THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

A Model Program for the Formation of Parish Catechists for Adults Using a Unique Training Methodology that Emphasizes Mentorship and Spirituality

A TREATISE

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology and Religious Studies Of The Catholic University of America

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree Doctor of Ministry

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By

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A Model Program for the Formation of Parish Catechists for Adults Using a Unique Training Methodology that Emphasizes Mentorship and Spirituality

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All recent catechetical documents of the Catholic Church have in some way stressed the need to focus on the formation of adults. Lay adults certainly can be trained to be excellent catechists of other adults, but the available training usually groups together catechists for all age groups and provides little specific help to those preparing for the unique challenges of ministry to adults. This is particularly the case in the area of adult spirituality. The project for this treatise sought to explore creating a practical, affordable formation program, with a strong spirituality component, developed to specifically address the need for preparing adults to catechize other adults, suited to at-distance structures of formation. This involved developing a project that sought to provide participants with the content, methodological, and spiritual formation necessary to equip them to effectively pass on the Catholic faith to other adults, designed as a parish-level certification program, especially aiming to make the spiritual-formation aspect foundational.

Participants were men and women, all laity, of varying educational levels from high school degrees to master’s degrees. Participants proceeded through the program in six months’ time. The project made use of staggered on-site study days. Participants were given a binder of material to work through, with exercises for each section completed by them at home. As exercises were completed and turned in, individual correspondence and meetings provided a strong mentor element integral to the formation structure.
The project resulted in significant insights into the willingness of participants to commit to substantial effort in the process of their own catechetical training and allowed a detailed assessment of the value of individual mentoring as a motivational and formative component. The time-intensive and personal transparency required by the spiritual elements of the formation proved challenging for both mentor and participants, and despite the demands, implied the potential value of this method for fostering individual growth and catechetical competence. Much investment in formator figures and commitment from participants would be needed to adopt this type of catechetical training in a diocesan context.
This treatise by William Joseph Keimig fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Ministry approved by Susan Timoney, S.T.D., as Director, and by Emanuel Magro, Ph.D., as Reader.

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DEDICATION

This treatise and project are dedicated to Barbara Ann Morgan, founding director of the Catechetics program at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, and my friend and mentor. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.” – James 3:1

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the process of scheduling and unfolding the trio of study days held for the project portion of this treatise, one person was indispensable in her support, unflagging encouragement, and wise advice: Marian Frentz. After a long battle with cancer, she passed away on January 21, 2018, as the writing of this treatise neared completion. My debt to her extends far beyond this degree work and I know her profound charism of encouragement remains, now in different, higher form. This treatise’s development was greatly helped by a pair of excellent research assistants: Kaitlin Maloney and Mary Maresch. Ms. Maloney’s diligent and highly competent theological sourcing and assistance in the draft stage was indispensable. Ms. Maresch gave of her time in helping with logistics in making the project study days occur smoothly, and once the project had been run, was generously able to offer her help in data compiling. Great thanks must also be extended to the project participants, whose striving and efforts were both deeply inspiring and encouraging. In the project binder itself (Appendix III), a good portion of it was written by me during the course of my doctoral studies for an unpublished RCIA project to serve the work of the Association for Catechumenal Ministry. I am grateful to this organization’s current leadership, Gary and Patty Norris, for allowing me to use aspects of this earlier text. Lastly, my mother, Patricia, and my wife, Heather, were supports beyond compare in myriad ways for the years that this entire degree endeavor has required to complete.
INTRODUCTION TO THE TREATISE

All recent catechetical documents of the Catholic Church have in some way stressed the need for parishes and dioceses to focus on the formation of adults, over and above the effort and resources expended on the catechesis of children. This implies the need for the formation of adults who can teach the faith to other adults in a catechetically and methodologically sound manner, founded upon a spirituality suited to adult laity. Many would agree that this is rare in parishes. Despite the development of many forms of diocesan catechist formation, implementing adult formation has proven elusive at the parish level.

Lay adults certainly can be trained to be excellent catechists of other adults, but the available training usually groups together catechists for all age groups and provides little specific help to those preparing for the unique challenges of ministry to adults. This is particularly the case in the area of adult spirituality. Even defining what “spirituality” means can be elusive and so varied that, in the surveying done by the doctoral candidate, it seems that dioceses often do not develop this part of catechist formation to any significant degree.\(^1\) The project\(^2\) for this treatise sought to substantively address these issues in adult-to-adult ministry training in a local setting that could also be suited to at-distance structures of formation.

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\(^1\) In the doctoral candidate’s current ministry work, a key element of the position involves regular contact with catechetically-relevant diocesan officials (superintendents, directors of formation, youth ministry coordinators, etc.). The assertion in the point above arises from specific discussions with officials from over 50 dioceses.

\(^2\) The term “project” will be used in this treatise to refer to the program created by the doctoral candidate and run for the six-month duration required by the doctoral treatise parameters.
Statement of Challenge

The challenge in ministry being identified by this project can be stated as question: How can a practical, affordable parish formation program, with a strong spirituality component, be developed that specifically addresses the need for preparing adults to catechize other adults? Answering this question involved developing a model based on the doctoral candidate’s experience with a form of catechist training in a Catholic setting experienced at a small catechetical entity called the Maryvale Institute of Birmingham, England. During the tenure of Dr. Petroc Willey’s leadership, this institute worked on a model for forming catechists in the United Kingdom. Dioceses in the United States do not seem to have experimented with this model to any significant degree as far as a survey conducted by the doctoral candidate can determine.

The purpose of the project was to provide participants with the content, methodology, and spiritual formation necessary to equip them to effectively pass on the Catholic faith to other adults in a parish setting. The project was designed as a parish-level certification program, and especially sought to make the spiritual formation aspect foundational, giving particular and primary attention to the development of the participant’s spiritual life. Developing teaching methods and skills was its other main object.

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3 Petroc Willey, *Course Director Training Manual* (Birmingham, England: Maryvale Institute, 2008). Dr. Petroc Willey served as the deputy director of the Maryvale Institute from 1992-2013; it was through conversations and working interactions with this professor that the doctoral candidate was exposed to the formation structure that inspired this treatise. Dr. Willey’s specialty is adult education. He has authored multiple courses, from field certification to Ph.D. level, that seek to apply the adult learning model to faith formation, with an emphasis on a mentoring format.

4 A telephone survey was conducted from 2015-2017 of a sampling of U.S. dioceses to give diocesan officials responsible for catechist formation a summary of the formation structure presented in this treatise, to query these officials about whether their dioceses had attempted such a training format for those doing adult catechists. In each conversation the answer given was “no,” this type of approach had not been tried in that location. The dioceses polled represented a little over 10% of U.S. Latin Rite diocese across 21 states: Archdiocese of Baltimore, MD; Archdiocese of Dubuque, IA; Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, TX; Archdiocese of Indianapolis, IN; Archdiocese of Miami, FL; Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, OK; Archdiocese of Portland, OR; Diocese of Arlington, VA; Diocese of Brooklyn, NY; Diocese of Burlington, VT; Diocese of Cleveland, OH; Diocese of Fargo, ND; Diocese of Fort Worth, TX; Diocese of La Crosse, WI; Diocese of Lake Charles, LA; Diocese of Lansing, MI; Diocese of Phoenix, AZ; Diocese of Pittsburgh, PA; Diocese of Sioux Falls, SD; Diocese of Venice, FL; Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, WV; Diocese of Winona, MN. These dioceses represent a reasonable cross-section of the country geographically, inclusive of highly urban and highly rural sees, high and low Catholic population densities, and a variation of relative wealth.
Overview of the Treatise

Participants in this project were lay Catholic adults being trained as catechists for other adults. Participants were men and women, all laity, of varying educational levels from high school degrees to master’s degrees. The project required a group of persons who did not have a need for kerygmatic evangelization. The registration material identified such persons. The group of participants being taken through the catechist formation project consisted of twenty people drawn from parishes in Maryland (more individuals originally agreed to begin the project; reasons for several leaving will be discussed in Chapter 3 below). Each participant signed and returned the Consent Form for Program Participation approved by The Catholic University of America. The formation project was arranged to take this group through the formation experience in 2016. Participants proceeded through the program in six months’ time, from March until October.

The project began by gathering participants at a Saturday study day (from breakfast to mid-afternoon) to orient them to the subject, deal with logistical questions, and inspire them to the task. There were two more study days, one at the halfway point, and the last to conclude and evaluate the endeavor. Participants were oriented to the doctoral candidate (termed program director for them) to personally assist them in moving through the various exercises that were designed to benefit their formation. The doctoral candidate’s role was to conduct the study days, and to respond to input from each participant who submitted various required exercise assignments. In summary, the components of this six-month program included:

- Three study days held on Saturdays, involving instruction in a classroom format and assistance with take-home materials; study days were held at the beginning, middle, and end of the program.
• Exercises for each section completed by participants at home.

• Individual correspondence and meetings with the doctoral candidate (by email, telephone, or in-person) as needed.

Three units (Parts I-III) were created for this project, divided into several chapters (Sections 1-10). A participant binder directed participants’ study, reading, and assignment submissions (see Appendix III).

This treatise first discusses the theological foundations of the project, primary to expand the understanding of why a mentoring focus and a spiritual formation focus appeared so prominently in the project. The treatise then offers theological reflections on dimensions of catechist formation as means to explain how the objectives and exercises of the project were determined. Following this the treatise presents a discussion of the design and implementation of the project. Lastly, recommendations and conclusions are offered.
CHAPTER ONE: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter of the treatise is to lay out foundational understandings that formed the context of the doctoral candidate’s decisions related to how adults should be formed for the work of passing on the faith. Although the greater portion of catechetical ministry principles are applicable to all persons who are the subjects of catechesis, at relevant points in the discussion, aspects relating more strongly to adult formation will be emphasized. In this chapter, the project under study will not be explained in detail; instead the purpose here is to articulate ecclesial and experiential norms that led to a specific design for adult catechist formation. Chapters 2 and 3 of this treatise will then apply those understandings to the project’s intended goals and actual implementation.

The Vocation of the Christian

Above all things, the Christian is called to imitation of Christ himself. Just as Christ dedicated his time on earth to ministry, service, and the mission of the Father, so does the Christian dedicate himself to the fulfillment of this call. The highest vocation of the Christian is first and foremost a call to holiness and Christian greatness – a call to share in the universal mission of Christ. “All Christians, indeed all human beings, are called to life of holiness.”¹ The call to holiness and into a life of service is a very real call to the hearts of all people by the God that made them. Benedict Groeschel called it “neurotic to settle for what is less than God when he has called us.”² God calls us and offers himself to us. The path is clear: to receive God we must partake in his mission.

¹ Peter Feldmeier, The Developing Christian (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2007), 162.
John Paul II likened the lay members of the Christian faithful to the laborers hired for the vineyard in the Gospel of Matthew. He spoke of how the Church, following the Council of Vatican II, has “come to a more lively awareness of her missionary nature and has listened again to the voice of her Lord who sends her forth into the world as ‘the universal sacrament of salvation.’” Lest this call to labor in the vineyard be set aside or aloft as a vocation of the few, John Paul II emphasized the universal call to all Christians – whether they be priests, religious, or lay. This call to labor in the vineyard “is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world.”

The Christian receives this call to the vineyard in Baptism: “Theologically, the radical beginning for the Christian is the reception of Baptism and incorporation into Christ.” As Paul noted, when a person is baptized, he or she is baptized into Christ and so “puts on Christ.” This action is a missioning. Through Baptism, a person is set free from sin and is reborn as a child of God, becoming a member of Christ, imbued with the mission of his Church: “Thus with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, the baptized share in the same mission of Jesus as the Christ, the Savior-Messiah.” In Christifideles Laici, John Paul II spoke of the call the faithful receive at Baptism:

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5 Ibid., no. 2.
6 Ibid., no. 2.
7 Groeschel, Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development, 72.
9 CL, no. 13.
With Baptism we become *children of God in his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ*. Rising from the waters of the Baptismal font, every Christian hears again the voice that was once heard on the banks of the Jordan River: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Lk 3:22). From this comes the understanding that one has been brought into association with the beloved Son, becoming a child of adoption (cf. Gal 4:4-7) and a brother or sister of Christ. In this way the eternal plan of the Father for each person is realized in history: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).\(^{10}\)

Baptism makes one a sharer in the Church’s mission to spread the Gospel to all peoples.\(^{11}\) John Paul II referred to evangelization as a “right and duty based on baptismal dignity.”\(^{12}\) The change effected by Baptism has the power to charge an otherwise natural life with a supernatural mission, for the one who has put on Christ strives for the kingdom of God with a whole and undivided heart. The disciple grows to a maturity that seeks no unnecessary earthly comfort,\(^{13}\) endeavoring to live the mission of Christ unreservedly.

Lay participation in the threefold mission of Christ finds its source in the anointing of Baptism.\(^{14}\) This mission of Christ can be articulated in threefold manner: that of *priest, prophet,* and *king*.\(^{15}\) As this treatise unfolds, this threefold understanding will be revisited, deepened, and applied to decisions made in the project’s design.

Christ’s *priestly mission* was demonstrated when Jesus offered himself on the cross, and as he continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist.\(^{16}\) The faithful are called to make themselves a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”\(^{17}\) The lay faithful take part in this

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\(^{10}\) CL, no. 11, italics added.


\(^{13}\) Rom 13:14.

\(^{14}\) CL, no. 15.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., no. 14.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Rom 12:1.
priestly mission through their daily offering of themselves, their work, and their lives. The lay members of the faithful fulfill their priestly duties by taking the ordinary world around them into their hands and consecrating it to God for his praise and his glory.\textsuperscript{18} The Christian who offers himself up as a living sacrifice simultaneously offers himself to God to be used for the salvation and sanctification of souls. By this sacrifice of self, the Christian also sets an example for those around him. This example allows the lay faithful to sanctify the world around them by calling those around them out of mediocrity and into a life given over and transformed by Christ.

Christ’s \textit{prophetic mission} exists in word and action; he “proclaimed the kingdom of his Father by the testimony of his life and by the power of his world.”\textsuperscript{19} Christ is “the Great Prophet.”\textsuperscript{20} From her very beginning the Church was commissioned by him to “Go 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.”\textsuperscript{21} Through the grace and power of their Baptism, “the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the Gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil.”\textsuperscript{22} The lay faithful are the prophets of the ordinary life. John Paul II outlined their call as one that must “allow the newness and the power of the Gospel to shine out every day in their family and social life, as well as to express patiently and courageously in the contradictions of the present age their hope of future glory.”\textsuperscript{23} The lay faithful use the “framework of their secular life”\textsuperscript{24} to display the full glory of the Gospel message.

\textsuperscript{18} CL, no. 14.  
\textsuperscript{19} LG, no. 35.  
\textsuperscript{20} Lk 7:16.  
\textsuperscript{21} Mt 28:19-20.  
\textsuperscript{22} CL, no. 14.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{24} LG, no. 35.
Finally, the lay faithful are called to share in Christ’s *kingly mission*. Because the faithful “belong to Christ, Lord and King of the Universe,”25 they are called to take their place in the unfolding of the kingdom of God. All Christians are called to participate in the spreading of Christ’s kingdom.26 This aspect of the Christian vocation in some ways brings with it elements of spiritual courage, particularly in the fight against sin.27 When the lay faithful labor in the vineyard so as to build up the kingdom of God, they are not exercising an authority to conquer and to rule. Rather, they are fulfilling their duty to take initiative and leadership, in the context of ecclesial hierarchy, in the work and mission of Christ’s beloved Church. The Christian faith is an otherworldly understanding that calls each person to labor for a kingdom here and a kingdom to come. It “is a faith that is engaged with the world, cooperating with God to recreate it and align it more fully with the kingdom.”28 If Baptism makes each person an heir to the kingship of God, then exercising his or her kingly role makes him or her a child of God, seeking good and prosperity for the kingdom he or she is to inherit. John Paul II noted that the lay faithful who fulfill their kingly mission are those who “make a gift of themselves so as to serve, in justice and in charity, Jesus who is himself present in all his brothers and sisters, above all in the very least.”29

The vocation of the lay faithful is thus one calling them to “restore to creation all its original value.”30 Since the lay faithful are in the world, they have the ability and call to reorder the world. They promote the fullness of authentic well-being of humanity, work that is governed

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.; Rom 6:12.
29 CL, nos. 14, 23; Mt 25:40.
and nourished by the life of grace.\textsuperscript{31} The lay faithful share in Christ’s own great mission: to make God everything to everyone.\textsuperscript{32} Such genuine Christian living “demands a great deal,”\textsuperscript{33} but it is a mark of maturity for the Christian adult to seriously take on the challenge of appropriating the life of faith.\textsuperscript{34}

In order to make God everything to everyone, Christians aim to be “all things to all men.”\textsuperscript{35} For this purpose, an adult commitment to the faith necessarily “implies the death of self.”\textsuperscript{36} This emptying of self for the fulfillment of others is foundational in the work of Christian ministry: “we increase so that Christ and his kingdom can increase. This active participation in Church and society is part and parcel of the life of faith.”\textsuperscript{37} Christian dignity demands that Christians take up the call to extend the salvation found in Christ to every person of every place at every time.\textsuperscript{38} John Paul II wrote of this universal call to ministry:

A member of the lay faithful can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited. The Spirit of the Lord gives a vast variety of charisms, inviting people to assume different ministries and forms of service and reminding them, as he reminds all people in their relationship in the Church, that what distinguishes persons is \textit{not an increase in dignity}, but a \textit{special and complementary capacity for service}... Thus, the charisms, the ministries, the different forms of service exercised by the lay faithful exist in communion and on behalf of communion. They are treasures that complement one another for the good of all and are under the wise guidance of their pastors.\textsuperscript{39}

In \textit{Lumen Gentium}, the Second Vatican Council referred to ministries as gifts of the Holy Spirit meant for building up the Church as the Body of Christ and to assist in her ministry of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.; 1 Cor 15:28; Jn 12:32.
\textsuperscript{33} Feldmeier, \textit{The Developing Christian}, 173.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{35} 1 Cor 9:22.
\textsuperscript{37} Feldmeier, \textit{The Developing Christian}, 191.
\textsuperscript{38} LG, no. 33.
\textsuperscript{39} CL, no. 20.
\end{footnotesize}
salvation for the world. In all their various forms, the ministries present in the Church are “a participation in Jesus Christ’s own ministry as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (cf. Jn 10:11), the humble servant who gives himself without reserve for the salvation of all (cf. Mk 10:45).”

The apostle Paul noted that the ministries present in the Church will present themselves with variety. Some will be called as apostles, others as prophets, and others as teachers. He noted that:

“the grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift... And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Although the types of ministry accomplished by the faithful may vary in kind, at their heart their mission is to build up the Body of Christ by helping others enter into the fullness of Christ.

The lay faithful help accomplish the Church’s mission of salvation through the various ministries, offices, and roles they can fulfill in the Church. This movement into ministry is a mark of spiritual growth and maturity, for “spiritual growth involves moving from naive idealism to concrete realism, from an abstract life story to one that is now engaged.” It is important to note that the laity’s work in the salvific mission of Christ and his Church is not only a particular office or select vocational state; instead the call into ministry flows organically from Baptism.

Yet, “The various ministries, offices and roles that the lay faithful can legitimately fulfill in the liturgy, in the transmission of the faith, and in the pastoral structure of the Church, ought to be

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40 LG, no. 4.
41 CL, no. 21.
42 1 Cor 12:28.
43 Eph 4:7, 11-13; cf. CL, no. 21; Rom 12:4-8.
44 Feldmeier, The Developing Christian, 173.
exercised in conformity to their specific lay vocation.”\textsuperscript{45} The call to fulfill Christ’s mission must nevertheless be seen as a general mission for all the faithful, not as a particular mission for the few. The call to make the faith present in the lives of others is not neatly fitted into any job title – unless that job title is no narrower than “baptized person.” It cannot be outsourced solely or even primarily to “official” catechists and Sunday School teachers. There must be ministry among laity; mature Christians are called to minister explicitly by word and by example to their own peers. This call is a common one and may be further specified to a catechetical ministry field. This treatise now moves to a discussion of the Church’s sense of ministry and the nature of a calling that accords with ecclesial tradition and suits a lay expression.

\textbf{Theology of Ministry}

In order to proceed towards a model of catechist training that more readily makes evident a priority on spiritual formation and personal attentiveness (in a one-to-one mentoring form), it becomes necessary at this point to examine the definition of ministry. Certainly, the New Testament use of the term cannot be limited to the ordained. The modern Church’s increasing use of the term ministry in relation to laity is evident in the documents of the Second Vatican Council\textsuperscript{46} and in the \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}.\textsuperscript{47}

If the term ministry can be used in reference to some lay activities, then this could point to a constructive consideration of its use to develop adult formation in a particularly person-to-

person direction, as this treatise will detail below in relation to *intimacy* or *immanence* in ministry. The term apostolate might suitably substitute for ministry, although the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* seems to distinguish the two by designating apostolate as referring to any Christian activity that works to extend the reign of Christ to the entire world, and ministry as referent to activities more directly related to the sanctifying and teaching offices (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*’s glossary for this distinction). This could be summarized as: all are called to apostolate, some are also called to ministry.

*Ministry in Terms of Intimacy/Immanence*

Ministry is frequently restricted to a simply clerical lens. It remains necessary to define ministry to include all baptized persons. This inclusion of the laity in ministry is not new. Within this understanding of ministry, there is a potential threefold expansion of defining the concept further according to the Christic pattern in the tradition that has been discussed in regards to the vocation of the Christian: kingly, priestly, and prophetic. *Catechesi Tradendae* notes how:

> The apostles were not slow to share with others the ministry of apostleship. They transmitted to their successors the task of teaching. They entrusted it also to the deacons from the moment of their institution: Stephen, “full of grace and power,” taught unceasingly, moved by the wisdom of the Spirit. The apostles associated “many others” with themselves in the task of teaching, and even simple Christians scattered by persecution “went about preaching the word.”

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48 CCC, no. 863.
The inclusion of laity in ministry has been a facet of the Church since apostolic times. “The Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right”\(^{51}\) since the lay vocation of spreading the faith to others springs from the sacrament of Baptism itself.\(^{52}\)

For the adult catechist formation project described herein, it becomes instructive to consider that ministry can be viewed not only as a degree or measure of *powers or functions* in the Church, but also as a degree or measure of *intimacy or immanence*, understood in the manner communicated by John Paul II, speaking in reference to catechesis in this case:

> 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.\(^{53}\)

If the point is *intimacy with Christ*, then it could be considered that those who impact the choice of and deepening in that intimacy are those most meriting support in ministry. If ministry is fundamentally the work of passing on a relationship (with Christ), then those most in relationship (with a person to be introduced to or deepened in Christ) or who should be, are prime in consideration as ministers. Instead of ranks or offices having sole priority in defining ministry, this method instead suggests an outcomes-based definition – whoever fosters intimacy (in whomever the object of conversion happens to be in particular circumstance).

This concept is founded in Paul’s expressions of his closeness to those he sought to grow in the Lord: “Like a mother feeding and looking after her own children, we felt so devoted and protective towards you, and had come to love you so much, that we were eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but our whole lives as well.”\(^{54}\) To the Corinthians he wrote:

\(^{51}\) CT, no. 14.  
\(^{53}\) CT, no. 5.  
\(^{54}\) 1 Thess 2:7-8.
We put no obstacle in any one’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide.\(^{55}\)

This unmistakable tone of sacrificial intimacy is echoed in the way the *General Directory for Catechesis* expresses the role of catechists:

> [The exercise of catechesis] will cause [the catechist] to grow in respect and in love for catechumens and those being catechized: “What is this love? It is the love, not so much of a teacher as of a father, or rather of a mother. It is the Lord’s wish that every preacher of the Gospel, every builder up of the Church should have this love” (CT 23; cf. SC 35)... The formation, above all, nourishes the *spirituality* of the catechist, so that his activity springs in truth from his own witness of life.\(^ {56}\)

This deeply challenging call has been more recently communicated by Pope Francis, preferring to make use of a term analogous to intimacy and immanence – *accompaniment*:

> The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. To accompany them would be counterproductive if it became a sort of therapy supporting their self-absorption and ceased to be a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father... One who accompanies others has to realize that each person’s situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without... Someone good at such accompaniment does not give in to frustrations or fears. He or she invites others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel. Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow... Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization. Paul’s relationship with Timothy and Titus provides an example of this accompaniment and formation which takes place in the midst of apostolic...

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\(^{55}\) 2 Cor 6:3-11.

\(^{56}\) GDC, no. 239.
activity. Entrusting them with the mission of remaining in each city to “put in order what remains to be done” (Tit 1:5; cf. 1 Tim 1:3-5), Paul also gives them rules for their personal lives and their pastoral activity. This is clearly distinct from every kind of intrusive accompaniment or isolated self-realization. Missionary disciples accompany missionary disciples.  

Another source of this concept of the importance of intimacy or immanence in forming adults results from the research done by the Rev. Bill Hybels. In his key findings of a study of his own congregation over time, he discovered that a congregant’s relationship with Christ (his or her personal perception of this) was the key corollary with Christian morality. The study notably pointed out that actions one might expect to correlate with the choice to act as a Christian, such as Church attendance, attendance of adult formation classes of various sorts, or participation in small groups, did not in fact correlate nearly as strongly as the simple perception of the congregant that he or she had an intimate relationship with Jesus. In other words, the study suggests that Christian “doings” are not as critical as the fact of an established relationship with the Lord. It seems that whatever “fed into” the likelihood of that relationship coming into existence and growing in an individual would be a good foundation for discovering how to define the critical ministries surrounding that person.

The way of parsing the concept of ministry is varied: One way is to divide ‘ministries’ along temporal grounds (full-time/part time). More accepted perhaps is to divide along lines of authority (for example, it could be argued that the concept of “extra-ordinary” ministry is relative to something other than “intimacy” – it is relative to hierarchy). A ministry can also be defined by who has rights (in the Church and in the natural law) in an official form (for example,


a canonically-installed pastor) or relational form (for example, parents have inalienable rights due to relationship).

If a sense of being in ministry were based rather on levels of *intimacy* or *immanence*, the definition of minister might instead be as follows: *those who, with intention, discern their vocational and life circumstances in light of the baptismal call to foster intimacy with Christ, in and through the Church, primarily by means of personal accompaniment, sacrifice, and witness (by works and words).* Basic and initial discernment of whether to enter a given ministry might take the form of three questions: 1) What are my vocational duties? 2) Who has God given me to love within those duties? 3) What gifts do I have (natural and supernatural) and how do I need to grow (formation sought within the context of vocational needs)?

*Intimacy or immanence is suggested as an important concept relative to this project on forming catechists for adults for two specific reasons:*

1. **If it could be maintained that, within Christianity, the order of authority exists to serve the order of love (not forgetting that the order of love is normatively subordinate to the order of authority), then it could be suggested that a ministerial definition that prioritizes love, while not neglecting the bounds to be set by legitimate authority, is tenable (consider CCC 773 relating this point in terms of the Marian and Petrine dimensions of the Church). Thus, some more didactic structures of forming catechists for adults can be less obviously suited to develop a Christian ability to love another soul towards growth. This treatise seeks to suggest ways of formation that draws two souls nearer by means of a mentoring structure and creating a climate for intentional spiritual guidance.**

2. **Using the concept of intimacy or immanence can have the effect of fighting the tendency to de-Christocentrize the term ministry. In other words, over the Church’s long history, it**
could be argued that what constitutes ministry has sometimes become strongly associated (to the exclusion of other things) to institutional realities that come and go with the passage of centuries (for example, the ministry of porter, or of sub deacon). As stated above, if the whole point is intimacy with Christ, then those who impact the choice of and deepening in that intimacy are those most in ministry. If intimacy is the working determinate, then what receives the label of ministry in a given period of the Church becomes fluid in some regard and perhaps better able to adapt to changing circumstances over time and in different cultures. It also serves to maintain bishops, priests, and deacons as the ever-critical ministries due to the primacy of the sacraments as the surpassing source of intimacy with Christ. Heinz Schuster argued that one way of looking at pastoral theology was the perspective of that “which deals with the Church’s self-fulfillment in the ever-new contemporary situation.” It could be argued that intimacy with Christ and one another is the goal of the Church. The very call which she seeks to fulfill – to intimacy – could thus be the means to judge what ministry is in any given time period of the Church’s life. In developing a sense of what catechetical ministry to adults should look like, this treatise moves in the direction of methods that encourage one adult to more personally and attentively accompany another in the formation process, through mentorship and through learning exercises that explicitly invite spiritual awareness and development and demand soul-to-soul accompaniment.

As will be clear further on in this treatise, considering intimacy or immanence as a relevant priority in ministry creates a pathway not only to evident reasons that parents are considered

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primary educators for their offspring, but also to an adult-to-adult valuation of closeness in ministry. Hence a clearer understanding may emerge of the importance of mentoring and attention to spiritual elements that foster intimacy in that formative relationship.

A Further Step

The *General Directory for Catechesis* links the call of the common vocation of the apostolate to the Christian participation in Christ’s threefold office of priest, prophet, and king.\(^6\) This lens has value in moving towards a more specific balance in forming catechists for adults. Prior to detailing that value in a lay catechetical context, it is important to define more general ways in which this threefold office exists in the life of the Church.

*Priestly Forms of Ministry* (examples: priest, married, religious)

- Discernment is pre-bestowal and pre-meditated (meaning, as with the kingly form above, an individual moves towards this ministry before its authority is formally bestowed; the individual considers the ministry work beforehand as potentially appropriate for his or her state in life).

- Authority to minister is bestowed with the vocation (meaning that generally an individual enters this form of ministry as an outflow of considering it in the context of the grace of state received by being in his or her vocation).

- Intrinsic ministry – this form has rights within the Church that are intrinsic to the vocation itself (and are not removable by the Church unless circumstances are extreme). This applies most obviously to parents.

\(^6\) GDC, no. 231.
**Kingly Forms of Ministry** (examples: pastor, teacher, catechist, lector)

- Discernment of this form of ministry is pre-bestowal and pre-mediated (meaning that an individual moves towards this ministry before its authority is formally bestowed; the individual considers the ministry work beforehand as potentially appropriate for his or her state in life).

- Authority to minister is bestowed post-vocationally (meaning that generally an individual enters this form of ministry as an outflow of discerning it in the context of his or her established state in life).

- Designated ministry – this form has no rights within the Church until bestowed (however pre-mediated and accurately discerned by the individual, this form of ministry carries no authority until confirmed – bestowed – by the Church)

**Prophetic Forms of Ministry** (examples: witness to faith, giving testimony to the faith, proclaimer, visionary or seer, healer, speaker in tongues; as well as certain other charismatic gifts)61

- Discernment is post-bestowal and not pre-mediated (meaning an individual does not necessarily discern this form of ministry before having its power bestowed; the individual does not necessarily consider the ministry work beforehand as potentially appropriate for his or her state in life).

- Authority to minister is bestowed with God’s act of actual grace and is transitory by its nature (meaning, unlike those above, the work of ministry is not conferred through an act

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61 LG, nos. 12, 35; CL, nos. 14, 34; a view of prophetic ministry more emphasizing aspects of visionary and healer is presented by Karl Rahner, *Theology of Pastoral Action* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 58.
of the Church, but directly from God; the ministry may persist for a time, and then become dormant or absent at God’s choosing).

- Recognition ministry – this form has rights within the Church relative to Church’s confirmation of the validity of the individual’s discernment and exercise of the ministry (this is the only manner that this form of ministry is tied to the hierarchy in a direct fashion).

All of these constructs have a general value in the Church, but they can appear too defined and may not readily demonstrate how the threefold offices can each be reflected in a lay ministry. As noted by Avery Dulles, the biblical testimony does not permit an overly specific narrowing of the term ministry into strictly clerical categories, or even into the tidy format of kingly, priestly, and prophetic.\(^62\) He goes on to note that the Second Vatican Council used the threefold pattern, which could be discerned from the Old Testament in relation to the Messiah, and certainly served as a valid foundation for understanding the modern apostolate of the laity in a Christocentric way.\(^63\)

The Christocentric aspect is critical. Although the Greek term *diakonia* denotes service, service to the kingdom of God is not sufficiently specific to mark out the degree of emphasis found in the New Testament usage of the term (which is where Thomas O’Meara’s seems to lay the emphasis).\(^64\) The New Testament is concerned not with simply service to the kingdom, but more fully, service to the kingdom for the purpose of intimacy with Christ – Christ-likeness. It is *diakonia* at the service of something higher than itself – forming “Christ in you, the hope of

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\(^63\) Ibid., 3.
Any valid form of Christian ministry presupposes self-identification with Christ as the primary goal. This would, for example, remove simply laudable social activity as a form of ministry. Secular (and certainly laudable) acts of justice, kindness, or mercy would be the form ministry takes outside of Christ. Such actions flow from the natural law and the human virtues, but they are not fundamentally eschatological; they are done for this world’s sake, rather than to build up the “convocation of men in Christ.” Catechesis, because it is motivated by a relationship, most naturally flows along pathways of intentional relationship. This call of Christ is what moves human souls to catechize. Their “yes” to the divine relationship allows them to lead others to the “yes” of faith in Jesus Christ. Catechesis is the natural sharing between siblings speaking to each other about their family history and their Father’s love for them.

As will be developed further in the next chapter of this treatise, the priestly, prophetic, and kingly expressions of Christ’s presence can all be fostered in a soul desiring to catechize. Despite any differences in age and experience, this sharing of the faith is the natural action of the Christian who recognizes the reality of his role as priest, prophet, and king. To be able to describe this threefold role as applying specifically to the lay vocation of catechesis, this treatise broadens first to the larger form of ministry within which all endeavors of passing on the faith exist.

The Vocation of the Catechist within the Ministry of the Word

The ministry of the word is the fundamental element of evangelization that proclaims Jesus Christ in his life, teachings, and promises. This proclamation is the meat of “true

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65 Col 1:27.
66 O’Meara, Theology of Ministry, 76.
67 CCC, no. 760.
68 Ibid., no. 231.
69 GDC, no. 50.
evangelization” and applies both to those who do not yet know Christ and those who already 
profess to know him – for even those who are already disciples of Jesus Christ must be 
“constantly nourished by the word of God so that they may grow in their Christian life.”
The ministry of the word operates within the context of evangelization and transmits the revelation of 
Christ Jesus through the Church. It uses human words to transmit divine truths and to witness to 
the work which God has done and continues to do. The ministry of the word is beautifully 
described as the Holy Spirit’s “dialogue with humanity.”

Besides transmitting the work and words of God, the ministry of the word accomplishes 
several important functions in the life of the Church. The General Directory for Catechesis states 
that the most important forms of the ministry of the word are as follows: “the first announcement 
or missionary preaching, pre- and post-baptismal catechesis, the liturgical forms and the 
theological forms.” The ministry of the word acts as the primary proclamation that the Church 
directs to non-believers, to Christians who fail to practice their faith, and to those who follow 
religions other than Christianity. It introduces those who are moved to follow Jesus “into the 
life of faith, the liturgy, and the charity of the people of God.” This is primarily through 
catechesis and the sacraments of initiation and can take the form of “catechesis of non-baptized 
adults in the catechumenate, the catechesis of baptized adults who wish to return to the faith (or 
of those who need to complete their initiation), and the catechesis of children and of the 
young.” The ministry of the word provides a space for an initial evangelization and conversion,

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., no. 51.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
and offers Christian formation which “leads to a sacramental life, and after the reception of the first sacrament… has to be continued by further preaching of the Gospel.”

Catechesis associated with the ministry of the word does not have to be limited only to contexts related to the sacraments of initiation. The catechist’s role within the ministry of the word consists of “proclaiming and expanding this word. The primary role of catechists is to announce and teach the good news.” The catechist is the messenger of the Good News of Christ. The ministry of the word also pertains to a “permanent catechesis” that is meant for Christians who have already received initiation into the most basic elements of the Christian faith. Such catechesis is meant to nourish and deepen the faith life of the one receiving it. This sort of catechesis may be achieved in many ways – whether systematic, occasional, individual, communal, organized, or spontaneous.

The ministry of the word also has liturgical and theological functions. The liturgical function pertains to the sacraments, the celebration of sacramentals, and participation in the Eucharist, and is most clearly realized in the homily. The theological function pertains to belief which seeks understanding. It is realized through belief’s dialogue with various confrontations with philosophical forms of thought, varied forms of humanism, and the sciences. Ultimately, both the liturgical and theological functions of the ministry of the word seek to foster greater understanding and incorporation of the faith in the Christian adult.

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80 GDC, no. 51.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
Although the ministry of the word clearly has an element of initial conversion, it also stresses a continuing conversion among the faithful. The Good News of revelation “invites men and women to conversion and faith.”\textsuperscript{85} The Christian faith is first and foremost a personal encounter with and conversion to Jesus Christ, a decision to walk in his footsteps and imitate him.\textsuperscript{86} Such a faith demands a permanent and ongoing commitment to unite oneself to Christ.\textsuperscript{87} Faith is made up of a resounding lifelong “yes” to Jesus Christ\textsuperscript{88} that will culminate the complete transformation of a person’s life,\textsuperscript{89} a change of life that is profound and ongoing. The life of the believer is a life of continual conversion that manifests itself at all levels.\textsuperscript{90} Throughout this lifelong process of conversion, the ministry of the word is to be present and active,\textsuperscript{91} giving the nourishment necessary for the healthy and continuing life of the faithful.

Although catechesis can take many different forms in faith education, it is important to remember that the primary form of catechesis will always be adult to adult.\textsuperscript{92} Because of this, it is necessary to ensure that catechesis is delivered to all adults, those newly reached as well as those who have already received the sacraments of initiation – implying a constant accompaniment. Adult accompaniment within a robust ministry of the word is intended to bear significant fruit. Out of all Christians, “adults have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form.”\textsuperscript{93} The mature lay Christian is primarily responsible for assisting in the accomplishment of the work of the greater mission of the Church as a whole. Catechesis for adults therefore takes on a surpassing importance. It must be

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., no. 53.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., no. 54.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., no. 55.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., no. 57.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., no. 258.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., no. 38.
considered “the chief form of catechesis.”\textsuperscript{94} Catechesis is “situated in the context of the Church’s mission of evangelization”\textsuperscript{95} and is an essential part of that ongoing Christic mission. Adults receive from deepening catechesis a missionary dynamic that both enriches and defines their identity as Christians. Lay adults are called to a greatly expanded role within the Church. In their publication, \textit{Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States}, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops noted that:

\begin{quote}
We are entering a period of new vitality for the Church, a period in which adult Catholic laity will play a pivotal leadership role in fulfilling the Christian mission of evangelizing and transforming society. For adults to fulfill their roles in this new era of the Church, their faith formation must be lifelong, just as they must continue to learn to keep up in the changing world.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

Strong Christian adult leadership has the potential to completely transform the Church and the work, but in order to realize their mission and potential, Christian adults must be superbly catechized. This education will invigorate the Church: “Every Church ministry will be energized through a dynamic ministry of adult catechesis.”\textsuperscript{97} Adult catechesis is a mission that itself provides the impetus for furthering the Church’s evangelizing mission.

The ministry of catechesis to adults in the ministry of the word is an essential service for the realization of the missionary mandate given to all Christians by Christ and the formation of mature Christian adults.\textsuperscript{98} The word of God and the Body of Christ nourish the Christian disciple and “the action of the Holy Spirit operates so that the gift of ‘communion’ and the task of ‘mission’ are deepened and lived in an increasingly intense way.”\textsuperscript{99} The Christian disciple must

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., no. 59.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., no. 39.
\textsuperscript{98} GDC, no. 59.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., no. 70.
“begin anew each day their spiritual journey in truth, adoration and thanksgiving.”

In order to become a disciple and incorporate the Church’s mission into their own worldview, adults need to learn about the greatness to which they are called. Because of this, “the Church wisely and repeatedly insists that adult faith formation is essential to who we are and what we do as Church and must be situated not at the periphery of the Church’s educational mission but at its center.”

Since this work is so vital to the life of the Church, it must be structured and effective. The ministry of the word uses many form of catechesis, including the study and exploration of scripture, a Christian reading of events, liturgical catechesis, catechesis pertaining directly to the issues and circumstances of individuals, continuing conversion initiatives, and theological and apologetical instruction. In all of these approaches ultimately, “catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act.” Specifically, a key aspect of this ecclesial tradition is to attend to a personal form of faith formation that is simply a following of Christ’s pattern and the apostolic pattern. In this earliest pattern, immanence is unmistakable: the early Christians laity interacting with the apostles were discipled in such a way that following Jesus and sharing Jesus were indistinguishable. In the modern Church, the pattern is the same: peer-to-peer adult catechesis is called to unveil the reality, nuance, and intimacy of divine relationship, in a manner best demonstrated by immanent human witness. The call was to live as other Christs and grace lifted that witness beyond human weakness. To evince this more clearly, this treatise now turns to a study of the pedagogy of imitation.

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100 Ibid.
101 USCCB, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, no. 42.
102 GDC, no. 71.
103 Ibid., no. 78.
Trinitarian Catechesis and the Pedagogy of God

It is impossible to speak of the craft of catechesis without speaking of the pedagogy of God, as the entire goal of catechesis is communion with the Trinity. God’s pedagogy “is broader than [the] ministry of the word: it is a whole pedagogy of the salvation of the person.” The pedagogy of God is revealed in the scriptures as centered on the salvation of the individual person. Ultimately, the pedagogy of God becomes the boundary that serves to keep people within a form of catechesis that neither warps nor waters down the fullness of the truth. It would be improper to speak of God and not teach as God himself teaches. Catechesis reaches its pinnacle through a Trinitarian pedagogy, in which the catechist is imbued with the pedagogy of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The catechist does not just speak of the Trinity, but speaks with and like the Trinity.

The pedagogy of God is an intensely personal one because God himself is a personal God:

God neither acts nor speaks to men in general. God does not address himself to creatures in the general and the abstract. He speaks to each soul in its innermost and most personal depths… It follows that the miracle worked before a crowd is not addressed to that crowd as such, but to each individual who goes to make up the crowd.

We meet God as the Three Persons, for Christian faith “is participation in the life of a person.” The faith is profoundly linked to relationship with the Persons of the Trinity, it is a “Trinitarian faith, and the sharing and the life of the Three Persons.” Faith itself is described as the

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105 Ibid., no. 46.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., no. 37.
“orientation of a person towards a good which can only be another person, this desire for a beautifying truth which can only be a person in whom light and love shine forth.”\textsuperscript{109} The faith is profoundly personal because of the familial bond between the divine Persons and the human persons, and thus pedagogy of the faith is rooted in the Trinitarian Persons.

The pedagogy of God is revealed in three parts – the pedagogy of the Father, the pedagogy of the Son, and the pedagogy of the Holy Spirit. The pedagogy of God the Father is revealed in the Old Testament. God the Father in sacred scripture is revealed as a “merciful Father, teacher, and sage.”\textsuperscript{110} God is a good Father who takes into account each person’s unique character and conditions. He is not a God who rules out of fear, but a God who attracts out of love. “God himself in his personal reality, and lightens and attracts us by his grace.”\textsuperscript{111} This attraction is not to a blind and impersonal force, but to a divine Person “who is light and love, who gives a little of himself to a person in need, one who craves that light and love.”\textsuperscript{112} God gives himself to us and calls us to himself.

