues including abortion, euthanasia, physician assisted suicide, unjust war, capital punishment, drug addiction, human trafficking, and the misuse of artificial intelligence

⁵⁹ EN, no. 63.

⁶⁰ See Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, no. 5.



These efforts reflect a deeper commitment to proclaiming the Gospel in ways that speak to the lived realities and moral concerns of our time. When catechesis engages these pressing issues through the lens of faith, it becomes both credible and transformative. By addressing the concrete struggles people face, the Church not only teaches doctrine but also bears witness to the transforming power of Christ. In doing so, evangelization becomes not just a message proclaimed, but a life shared and renewed.

Discuss: Guided Question and Answer

These questions are not intended to be an exhaustive list but an aid to foster discernment and conversation.

Innovative Methods

- Are we meeting the people “in the margins”?
- What does catechesis for different cultures look like?
- What can “family” catechesis look like?
- What does “intergenerational catechesis” look like?
- What kind of ecclesial community opportunities will facilitate personal encounters with Christ for a varied group of parishioners?
- How will individuals be accompanied, supported and mentored in their faith journey, adapting to the variety of stages and needs of the Lord’s people?
- Are our schools and parishes centers for catechetical formation, proclaiming Christ to the family and beyond?

New Ardor

- Are we asking the Holy Spirit to lead us in our ministry, each day?
- What can we do that is new in our own prayer life and personal faith journey to help renew us in our ministry?
- How can we help teach others to pray and discern their own call to holiness, and welcome their gifts into the life of the parish community?
- How can we help the community to discern their individual gifts and charisms, and find ways to put them at the service of the Church?

- Are we making time for personal prayer, encounter with the Lord in Scripture and the Eucharist, and faithful participation in the sacramental life of the Church?

Creative Expressions

- Is our proclamation of the kerygma one of beauty?
- What are some practical forms of catechesis we could explore beyond the “classroom” model?
- What are some practical ways to increase involvement from those who are underserved in our parishes?
- How can we build friendships and supportive communities within the parish that foster the development of virtues and the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the lives of each parishioner?

Q: What can “family catechesis” look like?

A: In the 2020 *Directory for Catechesis*, Chapter 8, titled, “Catechesis in the Lives of Persons,” begins with a discussion of three aspects of family catechesis. A variety of methods have been utilized for each of these three aspects of family catechesis.

- **“Catechesis in the family”** refers to the ways in which certain family members might hand on the faith to others. For example, parents forming their children, grandparents witnessing the faith to their grandchildren, and even older siblings serving as an example to younger ones. “Catechesis in the family” might look like conversations between parents and children as natural opportunities arise or the initiation of younger generations into cultural expressions of the faith within the home. Parents might also use more formal catechetical materials in the home to form their children.
- **“Catechesis with the family”** refers to the various ways in which catechists and leaders in parishes and schools accompany the family, and particularly parent in their role as primary catechists, by equipping and supporting them in forming their children, providing ongoing formation

to adults, offering formative community experiences of faith, and organizing programs of catechesis such that formation of the faith might be more systematic and comprehensive. “Catechesis *with* the family” might include sessions at the parish with parents and children together, meeting in a multi-family group led by a catechist or team of catechists. It might also include concurrent sessions specifically for parents and children of various ages (i.e., age-level breakouts) on the same topic so that each age is learning on their own level, but the whole family is diving deeper into a specific topic of faith. It could also be done in the form of resources given to the parents to facilitate an expression of faith in the home – such as a family prayer experience.

- The third aspect of family catechesis discussed in the *Directory for Catechesis* is the “**Catechesis of the Family.**” Because all baptized persons are called to be missionary disciples, every Christian family is called to be a witness of the faith, both in word and action, not only in the home, but also in the parish and the larger community. In this way, the family becomes a “catechist” to others. “Catechesis of the family” can include the ways in which families serve together in various ministries at the parish or volunteering in service in the community. It might also include families mentoring others in the faith (for example, families that are beginning the OCIA process).

The above is not an exhaustive list of the forms of family catechesis. As we renew our efforts to affirm the family as a privileged place of transmission of the faith, new methods and models will be developed. And as we continue to assess the fruits of these various models, through both empirical study and anecdotal experience, our methodologies will improve. One thing is certain, we can and must do more to connect with whole families in the work of catechesis. Simply relegating the entire process of faith formation to the religion class at the catholic school or a weekly grade-level group at the parish is profoundly insufficient for meeting the challenges of forming young people to live a life of discipleship. We can, and must, engage the whole family and respect the role of parents as the first and best teachers of the faith. We must also ensure that our catechetical work with families points them back to participation in the sacramental and prayer life of the Church, especially the Sunday liturgy of the parish.



Respond: Draw Conclusions

Pope St. John Paul II's widely quoted address to the Latin American Bishops at the opening of the 19th General Assembly of CELAM in Haiti on March 9, 1983, emphasizes the renewal and adaptability of catechesis to meet contemporary challenges while maintaining fidelity to the Gospel:

We need to evangelize with new ardor, new methods, and new expressions. This evangelization must be new in its ardor, in its methods, and in its expression. For the Church, the work of evangelization means a renewal of humanity, a renewal of culture, and a renewal of the Christian witness within society. It calls us to an unwavering commitment to proclaim Christ as the one who gives meaning to all of life.

In light of the text above, key points to consider include:

1 Renewal and Methods

Catechesis must evolve by revising its methods, exploring new ways to communicate, and maintaining the integrity of its content. A balance is required to avoid stagnation or confusion.