Ultimately, the core of the Christian message consists of the truth that the loving God the Father “has called us through his Son and made us his very own children by giving us his spirit.”\textsuperscript{113} In the same way that a young son grows in maturity and becomes more obedient and faithful even as he becomes more free, so do the sons of God mature in their faith to become true Christian adults.\textsuperscript{114} This journey from spiritual child to spiritual adult can often be one fraught with difficulty. The Father forms and teaches us with good things certainly, but also with difficulties, trials, and sufferings. By catechizing in light of this pedagogy of God, the catechist

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., no. 59. \\
\textsuperscript{110} GDC, no. 139. \\
\textsuperscript{111} Mouroux, \textit{I Believe: The Personal Structure of Faith}, 20. \\
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{113} Hofinger, \textit{Evangelization and Catechesis}, 137. \\
\textsuperscript{114} GDC, no. 139.
\end{flushleft}
guides those they serve to recognize the work of their Father’s hand in their own lives. In doing so, the catechist helps those they form to truly encounter God. Such a task is the primary work of the catechist.\textsuperscript{115} The person who has been catechized in light of the pedagogy of God the Father will be able to understand and embrace his or her own relationship with God.

The pedagogy of God the Son is revealed in the New Testament. Jesus’ earthly mission accomplished redemption and “continued the pedagogy of God with the perfection found in the newness of his Person.”\textsuperscript{116} The disciples were privileged to witness and impelled to record the revelation of this pedagogy firsthand. The pedagogy of God, brought to continued fullness and realization in Christ and displayed by his signs and works, reveals the heart of God as one that receives sinners, the poor, and little ones “as persons loved and sought out by God.”\textsuperscript{117} It is vital that catechetical proclamation be in line with this pedagogy of Christ. The “undiluted proclamation”\textsuperscript{118} of the Gospel message delivers “a pressing invitation to a manner of living sustained by faith in God, by hope in the kingdom, and by charity to one’s neighbor.”\textsuperscript{119} By meeting the Person of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, the believer is invited to be like Christ:

Thus, watching Jesus pray, we discover Him and his mystery as Son, on whom rests the Holy Spirit, and who addresses His Father, presenting all His brothers to Him, each and every one of us. In Him and through the Spirit, we can open our whole being to the Father who gives himself, and say, in a contemplation that is at the same time praise, blessing, and offering, the words Jesus taught us: ‘Our Father.’\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., no. 140.
\item\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{120} Farey, Linnig, and Paruch, \textit{The Pedagogy of God: Its Centrality in Catechesis and Formation}, 134.
\end{thebibliography}
The revelation of God the Son leads to a life characterized by sonship for all believers. Truly, “the one who has hope lives differently.” The believer who is steeped in the pedagogy of God the Son will have a life that exemplifies and follows Christ’s own life. It is essential that those who teach adults seek to catechize in light of this pedagogy of Christ because this pedagogy makes firm and mature adult believers and brings sons up in greater understanding of their own filial duty and the love of the Father.

The pedagogy of God is brought to its culmination in the life of the Christian through the pedagogy of the Holy Spirit. In scripture, the Holy Spirit is sent by Christ to his disciples at the end of his earthly mission. The pedagogy of the Holy Spirit assists a disciple to grow further in wisdom and virtue. The Holy Spirit is the developer of the divine education that the faithful receive in initial catechesis. Divine pedagogy is ultimately the Christian’s journey towards perfection as “the disciple seeks to grow in all things towards him who is the Head, Christ.” The Holy Spirit has the power to convince and convict the faithful disciples of Christ, bringing them to a point of true Christian maturity following their initial encounter with God as Father and the Person of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit acts in every Christian, bringing them ever closer to perfection.

The Church catechizes in correspondence with this Trinitarian pedagogy. The Church’s mission is to continually operate “as a visual and actual continuation of the pedagogy of the Father and the Son.” This mission renders the Church as a *living catechesis*; she is the one to proclaim, celebrate, and remain the primary locus of catechesis. The history of the Church and

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122 GDC, no. 142.
123 Ibid., no. 141.
124 Ibid.
her members is the very history of catechesis – a legacy she passes down through her ways of life and her original forms of religious faith communication. The Church’s legacy of catechesis forms and determines the methodology and pedagogy of the individual catechist. The existing revealed pedagogy of the Trinity, preserved by the Church, is protective of the delivery of the content of the faith.

The transmission of divine revelation through catechesis is inspired by the pedagogy of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This pedagogy seeks to lead to a disciple to a true experience of faith, a filial encounter with Jesus and thus an encounter with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This pedagogy is transmitted naturally among believers, since it is based in this encounter. Catechesis relies on Christians bearing witness to each other, for faith is “the revelation of a divine Person through a human testimony.” The person who has genuinely encountered the personal God calls forth this same encounter in the lives of his brothers and sisters. The love of Christ impels the Christian forward in this ongoing witness. Catechesis “takes the form of a process or journey of following the Christ of the Gospel in the Spirit towards the Father.” Christian maturity is that “of a free son able to enter into a fullness of communion with others and most fundamentally with the Blessed Trinity.” Catechesis is thus fundamentally relational not solely didactic, assisting the Christian adult into an ever deeper communion with his brethren in Christ and in communion with our Trinitarian God.

Catechesis properly done will do nothing to oppose or separate the salvific action of God and the divine pedagogy from the pedagogical action of man. Ultimately, even though

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125 Ibid., no. 143.
126 Mourouz, I Believe: The Personal Structure of Faith, 51.
127 2 Cor 5:14.
128 GDC, no. 143.
130 GDC, no. 144.
catechesis uses human catechists in human methods of teaching, it is part of humanity’s transcendent journey to God. This journey necessarily varies from person to person, yet ultimately the road is the same. All catechesis, received with good will, brings a human soul closer in relation with the Trinity. Catechesis will develop all the dimensions of faith, move the person to abandon himself completely to God, and ultimately help the person to discern where the Lord is leading him or her.\textsuperscript{131} Human intellect and methods are put at the service of God and his plan for salvation of each person. Catechesis utilizes the catechist as a “docile instruments”\textsuperscript{132} in the hands of the divine composer, creating a symphony of faith. Eventually, good catechesis will inspire the one catechized to become a docile instrument as well. Catechesis “carries out a complete work of initiation, education, and teaching”\textsuperscript{133} that impacts and remains fundamentally ordered to fostering rightly-ordered intimacy in a Christian’s life from beginning to end. The \textit{General Directory for Catechesis} states:

Genuine catechesis therefore is that catechesis which helps to perceive the action of God throughout the formative journey. It encourages a climate of listening, of thanksgiving and of prayer. It looks to the free response of persons and it promotes active participation among those to be catechized.\textsuperscript{134}

Catechesis rooted in the Trinitarian pedagogy will form Christians who understand the dignity and responsibility of their place within the family of God, changing the way they value, seek, and live in relationships. Catechesis proposes the Gospel and opens up to the ones who receive it to a religious dimension of life that penetrates and transforms the intellect, conscience, and will.\textsuperscript{135} This pedagogy makes the Church into a family in the truest sense – a family where the sons and daughters of God recognize God as their Father, where men and women encounter

\begin{footnotes}
\item[131] Ibid.
\item[133] GDC, no. 144.
\item[134] Ibid.
\item[135] Ibid., no. 147.
\end{footnotes}
the Person of Jesus Christ and the mission they share with him, where Christians are brought to maturity of virtue in the Holy Spirit. Though there are methodologically many different ways that a catechist can opt to educate in the faith, the pedagogy of God ultimately becomes the boundary that keeps catechesis undistorted and capable of fostering authentic human sharing and divine filiation. “Authentic Christian faith is radically Trinitarian, and the whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine Persons.” The pedagogy of God protects the content of the faith as it is delivered in catechesis and ensures that the fullness of faith is indeed transmitted. The pedagogy of God forms Christians that understand their dignity and place within the family of God and who will help encourage their brothers and sisters in a mutual understanding of desiring the other’s good. The Trinitarian pedagogy thereby inaugurates and preserves the familial nature of the Church of God.

The Importance of Catechist Formation

In order for catechesis to be effective, the formation of the catechist is a key task. “Like all Christians, catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation.” The formation of catechists is an indispensable task because formation makes one capable of giving the Gospel gift: “The competent evangelist is a product of the formation he receives for his work and the personal efforts by which he appropriates, continues, and deepens that formation.”

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136 USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, no. 56.
138 GDC, no. 219.
Formation *enables* the individual catechist “to transmit the Gospel to those who desire to entrust themselves to Jesus Christ.” This formation is fundamentally Christocentric and rooted in the Gospel message. Catechist must have a profound familiarity with God the Father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit. Formation of the catechist must also be ecclesial, with the catechist intentionally seeking to be attuned to the mission of the Church and its leadership.

Before examining the particular methods of catechist formation, it is worthwhile to examine the aspects of the formation of catechists as described in the *General Directory for Catechesis*:

The formation of catechists is made up of different dimensions. The deepest dimension refers to the very beginning of the catechist, to his human and Christian dimension. Formation, above all else, must help him to mature as a person, a believer, and as an apostle. This is what the catechist must know so as to be able to fulfill his responsibilities well. This dimension is permeated by the double commitment he has to the message and to man. It requires the catechist to have a sufficient knowledge of the message that he transmits and of those to whom he transmits the message and of the social context in which they live...The formation of the catechist tends to make him an educator of man and of the life of man.

The formation of catechists should be a profoundly personal growth, not limited to cognitive and methodological competencies, so that they might adhere intimately the truths there are transmitting, for:

*It is not enough for catechists to know their subject. They also need the competence to animate a shared journey with other adults, the ability to relate to real life circumstances, the ability to guide them in prayer and through spiritual experiences, and the craft to integrate divergent tendencies into the full faith and life of the Church. It is essential that catechists witness in their own lives the truth of the faith they are communicating.*

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140 Ibid., no. 235.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., no. 236.
143 Ibid., no. 238.
144 USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, no. 151.
The *General Directory for Catechesis* provides an outline for what catechist formation ought to look like. In any Christian community, catechists should be continually nourishing their own apostolic awareness.\(^{145}\) A parish or diocese can develop different formation activities for their catechists, but the essential approach is as follows: the catechists should receive a continual fostering and renewal of their vocation to catechize ecclesially arising from an awareness of being sent and commissioned by the Church. The catechist should have a mature and well-developed faith with good formation in the mysteries of faith; the catechist should receive some sort of immediate preparation for catechesis, preferably done in a group setting for better evaluation and learning; and the catechist may also receive other formative activities developed by their local church such as courses in catechetical awareness, retreats, systematic doctrinal formation, and themed workshops.\(^{146}\) As noted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

> A well-formed catechist “will require a love for people, a passion for catechesis, effective interpersonal and community-building skills, respect for different adult learning styles, the ability to communicate and explore the Gospel with others using effective and engaging methods appropriate to the learners and the content, and the flexibility to adapt to ever-changing circumstances.”\(^{147}\)

A catechist with excellent formation will ultimately combine a matured faith with a deep understanding of how to present that faith to a variety of people. A good catechist possesses and incorporates a faith that can truly be shared with others in a way that is “succinct, impartial, exact and at the same time well adapted to the particular situations of those to whom it is addressed.”\(^{148}\)

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\(^{145}\) GDC, no. 246.

\(^{146}\) Ibid., no. 247.

\(^{147}\) USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, no. 151.

\(^{148}\) Hofinger, *Evangelization and Catechesis*, no. 43.
The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops advises dioceses to “develop certification programs for adult faith formation ministry that offer well-planned, comprehensive, and practical training to meet the diverse needs of adults.” Such education programs ought to “develop in their students competencies for working with adults and an understanding of the adult life cycle.” The General Directory for Catechesis also recommends catechetical schools, referring to them as “a particularly important moment in the formation of a catechist.” The General Directory for Catechesis describes the schools and their purpose as follows:

The purpose of such schools is to give a comprehensive and systematic catechetical formation of a basic nature over a period of time during which the specifically catechetical dimensions of formation are promoted: the Christian message; knowledge of man and his socio-cultural situation; the pedagogy of the faith. Such a systematic formation has notable advantages amongst which the following can be numbered: (1) its systematic nature which is not so absorbed in the immediate concerns of catechetical activity; (2) its quality which is assured by trained specialists; (3) its integration with catechists from other communities, which promotes ecclesial communion.

The General Directory for Catechesis recommends that such catechetical institutes operate at the diocesan or inter-diocesan level, address the needs of both full-time and part-time catechists, and provide specialized training for particular circumstances and concerns that is more rigorous and demanding than standard offerings. Specializations should be determined on a particular diocesan basis based on the pastoral needs of the diocese in question without foregoing general basic formation that is both doctrinal and anthropological.

How does the project that is the subject of this treatise make an attempt to wield such a formation system on behalf of those who teach adults? There are different categories of adults

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149 USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, no. 74.
150 Ibid., no. 174.
151 GDC, no. 248.
152 Ibid., no. 249.
153 Ibid., no. 250.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
who need catechesis. First, there are the adult Christians who consistently live their faith out in their daily lives and have a sincere desire to deepen it further. These adults have been sufficiently catechized in a sense, but they rightly desire ongoing formation and continual conversion. Adults seeking such catechesis demonstrate a real maturity of faith. Second, there are adult Christians – perhaps the greater majority – who have been baptized and initiated into the Christian faith, but who have not been sufficiently catechized or brought to fulfillment in their faith journey. Adults at this stage may have lost their faith or experienced a weakening somewhere in life, or they may have never learned the truths of the faith in the first place. Third, there are non-baptized adults. These are the people “to whom the catechumenate truly and properly corresponds.” Although adult catechesis can be intended for a variety of adults at different places in their faith journey, ultimately it pertains to any adult needing or seeking growth in the faith.

The General Directory for Catechesis describes and outlines the criteria for adult catechesis as follows:

Adult catechesis concerns persons who have a right and a duty to bring to maturity the seed of Faith sown in them by God. It is addressed to individuals who are charged to fulfill social responsibilities of various types and to those who are also prey to all kinds of changes and crises, sometimes profound. The faith of adults, therefore, must be continually enlightened, developed, and protected, so that it may acquire that Christian wisdom which gives sense, unity, and hope to the many experiences of personal, social, and spiritual life. Adult catechesis requires the accurate identification of the typical characteristics of Christian adults. It must translate them into objectives and content, and determine certain constancy of presentation. It must establish the most effective method of logical approaches and choose formats and models. The role and identity of the catechists who work with adults and their formation – the people who are responsible for the catechesis of adults in the community – are vitally important.

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156 Ibid., no. 172.  
157 Ibid.  
158 Ibid.  
159 Ibid., no. 173.
The grave importance to protect and nourish the faith of Christian adults demands that this work have an effective plan for implementation. It is not simply important to find a way to catechize adults, it is necessary to find the best way to catechize adults.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* presents further criteria for adult catechesis. Good adult catechesis will take into account the problems and experiences of the adults being catechized. It should pay heed to and work with their spiritual and cultural resources, respecting the differences of adults being catechized, rather than trying to fit all to a “cookie cutter” standard. Good adult catechesis will also take into account the condition of adults being catechized, focusing on the temporal state of life of the souls with whom it is dealing, so that they may best be instructed in how to live holy and sanctified lives within the vocations to which they are called. A strong adult catechesis will give attention to involvement and witness of the Church community, in order to maintain a supportive and welcoming environment. Finally, a strong adult catechesis will not fail to ensure systematic pastoral care of adults “with which liturgical formation and the service of charity have been integrated.” These criteria will ensure that the pastoral and personal needs of the adults being catechized are met.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* presents methodological criteria as well. It is essential that adult catechesis “systematically propose the Christian faith in its entirety and in its authenticity, in accordance with the Church’s understanding.” Catechetical presentation must be pastorally aware and empathetic, yet unequivocal in presenting the truths of the faith. To do less would be an injustice to those being catechized and the faith being taught, and ultimately not

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160 Ibid., no. 174.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid., no. 175.
authentically helpful. Solid adult catechesis “must give priority to the proclamation of salvation, drawing attention to the many difficulties, doubts, misunderstandings, prejudices, and objections of today.”\textsuperscript{164} Such catechesis bears in mind the life experiences and culture in which the adults being catechized are living and instructs them in light of that in order to help them best understand how they must approach the world around them with the eyes of faith. In order that catechesis not become purely cerebral and so that those being catechized may deepen their relationship with Christ and his word, catechesis “must introduce adults to a faith-filled reading of sacred scripture and the practice of prayer.”\textsuperscript{165} Adult catechesis must present the faith in its entirety, relate that faith to the world in which those receiving it live, and deepen the prayer of those it instructs.

To complete this explication of the criteria for adult catechesis, the \textit{General Directory for Catechesis} summarizes the tasks of adult catechesis as follows:

In particular, the tasks of adult catechesis are: to promote formation and development of life in the Risen Christ; to educate toward a correct evaluation of the socio-cultural changes of our societies in the light of faith; to clarify current religious and moral questions; to clarify the relationship between temporal actions and ecclesial action; to develop the rational foundations of the faith; to encourage adults to assume responsibility for the Church’s mission and to be able to give Christian witness in society.\textsuperscript{166}

It is the task of adult catechesis to ensure that Christian adults are continually developing in their relationship and life in Christ. Adult catechesis must teach Christian adults to understand their faith in light of their culture and current topics of morality. Adult catechesis should help disciples to be firm in understanding the truths of their faith and what it means to apply that faith in their

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
lives and implement it. Adult catechesis will give Christian adults a sense of home and belonging in the Church, imbuing them with a zeal for the Church’s own mission.

Catechesis can be delivered deductively or inductively. The National Directory for Catechesis outlines the difference between the two:

Catechetical methods employ two fundamental processes that organize the human element in the communication of the faith: the inductive method and the deductive method. The inductive approach proceeds from the sensible, visible, tangible experiences of the person and leads, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to more general conclusions and principles. The deductive method proceeds in the opposite manner, beginning with the general principles or truths of the faith and applying them to the concrete experiences of those to whom catechesis is addressed. The deductive method corresponds to the kerygmatic approach starting with proclamation of the faith as it is expressed in the principal documents of the faith, such as Sacred Scripture, the Creeds, or the Liturgy, and applies it to human experiences. The inductive method on the other hand, corresponds to a more existential approach, beginning with the specifics of human experience and examining them in light of the Word of God. Both are legitimate approaches when properly applied and are distinct yet complementary methods for communicating the faith.  

Regardless of what method is used, a reference to life experience must eventually be made. It is important that the faith be shown to be organically connected to the life of the individual. The National Directory for Catechesis states that “human experience is a constituent element in catechesis. They are the means through which human beings come to know themselves, one another, and God.” Because of its kerygmatic approach, deductive catechesis remains a popular way to catechize. Because deductive catechesis begins with the truths of the faith, it is less reactionary than its inductive counterpart. Deductive catechesis presents the truths of the faith in the order in which they progress naturally, all the while connecting them to human experience and showing their relevance in the lives of the ones being catechized. Inductive catechesis is likelier to respond to the particular trials and moral issues of the times. Presenting

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167 USCCB, National Directory for Catechesis, no. 29.  
168 Ibid., no. 98.
the faith in this order may seem less properly ordered and is useful as an apologetic filling-in-the-gaps approach, but deductive catechesis is preferable for an overall presentation and synthesis of the faith. Ultimately, it is of the greatest importance to connect faith to life. This great and all-important connection is what Paul VI referred to as “the drama of our time.”

Now that the criteria for catechist formation and the criteria for formation of adults through catechesis have been sufficiently outlined, it becomes important to examine the project put forth in this treatise in light of these principles. Does it meet the criteria established by the catechetical sources in the tradition? Catechist formation should help the catechist grow in maturity of faith. This program clearly strives to meet that standard. At three points of the project, the faith life of participants is measured, using a recurring survey. Participants are encouraged to take their faith development seriously throughout the project. Even as they learn objective material, they work to mature their faith through exercises that foster personal examination and substantive spiritual engagement with a mentor figure.

For their part, formation should help the catechist understand their place within the Church and the ecclesial mission. The project seeks to accomplish this via targeted exercises that continually relate participants’ own experience to the wider experience of the Church. Catechists are encouraged to refer to the lives of the saints, to the works of the Doctors of the Church, and to the experiences of the early Christians as sources of objective understanding and encouragement as mentors. The project is designed to be intensely relational and highly formative over a short period of time, in the presence of peers during study days and in the presence of a mentor figure at all points.

\[^{169}\text{Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation}\ Evangeli\ Nuntiandi (On\ Evangelization\ in\ the\ Modern\ World),\ Dec. 8, 1975,\ no.\ 20,\ Holy\ See,\ accessed\ Nov.\ 6, 2016,\ http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangeli-nuntiandi.html.\ Henceforth\ EN.\]
The Goal of Formation

The goal of formation is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. The General Directory for Catechesis describes what it means to be a disciple beautifully, saying that “Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ making, of oneself a disciple of him. This demands a permanent commitment to think like him, to judge like him and to live as he lived. In this way the believer unites himself to the community of disciples and appropriates the faith of the Church.”\textsuperscript{170} To be a disciple of Christ, one must first have a genuine and personal encounter with him. A faith that is mature “consists of an intimate personal relationship with God as the only one who deserves the total surrender of our whole self.”\textsuperscript{171} The Christian faith consists of conversion to the person of Christ, with “full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps.”\textsuperscript{172}

This encounter acts as the impetus for the remainder of the Christian life. When Christ extends himself to us, “he expects us to accept his challenge with a commitment of loyalty and love.”\textsuperscript{173} A personal relationship with Christ gives the believer the strength and desire to act, live, and love as Christ does. They will have a mature faith that “penetrates the whole life and transforms it,”\textsuperscript{174} causing Christians to accept a new orientation for their lives.\textsuperscript{175} The desire for greater union with Christ gives the Christian a heart that is like Christ’s.

The disciple of Jesus Christ is one who perceives the world “with the same eyes with which Jesus contemplated the society of his time.”\textsuperscript{176} Benedict Groeschel acknowledged this,
noting that “believing Christians have embarked on the spiritual road marked out by Jesus of Nazareth, the Immortal Son of God, and must think, feel, and act in a way that is consistent with [their] identity.”\textsuperscript{177} In the same way that Christ spent his time on earth attending to the cares and bearing the burdens and concerns of those around him, so the Christian who is truly a disciple of Christ is one who “deeply shares the joys and hopes, the sadness and the anxieties of the men today.”\textsuperscript{178} Christian disciples are outwardly oriented, on a mission to the culture in which they live. Disciples, each in their own calling, are willing to become “all things to all men”\textsuperscript{179} in order to truly evangelize the culture and provide witness to others. The Christian makes Christ – in all his concern for mankind – present in the lives of the people of today. The disciple is one who has become the one who discipled him: a person with the heart of Christ.

When one becomes a disciple, one becomes changed. The disciple “gazes upon human history and participates in it, not only from the standpoint of reasons, but also from that of faith.”\textsuperscript{180} The disciple sees the world bathed in the light of Christ, understanding the events of the world surrounding them in the context of faith. The Christian is a being with a changed worldview, for “the Christian knows that every human event – indeed all reality – is marked by the creative activity of God which communicates goodness to all beings; the power of sin which limits and numbs man; and the dynamism which bursts forth from the Resurrection of Christ.”\textsuperscript{181}

Just as the disciples in the Gospels followed Jesus where he went and learned from him, so does the disciple of today ever strive to follow Christ and to learn what he has to teach. There is a real urgency to this call; “anyone who has tried seriously to follow the Christian way will know the urgency and desperation involved at times and seeking union with Christ.”\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{178} GDC, no. 16.
\textsuperscript{179} 1 Cor 9:22.
\textsuperscript{180} GDC, no. 16.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
conversion or evangelizing activity has as its goal promoting communing with Jesus Christ. Through Baptism, the Christian is “configured to Christ” and puts on the new self, a self created to be like Christ in righteousness and holiness.

The formation of the Christian disciple is elevated and displayed through the perfection of catechesis. Catechesis is not simply a matter of memorized methodology. Rather, the end goal of catechesis is “to put the human person in communion with Jesus Christ.” Christ enables the Christian to live in him in the way that he lived. When Christ is the educator and goal “in the school of the word of God, received in the Church, the disciple, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit sent by Christ, grows like his Teacher in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and men.” The life of Christ is not made inaccessible to man; Christ lived his humanity in the fullest sense: “He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, he acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved.” Catechesis connects the individual’s human experience to that of Christ, instructing the Christian disciple on how to think, act, and love as Christ. This formation of “the divine education” reaches fulfillment as the disciple further seeks to grow towards Christ. Such pedagogy “can be said to be completed when the disciple shall ‘become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.’”

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183 GDC, no. 80.
184 LG, no. 7.
185 Eph 4:24.
186 GDC, no. 116.
187 CCC, no. 521.
188 GDC, no. 142.
190 GDC, no. 116.
191 Ibid., no. 142.
192 Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON DIMENSIONS OF CATECHIST FORMATION

Project Formation Dimensions

The discussion of catechetical formation that has been laid out thus far in this treatise has presented a general foundation for a project that addresses forming catechists of adults. Church documents address in greater depth several specific dimensions of formation for clerical and lay ecclesial ministry. These are summarized here for the sake of developing a common approach that can be reflected in the project of this treatise.

Christifideles Laici gives these aspects of lay formation: spiritual, doctrinal, social, and human.\(^1\) Pastores Dabo Vobis gives the aspects of priestly formation as: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.\(^2\) The General Directory for Catechesis gives the aspects of catechist formation in a threefold manner: knowing, being, and savoir-faire.\(^3\)

Though this diversity of formation touchpoints among these three key formation documents does not seem to present a unified paradigm, further examination reveals a coherent set of dimensions. Each of these documents precedes its own particular list with a larger trio of formative dimensions: mystery, communion, and mission. The various aspects of formation all fall within the scope of this larger trio.

The mystery dimension is discussed in Christifideles Laici [no. 8ff], Pastores Dabo Vobis

\(^1\) CL, no. 60.
\(^3\) GDC, no. 238.
[no.12], General Directory for Catechesis [no. 85], and is inclusive of spiritual, doctrinal, intellectual, being, and knowing aspects of formation. The communion dimension is discussed in Christifideles Laici [no. 18ff], Pastores Dabo Vobis [no. 12], General Directory for Catechesis [no. 86], and is inclusive of social, pastoral, and human aspects of formation. The mission dimension is discussed in Christifideles Laici [no. 32ff], Pastores Dabo Vobis [no. 12], General Directory for Catechesis [no. 86], and is inclusive of savoir-faire, pastoral, and social aspects. Each of these three dimensions is explained below in further detail.

*Formation in Mystery*

This unifying set of formation dimensions – mystery, communion, and mission – is sequential, with formation in mystery necessarily occurring first: “The key concept that we need to understand as fully as possible, therefore, for the sake of our catechesis, is that of the mystery.”

Formation in mystery entails an understanding of the human act of faith and the revealed content of the faith. The process of formation in mystery begins at conversion and is the product of catechesis and faith education. The mystery is “not an incomprehensible enigma, but a dazzling reality” that enlightens and invigorates the life of faith. Conversion is a gradual turning from the darkness of sin and towards a desire for holiness, which leads the individual into the love of God and towards the establishment of a personal relationship with Christ. This newfound knowledge gives rise to a loving relationship with God, for one must know God in order to love and serve him.

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5 Ibid., 118.
Formation in mystery implies a time of education that ultimately leads to an acceptance of the truths of the faith; “the word mystery is used to draw together the chief doctrines of the Faith, as well as the unity between faith and life.”\(^6\) The catechist assists in this exploration of the mystery. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states: “The catechist is essentially a mediator, facilitating communication between the people and the mystery of God.”\(^7\) The catechist does not cheapen or lessen the value and reality of the mystery of faith; it is a key task to unveil the mystery as mystery. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states:

The “*deeds and words*” of Revelation point to the “*mystery contained in them*” (DV 2); catechesis helps to make the passage from sign to mystery; it leads to the discovery of the mystery of the Son of God behind his humanity; behind the history of the Church, it uncovers the mystery of her being the “sacrament of salvation;” behind the “signs of the times” (DCG 72; cf. CCC 39-43), it encounters the traces of God’s presence and plan: catechesis, thus, shall exhibit that knowledge which is typical of faith, which ‘is knowledge through signs.’\(^8\)

It is the catechist’s role to reveal the mystery of Christ in the outwardly-perceived elements of the Church. Formation in mystery make sense of the faith and makes sense of the life of each Christian, for “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear.”\(^9\) This allows for a relationship with God as Person to begin to exist, and fosters “an understanding of the mystery of God in his Trinitarian glory in the Holy Trinity’s plan for our salvation, and from there to come to an appreciation of how we are more and more deeply inserted into this mystery.”\(^10\) Formation in mystery also lays the foundation for formation in the remaining two dimensions: *communion* and *mission*. Without this, the mature Christian cannot act out of a perception of truth.

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\(^6\) Ibid., 119.
\(^7\) GDC, no. 156.
\(^8\) Ibid., no. 108, italics in original.
\(^9\) Ibid., no. 116.
One of the greatest dangers to formation in mystery is the presence of hypocrisy in the life of a catechist. It is indispensable for catechists to truly have a relationship with Christ and that this relationship is visible to those they instruct. The *General Directory for Catechesis* makes it clear that the catechist’s “cultural vision, social condition, and lifestyle must not be obstacles to the journey of faith.”¹¹ Instead, the catechist who models a vision, social condition, and lifestyle that is inherently Catholic, will “help to create the most advantageous conditions for seeking out, welcoming, and deepening the Christian message.”¹² No methodology or catechesis proper “can dispense with the person of the catechist in *every* phase of the catechetical process [emphasis added].”¹³ Christian witness acts as the very soul of catechesis.¹⁴ Tarnishing of this witness, at minimum, is a severe detriment to the progress and completion of formation and often causes it to fail.

Often catechists’ discomfort with of the concept of mystery and fear of the unknown can result in not even considering this dimension of formation as an intentional element. But God does not veil himself in mystery to confuse humanity: “God’s mystery is not so much an obscure reality as his fascinating in mysterious presence, his holiness and his faithfulness, before which man has to acknowledge his live on this and his need for forgiveness.”¹⁵ There is danger in abandoning the idea of mystery in catechesis.

When the concept of mystery is neglected in catechesis, it can ultimately lead to an emaciated sense of the other formational dimensions of community and mission. The *General Directory for Catechesis* notes this unfortunate truth, saying “The Church is often regarded in a

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¹¹ *GDC*, no. 156.
¹⁵ Cointet, Morgan, and Willey, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, 118.
one-dimensional way as a mere institution and deprived of her mystery.” An example of this is seen in the secularization of Catholic schools. When schools cease forming in mystery in the manner discussed above, that community’s ultimate mission of evangelization is threatened due to the loss of a clear sense of purpose. Mystery opens souls to teleological realities, which then impel a reordering of life’s priorities to serve those ends by means of seeking the Church’s graces. When the Church is deprived of her mystery, the faithful lose their sense of her.

When approaching the mystery of God, it is important that we “open our minds to this excess of light, putting away false images, so that we can enter into his mystery as he is and as the Son has revealed him to us.” In order to be understood, mystery is meant to be embraced. John Paul II stated that “the person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive ‘the word of faith’ not in mutilated, falsified, or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor.” Ultimately, “unfaithfulness on some point to the integrity of the message means a dangerous weakening of catechesis and putting at risk the results that Christ in the ecclesial community have a right to expect from it.” Formation in mystery is not essential solely for its own sake. It is essential for the whole of Christian life – the life of communion with others in Christ; the life of mission to others for Christ. Without formation in mystery, the Christian has no clearly “illuminated” and “secure” pathway on which to progress to mature adult faith.

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16 GDC, no. 28.
17 Cointet, Morgan, and Willey, The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, 118.
18 CT, no. 30.
19 Ibid.
20 CCC, no. 89.
Formation in Communion

Formation in communion is the second dimension of formation in the Christian life. Once a person has been appropriately formed in the reality of the mysteries of the faith, they rise to a call to communion, which catechesis must then inform and define. The Church is “the mystical presence of Christ in the world”\(^{21}\) that incorporates humanity, through Baptism, in the family of God. Baptism makes people adopted sons and daughters of God. Formation in mystery teaches them the great reality of that filiation so the step into communion is intuitive. However, even though this entrance into the communion of the Church is natural and intuitive, the Christian still needs to be formed in it: “Adult faith is clearly and explicitly rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus lived in the Christian community.”\(^{22}\) Christian adults mature in their faith as they continue to be formed in communion.

Formation in communion teaches a person how to be in relationship with a community. The pedagogy of God focuses “on the formation of the whole person for the sake of communion [emphasis added].”\(^ {23}\) Through formation in communion, disciples unlearn negative lessons they may have been taught through their own fallible human relationships, and learn how to grow and thrive in holy relationship with their brothers and sisters in Christ in the family of God.

God in his three Persons is in himself a communion. This communion forms the blueprint for the communion of the human persons within the Church. The General Directory for Catechesis states:

> The presentation of the innermost being of God, revealed by Jesus, the mystery of being one in essence and three in Person, has vital implications for the lives of human beings. To confess belief in one God means, that “man should not submit his personal freedom in

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\(^{22}\) USCCB, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, no. 55.
an absolute manner to any earthly power” (CCC 440). It also implies that humanity, made in the image and likeness of God who is a “communion of persons” (cf. CCC 1878; 1802), is called to be a fraternal society, comprised of sons and daughters of the same Father, and equal in personal dignity. The human and social implications of the Christian concept of God are immense.\textsuperscript{24}

The fact that God in himself is Person has implications for the life of each human, who is person in the likeness of the Trinity. When a disciple professes his belief in God, it is a beginning of the understanding that his or her own humanity must be conformed to the image and likeness of God. If God is communion within himself, then each soul is called to a life of familial communion specifically recognized not only as a privilege human fellowship but more fully as a \textit{divine} family, and the Church is “the Christian community is the historical realization of the gift of communion.”\textsuperscript{25} The Church is not a way in which the communion of the Trinity is \textit{expressed}, it is \textit{the} way that this communion is manifested on \textit{earth}. Communion is the term that best expresses this life of the Trinity lived out on earth through the Church. The \textit{General Directory for Catechesis} defines communion thus:

\textit{“Communion” expresses the profound nucleus between the universal Church and the particular Churches which make up the Christian community. It is realized and made visible in the rich variety of immediate Christian communities in which Christians are born into the faith, educated in it and live it: the family; parish; Catholic schools; Christian associations and movements; basic ecclesial communities. These are the loci of catechesis, the community places where initiatory catechesis and continuing education in the faith are realized.”}\textsuperscript{26}

The visible Church on earth is the realization, manifestation, and witness of the Trinity’s own community, first and foremost a place of communion. Her communion is manifested on both a local and a universal level and is strengthened by each of her individual members. The communion of the Church can be realized on a local level as numberless microcosms that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[24] GDC, no. 100.
\item[25] Ibid., no. 253.
\item[26] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
ultimately echo through the universal Church. The gift of communion reveals the true identity of the Church as the family of God.

How does the Church form her members in this life of communion? The Church’s gift of communion is developed and expressed in Christian life and education. The work of catechesis and faith formation is a profound expression of and witness to the communion experienced with God. The combined work of catechists striving to educate their fellow Christians in the truths of the faith manifests the communion of the Church united in the truths of revelation, for all truth possesses cohesion. The Church’s communion is manifested through the members of the Church’s unchanging adherence to upholding and passing on the truths of the faith and the consequent desire to share in fellowship and confirm that unity in the graced breaking of the bread. However, formation in communion also serves to express the inner life of the Church and to foster each individual’s unique connection to God and vocation outward to others.

The Church’s very life in God is expressed in the communion of her members. The General Directory for Catechesis states:

Basic ecclesial communities are a sign of the “Church’s vitality (RCIA 24, 183-187).” The disciples of Christ gather together in them so as to hear the word of God, to develop fraternal bonds, to celebrate the Christian mysteries in their lives and to assume responsibility for transforming society. In addition to these specifically Christian concerns other important human values emerge: friendship, personal recognition, a spirit of co-responsibility, creativity, vocational response, concern for the problems of the world and of the Church. From them, an enriched community experience can result, “a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion (RCIA 37-40, 235-239).”

The life of an ecclesial community at the level of a parish bears witness to the interior life of the whole universal Church. It is not just important that individual Churches exist, but that their

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27 Ibid., no. 263.
members thrive. The Christian faithful of any given Church must hear the word of God, develop fraternal bonds (and, as a result, develop their inherent understanding of the Church as the family of God), and celebrate the mysteries. These experiences foster members of the community attaining an authentic Christian maturity that allows for friendship, recognition, responsibility, creativity, vocation, and Christian concern to flourish within both the individual and the community they make up that in turn forms them. Just as the children of healthy homes are expected to become healthy adults, so does the person brought up in a vibrant Christian community experience the gift of communion and potentially chose to enter into a life pursuing Christian maturity. Formation in communion manifests a pathway for the individual Christian to maturely flourish inside a relationship with the Church.

Although the community of the Church is a great gift of communion in its own right, the greatest gift that the Church gives the individual Christian is the gift of communion with Jesus Christ’s own body and blood in the Eucharist. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states that:

> In the Christian community the disciples of Jesus Christ are nourished at a twofold table; that of the word of God and that of the Body of Christ. The Gospel and the Eucharist are the constant food for the journey to the Father’s House. The action of the Holy Spirit operates so that the gift of “communion” and the task of “mission” are deepened and lived in an increasingly intense way.\(^{28}\)

Communion with Christ in the Eucharist is food for the journey to sanctity in heaven. The communion that the faithful experience within the Church – among the members of Christ’s faithful and which they receive in the Eucharist and the Gospel – guides and accompanies them on their lifelong journey to their Father’s house.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., no. 70.
For the individual Christian to truly progress however, it is necessary that they be *formed* in communion with God, a specifically Christocentric goal. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states that “the Christocentric purpose of catechesis, which emphasizes the communion of the convert with Jesus Christ, permeates all aspects of the formation of catechists.”

The aim of catechesis and the Christian life as a whole is communion between the person catechized and the Person of Jesus Christ. Authentic Christic communion between human individuals *flows from* divine filiation with the Son.

Because of this, when catechists are formed, they need to be formed to be Christocentric persons. “One cannot put someone in communion, and intimacy with Jesus Christ if one is not in such intimacy oneself. One cannot transmit the loving knowledge of the living mystery of God if one does not possess it oneself.”

If the catechist is not catechizing from the heart of Christ, he or she is merely preaching a horizontal reality of relationship, bound to earthly forms of sharing. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states: “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ. All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ.” Communion with God is not an *element* of faith formation; it is its very goal. Adult faith formation should lead the Christian into ever-deepening relationship with Christ. If this primary aim is not being met, the Christian will not be properly formed for any relationship.

The primary way one can fail to form a person in communion is to form them without paying heed to the Christocentric purpose of catechesis. Earlier in this paper catechesis was described as possessing a Christocentric purpose “which emphasizes the communion of the

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29 Ibid., no. 235.
31 GDC, no. 80.
convert with Jesus Christ, permeates all aspects of the formation of catechists." Because of this, the catechist should always be deepening other adults’ relationship with Christ and relating aspects of human experience back to Christ. The General Directory for Catechesis states that:

This aim is nothing other than to lead the catechist to know how to animate a catechetical journey of which, the necessary stages are: the proclamation of Jesus Christ; making known his life by setting it in the context of salvation history; explanation of the mystery of the Son of God, made man for us; and finally, to help the catechumen, or those being catechized, to identify with Jesus Christ through the sacraments of initiation. With continuing catechesis, the catechist merely tries to deepen these basic elements.

Catechists must have firm and well-founded relationships with each of the Persons of the Trinity if they are to lead others to that same communion, for “this Christological perspective touches directly upon the identity of the catechist and his preparation.” Spiritual life cannot be subordinated to doctrinal and didactic forms of instruction lest communion with God be reduced to cerebralism. The General Directory for Catechesis states that:

The evangelizing activity of the Church, catechesis included, must tend all the more decisively toward solid ecclesial cohesion. To this end it is urgent that an authentic ecclesiology of communion, be promoted and deepened in order to arouse in Christians a deep ecclesial spirituality.

In order to strengthen her own vitality, the Church has always sought greater communion: “they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Mature faith “is rooted in the community of faith… a mature Christian must be willing to contribute generously to the realization of this community.” Communion shows the Church who she ought to be, so she can go on to do what she must do – fulfill the mission of Christ. The pursuit of communion should never be abandoned for a lesser

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32 Ibid., no. 235.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., no. 28.
36 Acts 2:42.
37 Hofinger, Evangelization and Catechesis, 25.
ideal. Failure to form a person in communion with Jesus Christ will lead to a diminished sense of mission:

Communion with Jesus Christ, by its own dynamic, leads the disciple to unite himself with everything with which Jesus Christ himself was profoundly united: with God his Father, who sent him into the world, and with the Holy Spirit, who impelled his mission; with the Church, his body, for which he gave himself up, with mankind and with his brothers whose lot he wished to share.38

Being in communion with Christ gives the Christian the very heart of Christ so that he or she might love what Christ loves as he loves it. This begets in the heart the call to mission.

Formation in Mission

Adults being formed in mystery and communion are positioned to be formed in mission. Persons formed in the mission of the Church will have a complete approach to faith, catechesis, and the Church, because “adult faith is explicitly connected to the life, teaching, and mission of the Church.”39 They will be outwardly oriented in all that they do, having a heart that beats with the heart of Christ and his Church. The General Directory for Catechesis emphasizes the Church’s orientation towards mission: “Indeed the primordial mission of the Church is to proclaim God and to be his witness before the world.”40 The Church has a sacred duty to evangelize and witness to the whole world.

The Church’s mission is given to her by Christ through the Holy Spirit: “Jesus Christ, after his Resurrection together with the Father sent the Holy Spirit in order that he might accomplish from within the work of salvation and that he might animate his disciples to continue

38 Ibid., 81.
39 USCCB, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, no. 57.
40 GDC, no. 23.
the mission to the whole world.”  

41 The Gospel message is a call of love that demands a response of love from us.”  

42 The Church forever seeks to fulfill Christ’s final great commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”  

43 From this moment, “Jesus entrusted a divine mission to his apostles [that] will continue until the end of time.”  

44 The Holy Spirit imbues the Church with this mission from her very beginning so that the Church by necessity “exists in order to evangelize.”  

45 This inherent mission to evangelize is applicable to both the Church as a whole and to individual Christians, who grow to possess “no less than a burning conviction for the proclamation of the Good News.”  

46 John Paul II succinctly summarized this ideal: “No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”  

47 Catechesis naturally fosters the Church’s core mission. The General Directory for Catechesis states that:  

Catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act. The true subject of catechesis is the Church which, continuing the mission of Jesus the Master and, therefore animated by the Holy Spirit, is sent to be the teacher of the faith. The Church imitates the Mother of the Lord in treasuring the Gospel in her heart. She proclaims it, celebrates it, lives it, and she transmits it in catechesis to all those who have decided to follow Jesus Christ. This transmission of the Gospel is a living act of ecclesial tradition.  

41 Ibid., no. 34.  
42 Hofinger, Evangelization and Catechesis, 58.  
43 Mt 28:19.  
44 USCCB, National Directory for Catechesis, no. 6.  
45 EN, no. 14.  
46 USCCB, National Directory for Catechesis, no. 298.  
47 RM, no. 3.  
48 GDC, no. 78.
Catechesis is a part of the Church’s activity that naturally flows from her mission to evangelize and witness to Christ and the message of the Gospel. The Church has been sent on a mission to the entire human race at the command of Christ.\(^{49}\) To be Catholic is to be on mission.

A sense of mission completes these formational dimensions – mystery, communion, and mission – to develop adults who are mature in their faith. Those who have been properly formed will possess this evangelizing spirit, for “all who have been evangelized are called to evangelize others.”\(^{50}\) To be formed in mission, it is critical that persons be formed in mystery and communion, otherwise mission is diminished to mere human philanthropy, devoid of divine commission and divine accountability. Proper faith formation aims to inspire a clear sense of mission: “Formation for the apostolate and for mission is one of the fundamental tasks of catechesis.”\(^{51}\) In his work The Way, Josemaría Escrivá exclaimed: “the world still echoes that divine cry: ‘I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!’...will you not help to spread the blaze?”\(^{52}\) An anecdote from Escrivá’s life illustrates how he took these words to heart and made their fulfillment his mission. His followers remembered him as continually walking around his house performing his duties, while over and over singing in Latin the verse, “I have come to set the Earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing!”\(^{53}\) He sang these words of Christ so often that the verse eventually became stuck in the minds of those around him – they would find themselves singing it as well. Escrivá longed for what Christ longed for. A heart on the mission of the Church is a heart that is utterly woven into Christ’s own

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\(^{49}\) CCC, no. 830.
\(^{50}\) Hofinger, *Evangelization and Catechesis*, 104.
\(^{51}\) GDC, no. 30.
journey from manger to cross to the hill of the Ascension. The Christian life is mission. It is a fundamentally “evangelical style of life.”

Christ formed the apostles to enter into mission. He gave them insight into his own heart – a heart burning with missionary desire – and then utilized that insight to form them in missionary spirituality. The catechesis preparing to teach adults follows the same formation that Christ gave to his own followers:

Catechesis is certainly inspired by the manner in which Jesus formed his disciples. He made known to them the different dimensions of the kingdom of God, He taught them to pray, He impressed upon them evangelic attitudes, He prepared them for mission.

The General Directory for Catechesis states that:

Faith involves a change of life, a “metanoia,” that is a profound transformation of mind and heart; it causes the believer to live that conversion. This transformation of life manifests itself at all levels of the Christian’s existence: in his interior life of adoration and acceptance of the divine will, in his action, participation in the mission of the Church, in his married and family life; in his professional life; in fulfilling economic and social responsibilities.

Faith leads to a change of life and a change of purpose and mission, a change that is apparent across the whole person. God invites and challenges each person with the invitation to the divine life – a life of mission: “the Christian message is by its nature at once both joyful tidings and a challenge which demands a radical decision by man.”

Catechesis and formation in mission opens the Christian faithful up to a whole new way of life, a way that profoundly follows the Lamb wherever he goes.

Catechesis is also open to the missionary dimension...this task of evangelization originates, for the lay faithful, in the sacraments of Christian initiation and in the secular character of their vocation...The evangelical attitudes which Jesus taught his disciples

54 GDC, no. 63.
55 Ibid., no. 84.
56 Ibid., no. 55.
57 Hofinger, Evangelization and Catechesis, 58.
58 Rev 14:14.
when he sent them on mission are precisely those which catechesis must nourish: to seek out the lost sheep, proclaim and heal at the same time, to be poor, without money or knapsack; to know how to accept rejection and persecution; to place one’s trust in the Father and in the support of the Holy Spirit; to expect no other reward than the joy of working for the Kingdom.59

When they are properly formed in mission, the faithful make it their task to imitate Christ on earth in all his works. The charism of mission is not something artificially imposed on the Christian person but is a direct effect of the Christian’s baptismal dignity. The baptized person is given a divine call to follow Christ as a teacher and formator of souls.

Clearly mission is a grave matter, so it is a grave error to fail in forming the Christian soul in mission. Failure to form a person in the call to mission can occur when those doing the forming diminish it to make the mandate more palatable, surrendering to the modern unease with the concept of evangelizing; it can be considered too intrusive and disrespectful towards other-minded individuals. The General Directory for Catechesis notes:

There is a new sensitivity to the formation of the laity for Christian witness, for interreligious dialogue, and for their secular obligations, education for missionary activity ‘ad gentes’ still seems weak and inadequate. Frequently, ordinary catechesis gives only marginal and inconsistent attention to the missions.60

Missionary zeal remains fundamentally appropriate as a formation goal, with due respect for the critical importance of prudence and tact in this context. Failure to form a person in mission takes place when there is a failure to recognize the missionary mandate of catechesis. Catechesis is “a work of evangelization in the context of the mission of the Church,”61 and ought to be “considered as one of the enduring concerns of the Church’s missionary mandate for our times.”62 Catechesis takes a place of priority “firmly within the Church’s mission,” an essential

59 GDC, no. 86.
60 Ibid., no. 30.
61 Ibid., no. 4.
62 Ibid.
and remarkable moment in the process of evangelization\textsuperscript{63} that only reaches its full potential in the context of mission:

Catechesis, situated in the context of the Church’s mission of evangelization and seen as an essential moment of that mission, receives from evangelization a missionary dynamic which deeply enriches it and defines its own identity. The ministry of catechesis appears, then, as a fundamental ecclesial service for the realization of the missionary mandate of Jesus.\textsuperscript{64}

The chaos of missionless man is resolved through the mission of Christ. When a disciple determines to conforms him or herself to the messianic mission, it opens a vista of possibilities, found alone through grace, to transform him or herself and the world. Each person’s works and prayers help unite the world to God, thereby becoming secondary causes of its sanctification.

Formation in mission is deepened by catechesis clearly on each Christian’s threefold office of priest, prophet, and king. The faithful share these offices with Christ; they form the missionary heart of the Church. A missionary heart is the natural result of a soul formed after the heart of Christ. Conformed to the image of Christ through Baptism, the dignity of the adult Christian to intentionally image Christ. The chaos of humanity’s fall is restored through a proper incorporation of the messianic roles of priest, prophet, and king in the life of each disciple. Properly ordered in humility and filial trust, this messianic role is graced to restore unity and order to the temporal world.

When a disciple images Christ in the \textit{priestly} role, he or she offers what could otherwise be a purposeless or arbitrary life to instead rise up to become an acceptable sacrifice to God. The priestly office calls all the faithful to lead lives that offer daily sacrifice to God. By orienting the work of their ordinary lives to the work of evangelization, the faithful’s “priestly soul and lay

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., no. 63.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., no. 59.
mentality” is an offering of themselves and their “ordinary lives” as acceptable sacrifices to God. Everything the person does – all of their daily works, trials, and tribulations – become an acceptable sacrifice to God.

When a disciple images Christ in the *prophetic* role, he or she preaches the kingdom of heaven with boldness and allows the temporal world to work with the heavenly in grace and freedom. The prophetic office is fulfilled when disciples faithfully preach and teach the Gospel at all times specifically through their witness of Christian living, fulfilling Christ’s commission to the Church to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation. They see this call to preach and teach as a grave matter and take seriously their appointment as prophets to the nations. Their dedication and faith in an increasingly secular world indifferent to God acts as the prophetic voice crying out in the desert to prepare the way of the Lord.65

When a disciple images Christ in the *kingly* role, he or she acts with authority over creation and subjects the temporal order to the divine law. The kingly office calls the faithful to take their places in the kingdom of God and invests them in its continued growth. Specifically through their daily work, words, and actions, their Gospel-oriented priorities witness to the surrounding culture, thereby building up the kingdom of God. By this building up, the faithful exercise their authority to take initiative in the Church’s mission, a mandate to reorder culture.

As a disciple shares in God’s family, so he or she shares in the family’s office and mission. Ralph Martin expressed this sentiment in his own brief treatise on the new evangelization, noting how the laity often “take a relatively passive role… But as the scripture indicates, and common sense reveals, there is no way that the mission of the Church can succeed

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65 Is 40:3.
without every baptized Catholic taking an active role.”

All the nations are called to join the family of God; the faithful must not stop evangelizing until everyone has been made a disciple. The Second Vatican Council’s Decree, *Ad Gentes*, succinctly states this solemn obligation: “All the faithful are duty-bound to cooperate in the expansion and spreading out of [Christ’s] Body, to bring it to fullness.”

Formation in mission ensures that the mission of the Church given to her by Christ is accomplished.

The following section of this treatise explores how the understandings of adult formation discussed thus far (the role of intimacy or immanence in formation, the aspects of mystery, communion, and mission in formation, and Christocentricity expressed in priestly, prophet, and kingly roles) have impacted the design of the project under study.

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67 Ibid., 36.
CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this portion of the treatise is to make explicit how understandings of formation discussed thus far have been incorporated into the project under study. A general review of the design is followed by looking more specifically at seven principles of adult formation integrated into the project. Concluding the chapter is a focus on how the project developed its two most important themes: spirituality and mentorship.

Structure of the Project

This project was designed for adult learners to teach other adult learners. It was intentionally patterned on a formative process called the collaborative learning model. As was noted in the Introduction of this treatise, this model was practiced in Birmingham, England at the Maryvale Institute. The doctoral candidate was befriended by the Institute’s then deputy director, Dr. Petroc Willey, and informally trained in the Institute’s practices. Though the Maryvale Institute had experience, its structures were built to accommodate small groups of learners. An accommodation to the larger-scale context of American Catholicism had not been attempted and, as noted earlier in this treatise, a sampling of U.S. dioceses revealed no American analogies to this methodology.

Many leaders in the Church in this country have experience with some forms of formation and training in catechetics that fail to engage, inspire, or excite learners. Means of assessing learners’ success in such situations can lack depth, ignore individual learning styles, or test only cognitive understanding, rather than ministerial ability and real-world professional growth. As well, these kinds of education approaches often lack human connection, mentorship, or useful dialogical exchange that extends through any significant length of time. In contrast, the
Maryvale Institute developed a Catholic catechetical formation system using a collaborative learning methodology. This approached formation via a learning environment that made extensive use of elements not characteristic of other common forms of training: an integral mentoring focus, a priority on the spiritual formation of learners, formation that intentionally builds relationships in a learner’s own community, mature, robust, and engaging assessment methods that address many facets of human formation, substantial demands upon adult learners to respond to formative tasks, and full integration of catechesis with aspects of pastoral growth that call learners to grow as much in accompaniment skills as in teaching skills. The design of this project along these lines is detailed below, as well as the reasons for valuing this formative direction.

Intentions communicated to participants:

The aims stated to participants at the beginning of the participant binder were as follows:

By the end of this three-part plan of study:

- A participant should be able to recognize the immense potential of a well-formed catechist to serve the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.
- A participant should have gained a command of how vital it is that catechesis serves the ongoing work of conversion that God’s grace makes possible.
- A participant should have acquired a practical appreciation for how catechesis serves the liturgical life of those being formed.

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1 Willey, *Course Director Training Manual*, Introduction.
• A participant should have gained the skills to catechize well in an adult context, to judge what must be taught, and to dynamically pass on the faith as a living witness to the reality and to the mystery of God’s saving love.

• A participant should have grown substantively in his or her relationship to the Triune God through scriptural prayer and discipleship under some of the Church’s great spiritual masters.

• A participant should desire even more deeply to do that to which he or she is called by the Lord: to become, by his grace, absolutely the best catechist he or she can be.

Structure of the participant’s binder:

There were three parts in each binder given to participants, covering ten sections (see Appendix III for the entire binder content as given to participants). Each section was designed to build upon its predecessor, and therefore pieces were required to be done in order.

• Part I (Sections 1-3) was titled “The Holy Spirit Leads the Church to Pass on the Faith to Every Generation: The Catechist Accepts a Role in the Ministry of Conversion.” This part explored the role of the catechist in the larger context of evangelization ministry, introducing the central concept of organic and systematic catechesis and examining the nature of conversion in the context of the liturgical life of the Church as well as the importance of a catechist’s spiritual life. The three section titles were:

  Section 1: The Context of Effective Catechesis

  Section 2: The Catechist Echoes What God Has Revealed in Word and Liturgy

  Section 3: The Two-Fold Aim of Catechesis
• Part II (Sections 4-6) was titled “The Father Reveals Himself in the Son: The Catechist Seeks to be Formed as an Instrument of Conversion.” This part addressed ways to discover a deeper spirituality suited to catechists, such as forms of devotion to the word of God and other helpful spiritual exercises. The three section titles were:

   Section 4: Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Conversion
   Section 5: Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Sacred Scripture
   Section 6: Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Yourself

• Part III (Sections 7-10) was titled “The Son Unfolds the Plan of the Father to Those Who Have Ears to Hear: The Catechist Strives to Be an Ever-More Perfect Instrument of Grace.” This part investigated the ways in which good methodology enables a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace and revisited the catechist’s spirituality through the practice of mentorship. The four section titles were:

   Section 7: The Ecclesial Method: How Do I Unfold the Life-Changing Truths?
   Section 8: Analyzing My Faith: What Must I Teach? What Do They Have to Know?
   Section 9: Analyzing My Situation: How Do These Participants Come to Faith?
   Section 10: Analyzing Myself: How Do I Become an Excellent Catechist?

Structure of the three Parts:

The ten sections of this project had commonalities. Each began with a passage from sacred scripture intended to set the tone and be the first “word” to the participants. The learning goals for the section were then laid out. The various elements of each section were headed in boldface. Concluding most of these was an exercise that referred participants to read brief selections from one or more resources and then asked them to practice various skills, demonstrate understanding,
or consider aspects of their own parish situation or their own spiritual life. The writing asked of participants in these exercises was the essential key to attaining the learning aims of each section. At the end of each section was a case study and summary exercise called Checking Your Progress. Following this, there was a boldface heading called Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It, designed to dovetail with and deepen the learning goals of each section. This further reading was not required, but participants were told that they would find it greatly beneficial to their formation in understanding, ongoing conversion, and spirituality. After section six, an optional spiritual meditation was added to this further reading. A quotation box concluded each section containing an inspiring word from saints and blessed known for their catechetical work in the life of the Church. These quotations were offered for their own sake but also to point participants to elder brothers and sisters in the faith who might serve as catechetical mentors for them, both as exemplars of the craft of catechesis during their time on earth and as heavenly intercessors.

Resources for participants to use in the project:

For this project, participants were told to expect to use the following: a Bible (Catholic edition) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd edition. Optional resources were encouraged, mostly related to the portion at the end of each section: the General Directory for Catechesis; Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales; and The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis by Petroc Willey, Pierre de Cointet, and Barbara Morgan. For the most part, terms used in the project were defined in the text itself. For terminology that a participant desired a fuller explanation of than the text provided, two resources were suggested: for general Catholic terms and theological terms, participants were told to look in the glossary
and index of the *Catechism*. For terms not addressed in the *Catechism*, participants were encouraged to use the provided link to the online version of the *Modern Catholic Dictionary* by Fr. John Hardon. In the participant binder, the group was given advice about how to learn from their reading.

*Creation of exercises within each section:*

To author formative exercises for the project, the doctoral candidate made use of the threefold dimensions discussed above: *mystery, communion, and mission*. This amounted to following a pattern of design that required each of the ten sections to contain at least one exercise that addressed formation in mystery, at least one for communion, and at least one for mission. Often more than one exercise for these dimensions of formation was included.

- For exercises involving formation in *mystery*, the question the doctoral candidate sought to address in light of a given section’s objectives was: How can the learning in this section offer at least one exercise that fosters growth in the learner’s spiritual self-awareness and hunger for more depth? Examples from the participant binder that focused on formation in *mystery* are: Exercises 1-1, 3-1, 3-4, 4-1, 4-3, Section 4 Case Study, 5-2, 503, 6-1, 6-3, 6-5, 8-3, 9-2, 9-6, 10-2 (see Appendix III).

- For exercises involving formation in *communion*, the question the doctoral candidate sought to address in light of a given section’s objectives was: How can the learning in this section offer at least one exercise that fosters growth in how the learner will exist as a disciple and witness within his or her local environment? Examples from the participant binder that focused on formation in *communion* are: Exercises 2-2, Section 3 Case Study,
4-2, Section 6 Case Study, 7-1, 8-2, 8-8, 9-7, Section 10 Case Study, 10-4 (see Appendix III).

- For exercises involving formation in *mission*, the question the doctoral candidate sought to address in light of a given section’s objectives was: How can the learning in this section offer at least one exercise that fosters growth in the learner’s vocation, catechetical abilities, and sense of self-offering to others? Examples from the participant binder that focused on formation in *mission* are: Exercises 2-1, Section 2 Case Study, 3-3, Section 5 Case Study, 7-5, 8-5, Section 8 Case Study, 9-1, 10-1, (see Appendix III).

As discussed above in previous sections of this treatise, the call upon those seeking to pass on the faith can be understood in light of the threefold office of Christ: *priestly*, *prophetic*, and *kingly*.

As exercises were developed and written, this understanding was incorporated into the participant binder in the following ways:

- Exercises conforming to fostering participants living out the *priestly* office accorded with the goal of *mystery*: when a disciple images Christ in the priestly role, he or she offers what could be a life more ordered to secular priorities to instead rise up to become an acceptable sacrifice to God. The priestly office calls all the faithful to lead lives that offer daily sacrifice to God. Everything the person does – all of their daily works, trials, and tribulations – become an acceptable sacrifice to God. Self-awareness and self-immolation arises from understanding the mystery of faith, and intentionally seeking a spirituality in accord with it.

- Exercises conforming to fostering participants living out the *prophetic* office accorded with the goal of *communion*: when a disciple images Christ in the prophetic role, he or she preaches the kingdom of heaven with boldness through their witness of Christian
living. Their dedication to their work and faith in their own communities acts as a prophetic “voice crying out in the desert” to prepare the way of the Lord.

- Exercises conforming to fostering participants living out the *kingly* office accorded with the goal of *mission*: when a disciple images Christ in the kingly role, he or she takes a chosen place in the kingdom of God and invests in the continued growth of the kingdom. By this building up, the faithful exercise their authority to take initiative in the Church’s mission.

*Communication in writing*

A vital aspect to the project was the strong emphasis on the participants working hard, not merely passively receiving formative instruction. The effort needed to have a participant communicate his or her thoughts through a pen or a keyboard is immensely formative in helping his or her understanding to grow and their memory to be deeply engaged. It is one of the main ways in which participants were helped to know that they have understood what they have been taught. Even though many found it to be a challenge, having to write things down is a known means to consolidate learning. It was also intended to give participants a great amount of practice in a vital catechetical skill: expressing themselves with significant substance, but succinctly. Sending what they have written to the doctoral candidate for comments allowed participants to become more secure in their grasp of a topics when they received feedback and advice from a person experienced in catechesis and with an advanced knowledge and understanding of the Church’s faith. All of the elements of this project were designed to work with participants to enable them to enjoy a rich and satisfying yet demanding experience. This was a reality not only in the binder’s exercises, but also in the three study days. Most of the talks in these Saturday
events used a fill-in-the-blank methodology that engaged participants kinesthetically and required pens to be out and busy (see Appendix I for these handouts).

The next aspect of this treatise addresses how the project was designed to incorporate elements from the Church’s understanding of how adults should be formed to reach other adults: “Catechists do not regard themselves as superior or extrinsic to the persons or groups to whom they minister… they know how to recognize everyone and make them agents and participants in the faith journey.”

### Principles of Adult Learning

The project discussed in this treatise was designed with adult learners in mind and so sought to correspond to principles of adult education. This project was intended to assist adults in forming other adults in faith, so principles of adult catechesis should correspond to the ultimate goal of such catechesis. Adult Catechesis in the Community outlines the ultimate goal of adult catechesis as “to help the mature Christian to live as an adult by acquiring certain qualities.”

The mature Christian adult will have an attitude of conversion to the Lord, a disposition of service and fellowship in the Christian community, and an overall manifestation of Christian discipleship in the world. In order to ensure the formation of this mature Christian, Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community posited certain criteria.

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3 Ibid., no. 34.
4 Ibid., no. 36.
5 Ibid., nos. 35, 37.
6 Ibid., no. 38.
The first principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is that the catechist must get to know the adults they are catechizing. The education in this project was undertaken by a teacher (the doctoral candidate) who also served as a mentoring figure for each participant, modeling a catechetical mentoring relationship. This created only the opportunity for relationship but it remained for the content of the project to be written as a context for relationship to grow in a distinctly formative way. The human availability of the doctoral candidate needed to be supported by a learning structure intentionally designed to foster intimacy in the form of mentorship.

The second principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is that formation is to be centered on the individual growth of the learner. “The traditional view among most scholars and practitioners of adult learning is to think exclusively of individual growth.” The catechist must begin by accepting adults “where they are,” keeping in mind “the specific adults with whom one is working, their cultural background, human and religious needs, their expectations, faith experiences, and their potential.” Each adult being formed has a unique history and experiences, and a unique and personal love affair with God (or the lack of one). Adult catechesis thus also should imitate the relationship that Christ had with his disciples, one that is soul-to-soul, encountering each person exactly where he or she is at. A catechesis that is truly personal will foster a faith that is deeply rooted within the person, thus a strong understanding of the person will assist in forming a strong and mature Christian adult. The project design attempted to allow the doctoral candidate to become aware of each participant’s

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7 Ibid., nos. 58, 61, 73, 79.
8 Ibid., nos. 49, 56.
10 ACCC, no. 56.
personality and situation as early as possible. The intake form, specific project exercises, and the face-to-face nature of the three study days allowed the doctoral candidate to get to know the adult participants’ own personal history and experiences. For example, this element of gaining early familiarity is particularly tangible in the project exercise, “Who are You in Christ and His Church and How Did That Happen?” This exercise asked participants to develop and submit a written testimony, explaining their personal backgrounds and their own faith journeys (see Appendix III).

The third principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is that adult catechesis must ensure that the great themes of Christianity are made clear.\textsuperscript{11} The Christian adult should be formed to understand the salvation of the world in a broad context. The project sought to emphasize to participants the importance of teaching these broad themes. This emphasis is especially clear in section 3 of Part I of the project binder, which outlines the topic of the Kerygma (see Appendix III). The \textit{General Directory for Catechesis} summarizes the structure of the Kerygma in this way: “The preparation for the Gospel in the Old Testament, the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ, and the time of the Church provide the structure of all salvation history of which creation and eschatology are its beginning and end.”\textsuperscript{12} The story lays out the main events in scripture as described in the \textit{General Directory for Catechesis}\textsuperscript{13} as well as the main events since the birth of the Church at Pentecost. By focusing on these elements, the project emphasized the importance of the catechist taking time to orient those they catechize to the fullness of the Church. Such an orientation enables the one catechized to respond more fully to the faith by responding to these truths.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., nos. 39, 49.
\textsuperscript{12} GDC, no. 115.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
The fourth principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is the importance of adults having experiences of Christian community in order to reinforce concepts being taught. Individuals being taught ought to know and experience the mystery of the Church as it is incarnated within a particular community. This project meets this principle in a variety of ways. The project was designed to have a fundamentally communal element, demonstrated through shared study days throughout the project duration. During these times, those being trained as catechists came together as one group to connect, dialogue, and grow together through new learning experiences. This communal element was encouraged throughout the project: participants were encouraged to meet informally with each other to process project materials and to discuss sections of the project binder. This occurred particularly among individuals from the same parish or who participated together in other regular gatherings. Further, many exercises within the project binder were designed to draw participants into experiences of their own parish communities and assess their experiences in light of specific learning objectives (for example, see in Appendix III exercises 4-2, 4-3, Section 6 Case Study, 7-1, 8-2, 8-5, 8-8, 9-1, 9-3, 10-1, 10-4).

The fifth principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is that prayer and opportunities for service ought to be woven into formation efforts. Such practices allow the catechist of adults to empower those they teach to begin calling forth their gifts, performing a type of spiritual inventory upon themselves. The Christian who knows how to turn inward in prayer to God is empowered to turn outward in service to his neighbor. Acts of service are then simply the natural outpouring of a life of faith and prayer rightly oriented. This project placed a

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14 ACCC, no. 53.
15 Ibid., no. 50.
strong emphasis on prayer. Participants were encouraged to strengthen their own prayer life throughout. This encouragement began even before the project content was offered with a continuing formation inventory that challenged participants to seriously look at their spiritual lives and consider in what ways they are forming themselves daily in prayer and knowledge of the faith. The adults in this project took this inventory three times throughout the six-month project. This practice alone was a form of encouraging them towards an attitude of continual conversion.

In addition to this set of personal spiritual check-ins, the project also had entire exercises and sections devoted to assessing, exploring, and developing participants’ spiritual growth, corresponding to the idea that learning evaluations “should include both pretests and posttests so that specific gains resulting from the learning experiences can be measured.”

Many of the project exercises required prayer and contemplation to complete. A myriad of exercises within the project sought to encourage and elicit an ever-deepening response to God (for example, see in Appendix III exercises 3-1, Section 3 Case Study, 4-1, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-5, 6-6, 7-1, 8-8, 9-7, 9-8, 10-1, 10-2). The project’s strong and regular incorporation of lectio divina walked participants through this method of prayer in detail and revisited its use in the context of learning objectives (for example, see Appendix III exercises 5-3, 7-7, 8-3, 8-9). Above all, section 6 of the project placed a profound emphasis on spirituality and walked participants through an unfolding spiritual challenge, using early chapters of Francis de Sales’ *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

The *sixth* principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is that formation should strive to find ways to break through to the individual, intentionally addressing points of misunderstanding rather than merely teaching a generic set of points in a manner unconcerned

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with individuals’ receptivity and comprehension. The catechist to adults should speak the truths of the faith in a way that those hearing it can truly understand them and come to their own convictions of heart. The catechist should enable adults gradually to become more aware of their value and dignity as human beings as one result of a careful and stimulating exposition of the great truths of faith. The catechist should not teach in a way that aims for impressive delivery at the cost of attentively examining and assuring reception. It is of utmost importance that the catechist be well-received and understood by those they catechize. In this, the catechist should consider the holy attitude of John the Baptist: “He must increase, I must decrease.” The catechist should strive to catechize with humility.

In this same pedagogical vein, it is important that the catechist expect and encourage questions. The experience of questioning is a natural part of adults fully coming to terms and accepting the truth proposed to them. Beyond expecting questions, the catechist should devise ways to hunt for questions and to draw them from those being served.

This project aimed to emphasize this important element of expecting and encouraging questions. At every stage of the project, participants were encouraged to contact the doctoral candidate with questions. At the end of each of the ten sections of the project, participants were instructed to put in writing to the doctoral candidate questions that had arisen up to that point. Participants were also given exercises that encouraged them to get “inside the head” of a person asking questions. For example, the case study entitled “The Experience of Questioning It All” required participants to imagine questions that a lukewarm Catholic on the verge of making a move to become a Protestant might have. Other exercises required participants to prepare

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17 ACCC, no. 30, 48.
18 Ibid., no. 49.
19 Jn 3:30.
material designed to reach a variety of different people at different places in their faith (for example, see Appendix III, exercises 1-2, Section 1 Case Study, 3-3, 3-5, 7-5, 8-5, 9-2, 9-9, 10-3). The project placed an emphasis on answering the questions of participants, modeling for them how a competent catechist seeks and answers the questions of others.

The seventh principle of adult catechesis incorporated into this project is respect for the need of adult learners to become collaborators in their own growth rather than passive recipients. In order for the content of the project itself to be appropriately and effectively conveyed to participants, it was necessary that its structure, delivery, and overall pedagogy be suited for the adult learner. “Adults have a deep need to be self-directing; therefore, the role of the teacher is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with them rather than to transmit his or her knowledge to them and then evaluate their conformity to it.” This project sought to adhere to this standard of adult education through its mentorship model and flexible deadlines for the assigned work, which allowed participants to self-direct their learning while being guided as individuals. The requirement of substantial work on the part of participants arose from the need to “make efforts to create learning experiences in which adults are helped to make the transition from dependent to self-directing learners.” Adults “need to know why they need to learn something; adults maintain the concept of responsibility for their own decisions, their own lives.” The elements of adult formation that participants learned in the project aimed to prepare them for real-life situations.

20 ACCC, nos. 28, 42, 57.
22 Ibid., 65.
23 Ibid., 72.
Primary Theme of Spirituality

The theme of spirituality, one of the two themes of this project, is essential because only when the catechist has a good and ever-deepening relationship with God does catechesis become ordered away from the person of the individual catechist and oriented towards the Person of Christ. The catechist with a strong spirituality has the ability to keep the God they profess to believe in at the forefront of their teaching and to truly impart a relationship with that same God to those they guide: “Only a really interior man of works will have enough life to produce other centers of fruitful life.”  

The catechist with a mature and deep spirituality possesses what is necessary to truly become a guide of souls; they cannot give what they themselves do not possess: “To heal souls, a man must himself have a healthy soul, because in order to heal them he has to give them something of himself.” The Church desires this above all in the formation of catechists:

The formation of catechists is made up of different dimensions. The deepest dimension refers to the very being of the catechist, to his human and Christian dimension. Formation, above all else, must help him to mature as a person, a believer and as an apostle.... formation, above all, nourishes the spirituality of the catechist, so that his activity springs in truth from his own witness of life. Every theme covered by formation should feed, in the first place, the faith of the catechist. It is true that catechists catechize others by firstly catechizing themselves.

Per this instruction, it is important that a significant part of catechist formation be dedicated to the formation of the catechist’s spirituality. This project attempts to place a particular emphasis on spirituality and spiritual formation, recognizing that “before they are allowed to proclaim the Christian message to others, they should themselves experience the transforming power of the

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25 Ibid., 135.
26 GDC, nos. 238, 239, italics in original.
Christian message, rightly proposed. In particular, the three sections of Part II focused on this almost exclusively: section 4 of the project developed the importance and nature of conversion to Jesus Christ in light of the work of the catechist; section 5 of the project introduced participants to the foundational spiritual value of sacred scripture and why any diligent catechist should be regularly seeking to enter more deeply into relationship with the Lord through the prayerful reading of the word of God; and section 6 placed participants at the feet of one of Church’s greatest spiritual masters, Francis de Sales, with the purpose of spiritually encouraging participants and further enabling their path to greater personal holiness, all the while recognizing that “conversion is a lifelong process” and that “it is normal for lay Catholics to have a living, growing relationship with God.” Part II was the longest portion of the project binder.

In a broader sense than the specific goals of Part II, this project strove to support formation within a community by helping those involved in local communities develop ongoing formation at all levels and ages. The presence of well-formed Christian disciples in a community has the power to reinvigorate the community’s culture:

- The presence of a significant number of disciples changes everything: a parish’s spiritual tone, energy level, attendance, bottom line, and what parishioners ask from their leaders. Disciples pray with passion. Disciples worship. Disciples love the Church and serve her with energy and joy. Disciples give lavishly. Disciples hunger to learn more about their faith. Disciples fill every formation class in a parish or diocese. Disciples manifest charisms and discern vocations. They clamor to discern God’s call because they long to live it. Disciples evangelize because they have really good news to share. Disciples share their faith with their children. Disciples care about the poor and about issues of justice. Disciples take risks for the Kingdom of God.

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28 Francis D. Kelly, *The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1999), 53.
30 CT, nos. 43, 57; GDC, no. 59.
Part of ongoing formation is ongoing conversion. Spiritual formation was this project’s first priority.

The goal for every catechist is to become what they teach, to become a witness. The person of the catechist, not firstly his or her skill or the programs he or she runs, is what makes for effective catechesis. “To help others to desire to ‘put on Christ,’ the catechist should thus first be committed to his or her own ongoing conversion to the Lord. For this reason, striving for holiness is a basic qualification of the catechist, so that “the ‘first word’ [he or she] speak[s] is that of personal witness.” The catechist becomes a transparent witness to the working of God in his or her own soul. Clearly, the Church sees the role of the catechist as not just teacher, but as a spiritual mentor and role model. The catechist is called to teach as Jesus taught, with words and actions, parables and signs, kindness and invitation.

It is the catechist’s attachment to the Person of Jesus that ultimately makes an “indelible impression” upon others. This requires a vibrant prayer life. The level of the catechist’s personal prayer life “will decide to a very great extent the value and effectiveness of his catechetical activity,” for “the blessings that make a ministry fruitful are reserved for the prayers of a man of interior life. Such prayer will have the power to bring forth from the bosom of God the strength for an apostolate that souls cannot resist.” The prayer of the catechist strengthens his or her ministry, allowing him or her to reach others more effectively. The prayer of the catechist is the prayer of the person who recognizes that his or her own personal faith empowers others in

32 Gal 3:27.
33 ACCC, no. 72.
36 Chautard, *The Soul of the Apostolate*, 133.
their spiritual growth: “True Christian living is, above all, a life of real Christian prayer”\textsuperscript{37}; in order to initiate others into a life of true Christian living, the catechist must put on Christ himself.

What does catechist spirituality ultimately look like? What are the particular marks of such a spirituality? Frank Sheed, one of the great master lay catechists of the last hundred years, offered a comprehensive overview of the necessary spirituality and spiritual formation of one who passes on the faith. His words on the subject come from a small and currently out of print booklet titled \textit{Are We Really Teaching Religion}? Although originally intended for those teaching children, the portion quoted here is even more relevant for those who seek to be catechists for adults:

The teaching of religion is a kind of dialogue – I was almost going to say between the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost – the Holy Ghost in you helping you to say the truth, and the Holy Ghost in the student helping him to understand what you are saying. It really is your work, you are not passive, you are not nothing – but the Holy Ghost is acting in you if you let him. The same is true of the student – the student is not passive, not nothing, but the Holy Ghost is helping him to understand what you say. Ideally, one should know the whole of the New Testament; the Gospels must be known thoroughly. In addition to reading the four Gospels, one should have a good harmony of the Gospels, and live with it. That is number one of the qualifications which seem to me to be an indispensable minimum. The teacher should be soaked also in the Church’s dogmas, soaked in them in this sense that she knows them in so far as the Church has expounded them; and further, that she is possessed by them…The very essence of being possessed by any truth at all is a desire to tell it. To be possessed by a truth and not to long to communicate it would be impossible. The mark of the teacher who is possessed by truth is an almost anguished desire to convey to others what is so rich a treasure to her.\textsuperscript{38}

Sheed expressed the Church’s understanding that the catechist is first and foremost a mediator between the learner and the mystery of God. The Holy Spirit acts in the one being catechized and it is the task of the catechist to recognize and facilitate that relationship without thwarting it.

\textsuperscript{37} Hofinger, \textit{You Are My Witnesses: Spirituality for Religion Teachers}, 164.
\textsuperscript{38} Frank J. Sheed, \textit{Are We Really Teaching Religion}? (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 20-23.
Catechist spirituality is one that recognizes the work of God in the Church and in the individual and is set afire for the continuation of that work in the lives of others.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* expounds on this understanding of the catechist as a mediator by recognizing the need for the catechist to work with the Holy Spirit at every stage of catechesis, for “no methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist at every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to him by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method.”\(^{39}\) The person of the catechist is a fundamental step of the catechetical process, so it is necessary that the catechist be well formed in their own spirituality. The catechist “is essentially a mediator,”\(^{40}\) who facilitates communication between the individual, the Church community, and the mystery of God. It is the task of the catechist to lead the individual into this great community and mystery; the only way the catechist can accomplish this is by themselves being truly a part of this community and mystery. The catechist must use the witness of his life “to create the most advantageous conditions for seeking out, welcoming, and deepening the Christian message.”\(^{41}\) The catechist is first and foremost a person whose catechetical activity and effectiveness “springs in truth from his own witness of life.”\(^{42}\) The catechist should have a “deeply ecclesial spirituality”\(^ {43}\) that speaks to a great love of and connectedness with Holy Mother Church. Since the catechist is a kind of prophetic bridge between the individual and the Church, it is important that his or her spirituality be profoundly ecclesial.

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\(^{39}\) GDC, no. 156.
\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., no. 239.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., no. 28.
Sr. Mary Michael Fox O.P.’s article entitled “The Spirituality of the Catechist” provides a deeper exploration of the topic of catechist spirituality. The article listed five main components of catechist spirituality: “possessing a missionary zeal and love for the Church, drawing life from the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, being rooted in sacred scripture and sacred tradition, living an authentic life in the Holy Spirit, and having deep devotion to Mary.”[^44] These five elements as hallmarks of a well-rounded catechist spirituality were built into the project’s design in the following ways.

With respect to the need for catechist’s missionary zeal, project participants were asked to prepare a personal mission statement for both their personal faith life and for their catechetical work, drawing both from the heart and teachings of the Church. This exercise, and others focusing on the formative dimension of mission, helped participants find their place within the heart of the Church and embrace the Church’s mission as their own.[^45]

The catechist’s love for the Church should cause him to be deeply immersed in the Church’s sacramental life and prayer. The catechist loves the Mass and drinks deeply from it, understanding it as “the wellspring of worship... an ever-flowing fountain of grace – the source and summit of the Christian life.”[^46] The catechist draws his or her spiritual life from the Mass and sacramental graces. Accordingly, authentic spiritual formation is fundamentally liturgical and Eucharistic. This project supported this formation by encouraging times of adoration, by creating exercises that stressed the importance of Mass and confession, and by helping participants articulate how various doctrines relate to the liturgy.

[^45]: GDC, no. 78.
The catechist must be rooted in sacred scripture and sacred tradition, loving the truths they proclaim so as to proclaim them boldly themselves. “Every catechist is called upon to present, clarify, and if need be, defend the Church’s teaching.”\(^47\) In order to instruct others in these truths, it is necessary for catechists to have incorporated them into their own spiritual life, growing to love and understand them in a way that is deeply personal, for “love for the doctrine is a part of love for Jesus.”\(^48\) The catechist must study and pray with sacred scripture and sacred tradition diligently, for “study ennobles the mind and nurtures in the catechist an intelligent fidelity to the Gospel. Prayer gives soul to the knowledge gained through study. Together prayer and study shape the mind and heart of the catechist according to the mind and heart of Christ.”\(^49\)

Francis Kelly in *The Mystery We Proclaim* outlined the work of the catechist with regard to sacred scripture and sacred tradition as such:

> The challenge of the catechist is to be faithful to God’s word and to help the modern person see how this Revealed Word is the answer to their own deepest longing for truth, goodness, and love. Catechesis therefore is above all at the service of divine revelation, and its method must reflect that reality.\(^50\)

A catechist must demonstrate the full truth, goodness, and beauty of the faith to learners within a teaching process that is “abidingly faithful to this divine deposit.”\(^51\) This project sought to recognize the importance of such faithfulness and manifest this attention to the spiritual topics of sacred scripture and sacred tradition through its heavy emphasis on the practice of *lectio divina* in a number of exercises, and in the participants’ own spiritual lives and through exercises that brought participants’ attention to the tradition and dogma of the Church.

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\(^47\) Ibid.


\(^50\) Kelly, *The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium*, 85.

\(^51\) Kevane, *Teaching the Catholic Faith Today*, xiv.
The catechist spirituality involves living a life in the Holy Spirit, for “there can be no true union with Christ except in the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit draws the faithful closer to Christ, for it is the Spirit who “imbues us with the mind of Christ and lets us pray and act as one with Christ.” The Holy Spirit has a transforming power and bestows on the faithful sense of mission that can be observed from the very beginnings of the Church at Pentecost. A life in the Spirit is one that is profoundly apostolic and mission-centered. The General Directory for Catechesis notes that catechist formation “constantly nourishes the apostolic consciousness of the catechist, that is, his sense of being an evangelizer.” The Holy Spirit empowers and prepares catechists for their mission, giving them “the right understanding of what is central in the Christian religion” and making their teaching prayerful so that it leads to a “personal encounter with God.” The Holy Spirit gives the catechist the drive and power to evangelize. “Living an authentic life of the Spirit, therefore, is integral to the catechist’s effectiveness in the apostolate of evangelization and catechesis.” In order to gain this authentic life in the Spirit, the catechist must invite the Holy Spirit into their work of catechesis, recognizing that it is the Spirit who works in the souls of those they catechize. This project sought to take note of the necessary relationship between the Holy Spirit and the catechist, for “the importance of prayer to the Holy Spirit for an evangelizers or catechists work cannot be emphasized enough.” Catechists must be utterly convinced and certain that adult formation is above all a work of grace, a work of the Spirit.

Only the Holy Spirit, the Principle of all spiritual fruitfulness, can make converts and impart the graces that determine men to flee vice and follow virtue. The preaching of the

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52 Hofinger, You Are My Witnesses: Spirituality for Religion Teachers, 47.
53 Ibid., 47.
54 GDC, no. 239.
55 Hofinger, You Are My Witnesses: Spirituality for Religion Teachers, 48-49.
57 Ibid., 6.
apostle, when it is filled with the unction of the sanctifying Spirit, becomes a living channel which holds back nothing of the divine action.\textsuperscript{58}

The Holy Spirit effects salvation and conversion in the individual. Through ever-present references in the project binder’s text to the Holy Spirit’s work, participants were brought to the realization that the Holy Spirit is at work in each person, and the Holy Spirit is at work in the individual catechist.

Finally, it is essential that the catechist have a relationship with Mary, the Mother of God, the “living catechism” and “model of catechists.”\textsuperscript{59} One cannot consider the work of catechesis without considering Mary, for “to isolate Mary from the apostolate would be to misconstrue one of the most vital parts of the divine plan.”\textsuperscript{60} Mary is the embodiment of the Gospel because she carried Christ within her and brought him to others. Her very soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.\textsuperscript{61} “Mary was the first to hear the Word and believe and she was the first to take the Word to others. She was the first to recognize the world’s need for her Son and the first to ask him to supply its need.”\textsuperscript{62} Mary is also the Church’s mother, the mother of all disciples. Because of this, the catechist turns to Mary and “entrusts himself to her maternal care.”\textsuperscript{63} Under Mary’s patronage, “the catechist will allow himself to be molded into a true disciple of the Lord Jesus and a fervent witness to his Gospel.”\textsuperscript{64} The catechist identifies with Mary because, like her, the catechist “is only God’s instrument in the work of salvation. Mary’s faith has brought us the Savior, the faith of the [catechist] leads his students to their saving encounter with Christ by

\begin{footnotes}
\item[58] Chautard, \textit{The Soul of the Apostolate}, 166.
\item[60] Chautard, \textit{The Soul of the Apostolate}, 305.
\item[61] Luke 1:46-55.
\item[63] Ibid.
\item[64] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
faith.” Mary’s maternal intercession is the strength of all catechists. In a number of exercises, the project encouraged the understanding that the catechist must have a lively devotion to Mary as the Mother of the Church and the Mother of all catechists.

*Lectio divina* was a foundational element of practical spirituality within the design of this project. Participants are trained in the methods of this practice of prayer and are encouraged to incorporate it into their own lives in order to aid their own success within the work of catechesis. This particular spiritual practice was undertaken in detail within the context of this project so that participants could have a mentored experience of concrete development in their spiritual lives. *Lectio divina* has a particular fit within the context of catechist spirituality because it is the practice of hearing and absorbing sacred scripture into one’s own life in an analogous manner that catechesis involves the sowing of the word into individuals’ lives. Everyone who educates others in the faith “needs most especially to be brought into close and personal contact with the sacred scripture... for his own spiritual vitality, he needs continually to be more completely formed to the image of Christ by the word of God in sacred scripture.” Project participants are asked at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the six-month timeframe to examine how they have implement *lectio divina* into their own prayer lives.

The goal of this project’s implementation of *lectio divina* was to invite participants to examine their spiritual life in light of their catechetical calling. The initial section of the project that addressed this area of spirituality began by outlining how *lectio divina* is prayed, suggested three scripture passages as a starting point, and offered additional passages in future sections.