2 Beauty in Proclamation

Evangelization should highlight the beauty of faith, utilizing art and contemporary expressions to inspire joy and connection while maintaining the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty.

3 Integration of Content and Method

Effective catechesis integrates theological and human dimensions, guiding individuals in gradual growth and transformation through faith.

4

Flexibility and Discernment

Catechesis does not adhere to a single method but adapts to the needs and contexts of individuals while connecting faith's message with personal and social realities.

Closing Prayer

O God, who in the Holy Family
left us a perfect model of family life
lived in faith and obedience to your will.

Help us to be examples of faith and love for your commandments.
Help us in our mission of transmitting the faith that we received from our
parents.

Open the hearts of our children
so that the seed of faith, which they received in Baptism, will grow in
them.

Strength the faith of our young people,
that they may grow in knowledge of Jesus.

Increase love and faithfulness in all marriages,
especially those going through times of suffering or difficulty

(...)

United to Joseph and Mary,
we ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

Amen.

(Pope Benedict XVI, Prayer for the *Fifth World Meeting of Families*,
2006)

Conclusion

The Path Forward and the Vision of Evangelizing Catechesis

God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in proclaiming the Gospel of his Son, that I remember you constantly, always asking in my prayers that somehow by God's will I may at last find my way clear to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may share with you some spiritual gift so that you may be strengthened, that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by one another's faith, yours and mine.

— Rom 1:9-12

Implementing Evangelizing Catechesis

This resource is meant to support the discernment and implementation of Bishops and Diocesan Directors and to enhance their collaborative efforts in fostering a vibrant culture of evangelizing catechesis within their dioceses.

By embracing this resource and working together in a spirit of collaboration and shared purpose, bishops and diocesan directors can create a transformative culture of evangelizing catechesis that leads people to a profound encounter with Jesus Christ and empowers them to become missionary disciples.

On the following pages are some ideas for bishops and diocesan staff to consider as they develop a vision of evangelizing catechesis within their respective dioceses.



For Bishops

A Deeper Dive into Responsibilities

Articulate a Vision

- Craft a compelling and inspiring diocesan vision for evangelizing catechesis that is rooted in the Gospel and resonates with the lived experiences of the faithful, creating a unified and coherent approach to evangelization.
- Regularly communicate this vision through pastoral letters, homilies, and other channels to inspire, guide, and accompany the diocesan community.
- Support and accompany pastors in their role as catechists of their parishes and provide opportunities for ongoing formation to explore evangelizing catechesis for their respective communities.

Guide Pastoral Planning Efforts

- Based on the articulated vision, provide leadership for the development of a comprehensive and dynamic evangelizing catechetical strategy that addresses the specific needs and challenges of the local Church.
- This strategy should encompass all the audiences (youth, parents, catechists, parish staff, priests) and all aspects of catechetical ministry, including formation, resources, and outreach.
- Offer support and guidance to Diocesan Directors as they implement innovative catechetical methods and expressions.
- Provide clear episcopal guidance and affirmation, fostering a collaborative and trusting relationship.
- Allocate necessary resources to equip and empower Diocesan Directors in their ministry.
- Champion ongoing formation opportunities for clergy, parish leaders, and catechists, integrating the principles of evangelizing catechesis into these programs.

- Ensure that formation is not simply intellectual but also human, spiritual and pastoral, fostering a deep personal encounter with Christ and sustained by the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church.

For Diocesan Directors

Expanding the Scope of Action

- Design and implement a wide range of catechetical initiatives that are evangelizing, faithful, relevant, and transformative. These initiatives could include retreats, workshops, conferences, works of service, and online resources.
- Ensure that all initiatives are rooted in the kerygma and lead to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
- Provide ample opportunities for prayer and discernment in order to implement the paradigm of evangelizing catechesis.
- Skillfully adapt the principles of evangelizing catechesis to the unique cultural, social, and pastoral realities of the diocese. This may involve incorporating local customs, traditions, and languages into catechetical programs.
- Be attentive to the needs of diverse communities, including those who are marginalized or underserved.
- Build strong collaborative relationships with bishops, clergy, catechetical leaders, catechists, lay leaders, and all those involved in catechetical ministry.
- Create opportunities for dialogue, shared learning, and mutual support.
- Encourage a spirit of co-responsibility and shared ownership for the work of evangelizing catechesis.
- Serve as a mentor and guide to parish catechists, accompanying them with ongoing support, formation, and resources.
- Foster formation opportunities that empower catechists to embrace a kerygmatic approach in their ministry, proclaiming the Gospel with joy and conviction.
- Celebrate the gifts and contributions of catechists, recognizing their vital role in the mission of the Church.

- Foster a catechetical culture in the parish community that invites the faithful to put their gifts and charisms from the Holy Spirit at the service of the Church.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Out of love for us you took on our nature,
becoming subject to suffering and death,
offering your life as the perfect sacrifice;
and you give us a share in your Paschal Mystery
through our participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

You have called us to be your disciples:
to be a leaven of love for the world,
filled with a missionary spirit with our arms open,
and to proclaim the word without ceasing.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us
that we might become your instruments in this world,
efficacious signs of peace, justice, and truth.

Help us to know the most urgent challenges
that are facing the people of the world today,
—especially the youth and those we guide in faith.
Help us to know the values to promote
and the resources that are available to assist us.

Make us capable of true love,
fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.

You who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