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66 Ibid., 200.
This section on *lectio divina* was designed to help the project participants understand and appreciate how and why sacred scripture is foundational to the spiritual formation of catechists and to empower them to begin using *lectio divina* as a way of praying with scripture in order to reach greater maturity in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ so as to become more effective catechists, for “catechesis will recover vigor and impact when it returns to the full drama of salvation and the full mystery of Jesus Christ.” Scripture strengthens catechesis and grounds the catechist.

This project attempted to prepare the participants to thrive in the practice of *lectio divina* by walking them through exact steps, giving tips, and even providing passages to reflect on for a more guided time of *lectio divina* prayer. The passages provided to the participants were chosen in the context of their catechist training. As participants worked through the scripture passages, they were also asked to use one of the provided prayer worksheets detailing the process of *lectio divina*. One of the worksheets presented a form of *lectio divina* following the model presented by Ignatius of Loyola. The second *lectio divina* worksheet followed the older Benedictine tradition. Participants were encouraged to use whichever tradition they preferred. *Lectio divina* allowed this project to focus on the personal spirituality of the catechist, providing participants a specific context in which to reflect on their catechetical vocation from a true encounter with the word.

A strong spirituality is a vital part of the catechist and this project strove to emphasize the importance of developing such a spiritual life as well as outlining the particular hallmarks of that life. The project highlighted the words of Benedict XVI, who called catechists to recognize the importance of prayer and the preeminence of the spiritual life:

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Catechists must have a deep spirituality, i.e., they must live in the Spirit, who will help them to renew themselves continually in their specific identity. Their spirituality is closely bound up with their status as lay Christians, made participants, in their own degree, in Christ’s prophetic, priestly and kingly offices. The need for a spirituality proper to catechists springs from their vocation and mission. It includes, therefore, a new and special motivation, a call to sanctity. Pope John Paul II’s saying: “The true missionary is the saint,” can be applied without hesitation to the catechist. Like every member of the faithful, catechists are “called to holiness and to mission,” i.e., to live out their own vocation “with the fervor of the saints.” Catechists’ spirituality is also conditioned by their apostolic vocation, and therefore should bear the marks of: openness to God’s Word, to the Church and to the world; authenticity of life; missionary zeal; and devotion to Mary.

The document quoted above goes on to say: “To be able to educate others in the faith, catechists should themselves have a deep spiritual life. This is the most important aspect of their personality and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation. The real catechist seeks to be a saint.” This is daunting. And yet this is doable – in God. So long as this daunting call impels the catechist to prayer, instead of driving him or her away in fear, then all things become possible. This project strove to help the learner understand the great joy and unparalleled privilege of being guided and guiding souls to God by forming them deeply in spirituality.

Once participants were steeped in the tradition and spirituality of catechesis, the project took both elements a step further: exploring how good methodology enables a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace and then revisiting the catechist’s spirituality by studying the theme of mentorship.

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68 GC, no. 6.
69 Ibid., no. 22.
70 Lk 1:37.
Primary Theme of Mentorship

Chapter 1 of this treatise discussed the role of *intimacy* or *immanence* in the understanding ministry. There are other applications of this concept, chiefly explaining the primacy of parents in ministry to their children, but this project aimed at a specifically adult-to-adult context. To develop this theme into an explicit support of *mentorship* in forming catechists for adults, this treatise sought to create a means to express a catechetical form of the principle of *subsidiarity*. For a definition of subsidiarity, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of *subsidiarity*, according to which a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.⁷¹

The principle of subsidiarity stems from the Church’s social teaching and is rooted in the fundamental understanding that the human person is the principle subject of every social organization. Because society is founded and centered on the person, the principle of subsidiarity holds that human affairs ought to be dealt with on the lowest possible level – that closest to those affected. Subsidiarity promotes the dignity of the individual person by showing concern for the diverse areas of life and communities in which they are involved, a concern extended to “the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth.”⁷² The principle of subsidiarity allows for consideration of the whole of society while

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⁷¹ CCC, no. 1883.
focusing on the people by whom society is made up. Subsidiarity considers the realm of civil society, which can be understood as “the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings... [that] strengthens the social fabric and constitutes the basis of a true community of persons.” Subsidiarity gives power to individuals, allowing them to effect positive change within their own communities. In his landmark social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pius XI gave the classic definition of subsidiarity:

> Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.

This project takes seriously the principle of subsidiarity, recognizing that passing on the faith is a social activity. All conversion is local, which is why faith formation must remain a robustly-supported *local* activity. This project did not aim to bypass those in the local community who have the responsibility for forming others in the faith, but rather trusted participants to take responsibility for their own learning. From this principle arises the theme of mentorship, hence the need for participants to work and for the guidance of that work to be proximal and personal: a mentoring accompaniment. Failure to honor this principle risks disempowering the local community in favor of a cult of distance experts and making instruction less able to address individual experiences and learning needs. As the *General Directory for Catechesis* explains:

> Catechetical pedagogy will be effective to the extent that the Christian community becomes a point of concrete reference for the faith journey of individuals. This happens

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73 CSDC, IV.185.
75 CL, no. 63.
when the community is proposed as a source, locus, and means of catechesis. Concretely, the community becomes a visible place of faith-witness. It provides for the formation of its members. It receives them as the family of God. It constitutes itself as the living and permanent environment for growth in the faith. Besides public and collective proclamation of the Gospel, person-to-person contact, after the example of Jesus and the Apostles, remains indispensable. In this way, personal conscience is more easily committed. The gift of the Holy Spirit comes to the subject from one living person to another. Thus, the power of persuasion becomes more effective.76

All of this project’s formation was designed to support and complement the formation being undertaken, locally and personally, in parishes accompanied by a mentor committed to personally come to know participants over an extended time. Never forgetting that formation in the faith is always first and foremost God’s attentive presence to the individual, the sections of this project sought to address various aspects of that which best fostered actual competency in those individuals rather than solely a generic approach. This included encouraging personal accountability to excellence and creating tasks that demonstrated the effectiveness of soul-to-soul persuasion, dialogue, and genuine openness to others. This project strove to create catechists of adults who would in turn invigorate their local community, in part because their formation modeled personal attentiveness from a mentor figure.

This personal focus allowed the project to seek to honor the movements of grace within each person called to the work of catechesis, building people to serve people. The project structure and submission requirements encouraged relational ministry, with the goal of helping participants discover by experience the value of making the effort to be more personally available to people.

Following this divine pedagogy, the work of forming souls must be attentive to the words of Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

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76 GDC, no. 158.
In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one’s personal experience of faith? It must not happen that the pressing need to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes should cause us to forget this form of proclamation whereby an individual’s personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique word that he receives from someone else.

This project aimed to recognize that the work of forming souls is entrusted to other souls because witness has the power to convict. “The one thing most likely to induce the faithful to lead a really Christian life is precisely the virtue of the one charged with teaching it.” The faith that is passed on is of necessity profoundly personal, from human being to human being. The mature Christian adult has the ability to see himself or herself as a minister of God’s own divine providence, called to be his hands, voice, and listening ear in the world.

The importance of individual attentiveness cannot be swallowed in the larger context of forming large numbers of people for the work of catechesis, for “every person, family, and intermediate group has something original to offer the community.” Faith is nurtured most naturally in a community of individuals centered on shared faith. The community of faith builds itself up as a body and finds individuals – mentor figures – who can commit to the demanding task of building up the individuals within it, empowering them to strengthen and give back to that community themselves.

Subsidiarity cannot be implemented with the participation of the individual, for “the characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation... participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good.” This project sought to bring its participants to an understanding of their role within their communities and to

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77 EN, no. 46.
79 CSDC, IV.187.
80 Ibid., IV.189.
give them the tools to best fulfill that role. The theme of subsidiarity leading to mentorship drove the formation of this project’s structure and content. The material within the project was designed to train those being instructed to eventually become formidable instructors in their own right, who prioritize mentoring relationships in forming other adults.

This project’s focus on subsidiarity-driven mentorship thus assists in the support of local parishes and communities as centers of learning and formation. In Acts 2:41-42, Luke describes the first local Christian community:

> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.\(^81\)

As noted in this passage and echoed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, four pillars marked this early community’s way of being together: 1) The apostles’ teaching (Creed); 2) fellowship (life in Christ); 3) The breaking of the bread (liturgy, centered on the Eucharist), and 4) the prayers (Christian prayer). Non-local efforts can aid or enrich these four pillars, but their essence is fundamentally local. Fellowship is profoundly proximal. The Mass, and all sacramental celebrations, exist only when clergy and laity share a sacred space and a personal moment of offering and reception. And prayers, always stemming from Jesus’ own emphasis, draw the faithful together in community: “If we pray the Our Father sincerely, we leave individualism behind, because the love that we receive frees us from it.”\(^82\)

The first pillar, however, the one that encompasses catechesis and formation in Catholic teaching, is less often recognized as a work self-evidently local. In current times, guest speakers

\(^{81}\) Acts 2:41-42.

\(^{82}\) CCC, no. 2792.
from afar and high-quality audio and video teachings threaten to replace local catechists. This presents numerous problems.

First, for all their talent and all they have to offer, guest speakers and audio/video teachers are not connected to the many local dioceses and parishes that use their services, nor are they involved with the ongoing work of forming and loving a particular people in a particular place. They are unable to participate in the struggles and graces involved with forming those people. An over-reliance on distant experts can also undercut a diocese’s commitment to form people locally – a commitment that takes far greater effort, time, and resources, but which also is able to more fruitfully address the particular needs of a parish, region, or diocese. Paul VI cut to the heart of this issue in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than teachers, and if he listens to teachers it is because they are witnesses.”

Although a guest speaker or teacher may have impactful things to say, no teaching cuts to the heart more than that of an authentic witness. It is imperative that catechists give *personal witness* to those they teach.

In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, this harder way is the Church’s way: “The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.” To reemphasize, non-local helps and training can aid this first pillar, but its essence remains fundamentally *local*. The long-term goal should be forming a confident parent in *that* place, a competent catechist in *that* place, a capable lay leader in *that* place, and, most important of all, a clearly empowered chief catechist in *that* place – a priest whose vocation can become the locus of teaching, community fellowship, liturgy, and prayers, allowing the immanent hospitality

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83 EN, no. 41.
84 GC, no. 8.
of Christ to enliven catechesis with a spirit of human warmth and welcome around that particular altar.

To offer some contribution to making this vision possible, this project encouraged its participants to grow in self-knowledge, offering exercises and teachings that increase awareness of faults and problematic comfort zones in relationships. The project also helped participants discover common needs and motivations in their communities and included exercises to hone participants’ ability to listen, show authentic interest in another’s good, and practice empathy. This project attempted to train and empower effective catechists who could strengthen and invigorate their own faith communities, promoting local strength.

Mentor figures are absolutely essential to accomplish this kind of formation. An outcome sought by this project is for evangelization and catechesis to remain appropriately situated with those who can be in authentic ministerial relationships in the field – a measure of intimacy, of closeness to those being formed. Only the catechist who is in these authentic relationships can utilize those same relationships as an impetus for initial and continual conversion. In this environment, the catechist can lead the learner by example to right Christian behavior, for “under his guidance the student has to learn to act as a true Christian.”

This project attempted to serve as one locus of such a mentorship model. The project was led by a single mentor (the doctoral candidate) in a local area, gathering and personally engaging with individuals over an extended period of formation. Throughout the formation process, participants were guided by the teaching, reading, and exercises contained within the project material and the responses provided by the mentor figure to questions and exercises. While this

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85 Hofinger, You Are My Witnesses: Spirituality for Religion Teachers, 30.
asked for greater time commitments by both participants and the teacher/mentor figure than commonly encountered in catechist formation efforts, this project suggests some advantages. Learning through the example given by teacher/mentor figure, participants have greater potential to become better ministers of accompaniment and are enabled to take more creative ownership of their own call to serve and form souls. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “We are God’s fellow workers.”

Becoming an excellent catechist is a work of delving into the richness of faith that is the priceless inheritance from those who have gone before in the teaching vocation. All the inspired writing in the world cannot alone make great catechists. Rather, a great catechist seeks to become more competent by seeing and hearing strong catechists in action and allowing themselves to be placed in a mentoring relationship with them. Catechists being mentored seek to learn all they can from master catechists and to make use of these masters’ techniques while making what they have learned their own, primarily by imitating what they have seen, heard, analyzed, and attempted in practice. And, using what they have seen and heard as effective in others, well-mentored and equipped catechists allow grace to work, offering to God their individual spirits, personalities, life experiences, and devoted hearts to serve the lives of those they mentor in turn.

86 1 Cor. 3:9.
CHAPTER FOUR: EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT

Implementation of the Project

The treatise parameters approved by The Catholic University of America required gathering a participant group of about 20 adults. Participants were sought according to the following criteria (see Appendix I for the invitation letter):

- Potentially able to attend live study days held on Saturdays at a parish in Laurel, Maryland.
- Already involved in some way in adult formation in a parish setting.
- Not themselves in need of initial kerygmatic evangelization at this point in their faith journey.

The project was advertised, primarily through word of mouth, to a number of adult formation groups in a range of parishes. The participants who elected to start the project and carried through to doing the exercises had the following demographic (see Figure 1 below):

- 20% men; 80% women; from 10 different Maryland parishes (in the Archdioceses of either Washington or Baltimore).
- Average age of 56.
- 35% with master’s degrees; 40% with bachelor’s degree; 25% with associate’s or high school degrees.
- No individuals had theology degrees.
- 30% had read or studied catechetical documents before beginning the project.
- 85% had endeavored in some way to read scriptures in a regular manner and had some familiarity with *lectio divina.*
• 60% had previously done some form of catechetical training program, mostly diocesan certification offerings.

Not included in the above statistics were three other individuals who intended to begin the project but did not progress to any of the exercises. Two of these, a married couple, dropped out immediately due to the wife’s cancer diagnosis. The other individual, a Marine officer, dropped out shortly after the project got underway due to transfer to an out-of-state duty station.

Of the group of 20 adults who progressed to work on the exercises, five eventually dropped out. These five are included in all statistics and figures up to the point of their departure. One the individuals who dropped out, an Army officer, was deployed overseas a couple of months into the course. Another, the youngest participant, moved out of state. The other three did not complete for less obvious reasons. Statistically, as noted in Figure 1, the dropouts as a group were younger, less exposed to catechetical reading and scripture, and substantially less experienced with similar formation courses. To the degree that their Continuing Formation Inventories allowed for a comparison, there was no other statistically significant difference in the spirituality measures that participants were asked to submit (see Figure 2 below for the raw data; an analysis is provided in the next section of this treatise).

Once the project began in March 2016, the first study day (all day Saturday) offered a vision for the project ahead and covered some preamble topics such as familiarity with scripture and the *Catechism*, a sense of the larger picture of salvation history, and the basic nature of evangelization and catechesis in the life of the Church (see Appendix I for the outline of all three study days and the accompanying handouts). The three study days (March, May, and October) served to touch base face-to-face, offer encouragement and elicit questions among the group, provide verbal clarity and momentum for various sections of the participant binder, and allow
opportunities for the doctoral candidate to collect data-bearing forms and an anecdotal understanding of participants’ experiences. The study days went smoothly logistically. Of the 20 participants in the project, the first two study days averaged 93% attendance. By the last study day, five of these people were gone, and 87% of remaining participants were present.

Once participants received the binder (see Appendix III for the binder contents), they were instructed and encouraged in various ways in their study (see “Introduction” in the Appendix III material). The binder’s three parts and multiple sections allowed each participant to move at his or her own pace and to turn in work via email, one exercise at a time or grouped. Most participants fell into a pattern of turning in one or two sections at a time, comprised of multiple exercises. The doctoral candidate responded to these submission by return email, phone, or face-to-face in the context of a study day (over one of the meals or at the conclusion of the day’s teaching). The form of the doctoral candidate’s response depended largely on whether a discussion seemed useful (phone or face-to-face) rather a simple one-way response less likely to lead to dialogue on a given exercise. Figure 3 provides data from these submissions and responses and the completion statistics for the three parts of the participant binder. These data are analyzed in the next section of this treatise.

**Evaluation of the Project**

Whether this project, as designed and implemented, served the goals set out for it is a question that can be only partially addressed by data collected through the evaluation tools approved for this treatise. Beyond the objective data collected and evaluation results presented below, this section discusses more subjective questions as well. Data collected for this project came in the following forms:
The project required participants to submit an intake sheet (called Registration for Adult Catechist Formation Program). This form collected contact and demographic information but also asked several subjective questions (see Appendix II). Statistics from this sheet are presented in Figure 1. Comments by participants are collected at the end of this chapter of the treatise.

The project required participants to submit three identical sheets (called Continuing Formation Inventories – Program Start/Mid-point/End-point). These used two assessment categories (means of continuing formation in prayer and means of continuing formation in knowledge) offered a scale of one to five for 11 questions in each category (see Appendix II). Once collected, these data points presented a picture of each participant’s usage of these formation means through project’s six-month timeframe. A compilation of these data is provided in Figure 2.

The project exercises asked participants to do a substantial amount of writing, mostly in a short-answer form, never requiring more than 500 words at a time and usually far less. Responses by the doctoral candidate were mostly via email, though sometimes by phone or in person during the study days. The total word count of the written interactions was recorded and compiled, along with data on how many exercises were completed and the percentages this represented. A compilation of these data is provided in Figure 3.

The project required participants to complete a final evaluation (Concluding Evaluation Form for Program Participants). This form asked for two categories of feedback on a number scale and then gave participants the opportunity to make subjective comments (see Appendix II). A compilation of the number-scale data is provided in Figures 4-7. Participants’ final evaluation comments are collected at the end of this chapter of the treatise.
Analysis of Figure 1 data and the Compilation of Subjective Answers from Registration Form for Project Participants (see both below in this chapter):

Participants in this project formed a diverse group in some ways and strongly skewed in others. The recruiting resulted in more locational variety than anticipated: people from ten parishes in two archdioceses with a wide range and even spread of education levels. The group overall was less diverse in other ways than would be desired: all lacked degree-level studies in philosophy, theology, or catechetics; all were Caucasian; 80% were women; and only two people were younger than 40, both of whom had to drop out. As would be expected from a group of evangelized Catholic adults who were already involved in some form of ministry to other adults, these 20 individuals evidenced a high degree of engagement in some form with scripture (85%) and attendance at previous catechetical training or formation opportunities (60%). For the five individuals who dropped out, these number were notably lower: 80% and 20% respectively. Also notable was the general lack of contact with actual magisterial catechetical documents (30% for the group in general; 20% for the dropouts). This points to a possible reality in the field: that of the many types of catechetical classes taken by these individuals, few formation events and courses included a direct exposure to magisterial sources.

One of the distinctive aspects of the project developed for this treatise was a high degree of engagement with key magisterial texts. In regard to the range of subjective comments solicited by the intake form, those collated at the end of this section of the treatise evidence four notable trends: 1) initial motivations to be a participant in this project were related just as much to a desire to grow personally/spiritually as to a desire to grow as a catechist or in an ability to share faith with another; 2) articulation of spiritual goals for the project implied a high diversity of
depth, from a desire to engage a spiritual director to basic questions about the nature of pursuing spirituality explicitly. Most participants articulated these goals in a personalist manner, desiring a growth in relationship to God rather than a growth in virtue or holiness in a more general sense; 3) desire for gaining knowledge seemed fairly mixed between gaining for self or for others, but it was surprising how many times “evangelization” was mentioned, given the stereotypical lack of comfort among American Catholic adults with self-applying that term; 4) in articulating a desire for more catechetical understanding, virtually all participants seemed aware that they felt less than effective in their current efforts. A learner’s desire to grow does not necessarily imply that he or she feels currently ineffective at some fundamental level, but this seemed to be the case for the set of participants in this project.

**Figure 1: Data from Participant Intake Registration Forms**

See Appendix II for original form

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<th>Initials</th>
<th>Active in Ministry</th>
<th>Parish Location</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Catechetical Reading/Study</th>
<th>Scripture Study/ Lectio Familiarity</th>
<th>Previous Classes</th>
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**Participants who dropped out of the project:**

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
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<td>38</td>
<td>MA</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Average for all participants:**

- Age: 56
- Education Level: MA: 35% BA: 40% HS: 25%
- Catechetical Reading/Study: 30%
- Scripture Study/ Lectio Familiarity: 85%
- Previous Classes: 60% yes

**Average for those who completed the project:**

- Age: 60
- Education Level: MA: 33% BA: 47% HS: 20%
- Catechetical Reading/Study: 33%
- Scripture Study/ Lectio Familiarity: 87%
- Previous Classes: 73% yes

**Average for those who dropped out of the project:**

- Age: 44
- Education Level: MA: 40% BA: 20% HS: 40%
- Catechetical Reading/Study: 20%
- Scripture Study/ Lectio Familiarity: 80%
- Previous Classes: 20% yes
Analysis of Figure 2 data:

The goal of gathering these data points was, first, to discover the general shape of the spiritual practices and faith studies of project participants. Second, the data were expected to give some insight into whether the experience of the project positively impacted these faith practices. The first impression of the data overall was that this group of individuals did a myriad of things to support their spiritual lives, with substantial intensity in most cases. In 9 of the 11 questions related to the spiritual practices category, there were far more higher numbers (4s and 5s indicating more regular practice) than lower numbers. Only the categories related to choosing a formal spirituality and choosing a spiritual director scored low numbers. For the 11 questions related to growth in knowledge category, there was a greater diversity of numbers, the average floating around 3 (equating to “sometimes”). Three questions among the 11 found lower numbers on average: Catechism reading, vocation-related reading (such as marriage books), and television use (such as EWTN). Over the span of the six-month project, participants were asked to record their practices in these two categories by re-marking the number scale at the mid-point and end-point. The mid-point numbers, in retrospect, seem not relevant as data points. The span of time was brief and the intensity of work required of participants by the project was substantially more than either the doctoral candidate or the 20 participants anticipated. This likely resulted in the mid-point evaluation to being somewhat irrelevant because it only addressed a person’s experience under much formative pressure rather than serving as a window into a more normal growth in spiritual practices that might flow from an experience of this kind. The end-point data may also have been compromised to a degree by this factor. Overall, the data show a preponderance of holding steady, on average, in spiritual practices from start-point to end-point, with a slight tendency (likely statistically insignificant given the small size of this sample).
towards growth versus decline. No column of the 22 questions shows a net decline, but most also reflect only very modest gains on average. It would have been more helpful to have had the option to collect data of this kind after the project participants had gained some distance from the experience, but this exceeded the treatise parameters. However, looking at individual columns in Figure 2, data in five stand out:

- The practice of a daily examination of conscience saw growth in 45% of participants. The project binder stressed this practice and provided a simple format for it, so this seems to make sense.

- The practice of *lectio divina* saw growth in 45% of participants. This practice was heavily stressed by the project exercises. This statistic is stronger still since most of the participants that recorded no net growth were already in the 4s or 5s range.

- The practice of seeking a more intentional spirituality (in the form of a more regularized and structured set of formal spiritual practices) saw the most dramatic increase by far, with 65% of participants indicating growth here. The project binder made a point of defining spirituality in a Catholic context and intentionally discussed several “spiritualities” to some degree, including Salesian, Franciscan, and Jesuit. Verbal questions asked during one of the study days also fed into the project’s overall emphasis of the notion of each disciple of the Church considering seeking a particular pathway (defined by a religious order or otherwise) to more intentionally develop spiritually.

- The practice of reading the *Catechism* saw growth in 50% of participants, with another 40% remaining steady in their rating. This is not surprising, considering how strongly *Catechism* passages figured into both the reading required in the binder and the steps needed to complete many exercises.
- The practice of gaining knowledge of the faith via television sources saw growth in 50% of participants, with another 35% remaining steady in their rating. Though there was increase here, the practice did not rise overall to the higher 4s and 5s for most. It may have been due to more available television watching “down-time” over the summer, since the mid-point numbers (taken in late May) were higher than the end-point ones on average.

Only one category experienced a net drop. The only practice that reflected an unexpectedly low score at the end was the practice of regular prayer (of some kind). 100% of participants rated this a 5 at the start of the course, but 90% of participants placed this measure at 4s and 5s by the end. Accounting for the drop here is difficult and the data do not support much in the way of suggested causes. Overall in the project, the majority either remained at the same scale of practice or grew in the other 21 measures, accounting for 79% of participants’ growth in the spiritual practices category and 72% of participants in the growth in knowledge category.
Table: Average participation in different activities over a six-month period

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>1st Month</th>
<th>2nd Month</th>
<th>3rd Month</th>
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</table>

*See Appendix II for original form.*
Analysis of Figure 3 data:

The purpose of collating these data was to get a sense of the workload demanded by this project, both on participants and on the doctoral candidate, who filled the role of a mentor figure in responding to exercise submissions. As a first point, column five indicates that overall 88% of responses to participants’ exercises were communicated by the doctoral candidate via email; the rest via phone or in person. Having noted this, the trackable word count (that done by email) resulted in the following:

Without adjusting for the dropout participants, the submission average among the group of 20 people was 6,767 words. Removing the dropout numbers, the figure rises to 7,970 words written via email by participants to answer exercises in the project binder. For perspective, a page count can be derived from this by assuming words written in the same font, margins, and double-spaced in which this treatise is submitted. 7,790 words thereby translates to the average participant (who made it to the point of the final evaluation form and the final continuing formation form) turning in a 29-page paper. The lowest amount of writing equated to a 5-page paper; the highest to a 119-page paper. Of the 15 individuals who stayed until the October study day, 69% of the project exercises saw answers submitted to the doctoral candidate.

In response, the doctoral candidate averaged 2,008 words to each participant, and 2,139 words to the 15 individuals who completed the final forms (equating to roughly a 7-page paper to each participant). The doctoral candidate had a low response of one page and a high of 17 pages. Cumulatively, the doctoral candidate communicated to all participants the equivalent of a 137-page paper. This aspect of the project seemed unexpectedly successful. One of the necessary means of attaining a more spiritually-attuned way of formation and more intimate and
substantive interactions than typical didactic instruction, was to have participants strongly engage and work quite hard. This engagement seems to be in evidence for the strong majority of participants, especially in light of the tone notable among the 15 completing individuals in the final evaluation measures and subjective comments (see analyses of Figures 4-7 below).

The average response time of the doctoral candidate was 11 days, with extremes of 3 days average for several participants and 21 and 35 days for two others. Aside from the undesirable extremes of too-long response times, generally, participants gained some response about a week later than the hoped-for timeframe of a formation project of this kind using the benchmark of the desired turn-around of a week for courses run at the Maryvale Institute in England (on which this project’s basic structure is modeled).

Overall exercise completion rates were disappointing. Only six participants completed more than 85% of the exercises. Possible reasons for this state of affairs will be discussed below in the analysis of the next set of figures.
Figure 3: Data from Participants’ Exercises, Doctoral Candidate’s Responses, and Completion Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Participant Exercises Word Count</th>
<th>Response to Participant Word Count</th>
<th>Average Response Time (in days)</th>
<th>% Response by Email vs. by Phone or In-Person</th>
<th>% of Part I Exercises Completed by Participant</th>
<th>% of Part II Exercises Completed by Participant</th>
<th>% of Part III Exercises Completed by Participant</th>
<th>Average % of Exercises Completed by Participant</th>
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Participants who dropped out of the project:

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<th>% Response by Email vs. by Phone or In-Person</th>
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</table>
Analysis of Figures 4-7 data:

These four figures collate data from the final evaluation form stemming from two questions: “How would you rate the adult catechist formation program you just completed?” and “How demanding did you find the work for the course?” (see Appendix II for original form). These two questions offered a number of sub-categories and a 5-point scale for each (see Figures 4 and 6).

For the 15 project participants who completed the final forms, ratings for the seven sub-categories related to the first question were very high, as reflected in Figure 4. The scale extended from a 1 being “Poor” to a 5 being “Excellent,” making the higher rating desirable for this grouping. The highest average was related to how sufficiently participants felt their questions were addressed, receiving an average rating of 4.93 out of 5. The lowest average appeared in the “Guidance given on studying,” yet even this was a 4.55 out of 5. Since most participants struggled to get through all the exercises assigned (and only 69% of exercises on average were completed), it seems surprising that the rating is not lower. Either participants needed more help than they received or the workload of the project was simply too demanding, or both. The circle graph in Figure 5 notes that average ratings were mostly 5s, with some 4s. Mathematically, the average rating among the seven sub-categories was 4.82 out of 5. The general sense from this is that these participants perceived a very good experience in the project in these sub-categories.

For the 15 project participants who completed the final forms, ratings for the eight sub-categories related to the second question lacked significant variation, as reflected in Figure 6. The scale extended from a 1 being “Not Demanding” to a 5 being “Too Demanding” making the mid-range of 3 the most desirable rating for this grouping. The most extreme average towards the
“Too Demanding” end of the scale was related to “Reading assigned beyond the program binder,” resulting in a 3.72. The most extreme average towards the “Not Demanding” end of the scale was related to “Assignments requiring teaching,” resulting in a 3.13. Since the mid-range of 3 was the desirable rating for this grouping, this demonstrated little variance from the median. The circle graph in Figure 7 notes that the average ratings were mostly 3s, with some 4s. Mathematically, the average rating among the eight sub-categories was 3.38 out of 5. The general sense from this is that these participants perceived that this project struck a good balance between being too easy or too difficult in these sub-categories.
Figure 4: Averages of Answers from Final Evaluation Form
Rating the Program
From 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)

Figure 5: Average of Answers from Final Evaluation Form
Overall Course Rating

- 1 - Poor
- 2 - Fair
- 3 - Average
- 4 - Good
- 5 - Excellent
**Figure 6: Averages of Answers from Final Evaluation Form**

**Course Difficulty**
From 1 (not demanding) to 5 (too demanding)

- Program booklet: 3.5
- Extra assigned reading: 3.7
- Required writing: 2.8
- Required teaching: 3.1
- Required assessments: 3.6
- Required spiritual exercises: 3.2
- Course deadlines: 2.9
- Instructor expectations: 3.4

---

**Figure 7: Average of Answers from Final Evaluation Form**

**Overall Difficulty of Course**

- 1 - Not Demanding
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Too Demanding
**Analysis of Final Evaluation participant comments:**

The remaining sections of the final evaluation form asked participants five questions, inviting written responses (see the end of this section for a compilation of their answers). Though the evaluation rating discussed above gave a general impression that participants were pleased and gained from the six-month experience, their subjective answers provided nuance.

The first question sought participants’ views on the main positive features of the program. Many aspects of the project were noted: the spiritual focus, the organization and richness of materials, the reading, the use of art, the need to do exercises, the study day teaching, the personal mentoring, various subjects within the binder, etc. No statistically significant trend seemed to emerge from this; answers were too varied.

The second question sought participants’ views on weaknesses in the program’s design. Here clearer trends surfaced. There were a few things mentioned once by given participants: lack of name tags on study days, needing better guidance on ministerial boundaries, a couple of assignments with ambiguous phrasing, some challenging readings, difficulty with recording technology, etc. Beyond this, two areas of weakness were noted by four or more participants: 1) more guidance was needed on the pace of assignments and when to turn things in, and 2) the project as a whole was too extensive to fit into participants’ lives and available timeframes. These two realities are echoed in the objective completion statistics discussed above, as well as the doctoral candidate’s anecdotal perception in interacting with participants.

The third question sought participants’ views on weaknesses in the how the program was facilitated or taught. There were two things mentioned once by given participants: a late lunch break, and pace of fill-in-the-blanks for the live teaching. Beyond this, the same pattern emerged here from most of those who chose to comment: the project pace and amount of material to read
and respond to was more than they could handle in the context of normal daily obligations.

The fourth question sought participants’ views on future improvements to this kind of catechist formation. There were a few things mentioned once by given participants: confession opportunity during study days, more question-and-answer time, longer availability of ongoing mentorship, discussion opportunity with other participants, small-group work between study days, and more incremental evaluations. Beyond this, once again a significant number of participants used this question to note struggles with the pace and workload of the project. This has clearly arisen as the dominant problem with how this project was designed and executed.

The fifth and final question sought participants’ views on the top three areas of their need and interest as a catechist that were addressed in the program. This request for a “top three” produced a quantifiable breakdown. There were four areas stated by participants that repeatedly drew comments: 1) the project assisted them in growing spiritually – noted eight times; 2) the project assisted them in prioritizing being a witness to others and engaging people personally – noted six times; 3) the project assisted them in growing in knowledge of their faith in a way useful to passing it on to others – noted 13 times; 4) the project assisted them in aspects of methodology in catechetics – noted seven times.

*General analysis relative to stated goals of this project:*

In the opening section of this treatise, the challenge in ministry identified by this project was stated as: “How can a practical, affordable parish formation program, with a strong spirituality component, be developed that specifically addresses the need for preparing adults to catechize other adults?” The purpose of this project was to provide participants with the necessary content, methodological, and spiritual formation equipping them to effectively pass on
the Catholic faith to other adults in a parish setting. It especially sought to make the spiritual formation aspect foundational: giving attention to the development of the participant’s spiritual life and developing teaching methods and skills. Did the project do this? On basic points of the central question of this treatise:

- Was the project practical? Yes. Using the paradigm of mystery, communion, and mission to form the exercises most certainly resulted in application-oriented tasks, attunement to the challenges participants faced in their existing parish communities and states-of-life, and ample opportunity via face-to-face or at-distance to address to the doctoral candidate entirely individualized questions and ideas. This was confirmed in the final evaluations.

- Was the project able to be translated into an affordable parish adult catechist formation program? Likely. If a project of this sort was corrected in terms of its overall timeframe and pace of due dates, it could be offered at little cost. The main cost would be associated with publishing the binder and associated materials (which could be largely mitigated by creating a PDF version rather than a hardcopy) and holding the study days (space costs, if any, and meals). These costs differ little from those required by other forms of on-ground formation.

- Did the project offer a strong, foundational spiritual component? Yes. The structure of the project placed participants in a spiritual context immediately and, through the ways detailed in sections above maintained that focus throughout. This was made possible not only by the many explicit exercises that delved into spiritual formation areas but also by the availability of a mentor figure able to substantively address spiritual formation and study days that modeled witness-based adult teaching and gentle but clear spiritual challenge. Participants’ evaluations clearly indicated that this occurred robustly and the many
spiritually-oriented email exchanges anecdotally point to this as an unequivocal theme of the entire learning experience.

- Did the course specifically prepare adults to teach other adults effectively. Unclear. While the analytical and evaluative tools seem to have provided a window into a strongly positive experience for participants, they do not ultimately allow sufficient clarity to answer the fundamental question of this treatise in a definitive manner. This is perhaps due to several issues: The project’s evaluative window was largely limited to its six-month timeframe. While statistics indicate a positive impact on the spiritual awareness and growth of participants, this may not last or become integral to the way these individuals exercise catechesis towards other adults. A longer view would be needed to assess this. The intensity, pace, and quantity of work required by the project ended up overmatching most participants’ ability to complete all aspects of the exercises. This could be remedied by a longer timeframe or less work within this six-month span, but either way, this issue likely obscured a clearer view of the spiritual impact of the content and the value of the project’s design to deepening participants’ knowledge of the craft of catechetics and ability to wield that craft effectively. Although a few of the tasks in the latter sections of the project binder did provide some insight into participants’ own sense of their ability to catechize, it would also have been very useful to have more direct opportunities to observe participants’ teaching at one or more points after all the content of the project was experienced and absorbed.

For future analysis of a course more attuned to timeframes of participants, it may be possible to add additional evaluative tools more dependent upon longer-term assessment.

Questions that would be useful for such a future structure could include: 1) Can a course of study
of this kind help newer teachers better or veterans better? 2) What is the long term spiritual
benefit of guided exposure to *lectio divina* and certain spiritual masters that this project made a
point of introducing? 4) Aside from the existing spiritual elements in the project, are there other
possible approaches that would be useful? 3) Is the overall approach helpful (mentoring,
substantial written work, study days) vs. evaluating individual exercises that could be tweaked
for greater impact? 4) How can the mentoring component be employed with sufficient quality
control if the project was replicated, such that mentors capable of prudent, attentive spiritual
formation and catechetical guidance could be identified, engaged, and trained to serve in this
context?
CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the evaluation of this project, a number of strengths were identified, and significant weaknesses were found relative to stated goals.

Project elements that seem to be worth retaining include:

- Study days that ensure some element of the formation is face-to-face and spread out such that opportunities to deepen a human connection are possible after initial acquaintance and early efforts at exercises. The character of the second and third study days was markedly different from the first study day; relationships of mutual respect, shared faith, and ministerial friendship were obviously advanced in a manner wholly beneficial to the formation effort. Study day content was taught not only for its instructional value but also as an intentional modeling of good adult formation methodology. In this way, the teaching abilities of the study day instructor seemed to matter greatly in support of the binder’s content. Many participants commented in their evaluations on aspects of that connection.

- Mentoring, in the form of regular exercise feedback, personal to each individual. The character of the feedback (encouraging, spiritually-oriented, respectful, explicitly trusting of the Church and of the working of grace) seemed equally important as the fact of an available mentor figure. Accompaniment of this kind appeared to be critical in helping participants feel motivated to progressively challenge themselves cognitively and spiritually, and to continue at difficult points. How to train mentors, and perhaps remunerate them, is important to consider. Many dioceses pay master catechist who teach in other forms of catechist training and certification courses. At least some of these individuals may already be able to act in the manner of spiritual accompaniment and mentoring.
modeled in this project. For others, additional formation in empathetic listening and questioning, spiritual awareness, and general pastoral attentiveness could be offered.

- Exercises that are incremental and oriented to life experiences, ministerial skill growth, and spiritual development. The exercises could have been less frequent (such as a midterm / final exam structure) or more solely cognitive and objective (return of information taught in the form of multiple choice or other readily ‘gradable’ data). Instead, the manner of the exercise design allowed for strong participant interest in real-world skill development and trial, clearer communication to the mentor figure of personal needs and subjective understanding, and a sense that learning goals accorded more thoroughly with the paradigm of mystery, communion, and mission in a manner that fostered the growth of the whole person.

- Content driven by ecclesial sources – scripture and magisterial texts – that provided strong grounding for participants to understand the mind of the Church, thereby fostering trust in that authority, along with the actual ability to discover the logic of adult formation from key sources rather than solely from second-hand commentaries.

- Content oriented firstly to spirituality and secondarily method and doctrine. This magisterial priority was built into the project design, thereby allowing personal witness, repeated examinations of conscience on specific points, and encouragement to become familiar with and comfortable engaging in spiritual discussions to become the norm in learning how to pass on the faith to other adults.

Project elements that needed improvement or reconsideration include:

- Timeframes for the project as a whole were too demanding for a significant portion of the participants. The amount of content offered in six months was overreaching. This was
less evident in the total amount of reading, which was under a page a day on average, and more apparent in the exercise pace. The number of required exercises seemed reasonable at the beginning to the doctoral candidate and participants alike but the reality proved otherwise. Exercises took substantially longer to complete than anticipated. As evident in the final evaluations, participants rated the difficulty in the midrange, but that did not correlate with actual fulfillment of project expectations for completing all the work assigned.

- The degree that the doctoral candidate was able to helpfully address issues of pace and completion rate as the project unfolded seemed inadequate for participants’ needs. Though participants did not always present their concerns in a timely manner, the problems were evident by the end of the six months in the rates of falling behind.

- Response time on the part of the doctoral candidate to participants’ exercises averaged 11 days over the whole group which, given the demanding pace, was too much of a feedback delay. For some individual participants, the delay was far more problematic, perhaps discouraging regular progress and damaging to morale. In part this was due to a learning group that may have been too large for a single mentor figure to handle well with this kind level of interaction and relationship. A smaller cohort would be better suited to the spiritual focus in particular. In a parish or deanery setting, a master catechist might be more reasonably assigned ten or so learners over a longer period of time. A one-to-ten ratio is perhaps more realistic and may still allow ten leaders of this kind to train 100 or so adult formators in a year or two – a useful gain in dioceses where those who can competently form other adults are relatively rare.
• Deadlines more firmly established at incremental points. The initial freedom given to participants to broadly seek to meet only a mid-point deadline and an endpoint deadline was done to respect the flexibility of adult learning environments. This proved unhelpfully hands-off and even led several participants to note to the doctoral candidate the incentive value of more incremental deadlines – perhaps monthly goals or completion expectations relative to individual sections rather than the defined three parts of the project.

Overall, the project was immensely challenging for the doctoral candidate to execute and deeply satisfying from a formative perspective. The opportunity to relate to such highly substantive and personally transparent learner engagement was profoundly worthwhile. The difference in relationship growth, spiritual impact, and opportunities for witness-based formation was stark when compared with more commonly-encountered didactic learning environments. In short, the model of formation sought in this project was not easy, but its lack of ease was substantially due to elements that made formation more intimate and individual, more spiritual, more ministerially practical, and more attentive to the adult learning model – and thereby hopefully a stronger builder of adult formators for the good of the Church.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Sheed, Frank J. *Are We Really Teaching Religion?* New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953.


Appendix I
Letters, Study Day Plans, and Study Day Handouts

- Initial Invitation Letter
- First Study Day Schedule and Handouts
- Second Study Day Schedule and Handouts
- Third Study Day Schedule and Handouts
January 22, 2016
+ Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

Dear Potential Course Participant,

New Year’s greetings! You’re receiving this letter because I wanted to invite you to be trained in a new way in the ministry of adult formation.

You’re likely aware that I’m a doctoral candidate at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. I am conducting a project study to conclude the degree and I would like to invite you to participate. The University would like a group of 25 to be taken through the course, and you are on my short list of people to ask.

The purpose of this project is to provide participants with the necessary content, methodological, and spiritual formation that will equip them to effectively pass on the Catholic faith to other adults in a parish setting. The project will especially seek to make the spiritual formation aspect foundational: giving attention to the development of each participant’s spiritual life, as well as developing teaching methods and skills. I hope that this study will help you grow spiritually, and contribute to your understanding of best practices in passing on the faith to other adults.

If you decide to participate, you’ll need to read and sign the attached consent form, and then to fill out the enclosed questionnaire pages. After you answer the questions and add any additional comments, please return the signed consent form via email or by mail using my address below. Following this, I’ll contact you, and send you a schedule with the necessary materials for the program.

This questionnaire will begin a plan of study that will last for six months. There is no monetary cost to you. The time commitment will be about one to two hours per week, and require the completion of reading and writing assignments. There will be three Saturday “study days”: one at the beginning of the program in mid March, another about half-way through in June, and a third at the completion of the six months of work in late September. Each of these three Saturday study days will be held in Maryland, and will begin at 9am, finish at 3pm, and include a free lunch.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the plan of study. Taking part in this program of study is your decision; you may quit at any time.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of this course of study. I look forward to hearing from you, preferably before February 15th.

In Christ,

William Joseph Keimig, MPM, MA
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Franciscan University of Steubenville
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wkeimig@franciscan.edu

cc: Susan Timoney, STD
Doctoral Project Director
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Catholic University of America
Washington, DC 20064

Three units are planned for this program, divided into several chapters in each unit, and making use of a program book that directs participants’ study, reading, and assignment submissions. Participants would need to complete about two sections each month for the six month duration of the program:

**Part I** will explore the role of the catechist in the larger context of the evangelization ministry, introduce the central concept of organic and systematic catechesis, and consider the nature of conversion in the context of the liturgical life of the Church, and the importance of a catechist’s spiritual life.
- **Section 1** – The Context of Effective Catechesis
- **Section 2** – The Catechist Echoes What God Has Revealed in Word and Liturgy
- **Section 3** – The Two-Fold Aim of Catechesis

**Part II** will address some of the ways to discover a deeper spirituality suited to catechists, such as forms of devotion to the Word of God, and other helpful spiritual exercises.
- **Section 4** – Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Conversion
- **Section 5** – Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Sacred Scripture
- **Section 6** – Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Yourself

**Part III** will investigate the ways in which good methodology enables a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace, and revisit the catechist’s spirituality through the practice of mentorship.
- **Section 7** – The Ecclesial Method: How Do I Unfold the Life-Changing Truths?
- **Section 8** – Analyzing My Faith: What Must I Teach? What Do They Have to Know?
- **Section 9** – Analyzing My Situation: How Do These Participants Come to Faith?
- **Section 10** – Analyzing Myself: How Do I Become an Excellent Catechist?
First Study Day
Saturday, March 12, 2016  +  St. Vincent Pallotti High School, Laurel, Maryland

8:00am  Mass, St. Mary of the Mills Main Church
9:00am  Breakfast & Introduction to the Program of Study
         The Sacramental Economy
         The Divine Pedagogy & the Christocentricity of Catechesis
12:00pm Lunch
         The Catechism of the Catholic Church
         Dei Verbum & Lectio Divina
3:00pm  Closing Prayer & Departure

To each of the three study days, please bring the following:
• Bible
• Catechism of the Catholic Church
• Notepad (or laptop if you prefer)

A simple breakfast and a full lunch will be provided, at no cost.

Please arrive on time at 9:00am for each study day, or at 8:00am if you wish to go to morning Mass.

Preview of the May 21st & October 1st Study Days
✧ Pedagogy of Revelation and the Response of Faith
✧ The Ecclesial Method
✧ Analyzing Doctrine
✧ Essential Link Between Liturgy and Catechesis
✧ Being Guided & Guiding Souls
✧ Strategies for Discipling Adults
✧ Catechetics and Counseling
✧ Teaching for Conversion
The Sacramental Economy
The History and Accomplishment of Our Salvation and Sanctification
The Dispensation of the Fruits of the Paschal Mystery (CCC 1076-1109)

The Father
send the Son...

The Son
with the Father
send the Holy Spirit...

SOURCE AND GOAL (CCC 1076-1083)
The Father has his “providential plan”, our participation in Trinitarian life.

REDEEMER AND MEDIATOR (CCC 1084-1090)
The Son makes the “providential plan” effective by the saving events of the Paschal mystery. (CCC 1085)

“Through the liturgy Christ, our redeemer and high priest, continues the work of redemption in, with, and through his Church.” (CCC 1069)

“[The liturgy] makes the Church present and manifests her as the visible sign of the communion in Christ between God and men.” (CCC 1071)

“The Church, united with her Lord and ‘in the Holy Spirit’, blesses the Father ‘for his inexpressible gift’ in her adoration, praise, and thanksgiving.” (CCC 1077-1085)

The four reasons for the Incarnation...
(Jesus’ Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension)

1. Christ saves us from sin and reconciles us to the Father.
   (Rom 5:8; 1 Pt 3:18; 1 Jn 3:16; CCC 457)
2. Christ shows us God’s love for us.
   (Jn 3:16-17; Jn 15:13; 1 Jn 4:10; CCC 458)
3. Christ models holiness for us.
   (Jn 15:13-15; Phil 2:5-8; CCC 459)
4. Christ makes it possible for us to be partakers of the divine life.
   (2 Pt 1:5-4; 1 Jn 3:2; 2 Cor 3:18; CCC 460)

... are accomplished in the Paschal mystery.

1. The fullness of revelation — 1 Jn 4:9
   “love made manifest…so that…we can live through him.” (CCC 516)
2. The redemption of mankind and reconciliation with the Father — Eph 1:7
   “redemption…according to the riches of his grace.” (CCC 517)
3. The recapitulation of all creation under the Lordship of Jesus — Eph 1:10
   “the plan to unite all things in him, things in Heaven and on earth.” (CCC 518)

The Holy Spirit
pours out on
the Church...

The Church
makes grace
abundantly
available in the
Sacred Liturgy...

The Sacred
Liturgy
God’s grace
comes to us...

LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE (CCC 1091-1109)
The Spirit effects the “providential plan” in our lives. He makes the life of grace possible for us in the Church.

DISPENSER OF THE MYSTERIES (CCC 774-776, 846, 1088, 1104; Eph 3:9-10, 1 Cor 2:7-9, Col 1:26-27; 1 Cor 4:1) The Church makes all the works of Christ in the events of the Paschal mystery available abundantly in the liturgy and sacraments. She is necessary for our salvation.

SOURCE OF GRACE (CCC 1066-1068)
God’s grace comes to us in the sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments, praying the liturgy of the hours, celebration of the liturgical year, proper use of sacramentals, and many other sources.
Catechesis: Echoing What God Has Revealed

And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. ~ John 17:3

Clarifying Terms for the Catechetical Endeavor...

- **God's Initiative**: God wants to make himself known, to communicate his own Divine life to us and make us capable of responding to him. (see CCC 51-52) God gradually “pulls back the veil.” It is God's method of manifesting a bit of himself, allowing us time to absorb it before he shows a bit more; and the process repeats. God reveals himself gradually by words and deeds, but especially in Jesus Christ, the mediator and fullness of all revelation. (see CCC 53, 65, 73)

- **Our Response**: God pours out grace to us through others in the Ministry of the Word (prophetic light) and through the sacraments (supernatural light). We are called to respond to these enabling graces with a growing faith and trust in God. (see CCC 2, 79, 1785)

- **The Deposit of Faith**: By his revelation, God has answered the questions about the purpose of human life. (see CCC 68) God wants all to be saved, so he arranged that his revelation remain in its entirety and be transmitted to all generations. (see CCC 74)

- **Doctrine/Dogma**: Doctrines illuminate our path to the Father, allow us to know with certainty who he is, what he offers to us, and what he asks of us. (see CCC 89) Dogmas are those doctrines defined in specific theological language by the Magisterium.

- **Magisterium**: The Magisterium is the teaching office of the Church, given to the apostles and their successors, the bishops of every generation in union with the Bishop of Rome. The Magisterium guards and gives the authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in written form (Scripture) or in the form of Tradition. The veracity of its teachings is protected by the Holy Spirit, ensuring the Church’s fidelity to the teaching of the apostles in matters of faith and morals. (see CCC 85)

- **Catechesis**: The apostolic work of passing on the truths of the faith in an organic and systematic way. This is done to make disciples of Christ and to initiate them into the fullness of Christian life through an encounter with the communion of believers and with Christ the teacher. (see CCC 5, 426)

- **Christocentricity**: “At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth... [Catechesis] is therefore to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” (CT 5) “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.” (CT 6)

- **Divine Pedagogy**: We seek to learn the ways of teaching others by studying the ways that God teaches. This will result in a catechetical approach that: 1) gives emphasis on the initiative of God and the primacy of His grace; 2) highlights the dignity of the human person and his liberty to respond freely; 3) takes on a gradual character, recognizing that God revealed himself in stages; 4) accepts the transcendence and power of the Word of God; 5) recognizes the centrality of Jesus Christ; 6) is rooted in person-to-person relationships, life experience, and the value of community; 7) moves the person to abandon himself completely and freely to God and helps the person to discern the vocation to which the Lord calls him. (see CCC 51-53; GDC 139-147)

The Goals of Catechesis can be Summed Up as Understanding” and “Change”

“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.” (CT 20)
Can you see it from a Christocentric Point of View?

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.

~ Hosea 2:19-20 ~

1. I’m not a very religious person.
I don’t want to learn how to love you, my spouse, as fully as I can, I’m happy with a distant marriage.

2. You don’t have to believe everything that Jesus teaches.
I don’t have to trust you, my perfect spouse.

3. I don’t think I can be very holy.
I don’t think I can be a good spouse to you; it’s easier to be in a mediocre marriage than a good one.

4. You can find God out in nature just as much as you can in church.
I can have full union with you, my spouse, anytime I just think about you, even where your body isn’t near me.

5. I don’t like it that I can’t take Communion if I’m not Catholic.
I will not take you as my spouse completely; I will take only the part of you that I want.

6. Jesus isn’t the only way to Heaven.
I don’t need to know and love you to fully celebrate our wedding feast of Heaven.

7. In Confession I don’t have to really commit to stop sinning, I just have to be sorry for my past sins.
In our marriage I can hurt you, and apologize without any intent or promise not to hurt you the same way again.

8. I don’t like to pray; praying is hard for me.
I don’t like to talk with you, my spouse; it’s hard to listen to you tell me how you love me.

9. I go to church on Sundays, but I’m not very interested in volunteering or doing things at the parish.
I’ll go to my wedding, but I don’t want to live in the marriage.

10. I don’t really want to give more than a few dollars to the collection.
I’ll gladly accept immense gifts from you, my spouse, but I don’t want use more than a scrap of those gifts to nurture your children – our children.

Help people to see “tough” questions from the perspective of a spousal relationship with Jesus:

★ Why did God make me free when it creates such a mess for Him and for me?
★ How could evil exist in a universe created by an all holy, all powerful, and all seeing God?
★ Why must there be a Satan?
★ Why doesn’t God just fix everything that is wrong in the world?
★ Why doesn’t God just show Himself to me?
★ What am I saved for? Am I being just restored to what Adam and Eve had?
★ Why does it matter that I was created as a male or a female?
★ What is Heaven going to be like? What about Hell? What about Purgatory?

“The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to His person and the decision to walk in His footsteps.” (GDC 53)
A Catechism as the Faithful Echo

Father...this is eternal, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. There is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

~ John 17:3; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Acts 4:12

How Does God Speak?

The Nature of Revelation

In His creation – The gift of the Laws of Nature and the Natural Law.  
In our conscience – The gift of a sacred place where God and I speak.  
In His Word made living as story and statute – The gift of the Testaments.  
In His Word made living as flesh – The gift of Himself in a specific time.  
In His Word made living as the Church – The gift of authority, to make Him everywhere for all time.

What Does God Need to Say?

For Love and Love Alone

God is the Lord of history – all of history leads up to that overwhelming and utterly simple offer.  
The goal of all things: “The world was created for the sake of the Church.” (CCC 760)

How Does the Church Hold this Word?

The Sacred Scriptures

- Scripture is one book. That book is Christ. (CCC 134)  
- The Church is called to venerate Scripture as it does the Lord’s Body. (CCC 103)  
- Christianity is not a “religion of the book”, but the religion of the “Word” of God. (CCC 108)  
- Sacred Scripture is not a Catechism.

The Sacred Tradition

- Tradition is the only proper context for the written Word of God.  
- The Magisterium’s role – an unchanging faith for a changing world – God’s gift of assurance.  
- Sacred Tradition is not a Catechism.

What Then is the Place of a Catechism?

The Faithful Echo

- All those “cate” words: catechism, catechesis, catechist, catechumen, catechumenate, catechetics.  
- A plan for our goodness – the Father desires us, and desires us to see the pattern of His love.  
- An organic vision – the face of the Father unveils in the gift of His Son.  
- A systematic whole – the hierarchy of truths unfolds as the Spirit loves us and loves in us.

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends.  
Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.  

~ CCC 25
A Catechism as the Faithful Echo

Father...this is eternal, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. There is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

~ John 17:3; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Acts 4:12

How Does God Speak?

The Nature of Revelation

In His _______ – The gift of the Laws of Nature and the Natural Law.
In our ___________ – The gift of a sacred place where God and I speak.
In His Word made living as _____ and _______ – The gift of the Testaments.
In His Word made living as _____ – The gift of Himself in a specific time.
In His Word made living as the _______ – The gift of authority, to make Him everywhere for all time.

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For Love and Love Alone

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Sacred Scripture is ___ a Catechism.

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All those “_____” words: catechism, catechesis, catechist, catechumen, catechumenate, catechetics.
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An ________ vision – the face of the Father unveils in the gift of His ____.
A __________ whole – the hierarchy of truths unfolds as the _____ loves us and loves in us.

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Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love. (CCC 25)
The Catechism of the Second Vatican Council

And they devoted themselves
to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship,
to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.
~ Acts 2:42

A Biblical Structure
from the First Days of Pentecost

Acts 2:42 – The pattern of the four parts of the Catechism
✦ Four sections or pillars that unlocking the Deposit of Faith.
✦ Doctrines are the path to freedom – dogmas are lights (CCC 89).

A Vision that Lifts You to Worship

The Golden Threads of the Catechism

PRIMARY
✦ The Trinity
✦ Jesus – True God and True Man
✦ The Paschal Mystery
✦ The Dignity of the Human Person

SECONDARY
✦ The Primacy of Grace
✦ The Symphonic Nature of the Faith
✦ The Necessity of the Visible Church
✦ The Reasonableness of the Faith

What the Catechism Isn’t
A long-winded answer – it presents only the keys to doctrines, only what is essential.

What the Catechism Is
✦ The “sure norm for teaching the faith.”
✦ The best existing summary of the Deposit of Faith.
✦ Organic – a living presentation of a living faith.
✦ Steeped, marinated in sacred Scripture – filled with “Scripture speak” (CCC 459).
✦ Breathing with both lungs of the Universal Church (CCC 525, 1297).
✦ Good for spiritual reading – the beauty of doctrine shines in this book (CCC 826, 1381).

God is in the Details
✦ New vs. old editions of the Catechism / other modern catechisms.
✦ Organic illustrated – footnotes, cross references and “In Brief” sections.
✦ An incredible glossary and breath-taking indexes.
✦ For the real Catholic geeks – tabs exist for the Catechism just as for the Bible.

There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas.
Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure.
Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open
to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith. (CCC 89)
The Catechism of the Second Vatican Council

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. ~ Acts 2:42

A Biblical Structure from the First Days of Pentecost

Acts 2:42 – The pattern of the four parts of the Catechism
◇ Four sections or ______ that unlocking the Deposit of Faith.
◇ Doctrines are the path to _______ – dogmas are ______ (CCC 89).

A Vision that Lifts You to Worship

The Golden Threads of the Catechism

PRIMARY
◇ The ______
◇ _______ – True God and True Man
◇ The ______ Mystery
◇ The ______ of the Human Person

SECONDARY
◇ The Primacy of ______
◇ The __________ Nature of the Faith
◇ The Necessity of the Visible ______
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What the Catechism Isn’t

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I. FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA ~ Year: 325
Summary: The Council of Nicaea lasted two months and twelve days. Three hundred and eighteen bishops were present. Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, assisted as legate of Pope Sylvester. The Emperor Constantine was also present. To this council we owe the Nicene Creed, defining against Arius the true Divinity of the Son of God (homoousios), and the fixing of the date for keeping Easter (against the Quartodecimans).
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/11044a.htm

II. FIRST COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE ~ Year: 381
Summary: The First General Council of Constantinople, under Pope Damasus and the Emperor Theodosius I, was attended by 150 bishops. It was directed against the followers of Macedonius, who impugned the Divinity of the Holy Ghost. To the above-mentioned Nicene Creed it added the clauses referring to the Holy Ghost (qui simul adoratur) and all that follows to the end.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/04308a.htm

III. COUNCIL OF EPHESUS ~ Year: 431
Summary: The Council of Ephesus, of more than 200 bishops, presided over by St. Cyril of Alexandria representing Pope Celestine I, defined the true personal unity of Christ, declared Mary the Mother of God (theotokos) against Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, and renewed the condemnation of Pelagius.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/05491a.htm

IV. COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON ~ Year: 451
Summary: The Council of Chalcedon -- 150 bishops under Pope Leo the Great and the Emperor Marcian -- defined the two natures (Divine and human) in Christ against Eutyches, who was excommunicated.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/03555a.htm

V. SECOND COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE ~ Year: 553
Summary: The Second General Council of Constantinople, of 165 bishops under Pope Vigilius and Emperor Justinian I, condemned the errors of Origen and certain writings (The Three Chapters) of Theodoret, of Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia and of Ibas, Bishop of Edessa; it further confirmed the first four general councils, especially that of Chalcedon whose authority was contested by some heretics.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/04308b.htm

VI. THIRD COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE ~ Years: 680-681
Summary: The Third General Council of Constantinople, under Pope Agatho and the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus, was attended by the Patriarchs of Constantinople and of Antioch, 174 bishops, and the emperor. It put an end to Monothelitism by defining two wills in Christ, the Divine and the human, as two distinct principles of operation. It anathematized Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, Macarius, and all their followers.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/04310a.htm

VII. SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAEA ~ Year: 787
Summary: The Second Council of Nicaea was convoked by Emperor Constantine VI and his mother Irene, under Pope Adrian I, and was presided over by the legates of Pope Adrian; it regulated the veneration of holy images. Between 300 and 367 bishops assisted.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/11045a.htm

VIII. FOURTH COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE ~ Year: 869
Summary: The Fourth General Council of Constantinople, under Pope Adrian II and Emperor Basil numbering 102 bishops, 3 papal legates, and 4 patriarchs, consigned to the flames the Acts of an irregular council (conciliabulum) brought together by Photius against Pope Nicholas and Ignatius the legitimate Patriarch of Constantinople; it condemned Photius who had unlawfully seized the patriarchal dignity. The Photian Schism, however, triumphed in the Greek Church, and no other general council took place in the East.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/04310b.htm

IX. FIRST LATERAN COUNCIL ~ Year: 1123
Summary: The First Lateran Council, the first held at Rome, met under Pope Callistus II. About 900 bishops and abbots assisted. It abolished the right claimed by lay princes, of investiture with ring and crosier to ecclesiastical benefices and dealt with church discipline and the recovery of the Holy Land from the infidels.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09016b.htm

X. SECOND LATERAN COUNCIL ~ Year: 1139
Summary: The Second Lateran Council was held at Rome under Pope Innocent II, with an attendance of about 1000 prelates and the Emperor Conrad. Its object was to put an end to the errors of Arnold of Brescia.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09017a.htm
XI. THIRD LATERAN COUNCIL ~ Year: 1179
Summary: The Third Lateran Council took place under Pope Alexander III, Frederick I being emperor. There were 302 bishops present. It condemned the Albigenses and Waldenses and issued numerous decrees for the reformation of morals.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09017b.htm

XII. FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL ~ Year: 1215
Summary: The Fourth Lateran Council was held under Innocent III. There were present the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, 71 archbishops, 412 bishops, and 800 abbots the Primate of the Maronites, and St. Dominic. It issued an enlarged creed (symbol) against the Albigenses (Firmiter credimus), condemned the Trinitarian errors of Abbot Joachim, and published 70 important reformatory decrees. This is the most important council of the Middle Ages, and it marks the culminating point of ecclesiastical life and papal power.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09018a.htm

XIII. FIRST COUNCIL OF LYONS ~ Year: 1245
Summary: The First General Council of Lyons was presided over by Innocent IV; the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, and Aquileia (Venice), 140 bishops, Baldwin II, Emperor of the East, and St. Louis, King of France, assisted. It excommunicated and deposed Emperor Frederick II and directed a new crusade, under the command of St. Louis, against the Saracens and Mongols.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09476b.htm

XIV. SECOND COUNCIL OF LYONS ~ Year: 1274
Summary: The Second General Council of Lyons was held by Pope Gregory X, the Patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople, 15 cardinals, 500 bishops, and more than 1000 other dignitaries. It effected a temporary reunion of the Greek Church with Rome. The word filioque was added to the symbol of Constantinople and means were sought for recovering Palestine from the Turks. It also laid down the rules for papal elections.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09476c.htm

XV. COUNCIL OF VIENNE ~ Years: 1311-1313
Summary: The Council of Vienne was held in that town in France by order of Clement V, the first of the Avignon popes. The Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, 300 bishops (114 according to some authorities), and 3 kings -- Philip IV of France, Edward II of England, and James II of Aragon -- were present. The synod dealt with the crimes and errors imputed to the Knights Templars, the Fraticelli, the Beghards, and the Beguines, with projects of a new crusade, the reformation of the clergy, and the teaching of Oriental languages in the universities.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/15423a.htm

XVI. COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE ~ Years: 1414-1418
Summary: The Council of Constance was held during the great Schism of the West, with the object of ending the divisions in the Church. It became legitimate only when Gregory XI had formally convoked it. Owing to this circumstance it succeeded in putting an end to the schism by the election of Pope Martin V, which the Council of Pisa (1403) had failed to accomplish on account of its illegality. The rightful pope confirmed the former decrees of the synod against Wyclif and Hus. This council is thus ecumenical only in its last sessions (42-45 inclusive) and with respect to the decrees of earlier sessions approved by Martin V.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/04288a.htm

XVII. COUNCIL OF BASLE/FERRARA/FLORENCE ~ Years: 1431-1439
Summary: The Council of Basle met first in that town, Eugene IV being pope, and Sigismund Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Its object was the religious pacification of Bohemia. Quarrels with the pope having arisen, the council was transferred first to Ferrara (1438), then to Florence (1439), where a short-lived union with the Greek Church was effected, the Greeks accepting the council’s definition of controverted points. The Council of Basle is only ecumenical till the end of the twenty-fifth session, and of its decrees Eugene IV approved only such as dealt with the extirpation of heresy, the peace of Christendom, and the reform of the Church, and which at the same time did not derogate from the rights of the Holy See.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/06111a.htm

XVIII. FIFTH LATERAN COUNCIL ~ Years: 1512-1517
Summary: The Fifth Lateran Council sat from 1512 to 1517 under Popes Julius II and Leo X, the emperor being Maximilian I. Fifteen cardinals and about eighty archbishops and bishops took part in it. Its decrees are chiefly disciplinary. A new crusade against the Turks was also planned, but came to naught, owing to the religious upheaval in Germany caused by Luther.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/09018b.htm

XIX. COUNCIL OF TRENT ~ Years: 1545-1563
Summary: The Council of Trent lasted eighteen years (1545-1563) under five popes: Paul III, Julius III, Marcellus II, Paul IV and Pius IV, and under the Emperors Charles V and Ferdinand. There were present 5 cardinal legates of the Holy See, 3 patriarchs, 33 archbishops, 235 bishops, 7 abbots, 7 generals of monastic orders, and 160 doctors of divinity. It was convoked to examine and condemn the errors promulgated by Luther and other Reformers, and to reform the discipline of the Church. Of all councils it lasted longest, issued the largest number of dogmatic and reformatory decrees, and produced the most beneficial results.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/15030c.htm

XX. FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL ~ Years: 1869-1870
Summary: The Vatican Council was summoned by Pius IX. It met 8 December, 1869, and lasted till 18 July, 1870, when it was adjourned. There were present 6 archbishop-princes, 49 cardinals, 11 patriarchs, 680 archbishops and bishops, 28 abbots, 29 generals of orders, in all 803. Besides important canons relating to the Faith and the constitution of the Church, the council decreed the infallibility of the pope when speaking ex cathedra, i.e. when as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church.
Further Reading: www.newadvent.org/cathen/15303a.htm
The Work of Vatican II

Four Constitutions

Sacrosanctum Concilium "On the Sacred Liturgy" (Dec. 4, 1963)
The celebration of the Eucharist as the focal point of community and renewal of the liturgy.

Lumen Gentium "On the Church" (Nov. 21, 1964)
The nature of the Church, and the Church as the Light for all people.

Dei Verbum "Divine Revelation" (Nov. 18, 1965)
The Church reaffirms that the deepest truth about God and the salvation of mankind shines out in the revelation of Jesus.

Gaudium et Spes "The Church in the Modern World" (Dec. 7, 1965)
This document presents a conversation with all about bringing the light of Christ to others in the modern world.

Nine Decrees

"Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication" (Dec. 4, 1963)
The role of technology in communicating the Gospel of Jesus.

"Decree on Ecumenism" (Nov. 21, 1964)
The council fathers make it clear that the Church reaches out to people of all faiths.

"Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches" (Nov. 21, 1964)
A document affirming the value of the Eastern Churches, giving principles of support and renewal.

"Decree on the Pastoral Duty of Bishops" (Oct. 18, 1965)
A study of the role of the Bishop as "shepherd" of the community.

"Decree on Priestly Formation" (Oct. 28, 1965)
The priest should be one with a capacity to listen, and to be open to others in a spirit of charity.

"Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" (Nov. 18, 1965)
The apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation; the Church can never be without it.

"Decree on Renewal of Religious Life" (Oct. 28, 1965)
Renewal of life includes a return to the spirit of trust and adaptation to the changed life of our time.

"Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests" (Dec. 7, 1965)
Through the ministry of priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ.

"Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church" (Dec. 7, 1965)
The Church exercises its mission to all humanity by striving to proclaim the Gospel message to all.

Three Declarations

"Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions" (Oct. 26, 1965)
Fostering unity and love, the Church highlights common beliefs among all people.

"Declaration on Christian Education" (Oct. 28, 1965)
Circumstances of our time make it more urgent than ever to educate our young people.

"Declaration on Religious Freedom" (Dec 7, 1965)
The dignity of the human person demands the free exercise of religion in society.

Textual Summaries courtesy of Joe Cece (catholicism.guide@about.com)
The Sure Charism of Truth

What is an Ecumenical Council?

- A universal gathering of Catholic bishops.
- It is the Church’s most authoritative collegiate teaching body.
- This way of shepherding God’s people began very early.
- The first seven councils are accepted by Orthodox and Protestants.

From the Catechism ~ The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an Ecumenical Council. But there never is an ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least recognized as such by Peter’s successor. CCC 884

From the Catechism ~ The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful – who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals... The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter’s successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium, above all in an Ecumenical Council. When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine for belief as being divinely revealed, and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions must be adhered to with the obedience of faith. CCC 891

What is the Role of the Magisterium?

- Not only must divine revelation be preserved and transmitted unaltered down the ages, but also there must be a definitive, authoritative voice to interpret it. Certainly the Holy Spirit would not inspire Sacred Scripture nor preserve the fullness of Sacred Tradition only to have us at odds about its meaning.
- The Second Vatican Council declared that the “task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ” (DV 10). This teaching authority is known as the Magisterium.
- This interpretation forms a historical continuity, setting fixed standards but never itself reaching a final point at which it belongs only to the past. Revelation is closed but interpretation which binds is not.
- The Church does not possess the power to invent new teachings, however, but only to better explain those that have been with us since apostolic times, for the “Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. (DV 10).
- “It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls” (DV 10).

An Analogy for the American Mind

To understand the concept of the Magisterium more fully, an analogy from the realm of civic life might be helpful. The United States Constitution has guided the nation since its founding. However, it is accepted that the Constitution does not interpret itself. Different people can read the same Constitution and come to opposing conclusions concerning what is lawful and what is not. This acknowledgment has made necessary the Supreme Court, to render a final interpretation of the meaning of the Constitution. The Supreme Court is given this power even though it is a fallible body of judges and has altered its interpretation many times. While the interpretation of the Constitution is important in the life of a single nation, the universal salvation of souls is infinitely more so. Just as the Constitution cannot interpret itself, nor is its meaning in every instance inarguable, so Sacred Tradition and its written portion, Sacred Scripture, is not self-interpreting and can, in good faith, be understood in more than one way. Our Lord would not have suffered and died for our salvation without providing the means for us to know with certainty what we must do to be saved. Just as the Supreme Courts seeks to defend the Constitution from erroneous interpretations, so too the Magisterium of the Catholic Church defends the faith: “It is the Magisterium’s task to preserve God’s people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error” (CCC 890). It is in this sense that one speaks of “defending the faith” from false ideas and interpretations. Through the ages the Church has had to answer novel moral questions and erroneous notions about God and man. Through Church councils, papal documents, and episcopal teaching, the Church responds so that the faithful remain rooted in truth.
The Sure Charism of Truth

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A Soul’s that Desires God

I want to believe in God the Father, who loves me as a son, and in Jesus, our Lord, who has poured His Spirit into my life so as to make me smile and thus to bring me to the eternal kingdom of life...

And I look forward to the surprise of every day, in which love, strength, betrayal, and fear will appear, which will accompany me until the definitive encounter with that marvelous face that I continually flee, although I do not know what it is like, but that I want to know and love.

~ Written by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, shortly before he was ordained a priest.
Second Study Day
Saturday, May 21, 2016 ✖ St. Vincent Pallotti High School, Laurel, Maryland

8:00am   Mass, St. Mary of the Mills Main Church
9:00am   Breakfast & Introduction to the Day’s Schedule
         Pedagogy of Revelation & the Response of Faith
         Essential Link Between Liturgy & Catechesis
12:00pm  Lunch
         Analyzing Doctrine
         The Ecclesial Method
3:00pm   Closing Prayer & Departure

To each of the three study days, please bring the following:
- Bible
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Notepad (or laptop if you prefer)

A simple breakfast and a full lunch will be provided, at no cost.

Please arrive on time at 9:00am for each study day, or at 8:00am if you wish to go to morning Mass.

Preview of the October 1st Study Day
- Being Guided & Guiding Souls
- Strategies for Discipling Adults
- Catechetics & Counseling
- Teaching for Conversion
God’s Methodology  
Revelation, Grace, & the Response of Faith

The true light that enlightens every one was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not... But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God... And from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.  
~ John 1:9-13, 16

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<th>It is Supernatural, beyond us</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Nature of Revelation</td>
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<td>That which is necessary for us (Eph 1:9-10)</td>
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<td>That which we would not otherwise know (Col 1:25-27; Jn 1:9-18)</td>
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<td>2) Content of Revelation</td>
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<td>Who God is; what he wants (Ex 3:14; Mt 3:17; Jer 31:31-34)</td>
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<td>His plan (Eph 1:3-10)</td>
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<td>Who we are (Lk 1:30-38)</td>
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<td>His provision for us (Mt 6:28-30; 10:29-30; Gen 22:9-14)</td>
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<td>God through history,“mirabilia Dei” (Acts 7:2-56;Ps 78; 111:2)</td>
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<td>3) Delivery of Revelation...</td>
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<td>Written word (Deut 5:22)</td>
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<td>Witnesses (Jn 21:24;Acts 1:8)</td>
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<th>It is echoed down to every generation</th>
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<td>4)...is accompanied by grace</td>
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<td>God’s own life — sanctifying grace (Jn 3:1-5; 15:4-5)</td>
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<th>It is always accompanied by grace</th>
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<td>5) Human Act</td>
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<td>6) God’s Gift</td>
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<td>Hope set before us (Heb 6:18-20)</td>
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<td>Love – Holy Spirit (2 Cor 6:1-11; Jd 1:20-21)</td>
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Faith: How to Get It

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. ~ Ephesians 1:16-18

Because the work of catechesis is oriented towards conversion, the catechist needs to understand clearly how a person gets faith, grows in faith, and loses faith.

HOW TO GET FAITH (SEE CCC 153-156, 162)

Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man (CCC 162):

- The grace to believe is granted to all — God desires all to be saved (see 1 Timothy 2:4)
- God always initiates and enables belief by his grace — we believe by the authority of God who reveals himself
- Accepting God’s free gift is an act of the will and the intellect — it does not depend upon emotions or feelings
- This belief does not stem from, but always accords with our reason — faith elevates reason
- The sacrament of Baptism bestows the power to believe, the theological virtue of faith — faith is an act above what is natural to us

HOW TO GROW IN FAITH (SEE CCC 94, 162)

Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very Word of God (CCC 157):

- Nourish it with the Word of God (Scripture) and with the works of God (charity)
- Participate in contemplation, study, and prayer with other believers
- Live with a steadfast hope of God’s love, his mercy, and of Heaven
- Root ourselves in the faith of the Church, listen to the voice of those who have the ‘sure charism of truth’
- Beg the Lord to increase our faith

HOW TO LOSE FAITH (SEE CCC 164, 2087-2088)

Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test (CCC 164):

- Continue in the company of non-believers or those who are spiritually lazy
- Nurture an unhealthy fascination with evil, suffering, injustice, and death
- Spurn the commandments and the precepts of the Church
- Cultivate doubt by disregarding revealed truths or fostering objections and anxiety due to some obscurity
- Fail to seek to know God in the Scriptures, in the life of the Church, and through prayer

FAITH AS AN ACT

The human act of responding to God’s gift

- Listen
- Consider
- Assent
- Obey

FAITH AS A VIRTUE

God’s gift nurtured by God’s grace

- Fed by truth, that which we believe
- Theological virtue, by which we believe
- Incremental growth in holiness (sacramental life)
- Seeking understanding (continual study)
Revelation means “to pull back the veil.” It is God’s method of manifesting a bit of himself, allowing us time to absorb it before he shows a bit more, and the process repeats.

The Gospel of St. Luke
5:1-11 Peter is called by Jesus

The Gospel of St. Matthew
8:14-15 Jesus cures his mother-in-law
8:23-27 Witnesses Jesus calming the storm
13:10-15 Hears the “Secrets” revealed to the apostles
14:13-21 Watches Jesus feed five thousand
14:22-33 Walks on water with Jesus
15:29-31 Sees Jesus healing
16:13-20 Recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah
16:21-23 Earns the rebuke “Get behind me Satan”
17:1-8 Sees Jesus transfigured
26:26-30 Is present at the Last Supper
26:69-75 Denies Jesus three times

The Gospel of St. John
20:1-7 Witnesses the empty tomb
21:15-17 Gets reconciled with the risen Jesus
21:18-19 Learns of his eventual martyrdom

The Acts of the Apostles
1:15-26 Replaces Judas with Matthias
2:14-40 Gives the first catechesis
3:1-10 Heals a lame man
4:5-15 Is arrested for his preaching
5:1-11 Confronts deception
6:1-6 Raises up deacons
8:14-24 Exercises authority
10:1-48 Begins ministry to the Gentiles
12:1-17 Is taken out of prison by an angel
15:1-11 Presides at circumcision debate in Jerusalem

The Epistle of First Peter
5:12-13 Writes from Rome
Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for Him. ~ CCC 2560

Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of His Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer. ~ CCC 1692

Liturgical Year – The living memory of the Church
Liturgical Prayers – Rich, concise expression of fidelity and focus
Liturgy of the Hours – Sanctifies time; constant prayer
Lectionary – Making God’s love audible
Eucharist – Making God’s love edible

In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal. ~ CCC 1073

Liturgical Prayers – Rich, concise expression of fidelity and focus

Liturgy is History Made Present

Liturgical Year – The living memory of the Church

Liturgy is Mission Made Present

Liturgical Prayers – Rich, concise expression of fidelity and focus

Liturgy of the Hours – Sanctifies time; constant prayer

Liturgy is Community Made Present

Lectionary – Making God’s love audible

Liturgy is Love Made Present

Eucharist – Making God’s love edible

Liturgy is God Made Present

Eucharist – Making God’s love edible

Introduces worship – Gives a first exposure to sacred space
Informs worship – Offers a compelling vision into the mystery
Inculturates worship – Bestows orthodoxy, authenticated by Mother Church
Invites worship – Points all doctrine to the Story and to the love that never end

Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity. ~ CT 23

Firm and well-thought-out convictions lead to courageous and upright action. ~ CT 22

Liturgy models utterance – Love longs to share itself
Liturgy models sacrifice – Love longs to not count the cost
Liturgy models surrender – Love longs to trust absolutely
Liturgy models dialogue – Love longs to speak to the beloved

Entrance into the Mystery of Christ

FIRST ORDER QUESTIONS:

1) What's the Point?
2) What is Liturgy?
3) What are common errors in seeing this?

Diabolical division between liturgists and catechists in the parish.
Liturgy is 'used,' becoming the servant of catechesis.
Liturgy does not determine your catechetical emphasis.
No books near you, means no exploration of liturgy.
Thinking that people have sufficiently-sticking conversions through teaching only; no vision that prayer and liturgy are the glue of conversion; they stick you to God.

Liturgy models utterance – Love longs to share itself
Liturgy models sacrifice – Love longs to not count the cost
Liturgy models surrender – Love longs to trust absolutely
Liturgy models dialogue – Love longs to speak to the beloved

Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed Himself and given Himself to man. By revealing Himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to Him, and of knowing Him, and of loving Him far beyond their own natural capacity. ~ CCC 50, 52

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LITURGY IS __________ MADE PRESENT
_________________ – The living memory of the Church
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____________ worship – Gives a first exposure to sacred space
____________ worship – Explains signs, gestures, and beauty
____________ worship – Offers a compelling vision into the mystery
____________ worship – Bestows orthodoxy, authenticated by Mother Church
____________ worship – Points all doctrine to the Story and to the love that never ends

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LEX ORANDI
LEX CREDENDE
LEX VIVENDI

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Liturgy models __________ – Love longs to speak to the beloved

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi

Lex Orandi

Lex Credendi

Lex Vivendi

Lex Orandi
SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS
IDEAS THAT HELP INCORPORATE LITURGICAL OR PARA-LITURGICAL ASPECTS IN THE WORK OF PASSING ON THE CATHOLIC FAITH

Suggestions for different subjects for guided meditations:
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the RCIA major Rites
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the Baptismal Rite
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the Confirmation Rite
- Guided meditation on the prayers of the Penitential Rite
- Guided meditation on the prayers of each of the Scrutinies
- Guided meditation on specific Gospel stories, on the Psalms, Wisdom Books, or other passages in Scripture
- Guided meditation on the Creed
- Guided meditation on one of the Eucharistic Prayers
- Guided meditation on other major prayers of the Mass (e.g. the Confiteor, the Gloria, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei, the Communion Rite, etc.)
- Guided meditation on the Divine Praises, or other litanies
- Guided meditation on the Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, or well-known prayers
- Guided meditation on the verses of hymns

Suggestions for places to visit and tour:
The parish church
The parish sacristy
The diocesan cathedral
A monastery or a retreat house
A local shrine or other Catholic worship site
An Eastern Rite Catholic church
A local Catholic historical site
A large or very old Catholic cemetery

Suggestions for different prayer forms:
- Adoration
- Liturgy of the Word (according to various themes)
- Silent prayer time alone
- Silent prayer time in an outdoor setting
- Silent prayer time in small groups
- Silent prayer time in a church or chapel
- Explain and offer Masses for various intentions
- Explain and pray formal Lectio Divina
- Explain and pray the Liturgy of the Hours
- Explain and pray the rosary
- Explain and pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet
- Explain and pray the Stations of the Cross
- Explain and pray the Stations of Light
- Explain and pray the Angelus or Regina Caeli
- Explain and pray a litany
- Explain and pray by laying on hands
- Explain and begin a novena for a specific intention
- Explain and pray a prayer in Latin
- Sing psalms
- Sing hymns
- Sing common Mass settings
- Personal silent meditation on a passage of Scripture or a description of a Biblical scene
- Personal silent meditation on a description of an event in Church history
- Personal silent meditation on a saint’s writing or on the life of a saint
- Personal silent meditation on a prayer text
- Personal silent meditation on a hymn text
- Personal silent meditation on a poem with suitable themes

Suggestions for other creative elements:
- Walk through the Mass
- Walk through the Bible or a specific Gospel
- Walk through a missalette
- Walk through a part of the Liturgy of the Hours (e.g., morning, midday, evening, or night prayer)
- Walk through an examination of conscience
- Demonstrate how to go to Confession
- Demonstrate how to receive Holy Communion, and how to offer a thanksgiving prayer after Holy Communion
- Explain and hold a Jewish Passover Seder
- Explain different Catholic objects (sacred vessels, sick-call crucifix, special statue, medal or devotional item, relic, etc.)
- Virtual computer tour of Catholic places
- Video tour of a major shrine or other Catholic places
- Video of a major papal event
- Movie on a Biblical story, the life of a saint, or Catholic theme

The liturgy is connaturally the center and soul of the whole striving toward perfection in the way in which Mother Church officially proposes it to her children.

~ Fr. Cyprian Vagaggini, OSB in Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy
Analyzing Doctrines: The Truths of the Faith

Remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith; whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith. Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions. ~ 1 Timothy 1:3-7

PREMISE

Foundational truth – this is not always the definition – it must be brief.

✧ Example – sweaters in a chest – warmth and color for my cold, grey winter.

✧ This premise sets the tone, theme, and conclusion – you could wrap up with this. Implies a systematic concept of doctrine to grasp a doctrine in this way.

The premise invites them to consider a doctrine’s purpose relative to other things.

ESSENTIALS

These are the things that you can’t leave to chance that they will get on their own. This is what your witness makes them hungry for.

You are rolling out the wonderful basics – this is the best – let your passion show!

There is a balance demanded in good catechesis:

1) Catechesis – Public revelation that is necessary for salvation.
2) Theology – Reflection upon revelation – you don’t have enough time for this.
3) Private Revelation – Approved by the Magisterium – Its place is limited.
4) Popular Piety – Practices that are normally good and encouraged, but not essential.

You only have time for the keys – the principles that let them unlock this for a lifetime.

You do have time for corrected packaging.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Preparing a catechesis with this in mind forces practicality and application.

✧ You are thinking about them.

✧ You are thinking about the culture – especially in defining terms.

✧ You are not necessarily thinking about what you’ve misunderstood in your journey.

This aspect of catechesis is the key to catch their ear and keep it.

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

What is going to drive this lesson vs. just backing it up (proof-texting)?

Properly understood, all doctrine is grounded in Sacred Scripture.

Gives them a heritage and fits them into the THE STORY.

RELATED DOCTRINES

Creating Cafeteria Catholicism vs. a solid building of faith.

Dogmas are lights along the path of faith – illuminating it and making it secure.

The relationship among doctrines is called the Hierarchy of Truths.

✧ Liturgical Aspect – What are they asked to affirm; What does the Church pray for?

✧ Catechetical Aspect – The threads of the Catechism.

✧ Pastoral Aspect – Who you’ve got that year.

* Blessed Trinity * Jesus as True God and True Man * Paschal Mystery * Church as Essential to the Gospel * Dignity of the Human Person
Analyzing Doctrines: The Truths of the Faith

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- You are thinking about _______________
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- Liturgical Aspect – What are they asked to _______________; What does the _______________ pray for?
- Catechetical Aspect – The _______________ of the Catechism.
- Pastoral Aspect – ___________ you’ve got that year.
1. Consider the differences among the following ways of beginning a statement of truth:
   1) “Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”
   2) “The Church teaches that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”
   3) “We as Catholics believe that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”
   4) “Purgatory is thought to be for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”
   5) “Some in the Church feel that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”

2. For each of the following statements, consider what mistake is being made by the catechist speaking, and what they are confusing with catechesis:
   - “We’ve just read in Matthew 20:18-19 that Jesus predicted his crucifixion to his disciples. As modern scholars tell us, this and similar ‘prediction’ texts from the gospels were put on Jesus’ lips after his death to bolster the belief that he was more than a man.”
   - “You may have heard about Mary’s appearance to five young teenagers at a city just south of here about three years ago. There Mary told us that world events in the past ten years forewarn us of the imminent end of the world, and gave the five teenagers a really beautiful prayer that will shield you from the danger. Here’s a copy of the prayer for you to pray.”
   - “Here’s the correct way to receive Holy Communion, genuflect just before you approach to receive the sacred Host, and receive on the tongue.”

3. Make a list of 15 common Catholic terms (not technical theological terms such as transubstantiation) that are likely to be unfamiliar to a non-Catholic.

4. Look at the catechetical session “Anointing of the Sick and Redemptive Suffering”, and read through the explanation section. Look for and identify on this page where the following elements appear:
   1) The Catholic family story
   2) The three theological virtues
   3) The pillars (four main parts) of the CCC

5. Look at the catechetical session “Mercy and Justice,” and read through the explanation section.
   ✧ In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice are clearly rooted in the life and work of the Trinity?
   ✧ In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice flow from the life and work of Jesus on earth?
   ✧ In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice are dependent on the grace won in the Paschal mystery?
   ✧ In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice help us to understand our dignity as human beings and our vocation to holiness?
   ✧ In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice are related to the work of the Church and its dispensation of sacramental grace?

6. Consider these three doctrines:
   1) Conscience
   2) Resurrection of the Body
   3) The Corporal Works of Mercy
      ✧ What do you think are the four doctrines of our faith most closely related to the ones above?
      ✧ Considering again these same three doctrines, how do they each connect to the sacred liturgy?
      ✧ Considering once more these same three doctrines, how do they each help a believer to understand the way God uses suffering to make a soul more perfect?
Catechetical Methodology: Catechesis that Changes Hearts

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. ~ 2 Timothy 4:1-2

FIRST STEP: PREPARATION

How should I arrange the environment and sacred space for this doctrine?

Here are some of the principal elements of this first step:

- Your relationship with the participants; St. John Bosco said, “Get them to love you and they’ll follow you anywhere!”
- Your arrangement of the environment is to be hospitable and attractive; St. Augustine warned not to let them be too cold or too hot because they will sleep or be distracted!
- Your readiness for them when they arrive — knowing their names, not being preoccupied.
- A “sacred space” ready as a focal point for prayer and attention.
- Your carefully prepared opening prayer, hymn, and perhaps Liturgy of the Word.
- Your sincere love of teaching them.

The purpose of this step is to create the conditions for the deepening of God’s Word in the participants’ hearts. This preparation should help them disengage from other preoccupations and remember how good it is to come to your sessions! With a group you are just getting to know this could take several weeks.

SECOND STEP: PROCLAMATION

What is the statement of truth to ring in their ears? What Scripture will drive this?

The purpose of this step is to clearly proclaim the truth to be taught:

- It does not take long at all, but following a well-crafted proclamation, everything else unfolds more clearly.
- It’s like saying, “This is what we are doing tonight.”
- Therefore, the announcement must not be ambiguous, delivered defensively, or phrased as an apology.
- Your announcement of the truth to be examined, explained, and assimilated comes like that of a herald, boldly and clearly stated but not intended as a confrontation.
- It is somewhat akin to rolling a very interesting object into the midst of a curious crowd.
- **This is the central step of the method.** All of the other steps should relate to this one.

THIRD STEP: EXPLANATION

What essentials of this doctrine will be drawn out verbally? What aspects will be explained in other ways (handouts, etc.)?

Your proclamation signals the opportunity to examine this “good news” which you have just presented:

- In addition to presenting catechesis in a straightforward manner, you can get creative to draw them in: Do some apologetics if appropriate; share your testimony, or a relevant aspect of it; show and discuss various sacred art renderings; study a prayer.
- This is the step in which participants’ questions and doubts need to be honestly addressed. Some questions or concerns may by handled in the small group time, but the explanation portion of a session must communicate an openness to dialogue and questions.
- The goal of the explanation is that, even if the truth reaches to the heights of transcendence, it remains clearly practical and reasonable.
The explanation of a given truth of the faith should not insult intelligence, rather it informs life experience and inspires fidelity to the God who reveals such wonderful things.

Everyone loves a good story — stories of your life, not embellished, are very helpful because you reveal yourself — you don’t want to be just “that teacher.” Reveal aspects of your love for God and the Church; witness to them regularly.

Using stories right from the news, the parish, or the neighborhood gives you a chance to shine the light of God’s love on the participants’ daily experiences.

Lives of saints and holy people are always useful, but make sure you portray them as real and believable — St. Teresa of Avila said there is nothing worse than a “sad” saint!

Do not read to them (except stories or Scripture). Only for those two mediums will anyone stay attentive to reading more than a one-line quotation.

Even though you come across a great quote, even something from the Catechism, don’t read it to them if it is somewhat lengthy. Paraphrase it instead — unless they have the same source and can read along.

FOURTH STEP: APPLICATION

What does this mean for them? So what does it matter that this teaching is true vs. false?

Now you begin to address what this truth means for participants:

- Remember the adult learning model.
- Break into small groups to examine the ramifications of this truth.
- A person you’re teaching might be led (by grace) to think: “If Mary is the Mother of God, and I see that she is, I wonder how Jesus wants me to relate to her in my life?”
- In helping them to apply this insight to their lives you might invite them to compare biological motherhood with spiritual motherhood. Or you might encourage them to create a simple Marian shrine in some room of their home.
- The result is that they might say, “You’ve given me a lot to think about.”
- This step intends to help the truths learned and revealed in the earlier steps bear fruit.

The application portion of a session should also be focused to enlighten participants’ experience, or intimation, of the truth discussed in that session, for example, providing encouragement to and knowledge about a participant’s growing desire to love Mary; or providing persuasive reasons to gradually end a long-term resistance to any real relationship with her.

FIFTH STEP: CELEBRATION

How can we thank God and acclaim his wonderful truth together?

To conclude teaching, it is helpful to give participants a way to respond to the grace that God was giving them while they investigated his truth in the explanation and application time of the session.

A session on Mary might end by encouraging participants to give thanks and praise, or to pray to her for themselves or others. For example: praying the Litany of Loretto or the Memorare; processing to the parish Marian shrine; teaching them how to pray the rosary so that they might do so for a person they’re worried about; or simply asking Mary to help them come closer to her Son.

“The Ecclesial Method” is taken from The Mystery We Proclaim by Msgr. Francis Kelly (Our Sunday Visitor Books, 1999).
Third Study Day
Saturday, October 1, 2016  ♦  St. Vincent Pallotti High School, Laurel, Maryland

8:00am   Mass, St. Mary of the Mills Main Church
9:00am   Breakfast & Introduction to the Day’s Schedule
          Teaching for Conversion
          Strategies for Discipling Adults
12:00pm  Lunch
          Being Guided & Guiding Souls
          Catechetics & Counseling
3:00pm   Closing Prayer & Departure

To each of the three study days, please bring the following:
- Bible
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Notepad (or laptop if you prefer)

A simple breakfast and a full lunch will be provided, at no cost.

Please arrive on time at 9:00am for each study day, or at 8:00am if you wish to go to morning Mass.

Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.
~ St. Mother Teresa
The first critical question of the catechetical endeavor: What’s the point? Proper object of all catechesis is conversion.

What is Conversion?

✧ A turning from your sin — detachment.
✧ A turning to your Jesus — attachment.
✧ An acceptance of your nothingness before God.
✧ A recognition of your high dignity before God.
✧ A dying to your self-interests.
✧ A rising to the interests of God working in you for others.
✧ A lessening of your desire for secular knowledge for its own sake.
✧ A hunger for knowledge of the One you love and all that He has created.
✧ An emptying of all that the world would make of you.
✧ A filling up with God’s zeal to unmake the world’s work in others’ souls.
✧ A dissatisfaction with the greatest dreams the world can offer you.
✧ A satisfaction with the thought of the hour of your death.
✧ An understanding that you will always be a minority, without being peaceful with it.
✧ A decision to engage in spiritual warfare until your last breath.
✧ A stepping out of comfort as an act of hope.
✧ A stepping into suffering for the sake of making your Beloved more loved.
✧ An abandonment of yourself to God’s will at all costs.
✧ A surrender of yourself to love beyond all telling.

Conversion is about finding what you are seeking in the deepest part of yourself, and finding it superabundantly. The result of conversion is peace of soul and zeal of heart.

Live well today. If you are not ready to see God today, then you are not likely to be ready tomorrow. ~ St. Frances de Sales
What is Teaching for Conversion?

✦ *Keeping* the truth personal — Jesus is always the point.
   **TIP:** Teach from Gospel stories frequently.

✦ *Finding* out how they fall in love — Preparing them for a new union, an embrace.
   **TIP:** Teach dialogically, to learn from them and discover them.

✦ *Working* to become a transparent witness — Teach *yourself* with the truth adhering.
   **TIP:** Teach from your own life frequently and with joyful humility.

✦ *Offering* an Act of Faith — Prayer as desire — how much do we burn for their souls?
   **TIP:** Pray before you teach, alone.

✦ *Offering* an Act of Hope — Believe that God can win even the toughest face.
   **TIP:** Pray as you teach, offering everything – every smallest struggle – for their souls.

✦ *Offering* an Act of Love — Pray to have for God’s heart for those you teach.
   **TIP:** Pray after you teach, asking Jesus how you did, and listening to His answer.

✦ *Fostering* experience — Without their own personal encounter with the Gospels they are reduced to understanding Jesus as just another interesting hero.
   **TIP:** Look for ways to expose them to a dramatic experience of God.

✦ *Challenging* with pain — Questions relating to suffering and dying are what cause the reawakening and re-evangelization of those who have abandoned religious practice.
   **TIP:** Teach them to suffer redemptively in the smallest details of their daily life.

✦ *Explaining* reality aggressively — Sublimity (saintliness) and stupidity (sin).
   **TIP:** Teach vigorously from the great saints, and rigorously from the great sinners.

✦ *Remembering* the war — Satan never drops the ball and no sin is frivolous.
   **TIP:** Teach the fine points of how Satan tempts and how to wage spiritual battle.

✦ *Never forgetting* that the Gospel is good news — A call to authentic and radical joy.
   **TIP:** Teach attachment more than detachment.

---

On the evening of Love, speaking without parable, Jesus said: If anyone wishes to love me All his life, let him keep my Word. My Father and I will come to visit him. And we will make his heart our dwelling. Coming to him, we shall love him always. We want him to remain, filled with peace, In our Love! ... Living on Love is not setting up one’s tent At the top of Tabor. It’s climbing Calvary with Jesus. It’s looking at the Cross as a treasure! ... In Heaven I’m to live on joy. Then trials will have fled forever, But in exile, in suffering I want to live on Love. Living on Love is imitating Mary, Bathing your divine feet that she kisses, transported. With tears, with precious perfume, She dries them with her long hair. ... Then standing up, she shatters the vase, And in turn she anoints your Sweet Face. As for me, the perfume with which I anoint your Face Is my Love! ... ~ St. Therese of Lisieux
The first critical question of the catechetical endeavor: ________________?
Proper object of all catechesis is ____________.

What is Conversion?

✧ A turning from __________ — detachment.
✧ A turning to ______________ — attachment.
✧ An acknowledgement of your ______________ before God.
✧ A recognition of your _______________ before God.
✧ A dying to your _________________.
✧ A rising to the interests of God working ______ for others.
✧ A lessening of your desire for __________________________ for its own sake.
✧ A hunger for knowledge of the _______________ and all that He has created.
✧ An emptying of all that ___________ would make of you.
✧ A filling up with God’s zeal to __________ the world’s work in others’ souls.
✧ A dissatisfaction with the ______________ of the world can offer you.
✧ A satisfaction with the thought of the _____________________.
✧ An understanding that you will always be a ___________, without being peaceful with it.
✧ A decision to engage in _______________ until your _________________.
✧ A stepping out of __________ as an act of _____.
✧ A stepping into ____________ for the sake of making your _____________________.
✧ An abandonment of yourself to God’s will ___________.
✧ A surrender of yourself to _____________________.

Conversion is about finding what you are seeking in the deepest part of yourself, and finding it superabundantly.
The result of conversion is ______ of soul and _____ of heart.

Live well today. If you are not ready to see God today, then you are not likely to be ready tomorrow. ~ St. Frances de Sales
What is Teaching for Conversion?

- **Keeping** the truth personal — _______ is always the point.
  **TIP:** Teach from Gospel stories frequently.

- **Finding** out how they ______________ — Preparing them for a new union, an embrace.
  **TIP:** Teach dialogically, to learn from them and discover them.

- **Working** to become a transparent witness — Teach ____________ with the truth adhering.
  **TIP:** Teach from your own life frequently and with joyful humility.

- **Offering** an Act of Faith — Prayer as desire — how much do we ________________?
  **TIP:** Pray before you teach, alone.

- **Offering** an Act of Hope — Believe that ________________ even the toughest face.
  **TIP:** Pray as you teach, offering everything – every smallest struggle – for their souls.

- **Offering** an Act of Love — Pray to have for ________________ for those you teach.
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- **Fostering** experience — Without their own ________________ with the Gospels they are reduced to understanding Jesus as just another interesting hero.
  **TIP:** Look for ways to expose them to a dramatic experience of God.

- **Challenging** with pain — Questions relating to ________________ are what cause the reawakening and re-evangelization of those who have abandoned religious practice.
  **TIP:** Teach them to suffer redemptively in the smallest details of their daily life.

- **Explaining** reality aggressively — ____________ (saintliness) and ____________ (sin).
  **TIP:** Teach vigorously from the great saints, and rigorously from the great sinners.

- **Remembering** the war — ______ never drops the ball and ___ sin is frivolous.
  **TIP:** Teach the fine points of how Satan tempts and how to wage spiritual battle.

- **Never forgetting** that the Gospel is good news — A call to authentic and radical _____.
  **TIP:** Teach attachment more than detachment.

---

On the evening of Love, speaking without parable, Jesus said: If anyone wishes to love me
All his life, let him keep my Word.
My Father and I will come to visit him.
And we will make his heart our dwelling.
Coming to him, we shall love him always.
We want him to remain, filled with peace,
In our Love! . . .
Living on Love is living on your life,
Glorious King, delight of the elect.
You live for me, hidden in a host.
I want to hide myself for you, O Jesus!
Lovers must have solitude,
A heart-to-heart lasting night and day.
Just one glance of yours makes my beatitude.
I live on Love! . . .

Living on Love is not setting up one’s tent
At the top of Tabor.
It’s climbing Calvary with Jesus.
It’s looking at the Cross as a treasure! . . .
In Heaven I’m to live on joy.
Then trials will have fled forever,
But in exile, in suffering I want to live on Love.
Living on Love is imitating Mary,
Bathing your divine feet that she kisses, transported.
With tears, with precious perfume,
She dries them with her long hair. . . .
Then standing up, she shatters the vase,
And in turn she anoints your Sweet Face.
As for me, the perfume with which I anoint your Face
Is my Love! . . .
~ St. Therese of Lisieux
Strategies for Discipling Adults

“... for catechesis to be effective, it must be permanent...” ~ St. John Paul, Catechesi Tradendae, 43

The Work of Making Catechesis...

... Personal – anam cara

“. . . but I have called you friends...”
- John 15:15

♦ You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord in the sinner’s home.

♦ Learn to speak hard truths, with a commitment to seeing individuals.

♦ In parish life, the apostolate of influence eventually calls good catechists to become good listeners.

♦ Start with empathy, respect, genuineness.

♦ Always tell the truth; don’t act.

♦ Recognize in yourself any problematic reactions to the needs of others:
  ♦ I avoid the needs of others.
  ♦ I fear the needs of others.
  ♦ I desire to have people need me and seek me.
  ♦ I feel incompetent to help others.
  ♦ I feel unconfident in helping others.
  ♦ I am fixated on providing solutions as my main task.

QUESTION: To what degree do you have a fear of fishing for pain?

PRINCIPLE: Arrange your job so you have real time to build relationships and meet one-on-one needs.

... Pastoral – shepherd

“. . . and go after the one which is lost...”  - Luke 15:4

♦ You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord in the Gospels.

♦ Learn to speak hard truths, with a demanding patience.

♦ Don’t be surprised when you discover that people are indeed sinners.

♦ Realize that people and situations are always more complex than you think.

QUESTION: What is the one thing that you would like to work on the most in your catechetical personality?

PRINCIPLE: Arrange your sensibilities, tolerances, and reactions to accord with how Jesus would be to those in His care.
“... for though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more ...”
- 1 Corinthians 9:10

- You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord as the silent observer.
- Learn to speak hard truths, with an eye to what these souls really need and want.
- Anticipate common requests and needs – have resources ready to go.
- Be perceived as a servant leader.

**QUESTION:** How much does your sanctity depend on your **curiosity**?

**PRINCIPLE:** Arrange your desires to always be on the hunt to discover people more deeply and meet their daily **anxieties** more competently.

---

“... for us Jesus was to You [Father] both Victor and Victim, and Victor because He was Victim ...”
- St. Augustine

- You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord in the Tabernacle.
- Learn to speak hard truths, with an **expectant** heart and a trusting mind.
- Pray about relationships, and offer **sacrifices** for them.
- Remember that the status quo prevails repeatedly until finally shaken up **enough**.
- Jesus always places us in ministries that call for **painful** growth.

**QUESTION:** How could you more regularly seek this one thing in your **daily** life and prayer?

**PRINCIPLE:** Exemplify Christ’s victimhood as a catechist by expecting to become uncommonly generous in **mortification**.

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“An adherence to the truths which the Lord in His mercy has revealed ... cannot remain abstract and unincarnated.” ~ Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 23
Strategies for Discipling Adults

“... for catechesis to be effective, it must be permanent . . .” ~ St. John Paul, Catechesi Tradendae, 43

The Work of Making Catechesis...

...Personal - anam cara

“. . . but I have called you friends . . .”
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† You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord in the ________________________.

† Learn to speak hard truths, with a commitment to ________________ individuals.

† In parish life, the apostolate of influence eventually calls good catechists to become good ________________.

† Start with ________________, respect, genuineness.

† Always tell the ___________; don’t act.

† Recognize in yourself any problematic reactions to the needs of others:
  • 1 ______________ the needs of others.
  • 1 __________ the needs of others.
  • 1 desire to have people __________ me and seek me.
  • 1 feel __________________ to help others.
  • 1 feel __________________ in helping others.
  • 1 am fixated on providing solutions as my main ____________.

QUESTION: To what degree do you have a fear of fishing for ____________?

PRINCIPLE: Arrange your job so you have ________________ to build relationships and meet one-on-one needs.

...Pastoral - shepherd

“. . . and go after the one which is lost . . .” ~ Luke 15:4

❖ You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord in the ________________.

❖ Learn to speak hard truths, with a ____________________________.

❖ Don’t be surprised when you discover that people are indeed ________________.

❖ Realize that people and situations are ____________ more complex than you think.

QUESTION: What is the one thing that you would like to work on the most in your catechetical ________________?

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“... for though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more...”
- 1 Corinthians 9:10

- You should not be in catechetics if you are not intimate with the Lord as the _____________________________.
- Learn to speak hard truths, with an eye to what these souls __________ need and want.
- Anticipate common requests and needs – have _______________ ready to go.
- Be perceived as a ________________ leader.

**QUESTION:** How much does your sanctity depend on your ____________________________?

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“... for us Jesus was to You [Father] both Victor and Victim, and Victor because He was Victim...”
- St. Augustine

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- Learn to speak hard truths, with an ______________ heart and a trusting mind.
- Pray about relationships, and offer ______________ for them.
- Remember that the status quo prevails repeatedly until finally shaken up ________________.
- Jesus always places us in ministries that call for ______________ growth.

**QUESTION:** How could you more regularly seek this one thing in your _____________ life and prayer?

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“An adherence to the truths which the Lord in His mercy has revealed... cannot remain abstract and unincarnated.” ~ Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 23
The Call to Be His . . .

In the seldom visited, poorly lit corner of Holy Innocents Catholic Church in New York City, is a little known painting called The Return. It is not even three feet tall, and is attached to a column. You have to know that it is there; it’s not visible as you enter the church.

The artist, Charles Bosseron Chambers, was inspired to paint this scene during one of the most horrible periods in history – the immense human tragedy that we now call World War I. This war, occurring a hundred years ago, resulted in the death of 17 million people.

A devout Catholic, the artist had just attended Mass when he noticed a young soldier kneeling at the foot of a large crucifix. He was deeply moved as he silently observed this intimate moment of prayer. The soldier was seeking forgiveness for his sins, just days before leaving to join the French Army. Well over a million French soldiers lost their lives in that war.

The fate of the man in this painting is unknown. Was he a husband? A father? Were his parents still alive to witness their son bravely facing the call to arms and going away into the jaws of such a conflict? We don’t know.

We do know that at this moment in his life he felt the deep need to turn to his Savior. He found a place that met his heart’s need. A place that spoke of tremendous sacrifice. A place that reminded him that a life was given. Given freely. Given to free him, a sinful man. He went to the foot of that great cross, in a darkened church, with a few votive candles flickering near him, marking the offering of others’ prayers. He went there because he understood his need.

Do you understand your need?

As we begin this workshop together, think about your need for a Savior. The whole history of human need, human suffering, and God’s choice to come to the cradle and to the cross, brings us to this moment. Right now. Your soul. Your neighbor’s soul. The constant and grave danger of temptation, your weakness, your sins. And the steadfast offering of God’s immense, all-sufficient, and generous graces. A life for a life. His life, to save yours.

Do you need a Savior?

All of salvation history comes to this question for each human heart, for your heart now, a person who desires to learn to give God more fully to others. Do you see, through the blinding and distracting temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, the one great need you have – for God to have mercy on you, a sinner?

As you consider the great sweep of salvation history, of all the Bible records and the unfolded generations to the present day, allow yourself to really question whether this is more to you than just a history of days gone by and people long past.

“I thirst” Jesus said from the cross (John 19:28). As His life ebbed away, Jesus spoke these two words – to you.

So let us begin this workshop with the words of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who received her First Holy Communion and Confirmation as her nation’s people battled and suffered in the First World War:

“He longs for you. He thirsts for you. . . My children, once you have experienced the thirst, the love of Jesus for you, you will never need, you will never thirst for these things which can only lead you away from Jesus. . . It is very important for us to know that Jesus is thirsting for our love, for the love of the whole world. . . Ask yourself, have I heard Jesus directly say this word to me personally? Did I ever hear that word personally? ‘I thirst.’ ‘I want your love.’ . . . If not, examine yourself: why could I not hear?”
Good Questions

In considering my spiritual walk as the masterwork of my life . . .

How well do I know Jesus from the Gospels?

Who will be my guides, my deep companions in my daily walk?

To whom am I accountable in my spiritual life?

What does it look like for me to listen in earnest?

What sins do I most lament and struggle with – those that steal my peace?

What sins do I least lament and struggle with – those I have made peace with, wrongheartedly?

What do I bring to my confessor about my prayer life?

The school of holiness is always familial.

Jesus My Jesus, show me what is not yours in my life.

How has my childhood fathering and mothering impacted me as a praying adult?

How does God the Father desire to show me His life, my call, and our shared eternity?

What could I leave to follow Him?

What could I gain by following Him?

What would I consider two positive habits I have successfully and intentionally formed in recent years?

What is the best time of day for me to give time to God regularly?

What could a chosen prayer environment at home look like for me?

What does my Sunday look like; it is His day?

What do I do with my soul at bedtime?

How does God the Father desire to show me His life, my call, and our shared eternity?

What could I leave to follow Him?

What could I gain by following Him?

What would I consider two positive habits I have successfully and intentionally formed in recent years?

What is the best time of day for me to give time to God regularly?

What could a chosen prayer environment at home look like for me?

What does my Sunday look like; it is His day?

What do I do with my soul at bedtime?

Does God the Father desire to hide Himself from me?

How does God the Father desire to show me His life, my call, and our shared eternity?

What could I leave to follow Him?

What could I gain by following Him?

What would I consider two positive habits I have successfully and intentionally formed in recent years?

What is the best time of day for me to give time to God regularly?

What could a chosen prayer environment at home look like for me?

What does my Sunday look like; it is His day?

What do I do with my soul at bedtime?

What sins do I most lament and struggle with – those that steal my peace?

What sins do I least lament and struggle with – those I have made peace with, wrongheartedly?

What do I bring to my confessor about my prayer life?

How has my awareness of your call as a father or mother impacted me as a praying adult?

In God’s plan, why do I need a Mother?

What do I need from God in terms of intimacy?

In what ways might prayer offer that intimacy to me?

What do I need from God in terms of toughening?

In what ways might prayer offer that toughening to me?

What is a saint?

What are my most persistent human fears?

What are my greatest fears in considering the idea to explicitly seek to be a saint?

What does it mean to be devout?

What currently is my greatest spiritual weakness; doing God’s will . . .

Quickly? Carefully? Constancy?

Can I sit with the Lord through a few holy hours (constancy), in the near future (quickly) and journal with all these questions in earnest (carefully)?
For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery…

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.

~ Galatians 5:1, 22-23

**Intending His Will – What’s the point of all this?**

*Holiness is perfection in love – the point of every life. The basis of holiness is…*

- Not education or intelligence
- Not social background
- Not giftedness
- Not age level
- Not random

*The basis of holiness is desire for the joy of relationship.*

*Make up your mind to become a saint.*

~ St. Mary Mazzarello

**Intending His Ways – How do I find reliable ways to grow?**

*What are forms of Divine guidance?*

- God’s Word – guidance – as a source of truth and a way of prayer
- God’s Word Made Flesh – example – our highest desire
- God’s Word Made Grace – enablement – liturgical life and sacramental fidelity

*What are forms of human guidance?*

- Parental / spousal
- Pastoral / regular confessor
- Like-to-like spiritual friendship / catechists or other teachers / spiritual advisor / spiritual director
- Reading and other learning / Mary and the saints / yourself – daily examine

*Live well today.*

*If you are not ready to see God today,*

*then you are not likely to be ready tomorrow.*

~ St. Francis de Sales
Intending His Goals – What does it look like to make progress?

Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see. ~ Corrie Ten Boom

- **Love** – If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ~ John 14:23
- **Joy** – These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ~ John 15:11
- **Peace** – I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. ~ John 16:33 – calm confidence
- **Patience** – Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ~ John 14:1-3
- **Kindness** – I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. ~ John 14:18
- **Generosity** – Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. ~ John 15:13
- **Faithfulness** – The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. ~ John 16:27
- **Gentleness** – What I am doing you do not know now, but afterwards you will understand. ~ John 13:7
- **Self-control** – I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ~ John 16:12

One cannot be strong in prayer and also continue to sin habitually.

Either he will give up prayer or he will stop sinning.

~ St. Alphonsus Liguori

Intending His Joys – How can I help others grow?

**Joy cannot be dissociated from sharing. In God Himself, all is joy because all is giving. ~ Pope Paul VI**

- Asking Mother Church what are the reliable sources
- Asking Mother Church what are good questions
- Asking Mother Church what to pray

We are so very much attached to our own opinions and our own judgments, and we esteem them so highly.

That is why so few of us reach perfection.

~ St. Francis de Sales

**Love to be real, it must cost – it must hurt – it must empty us of self. ~ Mother Teresa of Calcutta**

- Being a student of God’s ways
- Being a student of human suffering and diversity
- Being a student of history

Lord, may I have balance and measure in everything, except in love.

~ St. Josemaria Escriva

Do not presume – one of the thieves was lost.

Do not despair – one of thieves was saved. ~ St. Augustine
Catechetics & Counseling

In parish life, the apostolate of influence eventually calls good catechists to become good listeners.

Who are you?

If you want to be a catechist, decide to be a saint.

All we need to be holy comes from Mother Church.

☐ Have you received Baptism?
☐ Do you have access to the Eucharist?
☐ Do you have access to the truth?
☐ Do you have access to the fellowship of believers?
☐ Have you discerned your vocation?

What then is lacking? – Your desire!

When you seek this, people will seek your counsel.

Mother Church shapes our desire by key virtues.

☐ Are you humble?
☐ Are you obedient?
☐ Are you spiritually detached?
☐ Are you an encourager?
☐ Are you generous?

Ask those closest to you: What is most lacking in me?

What is your sure ground?

Catholic catechetics and counseling are distinctive. What you offer is what people really need.

✴ Baptismal virtues of faith, hope, and love are seen as authentic enablers that elevate human nature.
✴ Sacraments are taken seriously as critical to what is possible in the human condition.
✴ Suffering is recognized as a key allowance within God’s providential care.
✴ Our Catholic history mentors us through intimate example.
✴ Prayer is deeply protective and unifying.
✴ Sainthood is real and possible.
✴ It all makes sense.

What can help move you forward?

Jesus always places us in ministries that call for painful growth.

Practice true devotion in your response to Him – Carefully (diligently) Often (frequently) Reliably (quickly)

➢ Study the nature of conversion.
➢ Seek to foster deliberate relationships of service.
➢ Recognize in yourself any problematic reactions to the needs of others:

☐ I avoid the needs of others
☐ I fear the needs of others
☐ I desire to have people need me and seek me
☐ I feel incompetent to help others
☐ I feel unconfident in helping others
☐ I am fixated on providing solutions as my main task

➢ The value of formal training.
➢ The value to you of learning through other accessible forms of counseling.
➢ The use of first names vs. maintaining professionalism.
➢ Where to send people and where not to.

Useful resources:

☑ The Catholic’s Guide to Theophostic Prayer Ministry by Fr. David Tickerhoof, TOR.
☑ Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Counseling by Robert J. Wicks, Richard D. Parsons, Donald Capps, editors.
☑ The Good Listener by Fr. James E. Sullivan.
☑ Goodwin and Guze’s Psychiatric Diagnosis by Carol S. North, Sean H. Yutzy.
☑ Is He Depressed or What?: What to Do When the Man You Love is Irritable, Moody, and Withdrawn by David B. Wexler.

“The truth is that our need to be heard and understood is a powerful, relentless hunger.

It never diminishes. It never goes away.

And how spontaneously we love and bless, with our whole heart, the one who meets this need with tenderness and care.”

~ Fr. James E. Sullivan, The Good Listener
How do you listen?

Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself? ~ Job 15:8
You should not be in catechetics or a counselor of souls if you are not intimate with the Lord in the Tabernacle.
Stepping out of your own world.
Entering into their world.
Sensing their deepest feelings.
Giving an adequate response.

“Deep listening means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever that he or she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in the other’s life, moving about in it without making judgments.” ~ Carl Rogers, American psychologist

Confidentiality and assumed confidentiality
Calmness / matching / checking back.
Look for the thing that is on fire.
If you are going in circles – ask what are you not hearing?
Consider the image of a duck on a pond – calm to the person, but fast working feet (mind) under the surface.

How do you speak?

My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding. ~ Psalm 49:3

You should not be in catechetics or a counselor of souls if you are not intimate with the Lord in the Gospels.

Writing things down and documenting.
Set the frame – welcoming, making the person feel safe.
To pray or not to pray.
Start with empathy, respect, genuineness.
Always tell the truth; don’t act.
Overcome your fear of fishing for pain.
Ask “why” questions vs. “yes” or “no” questions – combine empathy with an open question.
Be willing to “sit in the mess” – empathy / brief responses / manage the anxiety / tolerance for silence.
Boundaries – limited self-disclosure / closeness / long-term parish or personal situations / couples and families.
What does it mean to seek “solutions” – the role of advice – always and only to help the person.
Psychic structure – the status quo prevails repeatedly until finally shaken up enough.
You help form a new structure – without which a person will be spiritually stunted.
A principle of ministry – decide that anything can be repaired in a relationship between two Christians.
Prayers of trust and need – Jesus I trust in you / Mother Mary, be a mother to me now.

Balance ~ My first pastor upon hiring me: “Bill, if you neglect your family in this job, I’ll fire you.”
Trust ~ “Do whatever He tells you.” ~ John 2:5
Appendix II
Intake and Evaluation Forms

- Registration for Adult Catechist Formation Program
- Research Consent Form for Program Participants
- Continuing Formation Inventory: Program Start
- Continuing Formation Inventory: Program Mid-Point
- Continuing Formation Inventory: Program End-Point
- Concluding Evaluation Form for Program Participants
- Compilation of Subjective Answers from Registration Form for Project Participants
- Compilation of Data Submitted on the Concluding Evaluation Form for Program Participants
Registration for Adult Catechist Formation Program

In a formation program there are always people at different levels of theological understanding, and spiritual need. This sheet is intended to give some insight into your desires for this program and your own expectations, along with the basic information needed to begin this program of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name ________________________________</th>
<th>Age _____</th>
<th>Today’s Date ________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address _____________________________________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone (home) ___________ (work/cell) ___________</th>
<th>Email ____________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefered means of contact: ☐ phone ☐ email ☐ either</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current role(s) in parish ministry (if any) ____________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level attained to date: ☐ High School ☐ Bachelors Degree ☐ Masters Degree ☐ Doctoral Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

What is the primary reason you decided to take this formation program?

Have you ever had an opportunity to read any Magisterial documents on catechist formation?

Have you developed the spiritual habit of regular Scripture reading?

Are you familiar with the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina?

Have you taken any other programs or classes in learning to do catechesis for adults?

What do you hope to gain spiritually by the end of this program?

What do you hope to gain in terms of knowledge by the end of this program?

What do you hope to gain in catechetical skills by the end of this program?

[An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer.]

~ St. Josemaría Escrivá
Title of Study: A Model Program for the Formation of Parish Catechists for Adults Using a Unique Training Methodology that Emphasizes Mentorship and Spirituality

Program Director: William J. Keimig

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE: I understand that I have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by William J. Keimig, a doctoral candidate in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. I understand that he is conducting a project study as part of the requirement of the degree.

PURPOSE: I understand that the purpose of this study is to learn how to form catechists for adults in the areas of spirituality, skills, and methodology. The study will also ask me for comments that may help describe my experience as a student. The study will also ask my age and gender. This study is being carried out as part of the requirements of a Doctorate in Ministry. I understand that this study will contribute to understanding best practices in catechist formation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURES: I understand that if I decide to participate, I will be asked to read and sign this consent form, and then to fill out an initial questionnaire that will contain questions about my experience as a catechist and my faith life as a Catholic. It will take about twenty minutes to complete. I understand that this questionnaire will begin a program of study that will last for six months. I understand that there is no monetary cost to me. I understand that the time commitment will be about one to two hours per week, and require the completion of reading and writing assignments that will ask about my comprehension of the material and its impact on my spiritual life as a Catholic and practices as a catechist. I understand that there will be a Saturday “study day” at the beginning of the program, another about halfway through, and a third at the completion of the six months of work.

DISCOMFORTS AND RISKS: I understand that there are no known risks for participating in this study other than the inconvenience of the time in completing the initial questionnaire and six month plan of study. I understand that I may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. I understand that my involvement in this plan of study is completely my choice. I also understand that I am free to discuss any questions or concerns with the program director, and that I can choose not to participate without any penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY: I understand that the initial questionnaire and my assignments responses for the program will be confidential. I understand that the results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identification will not be revealed. I understand that my name will not be identified. The questionnaires will be held in a locked file only accessible to the researcher.

EXPECTED BENEFITS: The project may help improve the training of catechists by contributing to knowledge about best practices in this method of catechist formation.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE STUDY: I understand that I can stop and end my participation at any time, or change my mind about starting, all without any penalty or loss of benefits otherwise available to me.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS: The only cost is the time required to fill out the initial questionnaire (about twenty minutes), and the time commitment of one to two hours per week for the plan of study that follows.

CONTACT: William J. Keimig, 301-848-1652 (cell) or 740-283-6754 (office) or wkeimig@franciscan.edu

RESEARCH SUBJECT RIGHTS: I have read or have had read to me all of the above. William J. Keimig has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told of the risks or discomforts and possible benefits of the study. I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled. I understand that any information obtained as a result of my participation in this research study will be kept as confidential as legally possible. The results of this study may be published, but my records will not be revealed unless required by law.

NOTE: If I have any questions about the conduct of this study or my rights as a subject in this study, I have been told I can call The Catholic University of America Office of Sponsored Programs at 202-319-5218. I understand my rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Name: William J. Keimig
Program Director’s Name

Participant’s Signature
Program Director’s Signature

Date: January 22, 2016
William Keimig (ID: 4311353)
15000 Schall Road
Accokeek
MD 20607
USA

DEPARTMENT
Theology and Religious Studies

PHONE
301-203-9293

EMAIL
wjk1863@comcast.net

INSTITUTION
The Catholic University of America

EXPIRATION DATE
08/25/2015

SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH
Stage 1/1
08/25/2014

REFERENCE ID
13785172

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<th>SCORE</th>
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For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator
LEARNER
William Keimig (ID: 4311353)
15000 Schall Road
Accokeek
MD 20607
USA

DEPARTMENT
Theology and Religious Studies

PHONE
301-203-9293

EMAIL
wj1863@comcast.net

INSTITUTION
The Catholic University of America

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH: This course is for investigators, staff and students with an interest or focus in Social and Behavioral research. This course contains text, embedded case studies AND quizzes.

COURSE/STAGE: RCR/1
PASSED ON: 08/25/2014
REFERENCE ID: 13785173

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<thead>
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Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT TOPIC: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL
(Please Type)

Candidate’s Name: William J. Keimig  Student ID#: 2326643

Having been admitted to candidacy for the Doctor of Ministry degree on 6/2011 (specify date) the above candidate wishes to submit the following topic for the approval of the School:

A Model Program for the Formation of Parish Catechists for Adults Using a Unique Training Methodology that Emphasizes Mentorship and Spirituality

Supporting information concerning the treatise and the projected research (methodology, purpose, contribution, etc.) is submitted on the attached pages(s).

The topic will be investigated and the treatise prepared under the direction of the following persons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name, Highest Degree Held</th>
<th>Faculty Rank, Department and/or School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Director: Susan Timoney, S.T.D.</td>
<td>Assistant Adjunct Professor, STRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader: Emanuel Magro, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Catechetics, STRS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Member (if any):

The proposed research does not involve human research subjects.

X The proposed research does involve human research subjects, and requires full committee review. (note appropriate subparagraph), and requires verification only.

Proposed by: By signing, the candidate acknowledges that he/she has read and complied with STRS instructions for preparing a DMin proposal.

William J. Keimig
Degree Candidate

Approved by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director of D.Min. Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Director of D.Min. Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Recommended by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee for the Protection of Human Research Subjects (if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cy to: Dean of Graduate Studies

Form Revised: 12/20/2013
EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE

William J. Keimig                                      August 25, 2014
Principal Investigator's Name                          Date

School of Theology and Religious Studies               Theology and Religious Studies, Religion &
School                                                   Culture

Department

A Model Program for the Formation of Parish Catechist for Adults Using a Unique Training Methodology
that Emphasizes Mentorship and Spirituality

Title of Study

Susan Timoney, S.T.D.

Faculty Advisor (if Student PI)

FWA00004459

The project is exempt under the following category of 45 CFR 46.101:

1. (b) (1) X Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or b) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instruction techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

2. (b) (2) ☐ Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

3. (b) (3) ☐ Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under (2), if: a) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or b) federal statue(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

4. (b) (4) ☐ Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

5. (b) (5) ☐ Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of the department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: a) Public benefit or service programs; b) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under these programs; c) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

6. (b) (6) ☐ Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, a) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or b) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Certification as Exempt:

Secretary of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects
CONTINUING FORMATION INVENTORY – PROGRAM START

This inventory is not intended to indicate any failings, but to help your spiritual life grow. You will be asked to fill out this page at the beginning of the program, halfway through and at the end.

Means of Continuing Formation in Prayer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you regularly pray in some way (daily, weekly)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you practice any Catholic devotions (rosary, etc.)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you do a daily examination of conscience?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you regularly pray for those you are closest to?</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you pray the Liturgy of the Hours?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Do you do a daily or weekly holy hour?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you do Lectio Divina (prayerful reading of Scripture)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you try to attend daily Mass when possible?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you looked for a formal spirituality that fits you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you under the guidance of a spiritual director?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means of Continuing Formation in Knowledge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you read the Bible with any regularity?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read the Catechism with any regularity?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read spiritual works with any regularity?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read vocational books (how to parent, etc.)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read the lives of the saints?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you listen to Catholic educational CDs/tapes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you watch Catholic educational DVDs/videos?</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you watch Catholic television (such as EWTN)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you subscribe to any Catholic magazines/papers?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you attend conferences to learn your faith better?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you attend any parish educational/prayer offerings?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other means by which you engage in continuing your Christian formation:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Please describe the types of religious education you received as a child/teenager:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

In a few words, please describe your understanding of what it means to be an adult in the Faith:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
CONTINUING FORMATION INVENTORY — PROGRAM MID-POINT

This inventory is not intended to indicate any failings, but to help your spiritual life grow. This sheet is to be used at the mid-way point in the program.

**Note:** Questions are to be answered relative to your status at the start of the program.

### Means of Continuing Formation in Prayer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has your regular pray increased (daily, weekly)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you practice any Catholic devotions (rosary, etc.)?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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### Means of Continuing Formation in Knowledge:

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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other means by which you engage in continuing your Christian formation:**

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

What is the most useful learning experience you’ve had in this program so far?

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

In a few words, please describe your understanding of what it means to be an adult in the Faith:

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
CONTINUING FORMATION INVENTORY – PROGRAM END-POINT

This inventory is not intended to indicate any failings, but to help your spiritual life grow. This sheet is to be used at the conclusion of the program.

Note: Questions are to be answered relative to your status at the start of the program.

Means of Continuing Formation in Prayer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has your regular pray increased (daily, weekly)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you practice any Catholic devotions (rosary, etc.)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you do a daily examination of conscience?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you regularly pray for those you are closest to?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you pray regularly with any particular person(s)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you pray the Liturgy of the Hours?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you do a daily or weekly holy hour?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you do Lectio Divina (prayerful reading of Scripture)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you try to attend daily Mass when possible?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you looked for a formal spirituality that fits you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you under the guidance of a spiritual director?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means of Continuing Formation in Knowledge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you read the Bible with any regularity?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read the Catechism with any regularity?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read spiritual works with any regularity?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read vocational books (how to parent, etc.)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you read the lives of the saints?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you listen to Catholic educational CDs/tapes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you watch Catholic educational DVDs/videos?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you watch Catholic television (such as EWTN)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you subscribe to any Catholic magazines/papers?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you attend conferences to learn your faith better?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you attend any parish educational/prayer offerings?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other means by which you engage in continuing your Christian formation:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What is the most useful learning experience you’ve had in this program?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

In a few words, please describe your understanding of what it means to be an adult in the Faith.
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
### Concluding Evaluation Form for Program Participants

To be used by program participants in addition to the final Continuing Formation Inventory

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**NAME**

**DATE**

### How would you rate the adult catechist formation program you just completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of the written program material</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of the study days</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance given on studying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions addressed sufficiently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness to you in gaining doctrinal understanding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness to you in gaining catechetical skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness to you in your spiritual formation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How demanding did you find the work of the course?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Demanding</th>
<th>Too Demanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written program booklet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading assigned beyond the program booklet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments requiring writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments requiring teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments requiring assessing others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments requiring spiritual exercises</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadlines for the course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your sense of the program instructor’s expectations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please comment on the main positive features of this program for you.

Please comment on any weaknesses you feel are present in the program’s design.

Please comment on any weaknesses you feel are present in how the program was facilitated / taught.

What suggestions do you have for future improvements to this kind of catechist formation?

What are the top three areas of your need and interest as a catechist that were addressed in this program?

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**PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THIS FORM TO ADD ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS. Thank You!**
Compilation of Subjective Answers from Registration Form for Project Participants

Note: 1) Answers are organized by evaluation question; initials of participants identify the responder.
2) Responses from the five individuals who did not submit concluding evaluation forms are shown separately at the end of the responses to each question.

A. WHAT IS THE PRIMARY REASON YOU DECIDED TO TAKE THIS FORMATION PROGRAM?
   PC: To help draw my brother to Christ; to draw nearer to Christ.
   EC: I have always grown under Bill’s teaching and I am hungry for more.
   JD: I am often faced with challenges in expressing my thoughts in a clear, concise way. At times I have difficulty responding to questions about the faith (on the spot) without emotion—hindering the response.
   CF: As an aid to help me share my faith with those coming to RCIA and as an aid in teaching at my third-order Carmel.
   BG: It feels like the next step to take in my journey.
   MG: To learn to be a better teacher and to be able to share my faith.
   CH: I like studying, especially Bible and/or Catholic studies, although I think this is more like small group dynamics.
   LH: Personal growth and formation and to assist you in this program.
   JJ: I would like to grow deeper in my own spirituality and become more skilled at imparting God’s message of love to win souls.
   MM: I am always looking for ways to enhance my spirituality not only for myself and my relationship with Jesus, but also to help others as they journey.
   RP: To start, I felt it would be a very good opportunity to better my current spiritual life (prayer, Scripture). I have a struggle with finding time (or taking more time) to pray. Also, I hope through this program I can be a more effective catechist.
   JR: I love our faith and have participated in various forms of parish ministry through the years, but have not received any formal catechetical training. I recently retired and am looking forward to participating more fully in adult faith formation activities in our parish. My hope is that participation in this adult catechist formation program will help me to better serve our parish community, and that I will grow in faith and gain in confidence.
   KR: I love learning about the Catholic faith, sometimes surprised at what I’m learning and other times, pleasantly reminded of wonderful nuggets of knowledge. Having a structured program to participate in facilitates my commitment to the “magis” [I think this is the word!] I want to receive.
   PW: Interested in participating in this project.
   DZ: My passion that all can come to know, love, and serve our Lord and Savior.
   TC: Two reasons: (1) Increase my passion for the faith (I don’t sense I am passionate at all); (2) I sense God calling me, though for what purpose I don’t know, maybe this is it!
   MH: To be a better catechist through personal development.
   MA: I hope it will form me as a better catechist.
   SR: Saint John Paul II said to teach the faith in “new” ways. I want to follow that directive.
   MR: My current schedule proves difficult to participate in the weekly formation programs, something I really want to do.
B. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN SPIRITUALLY BY THE END OF THIS PROGRAM?

PC: A clearer vision of God, a greater love of Our Lord, and better equipment to serve Him with.

EC: Growing closer to Jesus, Trinity, Man, Church, and his people.

JD: Closer connection between “head” knowledge, “heart” knowledge and my faith. Deeper appreciation of God’s presence in my life.

CF: A new awareness of how to grow deeper in my spiritual life.

BG: Stronger idea of the Lord’s plan in my life.

MG: To grow closer to God by sharing my faith.

CH: Imagine I would learn more about how the Church would guide us in personal and/or small group prayer.

LH: Greater focus and improved interior life.

JJ: A closer walk with the Lord and greater ability to share His message.

MM: I would hope to develop a greater appreciation for my Catholic Faith and a deeper understanding of God’s love for me. All this should help me be a better evangelizer.

RP: I hope to gain a more consistent and stronger spiritual life where Scripture and prayer are deeply rooted in my daily life. I hope that stronger spiritual life will help me as a catechist, giving me a strong, consistent focus on why I teach — “For Him and His children.”

JR: I pray that I will grow in abandonment to God the Father, in friendship with Christ our Savior, and in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit. I would also like to identify a spiritual director and enter into the process of spiritual direction.

KR: A deeper relationship with the Father.

PW: Grow in knowledge of passing on the Father to others. Help to be a fruitful mother and wife to grow in my closeness with Jesus.

DZ: To grow closer to God.

TC: I don’t know. Can spiritually be measured? Are there “degrees” of spirituality?

MH: Rekindling of spiritual fervor. I’m currently fighting feelings of lukewarmness.

MA: To have a greater fire for reaching out to souls.

SR: I would like to work on my personal holiness through prayer, formation, deeds of mercy, and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

MR: How to develop and [i.e., “a”] more regular prayer life to grow closer to the Father by means of prayer and devotions that I don’t currently practice.

C. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN IN TERMS OF KNOWLEDGE BY THE END OF THIS PROGRAM?

PC: Better insight into “student” mindset and needs; better appreciation into what can/should be presented and how.

EC: Current teachings and reframing of classics to air in sharing the faith.

JD: I have struggled with recall of knowledge learned previously. I hope this course will provide a reinforcement/reminder of information previously learned as well as additional new information/insight to enable me to better respond.

CF: What tools to use, in order to help others grow in their faith, perhaps a better knowledge of using Scripture.

BG: Stronger sense to show others the fullness of the Catholic Church and how it brings you into a more loving relationship with God.

MG: How to evangelize with success.
CH: Increase knowledge re CCC and/or encyclicals or dogma.

LH: Continued faith formation.

JJ: More knowledge of the Church and her teachings.

MM: Well, this is one of those “you don’t know until you know” questions. I know there are resources out there to help me understand my Catholic Faith better. Quite honestly, many things I try to read are often over my head. I listened to your first talk on “The Sacramental Economy” and your delivery and explanations are very instructive, easy to follow and understand. If all the talks follow this same pattern I hope to gain useful information for my own edification and to share.

RP: I hope to gain knowledge of [the] most effective ways to teach. I hope to gain a knowledge of [the] best ways to prepare and present.

JR: It is a privilege and a responsibility to present the truths of our faith to other adults, to join in discussion with them, and to share in their journey of faith. [Not transcribed: a long description of leading a women’s study of St. Therese of Lisieux.] Based on this recent experience, I hope to gain in knowledge of the development of faith through adulthood, and the ways in which faith can be enflamed and nourished in response to the various passages of life. I also hope to gain clarity and direction in terms of which aspects of the faith are most essential for adult education, especially for those adults who lead active faith lives but are searching to deepen their relationship with the Trinity and their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.

KR: I’m open to receiving more and hope that this program goes beyond the elementary basics.

PW: Methods of passing along catechetics to others as an RCIA teacher, etc.

DZ: To learn effective evangelization skills.

TC: An understanding of what adult formation is all about, and the confidence/courage to excite others about Catholicism.

MH: Better knowledge of historical and Scriptural references in order to be able to better answer inquirer questions, and improve presentations.

MA: An understanding of how to teach the faith to adults.

SR: Catechesis and evangelization: how they work together, how they impact my life, how I can affect others in what I do and say.

MR: Just understand the faith more. Learn different avenues of education that can help with the previous question.

D. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN IN CATECHETICAL SKILLS BY THE END OF THIS PROGRAM?

PC: Ability to articulate the complex teachings of the Church in ways that are meaningful to the “student”/people around me . . . and to myself (!) in specific situations.

EC: Whatever I don’t currently have.

JD: Ability to draw from my faith and knowledge to be able to share with others on a deeper level.

CF: A better understanding of how to approach people who are at a different level of faith than I am.

BG: Since I’ve never been a formal catechist, any skills gained would be beneficial.

MG: Teaching skills and best approach to teaching.

CH: More confidence.

LH: Improved communication and sharing.
JJ: How to be a good teacher and witness for the Lord.
MM: I hope I will become more familiar and comfortable with all the Church teaches so that my catechetical skills will become second nature to me. I want to help others trust in and fall in love with God and help them understand his mercy.
RP: The skills I hope to gain are knowing how best to prepare through prayer, Scripture. I hope to be able to present effectively, not just imparting [i.e., imparting] knowledge, but the love of Christ. I hope to gain a knowledge of different catechetical skills.
JR: As noted previously, I have not gone through a formal catechetical program, and therefore am especially excited about the study of methodology within the context of the catechist’s spirituality.
KR: A way to engage any adult in the discussion of the Catholic faith.
PW: Learning to see what methods of study work best for absorption of catechetical material. “How can we teach better,” methods, techniques.
DZ: To be more effective with helping others grow in their faith.
TC: The ability to present the genius of Catholic faith in a logical and compelling way (easy to relate to and understand).
MH: As above, but additionally to be more confident in explanations in order to avoid misspeaking and causing misunderstanding. (Avoid being a heretic ☺).
MA: A greater understanding of the Maryvale methodology. Confidence in teaching.
SR: We have enough poorly formed Catholics in the world. I want our RCIA catechumens to be formed properly. I need to learn how to do that better.
MR: How to better explain my faith. How to better pass along the knowledge of Scripture.
Compilation of Data Submitted on the Concluding Evaluation Form for Program Participants

Note: 1) Italicized text is introductory to the verbatim text of each participant. 2) Answers are organized by evaluation question; initials before responses identify the responder.

A. PLEASE COMMENT ON THE MAIN POSITIVE FEATURES OF THIS PROGRAM FOR YOU.

PC: The main positive features of this program for me were having to think and write out answers to questions, excellence of catechesis, and clarity of presentations.

EC: The main positive features of this program for me were excellent content flowing from a passionate soul for Jesus, and glad I didn’t have to be an active catechist.

JD: The main positive features of this program for me were clarity of instruction could not be better, and able to illustrate points so vividly and draw me to greater understanding.

CF: The main positive features of this program for me were learning how to lean into trusting in God completely, and how to become a true echo, allowing God to guide and teach through myself.

BG: The main positive features of this program for me were learning to prioritize teaching/learning.

MG: The main positive features of this program for me were I loved the structure and now that it is over I can see how it all fits together.

CH: The main positive features of this program for me were learning the basics (organic vs. systematic catechesis; foundational truths; ecclesial method) as well as the emphasis on catechesis as accompaniment of another.

LH: The main positive features of this program for me were course content, reading, and having to write responses.

JJ: The main positive features of this program for me: Being online made it so do-able. The material provided in our notebook was well put together and so plentiful, very rich. It was exciting material to read. Having this in hand and well organized makes for great reference and further reading and study. The three Saturdays were well spent to instruct, enrich our study as well as some fellowship. The teaching embellishment on top of the ‘fill in the blank’ was very interesting, helpful and rounded out what it is to be a catechist. The use of art in instruction was well done. It is an important teaching tool that was evident in the material.

MM: The main positive features of this program for me were that it helped me to understand that this relationship is not just for me but necessary in order to share my faith with others. The other positive feature is learning how to systematically share our Deposit of Faith. When and how to teach.

RP: The main positive features of this program for me were 1) availability of materials via email and audio; 2) guidance in practical Catechist spirituality; 3) hands on practical Catechist spirituality; 4) great tools to incorporate into RCIA; 5) Ecclesial method stands out but many others; application of lessons – requirement in exercises to discern and develop practical application of lessons.

JR: The main positive features of this program for me were the excellent mentorship provided by the instructor, both spiritual and catechetical, was a source of great learning and growth.

KR: The main positive features of this program for me were [that] there’s a fullness to the content that challenges one to grow and keep growing.

PW: The main positive features of this program for me were the study days, critical in
understanding expectations and direction.

**DZ:** The main positive features of this program for me were understanding the value of asking the right questions at the right time.

### B. Please comment on any weaknesses you feel are present in the program’s design.

**PC:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include difficulty with the technology to listen to [a] recording [of the first classroom session which] I missed, and at first I was confused about how/when to turn in homework.

**EC:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include emphasis on “burning out for Christ” scared me when people don’t know how to set healthy boundaries and just want to please and be needed, etc. Little thing: name tags on study days.

**EC:** Written between this and the following item: Little Flower “everything is grace.”

**JD:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include [that] the program [was] geared more for a person able to focus completely on program. Unfortunately, I am in a place where (mentally for life) [I] wish I could put [a] hold button on life & take [the] course again with you, Bill.

**CF:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include finding some of the reading a challenge. I don’t feel there are any weaknesses per se.

**BG:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include some of the questions were a bit ambiguous.

**MG:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include [that it was] very demanding with assignments—I would not have been able to work and do the program time.

**CH:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include [left blank].

**LH:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include no specific weaknesses to address. Well organized, variety of sources.

**JJ:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include finding it a bid hard to pace myself—where I should be and when in order to finish in the time allotted by the instructor.

**MM:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include [did not comment].

**RP:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include 1) maybe shorter time periods between material due dates—i.e. material due every month—so as not to get too far behind (summer was a killer).

**JR:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include the time frame, which could be extended perhaps to include a fourth study day so that the pace of study is stretched out. The program content is excellent!

**KR:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include only 3 class times, perhaps 4 or 5 may be helpful so as to have time for questions and answers as well as some discussion.

**PW:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include [the] workload in the last section [was] a bit too much for full-time working parents.

**DZ:** Weaknesses I feel are present in the program’s design include [that] it required a lot more time than I expected it would.

### C. Please comment on any weaknesses you feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught.

**PC:** Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include none noted. This was a great class; I wish more folks from my parish could have been here; nice facilities and food.
EC: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include today’s 50-minute late lunch breaking time without notice [is] tough for people with problems physically.

JD: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include distractions are every day—sick children, ailing parent, & normal parenting life made it difficult to maintain [the] pace I needed to stay on top of the course work. Intend to finish what I can for deadline & return to it at a slower pace—when I was not able to be thorough.

CF: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include none. The facilitation was always excellent. I always felt enriched and encouraged.

BG: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include, nothing jumps out at this time.

MG: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include none.

CH: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include [left blank].

LH: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include occasionally, it was difficult to stay on course filling in blanks. But Bill was a very good and engaging instructor. The material was well presented using a variety of techniques.

JJ: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include [that] the amount of time was greater than I had anticipated.

MM: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include [same comment as the previous one.]

RP: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include none. 3 sessions were wonderful.

JR: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include as noted above, my only wish is that the pace of study & absorption of the material might be lengthened. Bill is an excellent teacher!

KR: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include [none given] Well taught.

PW: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include [none given]. Overall excellent!

DZ: Weaknesses I feel are present in how the program was facilitated/taught include [that] I felt the course was beyond my skill set but was worth the extra effort.

D. What suggestions do you have for future improvements to this kind of catechist formation?

PC: I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation an opportunity for confession at one session, and more time for Q&A.

EC: I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation [that the facilitator] offer to do this for spiritual directors (especially lay people in schools in Clearwater, Lanteri-Denver, etc.)

JD: [The space allowed for suggestions for future improvements was used for the previous response.]

CF: I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation [that] perhaps [opportunities] to communicate with the other students.

BG: I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation maybe the overall length could be expanded.

MG: I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation: I would have loved
to do the optional things but didn’t have time.

**CH:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* [that] it would be good to continue to have access to the mentorship in the month[s] & years ahead as I try to implement the teachings.

**LH:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation:* might there be a way of small-group work between formal sessions.

**JJ:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* perhaps to indicate a half-way mark because the time needed varied with the material presented and the exercises required. I tried to look ahead to gauge this. The fact that life sometimes gets in the way is a given so I appreciate the extension of time to finish. Flexibility if needed is good to do.

**MM:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* letting participants know the amount of time to be fully engaged.

**RP:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* more regular due dates for assignments, and make [an] evaluation requirement to turn in one week after course.

**JR:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* none.

**KR:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* [no reply].

**PW:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* perhaps an extra study day and only one assignment per chapter.

**DZ:** *I suggest for future improvements in this kind of catechist formation* the text in the booklet was written at a level that was beyond my usual reading. I found that if I took it to adoration, it was easier to understand. This required more effort and at times repeated reading to grasp the concepts. It was difficult to do the computer portion during adoration so I frequently didn’t have the right books or materials with me to finish the chapter. Since I am not in a formal catechetics program—it was difficult to answer some of the exercises. The program really stretched me but it was worth the effort. You did an excellent job and are a fabulous teacher, mentor, and soul mate. I feel blessed to have this opportunity and pray for the success of your program. I hope to follow through with the additional readings after the class.

**E.** WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE AREAS OF YOUR NEED AND INTEREST AS A CATECHIST THAT WERE ADDRESSED IN THIS PROGRAM?

**PC:** *My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are* 1) how to direct almost any conversation to Christ, 2) growing in holiness, 3) realizing that conversion can be slow and I only need to do by bit and let God do the rest.

**EC:** *My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are* 1) “majoring in the majors” content approach, 2) personal growth and holiness critical, 3) where to go for more in-depth work.

**JD:** *My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are* 1) ability to reach young adults, teens, provide clear witness that draws interest & calls/invites others to seek (deepen) relationship with God, 2) honing of personal touch when engaged in personal encounter with someone with whom I am not in relationship already, 3) how do you share the joy in those “encounters.”

**CF:** *My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are* 1) Teaching with authority, 2) Finding the right resources and how to use them, 3) How to gain self-knowledge and be encouraged.

**BG:** *My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are* 1) methodology, 2) Scripture, 3) I don’t need to know all the answers, just where to find them.

**MG:** *My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are* 1)
the 5 steps really helped, 2) I loved the way conversion happens! 3) [none stated].

CH: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are [left blank].

LH: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) technique, 2) approach, 3) information to address voids in my knowledge.

JJ: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are [the following is verbatim, with no division into by the writer into three items:] I enjoy and appreciate historical writing and God’s history is tops. I have a better understanding of the doctrinal truths and all those responsible from the get go to keep the golden thread of truth alive and flourishing in the church so our inheritance is intact. The valuable Deposit of Faith is to be defended at all costs. The use of art makes me want to research and use it more. The wealth of contributors, writings and extensive materials available that was included is excellent and can be well utilized in the future by me or any student.

MM: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) This course helped me feel more confident in my teaching of the Faith. It showed me what needs to be included and what should be left out. It taught me the importance of teaching organically so that a participant’s journey can flow and grow systematically (1 Cor 3:2). 2) The course helped me become more comfortable with the CCC. 3) The course helped me realize how much I already know about my faith but now gave me the tools to organize my beliefs.

RP: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) continued spiritual formation of Catechist, 2) commitment of Catechist to the student’s formation, 3) emphasis on focus on spiritual needs/growth of students.

JR: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) personal spiritual growth and mentorship, 2) in-depth study of the CCC, 3) practical tools for catechetical service.

KR: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) the idea of teaching with the particular catechumens in mind, their personalities and life stories, 2) the sharing of one’s own life experiences with the Lord and the humility and courage this takes; 3) the idea of team teaching and how this works effectively.

PW: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) more knowledge about CCC and other resources, 2) to understand the main “doctrines” of the Church, 3) to better explain the “Divine Revelation” process through Sacred Scripture.

DZ: My top three areas of need and interest as a catechist addressed in this program are 1) what are the essentials, 2) ways to encourage openness to growth, 3) don’t give up hope… stay the course in incremental growth.
Appendix III
Participant Binder

• Part I: The Holy Spirit Leads the Church to Pass on the Faith to Every Generation
  The Catechist Accepts a Role in the Ministry of Conversion
  • Section 1: The Context of Effective Catechesis
  • Section 2: The Catechist Echoes What God Has Revealed in Word and Liturgy
  • Section 3: The Two-Fold Aim of Catechesis

• Part II: The Father Reveals Himself in the Son
  The Catechist Seeks to be Formed as an Instrument of Conversion
  • Section 4: Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Conversion
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  • Section 6: Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Yourself

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  • Section 7: The Ecclesial Method: How Do I Unfold the Life-Changing Truths?
  • Section 8: Analyzing My Faith: What Must I Teach? What Do They Have to Know?
  • Section 9: Analyzing My Situation: How Do These Participants Come to Faith?
  • Section 10: Analyzing Myself: How Do I Become an Excellent Catechist?

1 Appendix III is an intact binder that was used for participants in the project, and reflects the pagination of the exact original version given to them, just as the various handouts in Appendix I and II are unpagedinated for the same reason.
The Father’s Work:
Learning the Craft of Adult Catechesis
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ANGELUS & REGINA CAELI TRADITIONS
Honoring the Incarnation & the Resurrection Daily

The Angelus is a short practice of devotion in honor of the Incarnation of the Lord traditionally repeated three times each day, morning, noon, and evening, at the sound of a bell. The devotion derives its name from the first word of the prayer, Angelus Domini nuntiavit Maria (The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary). The earliest vestiges of the prayer go back to Pope Gregory IX, in 1239, with an ordinance enjoining that a bell should be rung for the salutation and praises of our Lady at certain times of the day. In some monasteries the tradition may have begun as early as the tenth century.

The Angelus prayer had become general throughout Europe in the first half of the fourteenth century, with even church tower bells throughout entire cities being used to call the faithful to prayer. It was first recommended and indulged by Pope John XXII in 1318 and again in 1327. An indulgence of 100 days for each recitation, with a plenary once a month, was granted by Pope Benedict XIII in 1724.

In the sixteenth century are recorded suggestions that the Resurrection (celebrated by the Regina Caeli) should be honored in the morning, the Passion at noon, and the Incarnation (celebrated by the Angelus) in the evening, since the times correspond to the hours at which these great Mysteries actually occurred. To some such practice we no doubt owe the substitution of Regina Caeli for the Angelus during the Easter Season. The Passion is now honored in the Catholic Church by the special devotion of the Stations of the Cross (which was developed by the Franciscans Order in the thirteenth century).

Regina caeli laetare (Queen of Heaven, rejoice) are the opening words of the Eastertide anthem of the Blessed Virgin. The Alleluia serves as a refrain. Of uncertain authorship, the anthem has been traced back for certain to the twelfth century, and may have been written as early as the seventh century by Pope St. Gregory the Great. It was in Franciscan use in the first half of the thirteenth century. By the order of Pope Nicholas III (1277-80), the Regina Caeli replaced other Marian prayers in the churches of Rome. From that point, the devotional prayer spread throughout the Catholic world. The anthem has often been set to music by both ancient and modern composers.

Angelus

| L. | The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, |
| R. | and she conceived of the Holy Spirit.     |
|    | Hail Mary . . .                           |
| L. | “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,         |
| R. | Be it done unto me according to thy word.”|
|    | Hail Mary . . .                           |
| L. | And the Word was made flesh,              |
| R. | and dwelt among us.                      |
|    | Hail Mary . . .                           |
| L. | Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,        |
| R. | that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. |

Let us pray.
Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Regina Caeli

| L. | Queen of heaven, rejoice,               |
| R. | Alleluia.                              |
| L. | For He whom thou didst deserve to bear, |
|    | Alleluia.                              |
| L. | has risen as He said,                  |
| R. | Alleluia.                              |
| L. | Pray for us to God,                    |
| R. | Alleluia.                              |
| L. | Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary,    |
|    | Alleluia.                              |
| R. | For the Lord is truly risen,           |
|    | Alleluia.                              |

Let us pray.
O God who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of thy Son, Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech thee, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, his Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.
### Abbreviations for Books of the Bible

Following, in alphabetical order, are the abbreviations used for the books of Sacred Scripture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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Abbreviations for Magisterial and Other Documents

A note on citations: because non-Magisterial documents are extensively referenced by page number, and Magisterial documents such as CCC, CT, and GDC are extensively referenced by paragraph number, in every case before the numerical reference “p.,” “pp.” is used to make it immediately clear when numbers do not refer to paragraphs.


PCB  Paterna cum Benevolentia, On Reconciliation within the Church, Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, 1974.


Prayer for Your Studies

The following prayer by St. Thomas Aquinas is recommended to you as you begin each section of this program of study. It is concluded by the intentions of Pope St. John Paul II, offered to the Church at the close of his primary document on catechesis.

診

Grant, O merciful God,
that I may ardently desire,
prudently examine,
truthfully acknowledge,
and perfectly accomplish
what is pleasing to you,
for the praise and glory of your Name.
Amen.

~ St. Thomas Aquinas ~

診

I invoke on the catechizing Church
the Spirit of the Father and the Son,
and I beg him to renew catechetical
dynamism in the Church.
May the Virgin of Pentecost obtain this for us
through her intercession.
May the presence of the Holy Spirit,
through the prayers of Mary,
grant the Church unprecedented enthusiasm
in the catechetical work that is essential for her.
Thus will she effectively carry out,
at this moment of grace,
her inalienable and universal mission,
the mission given her by her Teacher:
“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

~ Pope St. John Paul II ~
Catechesi Tradendae, 72-73
O Jesus, I rest in you. All our fortitude is on loan. Trust always in your God. He does not lose battles.

- St. Josemaria Escriva
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Introduction

_For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth._
~ John 18:37

Welcome!

Since the time of the apostles, people have shared their faith in Jesus Christ person-to-person, generation-to-generation, in an unbroken chain. In every generation the Lord calls his people to pass on what they themselves have received: “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you” (1 Cor 11:23). If at any point in history just one or two generations had neglected this Christian calling, millions of people today would not know Jesus and his message of salvation. We might be among them.

As catechists for adults, we are part of this generation’s link in that unbroken chain of faith. Handing on the faith is a deeply personal endeavor. Those we invite towards a deeper love for God and his Church will one day invite others. Generations yet unborn may one day trace their spiritual lineage to our — your — efforts. So let us begin.

Specializing in Being a Catechist of Adults

This program will be most helpful if you are currently involved in adult formation in some way, for observing and doing are the best ways to learn. If that is not possible, the exercises in each section provide an accommodation to this.

The three parts for this program of study are each divided into a number of sections. Each section contains several boxed sections marked For Your Portfolio. There is also a concluding boxed piece at the end of each section called Checking Your Progress, which sums up the main content of the section. At the end of each of the three parts, the exercise entitled Wrapping Up must also be completed. Your work for each section is gathered into a portfolio that you send to the program director via email.

When you look at the binder for this program, you will see that each section is also interspersed with brief exercises for you to complete. In most cases you will not be sending in these for comment (you may if you wish to do so), but they are the heart of this program of study — it is invaluable to do these exercises. The brief amount of writing asked of you in some of these exercises is key to the learning methodology used in this program. The effort needed to send your thoughts through a pen or a keyboard is immensely formative in helping your understanding to grow and your memory to be deeply engaged. It is one of the main ways in which you can know that you have understood what has been taught. Even though most of us do not find it easy, having to write things down consolidates our learning. It is also intended to give you a great amount of practice in a vital catechetical skill: expressing yourself succinctly, but with significant substance.

Sending what you have written to the program director for comments allows you to be secure in your learning as you receive feedback and advice from a person experienced in catechesis and with an advanced knowledge and understanding of the Church’s faith. All of the elements of this program of study have been designed to work with you to enable you to enjoy a rich and satisfying experience. So it will be a matter of trusting the program and the approach that you are being asked to follow. It depends on you to use all of the elements offered. Remember — you and more than welcome to ask for help at any point, and for any reason!
Aims of this Program

By the end of this three-part plan of study:

- You’ll recognize the immense potential of a well-formed catechist to serve the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.
- You’ll have gained a command of how vital it is that catechesis serves the on-going work of conversion that God’s grace makes possible.
- You’ll have acquired a practical appreciation for how catechesis serves the liturgical life of those being formed.
- You’ll have gained the skills to catechize well in an adult context, to judge what must be taught, and to dynamically pass on the faith as a living witness to the reality and to the mystery of God’s saving love.
- You’ll have grown substantively in your relationship to the Triune God through scriptural prayer and discipleship under some of the Church’s great spiritual masters.
- You’ll desire even more deeply to do that which you are called to by the Lord: to become, by his grace, absolutely the best catechist you can be.

Structure of the Program

There are three parts in this program of study, covering ten sections. Each section is designed to build upon its predecessor, and therefore things should be done in order.

- **In Part I** (Sections 1-3) we will explore the role of the catechist in the larger context of the evangelization ministry, introduce the central concept of organic and systematic catechesis, and consider the nature of conversion in the context of the liturgical life of the Church, and the importance of a catechist’s spiritual life.

- **In Part II** (Sections 4-6) we will address some of the ways to discover a deeper spirituality suited to catechists, such as forms of devotion to the Word of God, and other helpful spiritual exercises.

- **In Part III** (Sections 7-10) we will investigate the ways in which good methodology enables a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace, and revisit the catechist’s spirituality through the practice of mentorship.

Structure of the Three Parts

The ten sections of this program of study have commonalities that are useful to know. Each begins with a passage from Sacred Scripture that is intended to set the tone and be the first “word” to you. The learning goals for the section are then laid out. The various elements of each section are headed in boldface. Concluding most of these is an exercise that refers you to read brief selections from one or more resources and then asks you to practice various skills, demonstrate understanding, or consider aspects of your own parish situation or your own spiritual life. Again, the writing asked of you in these exercises is the essential key to attaining the learning aims of each section.

At the end of each section is a **Case Study** and summary exercise called **Checking Your Progress**. Following this, there is a boldface heading called **Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It**, designed to dovetail with and deepen the learning goals of each section. This further reading is not required, but you will find it *greatly* useful for your formation in understanding, ongoing conversion, and spirituality.

After section six an optional meditation is added to this further reading. A quotation box concludes each section, containing an inspiring word from saints and blesseds known for their catechetical work in the life of the Church. These quotations are offered for their own sake, but also to point you to our elder brothers and sisters in the faith who might serve as catechetical mentors for you, both as exemplars of the craft of catechesis during their time on earth and as Heavenly intercessors.
Necessary Resources

For this program you’ll need the following (beyond the provided binder and a few other handouts):

✧ **Bible, Catholic Edition**
  (available from many publishers or online at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/r/rsv)

✧ **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 2nd edition**
  (available from many publishers or online at www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm)

Optional Resources

The following resources are not required, but are desirable, especially for the portion at the end of each section entitled Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It:

✧ **General Directory for Catechesis** (GDC) by the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy
  (available online at www.intratext.com/x/eng0159.htm)

✧ **Introduction to the Devout Life** by St. Francis de Sales
  (available online at www.catholicity.com/devoutlife/)

✧ **The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis** by Petroc Willey, Pierre de Cointet, and Barbara Morgan
  (available for purchase at www.ignatius.com)

Terms

For the most part, terms used in this program are defined in the text itself. If you come across terminology for which you would like a fuller explanation than the text provides, there are two suggested resources:

✧ For general Catholic terms and theological terms, you should look in the back of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 2nd edition. The glossary is very thorough and references you back to paragraphs in the *Catechism* if you need further explanation.

✧ For terms not addressed in the CCC, you can go to the following website, at which you will find an online version of Fr. John Hardon’s excellent *Modern Catholic Dictionary*:
  www.therealpresence.org/dictionary/adict.htm

Learning from Your Reading

The active study of texts is greatly rewarding, but you often need a few techniques to get started. For example, read with a pencil or pen in hand. You may find it helpful to mark the text in the following ways:

✧ Underline points or ideas the author is indicating as important. One indication that a point is being emphasized is that the words or ideas recur; another is that the point is written about in a particularly arresting way.

✧ Mark any words or ideas when you are not certain as to their meaning. You’ll want to check the meaning of these — check any footnotes, or a biblical dictionary to help understand them. Probe the text; make it a habit to ask “Why?” of passages.

✧ You’re trying to understand why the writer has written what you are reading. Experience shows that these points are often some of the richest veins for exploration. Be patient and keep questioning.

✧ Mark any points which strike you, where the words seem to “leap off the page” or are especially pertinent for you at the moment; you may want to return to these in prayer, or even memorize the lines.

It is an ancient practice to read passages out loud, and it can assist you in focusing on the words and their meaning. Practicing the skill of learning and discovering the faith ever more fully will inspire those we teach to do the same.
Our Lady, Mother of Catechists,
Help of Christians, Pray for Us
Part I

The Context of Effective Catechesis


The Catechist Echoes What God Has Revealed in Word and Liturgy


The Two-Fold Aim of Catechesis

Accordingly, while not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church’s pastoral mission that have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or that spring from it. These elements are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching through the kerygma to arouse faith, apologetics or examination of the reasons for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic and missionary witness.

~ Pope St. John Paul II ~
Catechesi Tradendae, paragraph 18
Section 1
The Context of Effective Catechesis

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee.
And he found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”
Philip found Nathaniel, and said to him,
“We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote,
Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”
Nathaniel said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”
Philip said to him, “Come and see.”
~ John 1:43-46 ~

Considering the above passage’s invitation to “come and see,” let’s take the first step . . .

Celebrant: What do you ask of God’s Church?
Candidate: Faith.
Celebrant: What does faith offer you?
Candidate: Eternal life.

With this exchange, beautiful in its simplicity, an unbaptized adult enters into a formal relationship with the Church, the first public step of the process of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) that will culminate with the sacraments of initiation — Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist — most usually received at the Easter Vigil.

This Part I (Sections 1-3) explores the role of you as a catechist in the larger context of the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion in ministry to adults. The adult catechesis that occurs in the RCIA process is a paradigm for how the Church asks all forms of passing on the faith to focus on the conversion of heart in each individual. In this program of study, we will occasionally be using understandings found in the RCIA process to shed light on how to catechize adults in any circumstance.

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

➤ You’ll recognize the centrality of grace in the work of conversion.

➤ You’ll understand several critical terms to be able to work with Church documents on catechesis.

Exercise 1-1
The Four Dimensions of Our Life in Christ

Turn to your Bible and look up Acts 2:41-42. Adult formation is to prepare someone for Christian life in all its aspects. Note especially the four dimensions of Christian life mentioned in verse 42. These became very important to the Church as you will see later.

The first aspect, or dimension, to be mentioned is the “teaching of the apostles.” Remember that Christ told the apostles to go and make disciples, baptizing “and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (see Matt 28:19-20). Adult formation, then, includes leading people into being able to continually learn from the teachings of the apostles that have been preserved and passed on in the Church. We will see that adult formation includes teaching the truths of the
Catholic faith as they have been preserved and passed on from generation to generation for 2,000 years to those who choose to “come and see,” as Philip said to Nathaniel.

The second dimension mentioned concerns life together, fellowship. Adult formation includes helping people understand how to live in “fellowship,” that is, in Christian charity; the moral teaching of the Church is all about this.

The “breaking of bread” is mentioned next, indicating that Christian life includes dedication in going to Mass. We will see in due course how indispensable the liturgy and sacraments are, especially the Eucharist, for living as a Christian.

People also need to be initiated into Christian prayer, that is, a direct relationship with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity with whom we will spend eternity.

Learning to live fully as a Christian needs help in each of these four dimensions. Take a moment before continuing to reflect upon how your own life is nourished by each of the four dimensions of the Christian life.

The Greek word used by St. Paul for “passing on” these four dimensions, or teaching, is catechein and the Church continues to use this as the root of many of its terms. Let us be sure we know these:

- **Catechist** — the person communicating the faith of the Church.
- **Catechesis** — the action of communicating the faith of the Church.
- **Catechism** — a book of the content of the faith to be communicated.
- **Catechumen** — a person preparing for Baptism and receiving the teaching of the faith.
- **Catechumenate** — the period of initiation for catechumen.
- **Catechetics** — guidelines for communicating the faith of the Church.

We can now return to the opening dialogue of the first liturgical ritual of the RCIA process, “The Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens”:

Celebrant: *What is your name?*
[The candidates acknowledge that they are present.]
Celebrant: *What do you ask of God’s Church?*
Candidate: *Faith.*
Celebrant: *What does faith offer you?*
Candidate: *Eternal life.*

**The Gift of Faith**

The candidate asks firstly for the gift of “faith” from “God’s Church.” It is important to realize from the beginning that this faith, from God’s Church, has two inseparable sides to it like the two sides of a coin or a piece of paper. The Church often refers to these as *fides quae* and *fides qua*; that is, what we believe (*fides quae*) and also the internal capacity by which we believe it (*fides qua*).

How can we understand this? Well, let’s think of it in this way: you can, on the one hand, know a piece of music; on the other hand, you can practice playing this piece of music; these are two distinct but linked things. You cannot play a piece well unless you know it *and* practice it. Both are involved in the learning process. So with faith: we need to be taught what it consists of, and we also need to receive in Baptism the inner capacity to practice in life what we have been taught. Capacities need to be exercised and they can develop, in a similar manner to being able to play music.

Faith from God’s Church is faith in Christ Jesus. Jesus said “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Faith therefore includes the *truth* of what we believe and also the *way* of practicing it in order to *live* in Christ.
Only with a full understanding of what the Church includes when she speaks of “faith” will we know how to encourage people to love God with all their heart, all their soul and all their mind (see Matt 22:37). We will then be able to help them to find eternal life, the everlasting happiness that God longs to give us in giving us his Son: “God so loved the world, he gave his only Son that all who believe in him might have eternal life” (John 3:16).

The Movement of the Holy Spirit

Before going any further there is an extremely important point about which a catechist needs to be utterly convinced and certain, that is, adult formation is above all the work of the Blessed Trinity. As catechists, we join the Trinity in the Church to assist those who seek the living God to find him. It is the Holy Spirit who opens hearts and strengthens wills, not us. It is the Holy Spirit who helps someone “enter the way of faith and conversion.” This single “way,” with the two aspects “of faith and conversion,” now needs some consideration, and especially the way in which knowledge of the faith of the Church can lead to a desire to turn and conform one’s life more and more to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Conversion

We considered “faith” earlier. Let’s now look at the word “conversion.” This involves a response to God’s call, so that we turn from something and towards something else. People who begin the process of “turning from” step out as an act of hope that there must be “something better.” Conversion is an action of the whole person, a response to the Father’s desire for us and the grace he gives us to desire him in return. The task of the catechist is to assist the Holy Spirit’s transforming work in each soul. God calls all Christians to continual conversion and transformation in every aspect of their lives.

Today, unfettered license, pleasure, sensuality, and materialism are promoted and praised in a popular culture from which all sense of sin has disappeared. Many people are increasingly disillusioned with what the world calls “freedom.” There is dissatisfaction with the greatest dreams the world can offer. People long for something more: they want to know the meaning and purpose of life. This longing may be accompanied by pain, confusion, or despair, and ignorance of what the object of their longing might be. They are aching and weak, in need of understanding for what, or better, for whom they long. Man has a darkened intellect, a weakened will, and a disordered set of desires that are the joint inheritance of all humans from Adam and Eve. Conversion to Christ, then, cannot begin as a human act; it is, first of all, a work of the grace of God (see CCC 1432).

Long ago, a seeker who had spent over twenty years in confusion and sexual license exclaimed, when he found the desire of his heart, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (St. Augustine, Confessions, 1.1). When people turn towards the Church for that “something better” for which they long, they are actually turning towards a Person.

Conversion is intimately connected with the act of coming to faith, which “is a gift from God [that] can only be born in the intimacy of man’s heart as a fruit of that ‘grace [which] moves and assists him’ and as a completely free response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and turns it towards God” (GDC 55).

Hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ proclaimed, or seeing it lived out through the life of a committed disciple, may inspire an individual to experience an initial faith in Jesus. Such an individual may come to the Catholic Church asking, “Will you help me find what I’m looking for?” Each person’s journey of “faith and conversion” takes place by the promptings of the Holy Spirit in and through concrete means provided by the Church. A parish usually has a set calendar of meetings and other events during the year. At the same time, an adult formator must pay close attention to the fact that, for each person, the journey is unique to him or her.
Suited to the Individual Soul

Pause here and, to consolidate these points, read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), paragraphs 156-160 and paragraphs 1427-1433 which emphasize the flexible and individual nature of the spiritual journey of each adult in response to God’s grace.

The Primacy of Grace

Before going any further it is of value to stop and consider the meaning of the word “grace.” It is of such importance in the Church that it is worth spending some time to ponder it.

Grace cannot be seen or felt. This is because it is a *spiritual reality* not a physical one. It is not natural, but supernatural, which means that it is *of God* (“super” here means “from above”) and *for us* (“natural” here means “for our nature”). The Church takes the supernatural very seriously because it is *of God* and *for the whole of humanity*. Grace is real and we all need it! Grace is the work of the Holy Spirit and always precedes whatever good we do. The “primacy of grace” is a fundamental catechetical principle that needs to permeate all our teaching. What we mean by this phrase is that God is always at work; God always takes the initiative; God prompts every good action; God is the source of all goodness.

Sources of grace in the Church are, therefore, also taken very seriously. The sacraments are the pre-eminent sources of grace. So much do we all need grace to turn continually to Christ and to live Christian lives, that the Church multiplies opportunities for receiving grace and even for *disposing* us, *preparing* us, to receive grace! This is the purpose of blessings and “sacramentals” such as blessed rosaries, prayer cards, holy water, or holy pictures. So, for example, it is worth seeking the blessing given by an ordained minister (bishop, priest, or deacon) whenever an appropriate opportunity arises. Sacramentals in the Church all draw their power from “the divine grace which flows from the Paschal mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ” (CCC 1670).

What is Grace?

In your *Catechism*, turn to paragraphs 1996-2005, which has grace for its subject, and read how this great mystery of God’s love is described. Reflecting on this, what statement in this reading most struck you? Write 200 words for yourself on the reality and importance of grace.

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

**Understanding:**
General Directory for Catechesis, Introduction, 14-33
The *Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, Preface, pp. ix-xv

**Change:**
*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2558-2565

**Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 4th Century**

“You, who among the things that exist are reckoned as nothing, as ashes, as grass, as vanity, are made familiar with and a partaker of such and so great a Majesty as can neither be seen, nor heard, nor reckoned. You are received and accounted as son by the God of the universe. Who can discover a way of giving thanks worthily for such a gift? With what voice, with what thought, what movement of the heart, can a person sing the praises of this superlative gift? You transcend your own nature: from mortal you are made immortal, from brazen to pure, from ephemeral to eternal, and in short, from human to divine. For if you are made worthy of becoming a son of God, you will have entirely in yourself the dignity of the Father, and will be heir to all the paternal goods.”

~ St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa ~
The Beatitudes, 7
Section 2
The Catechist Echoes What God Has Revealed in Word and Liturgy

Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.
~ 2 Timothy 1:13-14 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to catechetical fidelity, let’s take the next step . . .

Section 1 presented an overview of the context in which effective catechesis occurs: God’s gift of grace and call to conversion for each individual. This section provides a broad understanding of catechesis as an act of passing on something that God has already revealed in total — the Deposit of Faith given once and for all to the apostles. The apostles echoed faithfully what they heard and saw while the Word made flesh walked among them. The catechist echoes this apostolic heritage, which is nothing less than the unfolding of the Father’s plan, revealed in the Son, and entrusted to faithful messengers — like you, now.

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

✦ You’ll understand that catechesis is the transmission of God’s Word to invite people to personal faith. It is an invitation, not indoctrination.

✦ You’ll understand the term “revelation” and how it enables the catechist to teach the truths of the faith as certitudes, not as opinions.

✦ You’ll be able to explain why the Catholic Church understands God’s Word to include both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and recognize the essential role of the Magisterium in the work of catechesis.

✦ You’ll be able to see why theology, private revelation, and popular piety are not synonymous with catechesis, and what difference this makes in the work of conversion.

Catechesis Echoes What the Apostles Taught

We, as catechists, are always faced with the question, “What do I teach?” Catholicism has a rich heritage; thousands of books have been written on topics from Scripture to saints to morality. The breadth and depth of material is overwhelming.

But understanding one word, katekhein, is extremely helpful. Katekhein is a Greek verb meaning “to teach by spoken word,” made up of the Greek roots for “down” and “to sound.” The implication is that we teach to others what we have been taught. Our English word “catechesis” comes from katekhein. As catechists, we are responsible to hand on the same faith taught by the apostles, to echo what they taught which itself echoed what Jesus taught. This is no small task! Catechesis — transmits the words and deeds of revelation; it is obliged to proclaim and narrate them and, at the same time, to make clear the profound mysteries they contain. Moreover, since revelation is a source of light for the human person, catechesis not only recalls the marvels worked by God in the past, but also, in the light of the same revelation, it interprets the signs of the times and the present life of man, since it is in these that the plan of God for the salvation of the world is realized (GDC 39).
As catechists, we know that we have a grave responsibility to remain faithful to the true Word of God, the Good News revealed by Jesus. Yet Jesus had scarcely ascended to the Father when false teachings began to appear. In his Letter to the Galatians, St. Paul lamented, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different Gospel — not that there is another Gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7).

**Exercise 2-1**

Do You Really Believe That?

St. Paul’s certainty about the absolute truthfulness of the Gospel he preached should inform our way of catechizing. The faith must be taught as certitudes. Reflect on this quotation from Pope John Paul II:

The Letter to the Hebrews says that “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). Although we are not in full possession, we do have an assurance and a conviction. When educating children, adolescents and young people, let us not give them too negative an idea of faith — as if it were absolute non-knowing, a kind of blindness, a world of darkness — but let us show them that the humble yet courageous seeking of the believer, far from having its starting point in nothingness, in plain self-deception, in fallible opinions or in uncertainty, is based on the Word of God who cannot deceive or be deceived, and is unceasingly built on the immovable rock of this Word. It is also one of the aims of catechesis to give catechumens the simple but solid certainties that will help them to seek to know the Lord more and better (CT 60).

Consider the differences among the following ways of beginning a statement of truth:

1) “Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”

2) “The Church teaches that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”

3) “We as Catholics believe that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”

4) “Purgatory is thought to be for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”

5) “Some in the Church feel that Purgatory is for souls who, at the point of death, receive from their Lord purification from the temporal effects of sin.”

In light of the above reading, in one paragraph reflect on the validity of each of these five statements in terms of what an adult learner might hear and conclude. Then, in a second paragraph, reflect on how you might phrase things to others when discussing or teaching about purgatory with other adults.

**What Is Divine Revelation?**

How do we know with certainty what to teach? Let us begin with God’s revelation: “Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God
has fully revealed the plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit” (CCC 50). Divine revelation thus refers to things that can be known with certainty about God, because he desires us to abide safely in the truth and in the blessed happiness of Trinitarian life. So over the course of centuries he gradually revealed them (see CCC 54-66).

Divine revelation answers two general sets of questions. First, who is God? What are his characteristics? Is God a loving Father, a Master demanding obedience, a disinterested Creator who made the earth but no longer cares for us or participates in our lives? Is there one God, or many gods? Are there different gods for different nations?

Second, what is God’s plan for humanity? What did our Creator intend? How does he want to be worshiped? How are we to live and interact with each other? What do we do about the problem of human sinfulness? What is our final end?

These two sets of questions — one pertaining to the Person of God, the other to his plan for humanity — are intimately related. How one understands God has a direct bearing on how one responds to God and neighbor.

For example, if one conceived of the Creator as a cruel puppeteer and master of fate, it may well seem logical to seek out ways to appease him. History offers numerous examples of societies that sought to appease their gods, even to the point of human sacrifice. An erroneous notion of God will lead to an erroneous response.

Throughout the Old Testament, God slowly revealed who he is and gathered a people to himself, giving them his covenant and Law on Mount Sinai “so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Savior” (CCC 62). Much of this revelation was gradually committed to writing and forms the portion of Sacred Scripture that we call the Old Testament.

Finally, as St. Paul tells us, “in these last days [God] has spoken to us by a Son” (Heb 1:2). The Catechism of the Catholic Church proclaims that “Christ’s whole earthly life … is revelation of the Father. Jesus can say: ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,’ and the Father can say: ‘This is my son, my Chosen; listen to him!’” (CCC 516; italics in original). Indeed, Jesus is the fulfillment of revelation and completes it (see CCC 65-66).

Trusting Jesus as the master teacher, we know a great deal more about the Person of God, that the one God is not a solitude but a Trinity of divine Persons, and that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life [and] that the world might be saved through him” (Jn 3:16-17).

We know about God’s plan for us because Jesus revealed it to us: “His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature” (CCC 51). Over several generations, the essence of what Jesus revealed was committed to writing, forming the portion of Sacred Scripture that we call the New Testament.

What Is Sacred Tradition and How Is It Preserved and Transmitted?

How should we understand Sacred Tradition? We are all familiar with Sacred Scripture, “the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit” (DV 9).

Look up Jn 21:25. This illustrates that not everything Jesus said or did was recorded in Sacred Scripture, and some parts of the New Testament were not written until about the end of the first century, or 60-some years after Jesus’ Ascension. Even with all of the books and letters written, the New Testament was only slowly assembled by the Church, its contents decided over a matter of centuries.
But with the making of the New Covenant in Christ’s blood came his establishment of the Church as the repository of the fullness of divine revelation. Now look up Mt 16:18 and Mt 28:20. Here we see that Jesus instituted the Church and left her with the authority to teach everything that he had taught.

He also told his disciples, when he sent them out to preach in his name, “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Lk 10:16). St. Paul admonished one of the congregations he founded to “hold to the tradition which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thes 2:15). Msgr. Ronald A. Knox, a 20th century English writer and translator of the Bible, said it this way:

The safeguarding of revelation depended … upon a set of first-hand witnesses, who were called apostles, and next to them upon “elders,” whose memory would go furthest back. The Church was thus a teaching Church in its earliest beginnings; religious certitude was based upon a set of living memories, and those memories were perpetuated in the first instance by Tradition (The Church on Earth, London: Burnes & Oates, 1929 (reprinted by Sophia Institute Press), p. 32).

Now look up CCC paragraphs 81-83. Here you can see that right from the beginning, there was Sacred Tradition, which “transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit” (CCC 81, quoting DV 9).

Sacred Tradition did not wither away with the writing of the New Testament. Given dynamic life by the Holy Spirit, Sacred Tradition is borne down to the present age in the Church’s liturgy and her teaching, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the popes and bishops:

Holy Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their preaching (CCC 81).

Sacred Tradition is a living and active process by which “the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes” (DV 1).

Furthermore, “even if revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of centuries” (CCC 66) by means of the Church’s interpretation of Sacred Scripture. The Church in each generation, through prayer, study, and meditation, reflects on the Word of God and the events of salvation history and gives new interpretation to it while never altering the revelation it contains. The Holy Spirit guides the Church in this process and guarantees that Sacred Tradition will be an authentic expression of God’s Word for each generation.

**Did You Know?**

Many conversions throughout Church history have been profoundly influenced by seeing the Church as the vital and living connection to the Person of Christ, among them the great North African Bishop, St. Augustine: “I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me” (St. Augustine of Hippo, Contra epistolam Manichaei, 5, 6: PL 42, 176, written in 397 A.D.).
What Is the Magisterium and Its Role in Interpreting Divine Revelation?

Not only must divine revelation be preserved and transmitted unaltered down the ages, but also there must be a definitive, authoritative voice to interpret it. Certainly the Holy Spirit would not inspire Sacred Scripture nor preserve the fullness of Sacred Tradition only to have us at odds about its meaning. The Second Vatican Council declared that the “task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the Name of Jesus Christ” (DV 10). This teaching authority is known as the Magisterium.

Our Lord Jesus gave this authority to Peter and the Church when he gave Peter the keys to the kingdom (see Mt 16:19) and to Peter and then to his disciples the power to bind and loose (see Mt 16:19, 18:18. Otherwise, we would be like “sheep without a shepherd” (Mk 6:34). Under the infallible guidance of the Magisterium, the “Bible is lived and interpreted in a way that binds. This interpretation forms a historical continuity, setting fixed standards but never itself reaching a final point at which it belongs only to the past. ‘Revelation’ is closed but interpretation which binds is not” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger [later Pope Benedict XVI], Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 80).

To understand the concept of the Magisterium more fully, an analogy from the realm of civic life might be helpful. The United States Constitution has guided the nation since its founding. However, it is accepted that the Constitution does not interpret itself. Different people can read the same Constitution and come to opposing conclusions concerning what is lawful and what is not. This acknowledgment has made necessary the Supreme Court, to render a final interpretation of the meaning of the Constitution. The Supreme Court is given this power even though it is a fallible body of judges and has altered its interpretation many times.

While the interpretation of the Constitution is important in the life of single nation, the universal salvation of souls is infinitely more so. Just as the Constitution cannot interpret itself, nor is its meaning in every instance inarguable, so Sacred Tradition and its written portion, Sacred Scripture, is not self-interpreting and can, in good faith, be understood in more than one way. Our Lord would not have suffered and died for our salvation without providing the means for us to know with certainty what we must do to be saved. Just as the Supreme Courts seeks to defend the Constitution from erroneous interpretations, so too the Magisterium of the Catholic Church defends the faith: “It is the Magisterium’s task to preserve God’s people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error” (CCC 890). It is in this sense that one speaks of “defending the faith” from false ideas and interpretations. Through the ages the Church has had to answer novel moral questions and erroneous notions about God and man. Through Church councils, papal documents, and episcopal teaching, the Church responds so that the faithful remain rooted in truth.

**Common Misunderstanding:**

There Cannot be an Authoritative Interpretation of Scripture

Today’s culture denies that there can be such a thing as objective truth, and the many thousands of Christian denominations that rely on private interpretation of Sacred Scripture suggest to non-Christians that there is no objective truth possible in its interpretation. However, Jesus promised the night before he died that “when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (Jn 16:13). The Church has relied on this promise that the Holy Spirit would be the guarantor, that she would always authoritatively teach how God intends us to understand Scripture.
The Church does not possess the power to invent new teachings, however, but only to better explain those that have been with us since apostolic times, for the “Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single Deposit of Faith” (DV 10).

The Magisterium is not found in a particular office at the Vatican, nor a post held by a high-ranking Church official. Rather, it is the special gift of the Holy Spirit given by Jesus to St. Peter, the apostles, and the apostles’ successors, that is, the pope and all bishops in union with the pope, to ensure that the faith taught and preached by the Church today is authentically the same as that taught by the apostles.

Summarizing the relationship between divine revelation and the Church’s teaching office, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote: “It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls” (DV 10). The role of the Church in humanity’s salvation is a fundamental concept for catechists.

**Exercise 2-2**

**Authority, Burden or Gift?**

1) Many non-Catholics, as well as a good number of Catholics, view the Church’s understanding of her own authority as burdensome, overbearing, or overreaching. Select one issue that many in modern culture tend to see in this way (such as contraception, same-sex union, or pornography). Then turn to the *Catechism* and read paragraphs 2032, 2035 and 2037. How can these paragraphs from the *Catechism* help a catechist to assist other adults in seeing the Church’s “charism of infallibility” as a gift to be welcomed?

2) Now read and reflect on the following passage written by Pope John Paul II:

In order that the sacrificial offering of his or her faith should be perfect, the person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive “the word of faith” not in mutilated, falsified or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor. Unfaithfulness on some point to the integrity of the message means a dangerous weakening of catechesis and putting at risk the results that Christ and the ecclesial community have a right to expect from it. It is certainly not by chance that the final command of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel bears the mark of a certain entireness: “All authority...has been given to me...make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all...I am with you always” (Mt 28:18-20 quoted in CT 30)

What a wonderful paragraph from Pope John Paul II! Do you notice the profound reason that he offers to us as to why there must be no mutilation or diminishment of the faith in the teaching we provide? It is so that those who receive our teaching may be able to make a perfect offering of themselves in faith to the blessed Trinity. If we remove aspects of the faith or hide them we will hinder others from making this gift of themselves. Spend some time in prayer with this teaching from the Church.

**Distinguishing Catechesis from Theology**

A full unfolding of the Catholic faith in adult formation ministry requires us to present the faith and encourage practices that can serve powerfully the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion. Yet we must be cautious. The conversion of souls can be harmed rather than served by this resplendent richness if clear distinctions are not made. There is a balance demanded in good catechesis. To be faithful to our
mission, we must distinguish what is firmly known and taught by the Church from what is theological reflection, taken from private revelation, or devotional. Failing to properly make distinctions when we are teaching may result in the weakening of faith because the essential content of the faith may become confused with what is desirable but not essential for salvation.

The Church recognizes, benefits from, and appreciates the contributions of theologians. For example, many catechists have used the five proofs of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the Church’s greatest theologians, for the existence of God. However by its nature theology is speculative. While certain conclusions may pass the test of time, others will not. Even portions of St. Thomas Aquinas’ theological writings subsequently were judged inaccurate by the Church.

Pope John Paul II admonished catechists to “avoid presenting as certain things which are not” (CT 60; italics added), and pointed out that bishops everywhere had spoken of “the danger of an ‘unstable balance’ passing from theology to catechesis and they stressed the need to do something about this difficulty.... Catechists ... must have the wisdom to pick from the field of theological research those points that can provide light for their own reflection and their teaching, drawing, like the theologians, from the true sources, in the light of the Magisterium” (CT 61). He further forcefully wrote of the “need for catechesis to remain above one-sided divergent trends — to avoid ‘dichotomies’ — even in the field of theological interpretation of such questions” (CT 52).

Distinguishing Catechesis from Private Revelation

Private revelation is a prominent element in the lives of many Catholics. The millions that make pilgrimages to sites of Marian apparitions at Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, and others, and the impact of the revelations (for example, leading to the Divine Mercy devotions) testify to their appeal. In regard to this, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “Throughout the ages, there have been so-called ‘private’ revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the Deposit of Faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history” (CCC 67).

Our task as catechists is to keep private revelations from overshadowing or replacing our teaching of the Deposit of Faith, for the Church has always made it clear that the faithful are not obliged to believe or act on the content of even private revelations that she has recognized. A further caution is to entirely avoid presenting material from private revelations that have been declared false by the Church, or that she has not yet definitively recognized.

Distinguishing Catechesis from Popular Piety

Closely related to private revelations is the abundant presence in the life of the Church of popular piety, many of whose devotions — the Miraculous Medal, the Rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet, wearing of various scapulars — stem from private revelations. The Church encourages catechists to “take into account the forms of piety and popular devotions among the faithful” (CCC 1674) but cautions that these “expressions of piety extend the liturgical life of the Church, but do not replace it” (CCC 1675). Sensitive care must be exercised because popular piety is a “rich yet vulnerable reality in which the faith at its base may be in need of purification and consolidation.

A catechesis, therefore, is required which is of such religious richness as to be quick to appreciate its inherent nature and its desirable qualities and zealous to direct it so that the dangers arising out of its errors or fanaticism, superstition, syncretism, or religious ignorance may be avoided” (GDC 95).

In conclusion, while acknowledging the place of theology, private revelation, and popular piety in faith formation, catechesis itself is simple and direct: it is passing on that which is known with certainty about God and his plan for creation.
**Exercise 2-3**

A Catechist’s Task is Catechesis

For each of the following statements, in one sentence, express what mistake is being made by the catechist speaking, and what is being confused with catechesis:

 العالي “We’ve just read in Matthew 20:18-19 that Jesus predicted his crucifixion to his disciples. As modern scholars tell us, this and similar ‘prediction’ texts from the Gospels were put on Jesus’ lips after his death to bolster the belief that he was more than a man.”

 العالي “You may have heard about Mary’s appearance to five young teenagers at a city just south of here about three years ago. There Mary told us that world events in the past ten years forewarn us of the imminent end of the world, and gave the five teenagers a really beautiful prayer that will shield you from the danger. Here’s a copy of the prayer for you to pray.”

 العالي “Here’s the correct way to receive Holy Communion, genuflect just before you approach to receive the sacred Host, and receive on the tongue.”

**For Your Portfolio**

Case Study: The Blessing of the Holy Spirit’s Guidance of Mother Church

The inquirers in your parish’s RCIA group this year have unusually diverse faith backgrounds. Among them are:

 العالي Benjamin wonders if Jesus is the Messiah. He grew up in a home that practiced Judaism sporadically, and his Jewish self-identity is largely cultural. He has been approached by members of the group “Jews for Jesus” and isn’t sure what to make of their belief that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and fulfillment of the Old Testament covenants.

 العالي Ibrahim questions that Jesus is God. The son of a non-practicing Muslim father who married an American woman who received no faith formation in her own childhood, Ibrahim has not been raised in any faith at all. He has been exploring Islam, which reveres Jesus as a great prophet but still a man, but also wants to know something more about what the Catholic Church teaches about Jesus.

 العالي Emily is skeptical whether Jesus intended to found a Church. She was raised a Baptist, and her devout parents were upset when she married a lukewarm Catholic. But now her husband is becoming more interested in the faith of his childhood, and Emily’s parents have been giving her literature claiming that the Catholic Church was an invention of a later age long after Jesus and the apostles passed from the scene.

Consider the fact that all three of the questions raised in these examples could be addressed from Scripture alone, but that other interpretations of these same Scriptures have abounded. Write a paragraph on how Holy Mother Church’s unique ability to bring to bear Sacred Tradition and the authority of the Magisterium results in greater clarity than can be attained using Sacred Scripture alone.

In your explanation, you do not need to include how you might explain the specific doctrinal issues relevant to the above examples, but simply how the existence of Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium could help such RCIA inquirers receive clarity about the truths taught by the Church.
For Your Portfolio
Checking Your Progress
How Can We Know?

In your Catechism, read paragraphs 1-7 and paragraphs 426-429. These two sections of the CCC summarize some of the key concepts of the catechetical endeavor.

Using the topic of Baptism, prepare two single sheets – with text totaling about 500 words – which could be used to explain Baptism to a group of adults.

✠ In the case of the first sheet, seek to exemplify some of the catechetical principles you have met in this section.
✠ In the case of the second sheet, seek to break some of the catechetical principles you have met in this section!

Forward your answer to your program director for assessment.

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

Understanding: General Directory for Catechesis, Part 3, 137-142
The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, Chapter 1, pp. 1-19

Change: Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2598-2619

Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 3rd Century
“For though languages differ throughout the world, the content of the Tradition is one and the same. The Churches established in Germany have no other faith or Tradition, nor do those of the Iberians, nor those of the Celts, nor those of the East, of Egypt, of Libya, nor those established at the center of the world…. The Church’s message is true and solid, in which one and the same way of salvation appears throughout the whole world.”
~ St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons ~
Section 3
The Two-Fold Aim of Catechesis

I have given them the words which thou gave me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou did send me.... Sanctify them in the truth; thy Word is truth.... The glory which thou has given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou has sent me and has loved them even as thou has loved me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom thou has given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou has given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.... I made known to them thy Name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them.

~ John 17:8, 17, 22-24, 26 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to know truth and live love, let’s take the next step....

Section 1 presented an overview of the catechist’s work in light of the primacy of God’s grace. Section 2 provided a broad understanding of catechesis as an act of passing on the Deposit of Faith. In this section we explore these questions: As catechists, what is our ultimate aim? How do we share the Deposit of Faith? Where do we start?

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination....

► You’ll recognize that catechesis has a two-fold aim: understanding and change (conversion).
► You’ll gain an appreciation for how making catechesis organic and systematic enables an adult learner to really grasp the faith in a way that fosters conversion.
► You’ll discover the five foundational truths of the faith, and that the defining characteristic of systematic catechesis is the hierarchy of truths.
► You’ll be able to articulate the content of the first proclamation of the Gospel message, the kerygma, and see how the great Story of the People of God flows naturally from it.

Teaching for Understanding and Conversion

The Catholic Church has always considered the spreading of the “Good News” as one of her fundamental duties, following the example of Christ as he sent forth his apostles, commissioning them to proclaim the Gospel: “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” (Mt 28:19-20). Catechesis is the apostolic work of passing on the truths of the faith for the purpose of making disciples of Christ, bringing them to a profession of faith in everything Christ taught and the Church continues to teach, and inviting them into the fullness of Catholic life through an encounter with the communion of believers and with Christ the Teacher, who now teaches through the catechist and who leads them “to the love of the Father in the Spirit” and to a “share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (CCC 426, quoting CT 5; see CCC 5, 66, 81, 100).
Any kind of instruction in any discipline seeks to impart an understanding of its subject matter and contribute to a student’s understanding of reality. The purpose of catechesis however, is fundamentally different in that it imparts a unique “subject matter” and seeks to do far more than improve an “understanding of reality.” First, teaching the faith differs from teaching academic subjects such as mathematics or English because catechesis imparts *revealed* knowledge, the knowledge that God himself desires that we know, that can only be understood through faith. The primacy of faith over the kind of knowledge that can be discovered by reason alone does not, however, make catechesis any less intellectually stimulating or challenging. Second, this knowledge is imparted for one reason alone: to radically change lives. Knowledge gained from instruction in other subjects might improve a person’s thinking, appreciation of literature, or job prospects. The revealed knowledge imparted by catechesis is intended to make it possible for the person, by entering into the mystery of Christ, to attain the definitive goals of life: peace, joy, and the satisfaction of the heart’s deepest desire (see GDC 117) — nothing less than the beatitude of Heaven, eternal union with God.

Among the principal reasons for the Incarnation (see CCC 457-460) is the fact that Jesus came to show us how to live the fullness of life that God intends for us. He first showed his apostles how to live this fullness of life and then gave them and, through them, all Christians the command to “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). What they were to teach was not mere information, however, but a way of life and a system of beliefs that have been preserved in Sacred Scripture and Tradition. In fact, early Christians were simply referred to as the followers of “The Way” (see, for example, Acts 19:9; Acts 24:14).

People today tend to underestimate, or deny, the power of truth. We live in a post-Enlightenment era where reason has been dethroned and replaced with pragmatism and relativism. People are less interested in what is true than in what works, even when “what works” for one person contradicts “what works” for another. But no matter how far we stray with such philosophies, nothing can change the way God created us. As our lungs were made for air, our eyes for light, and our ears for sound, so our minds were made for truth. While many things are true, the fullest expression of divine truth is found in the plan God has for each and every person, a plan which took on flesh in Jesus Christ and is articulated in the Church’s doctrines. Unlike other sources in which truth may be mixed with and clouded by different degrees of error, the doctrines of the Church, rooted in Sacred Scripture and unfolded in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, are completely true.

**Common Misunderstanding:**

**What’s a Dogma?**

*There is often a looseness in the way the terms “dogma” and “doctrine” are used, specifically in thinking that only dogmas must be believed by the faithful Catholic, or that dogmas are “Church doctrines” not readily discerned in Sacred Scripture while doctrines in general are truths of the faith found in Scripture. In its Glossary, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not specifically distinguish between dogma and doctrine. CCC 88 offers the following definition of dogma: the Church “proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these.” However, the CCC does not thereby suggest that doctrines are somehow less than dogmas. The best way to understand the distinction is that dogmas are those truths that have required especially careful definition because they have, historically, been the subject of misunderstanding, distortion, or error. An example of a dogmatized doctrine is Jesus having two complete natures as true God and true man, defined at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Doctrines not “dogmatized” should be viewed as just as binding on the faithful Catholic and should be received with the same assent of faith. It is also incorrect to view dogmatized doctrines as somehow more important or more worthy of belief than other doctrines.*
For today’s catechist, this two-fold task — understanding and conversion — presents a challenge. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II recognized that many people, both young and old, have heard the Gospel proclaimed and may have entered into the Church through Baptism, but “remain hesitant about committing their whole lives to Jesus Christ” (CT 19). Thus, in these circumstances the catechist should seek not only to teach, but to inspire conversion. “[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” (CT 19).

Pope John Paul II went on to explain the two-fold aim of catechesis.

[T]he specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God’s help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.

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.

To put it more precisely: within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the Person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know his “mystery,” the Kingdom of God proclaimed by him, the requirements and promises contained in his Gospel message, and the paths that he has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow him. It is true that being a Christian means saying “yes” to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this “yes” has two levels: it consists in surrendering to the Word of God and relying on it, but it also means, at a later stage, endeavoring to know better and better the profound meaning of this Word (CT 20, italics added).

**Exercise 3-1**

*The Sheep are Sometimes Slow to Grow!*

Read Luke 22:39-46. Think of a time in your life when, upon later reflection, you recognized the immensity of God the Father’s patience when you recognized some truth, but for some time failed to respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to change your life. Reflect on the importance of a catechist understanding and accepting this same human weakness in others, the unwillingness to act promptly even when the truth is presented attractively and compellingly.

In a paragraph, reflect on the transition, in your own life, from an initial **understanding** of and submission to Jesus Christ, to a later, deeper **change** or conversion, based on a profound understanding of the Word of God. In prayer to the Father, offer your thanksgiving for his loving forbearance in your own life.
Organic and Systematic Catechesis

Throughout the *Catechism* you’ll see a call for catechesis that is organic and systematic. This emphasis is rooted in the direction given by Pope John Paul II:

In his closing speech at the fourth general assembly of the synod, Pope Paul VI rejoiced “to see how everyone drew attention to the absolute need for systematic catechesis, precisely because it is this reflective study of the Christian mystery that fundamentally distinguishes catechesis from all other ways of presenting the Word of God.”

In view of practical difficulties, attention must be drawn to some of the characteristics of this instruction:

- It must be systematic, not improvised but programmed to reach a precise goal
- It must deal with essentials, without any claim to tackle all disputed questions or to transform itself into theological research or scientific exegesis
- It must nevertheless be sufficiently complete
- It must be an integral Christian initiation, open to all the other factors of Christian life.

I am not forgetting the interest of the many different occasions for catechesis connected with personal, family, social and ecclesial life … *but I am stressing the need for organic and systematic Christian instruction, because of the tendency in various quarters to minimize its importance* (CT 21, italics added; see also GDC 66, 241).

So, what does Pope John Paul II mean by organic and systematic?

**Organic** implies interconnected parts. Think of the human body. The heart, stomach, and brain cannot function alone. Each system of the human body is meticulously designed to function in concert with every other part. Equally important: damage to any one organ sets in motion eventual damage to others within the living whole.

In like manner, the Deposit of Faith is organic. *Every doctrine is logically and intimately tied to every other teaching.* Those who have studied Catholic doctrine have a profound appreciation for its organic nature. The organic nature of the faith demands that it be presented in a way that helps people connect individual truths together to see a larger reality. Doctrines should be taught with an eye to what will be unfolded in future sessions. Conversely, subsequent teaching must go back to earlier teaching to forge connections and strengthen those already made.

**Systematic** catechesis is a gradual, incremental and orderly presentation of the teachings of the Church. Adults learning about the teachings of Christ and his Church need to understand certain truths first in order to be able to comprehend others. This is called the hierarchy of truths. Catechesis that is delivered according to the hierarchy of truths does not mean that some teachings have more or less importance than others, but rather that Catholic teachings order themselves systematically around these five foundational truths:

1) **The Trinity** — “The internal structure of catechesis: every mode of presentation must always be Christocentric-Trinitarian: Through Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit. If catechesis lacks these three elements or neglects their close relationship, the Christian message can certainly lose its proper character” (GDC 100).

2) **The Person of Jesus** — “Jesus Christ not only transmits the Word of God: he *is* the Word of God. Catechesis is therefore completely tied to him. Thus what must characterize the message transmitted by catechesis is, above all, its ‘Christocentricity’” (GDC 98).
3) **The Paschal Mystery** — “The baptismal catechumenate is also completely permeated by the **mystery of Christ’s Passover**. For this reason, all initiation must reveal clearly its Paschal nature. The Easter Vigil, focal point of the Christian liturgy, and its spirituality of Baptism inspire all catechesis” (GDC 91).

4) **The Dignity of the Human Person** — “The mystery of the human person is presented throughout the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** ... This doctrine, contemplated in the light of the humanity of Jesus, the perfect man, demonstrates the highest vocation and the ideal of perfection to which every human person is called” (GDC 123).

5) **The Church as Christ’s Mystical Body** — “Catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act. The true subject of catechesis is the Church which, continuing the mission of Jesus the Master and, therefore animated by the Holy Spirit, is sent to be the teacher of the faith” (GDC 78).

In later sections of this program of study, we will help deepen the concepts presented in this section by referring back to them, using further reading and exercises designed to help you gain greater mastery of this central task of catechesis.

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**Exercise 3-2**

**Spotting the Connections**

Go to the following web link: www.fwdioc.org/catechesis-in-the-RCIA-catechumenate-period.pdf

This is an article authored by the program director related to RCIA catechesis. Read the article, especially focusing on the brief section about “Organic Catechesis.”

Write a couple of paragraphs on this question: How has your study thus far changed your previous perceptions of how catechesis is done in the Catholic Church?

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**Exercise 3-3**

**Case Study: Making All Those Connections Practical in Someone’s Life**

Estelle, who worked as an aide in a nursing home, heard a Catholic colleague say something about “redemptive suffering.” She asked what this meant and, attracted by what she heard, asked her colleague to help her learn more about this teaching. As a result, Estelle entered the RCIA process and has now been a Catholic for seven years.

She had always been asked the question, “How can you stand to work in that depressing place, surrounded by death and suffering?” She always answered that she loved her job and did not find it depressing at all. She said that it was difficult, both physically and emotionally, but that she felt privileged to care for her patients.

Now, as a Catholic, Estelle saw the suffering Christ in afflicted and aged people, often alone in the world, forgotten, abandoned, or just the last of a family. She knew that the approach of death, even when pain was involved, was a grace-filled, precious time, that a great deal was going on in each person before the Lord called him or her home. She saw that the freedom often lost in the clutter of life can be rediscovered as everything but the essential is stripped away, and that, at the end, her patients were truly free to meet their Lord. She felt honored to offer her prayers and love as support for the journey, and counted it a gift when she could caress the forehead or the hand of someone slipping away into eternity. Estelle left her job each day a firm witness to the sanctity of life, especially the holiness of a natural death.
Another doctrine Estelle might find vital in her chosen field of work is that of God the Father. By using faith, hope, and love as a principle of making instruction organic, a catechist seeks to deliberately prepare a teaching with the intention of showing adult learners how this doctrine or that truth helps them to more fully believe in God, trust God’s promises, or love him and others more fully. This is concrete and realistic, conveying that no truth has been revealed to be an end in itself, but instead to aid the adult in the life of believing, hoping, and loving.

In your *Catechism*, read paragraphs 2777-2785, which refer to God as our Father. In one sentence each, describe how the Church’s teaching on God as our Father would help Estelle lead those for whom she cares to trust God better (faith), desire eternal life more deeply (hope), and love God and others more fully (charity).

The *Kerygma*: Proclaiming the Good News

Some have suggested that the purpose of catechesis is to simply help people experience God. In this view, knowledge of the faith is secondary to an individual’s interior experience. But attraction without knowledge is a hallmark of infatuation, and infatuation is sandy soil upon which to build a long-term relationship. You cannot truly love that which you do not know. Thus, at the earliest stages of forming a person’s faith, we begin to share our knowledge of the Catholic faith. This takes the form of the *kerygma* and the Story of the People of God.

*Kerygma* is a word used in the Greek original of the New Testament to mean “proclamation” or “preaching.” Its Greek root is the word for “herald,” so the idea is to proclaim — what? The *evangelium*, or Good News as it is translated into English: the Gospel (from Old English, “godspell”). This is what happens in the earliest steps of passing on the faith to another adult: with simplicity, we as catechists proclaim the Good News of salvation. What a marvelous and joyous calling!

The content of this proclamation, this *kerygma*, recounts why we need a Savior and describes how God went about redeeming humanity’s fallen nature up to the modern day, having in view our final end (or eschaton, from the Greek root *eschatos*, meaning “last”). The structure of the *kerygma* is explained in the GDC in this way: “The preparation for the Gospel in the Old Testament, the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ, and the time of the Church, provide the structure of all salvation history of which creation and eschatology are its beginning and its end” (GDC 115).

Exercise 3-4

What’s Unique About the Catholic Church’s Proclamation of Salvation?

Go to the following web link: www.pastoralquotient.net/9/category/tell%20the%20jesus%20story/1.html

This brief article explains the basic elements of the *kerygma*, the basic proclamation of the Gospel. In a paragraph, reflect (as far as your experience allows) on what is distinct about the way the Catholic Church understands the *kerygma* in comparison to what might be said in a Protestant setting. What is the Catholic Gospel? (If you have no experience or awareness of the latter, ask someone of your acquaintance who knows details of the Protestant understanding of the Gospel.)

The Story of the People of God: Narrating the Good News

The Story of the People of God expands upon the *kerygma* by recounting the narrative of God’s continual interaction with humanity. Where the *kerygma* takes the form of a proclamation, the Story takes the form of the “narration of the history of salvation” (GDC 128). The Story lays out the main events in Scripture as described in GDC 115, and the main events since the birth of the Church on Pentecost.
Think of it not so much as a history of events, but as a history of faithfulness — how our merciful God has initiated and how we have responded, as individual souls and as a people spreading out through the ages and through innumerable cultures. It is a narrative of relationship — of love recognized and embraced; of love trampled and made to bleed.

The Story can be told in many forms, especially the preeminent form in the liturgy. The Easter Vigil Mass can include as many as seven readings from the Old Testament: Creation, God’s promise to Abraham, Moses leading the People of Israel through the Red Sea, and the prophets reminding the people to return to the One God, and follows these with an epistle and a Gospel reading showing that Jesus is the Messiah and the fulfillment of God’s promise to redeem humanity. It can be recounted as a history of an ever-patient God’s covenants with an ever-wayward people, culminating in the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood — where his rejection becomes the very form of his patient, saving love. It can be told in stages over time, according to the depth and number of sessions judged suitable for the inquirers God has drawn to your parish this year.

Many adults may have been exposed to “Bible stories” from childhood. Lift-and-see books featuring the wonders of the Garden of Eden and toys based on Noah’s Ark abound. Our storytelling as catechists of adults, however, will ignore the physical realities of these scenes and instead focus on the spiritual realities of God’s creation of humankind, male and female, in his own image and likeness, our first parents’ lack of trust that God willed only the best for them and Noah’s absolute trust in God although God explained nothing, the role of temptation in sin, the dreadful impact of sin, God’s justice and his loving mercy, and humankind’s inability to avoid evil without sacramental grace.

In whatever form you present it, themes that should always be present include God’s activity in the affairs of humankind from the beginning, God’s promises as the Lord of history until Jesus returns in glory and time itself ends, and God’s call in the life of each soul that he has authored. It is the great story. It is never boring.

Exercise 3-5
How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Guides Me?


In a couple of paragraphs, perhaps in bullet form, outline what, if you were Philip, you would have said as a follow-up to the text from Isaiah that the eunuch had been reading to help bring him to conversion of heart and desire for Baptism.

The Divine Economy: Explaining the Good News of God’s Plan of Salvation

The Greek root of “economy,” oikonomia, refers to the management of one’s home, the plans and standard operating procedures regulating household business. It speaks to the way the head of the household brings order to the affairs of the home. This notion of managing one’s household affairs helps us understand the use of the term in catechetics. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the word “economy” is used over 30 times. We read of the Christian economy, the divine economy, the economy of revelation, sacramental economy, and most frequently of the economy of salvation. This last term, sometimes referred to simply as the divine economy, speaks of the way God orders his interaction with humanity for our salvation, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us:

[T]he Church confesses the mystery of the Holy Trinity and of the plan of God’s “good pleasure” for all creation: the Father accomplishes the “mystery of his will” by giving his beloved Son and his Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world and for the glory of his name.
Such is the mystery of Christ, revealed and fulfilled in history according to the wisely ordered plan that St. Paul calls the “plan of the mystery” (Eph 3:9) and the patristic tradition will call the “economy of the Word incarnate” or the “economy of salvation” (CCC 1066).

The key characteristic of the economy of salvation is that God is always the first to act. It is he who first reaches out to humanity in an effort to save us from sin:

Disfigured by sin and death, man remains “in the image of God,” in the image of the Son, but is deprived “of the glory of God,” of his “likeness.” The promise made to Abraham inaugurates the economy of salvation, at the culmination of which the Son himself will assume that “image” and restore it in the Father’s “likeness” by giving it again its glory, the Spirit who is “the giver of life” (CCC 705).

But, as the saying goes, God cannot save us, without us; we are not restored by God’s salvific plan without our own cooperation, as the Catechism explains:

God’s free initiative demands man’s free response, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy (CCC 2002; italics in original).

Though God moves hearts in many ways, there is one consistent hallmark to the way he chooses to work. He initiates the relationship with an offer of grace, and we are free to accept or reject his offer.

If the kerygma is proclamation and the Story is narration, the divine economy is explanation, focusing on the plan of the Father, the saving work of the Son’s Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension — the Paschal mystery — making the plan effective, and the actions of the Holy Spirit that accomplish the plan in each willing soul by means of the Church, the dispenser of the graces that save and sanctify us.

Let us now apply the concept of the divine economy to our work as catechists. First, we should always keep in mind that it is God who inspires inquirers’ interest in the Church, and God is the one who will ultimately draw them onward. Our task as catechists is to be faithful to our calling and patient instruments of these abundant graces of God.

Second, in understanding that God is the initiator, we catechists can rightfully conclude that the people in every parish were made “by God and for God” (CCC 27), the Holy Spirit is at work in each person, and the Holy Spirit is at work in us catechists. These realizations give us encouragement no matter how trying the circumstances, mindful that we, too, have been offered grace from God for the work ahead.

**Exercise 3-6**

Is the Church an Essential Part of the Gospel?

In your Catechism, read paragraphs 770-776.

One of the differences between the Catholic understanding of the Gospel, and that normally expounded by our Protestant brothers and sisters, is the role of the Church. Outside a Catholic setting, the concept of “Church” is often understood as more of an addendum to the basic Gospel message, rather than as integral to God’s plan of calling us to holiness and making our sanctity possible by grace.

Reading through those CCC sections on the nature of the Church, reflect in one or two paragraphs on what ways you can see the visible Church as essential to God’s plan, not as an addendum that developed later in history.
Brandon grew up in a family in which the presence of God was completely absent from his home. Twice as he was growing up, he went to a Catholic Mass, once taken by an uncle and once by a friend in high school. Neither one explained anything about the Catholic Church, and he was aware of no change in his heart at all. As he reached his late twenties, a deep sense of unhappiness began to pervade his life. In this frame of mind, he met some Christian friends, who urged him to commit his life to Jesus Christ and to read the Bible.

He began reading the Gospel of Matthew. He plowed through it as though he were reading a novel, and came to a passage where Jesus told his disciples that he was changing bread and wine into his Body and Blood. They were to eat his Body and Blood in remembrance of him. He immediately had two reactions to this passage: first, he experienced an inner conviction that this was true. Second, he wanted to obey the words of Jesus and intensely desired the Eucharist. This is where his earlier experiences with the Mass finally bore fruit. His reading of the Gospel of Matthew finally gave him the means to understand, not with his head but with his whole being, what he had witnessed. Liturgy has its own language, its own expression of reality, and the Gospel of Matthew made it possible for him to enter that reality.

Reflect on the above conversion story and write two paragraphs on how it is possible for liturgy to evangelize and the role of catechesis in creating a connection between that which is prayed and that which is lived.

Catechists have the opportunity to lead those on the journey of faith to come to the breathtaking realization that God loves them and will continue to love them regardless of what they have done or think they have done. In this understanding of God, participants in adult formation can then perceive the generous call of God beyond justice to mercy, the call to change. In this hope alone can mere humanity be opened to the call to and the pursuit of divinization.

Participants in good adult formation should feel that the catechesis they have received has, above all, been for them the Word of God spoken to those who have been graced with ears to hear their Lord (understanding), to lead them to the Word of God made flesh for those who have been given hearts to embrace their Lord (change).

The goal of adult formation is therefore not only imparting that which must be believed. It seeks also to prepare participants for a new union, an embrace. This embrace is human and divine, unifying the two as water into wine, inviting participants to thereby quench the deepest call of relationship that Jesus gives — “I thirst” (Jn 19:28).

Consider what you have read about teaching the faith organically and systematically, and making the basic Gospel message and the Story of God’s loving plan known to each person.

In 500 words or less, using your own parish adult formation ministry, explain in what ways it does these things well, and how you might suggest it would change to do these essential things better.

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.
This section concludes Part I. Its goal has been to explore the role of you as a catechist at the service of the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion. In light of this goal, please answer the following:

1. What are the two most pressing questions that arise for you from your study of these sections?
2. What are the two most surprising things that you encountered in Part I?

Forward your answers to your program director. (They will not be used to assess your progress, but rather to provide your program director with the opportunity to gain a sense of what are your greatest needs as you continue to study the craft of catechesis to adults.)

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

**Understanding:**  
*General Directory for Catechesis*, Part 1, 77-83  
*The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, Chapter 2, pp. 25-39

**Change:**  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2623-2643

*Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 11th Century*

“O God of truth, I seek that I may receive, so that my joy may be full. Till then, let my mind meditate on it, and let my tongue speak of it; let my heart love it, and the words of my mouth be about it.”

~ St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury ~
Part II

Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Conversion

Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Sacred Scripture

Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Yourself

To begin with, it is clear that, when carrying out her mission of giving catechesis, the Church — and also every individual Christian devoting himself to that mission within the Church and in her name — must be very much aware of acting as a living pliant instrument of the Holy Spirit. To invoke this Spirit constantly, to be in communion with him, to endeavor to know his authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every catechist.

~ Pope St. John Paul II ~
Catechesi Tradendi, paragraph 72
Section 4  
Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Conversion

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard,  
which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands,  
concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it,  
and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us —  
that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you,  
so that you may have fellowship with us;  
and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.  
And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.  
~ 1 John 1:1-4 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to invite all to divine fellowship, let’s take the next step . . .

In Part I (Sections 1-3) we explored the role of the catechist in the larger work of adult conversion, concluding by studying the two-fold aim of catechesis — understanding (growth in knowledge) and change (seeking conversion to Christ).

Understanding is rooted in truth — knowing what is good and pleasing to God the Father. As we saw in Section 3, knowledge of the faith is so important that Holy Mother Church calls for catechesis that meets the challenge of being authentically organic and systematic.

We also recognized that knowledge alone is not enough. Those with a sweet tooth will tell you they know too much candy is not good for them; yet many continue their love affair with it! Obviously, knowledge of the ill effects of too many sweets is not enough to create a change in behavior. Knowledge is translated into action only through an act of the will. Thus, to cooperate sensitively with the Holy Spirit, the only one who can bring about conversion, there are two overarching tasks for the catechist: informing the intellect and motivating the will.

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

➤ You’ll be able to explain the phrase “enter into the mystery of Christ” and its relationship to conversion.

➤ You’ll be able to recognize three vital qualities that make a catechist an instrument of the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.

➤ You’ll be able to explain the importance and role of each of these four means of conversion:
  ♦ Scripture
  ♦ Liturgy
  ♦ Systematic and organic catechesis
  ♦ Christian witness

➤ You’ll be able to identify the signs and stages of conversion in an adult.

➤ Finally, in this section we introduce the idea that effective catechists care for their own spiritual lives. To that end, you’ll be invited to reflect on your own progress.
Looking ahead, in Section 5 we begin using *lectio divina*, a method of praying with Scripture that has proven of great benefit to Christians throughout the centuries, so that we might better model what we teach. Our goal is to be catechists who *understand* catechesis and who are personally committed to an ongoing *conversion* that inspires participants in adult formation.

**What is the Essence of the Call to Conversion?**

It is always important to remind ourselves that catechesis has a high calling in serving the work of the Holy Spirit: conversion and discipleship to the plan of the Father as revealed in Jesus Christ. Authentic conversion and discipleship in Christ means learning “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” (CT 20). Conversion is a gradual turning from the darkness of sin, and turning to a desire for holiness, which involves:

...being led into the mystery of God’s love, who invites [participants] to establish a personal relationship with him in Christ. Under the movement of divine grace the new convert sets out on a spiritual journey by means of which, while already sharing through faith in the mystery of death and Resurrection, he passes from the old person to the new who has been made perfect in Christ (see Col 3:5-10; Eph 4:20-24). This transition, which involves a progressive change of outlook and morals, should be manifested in its social implications and effected gradually during the period of the catechumenate. Since the Lord in whom he believes is a sign of contradiction (see Lk 2:34; Mt 10:34-39), the convert often has to suffer misunderstanding and separation, but he also experiences those joys which are generously granted by God (AG 13).

To be of service to those on the journey, a catechist is called to be a compelling witness to this “personal relationship,” to this passing from “the old person to the new,” to this fortitude to “suffer misunderstanding,” and above all to this experience of the joy of the Lord that is the mark of those founded deeply in the God who has overcome the grave. An effective catechist is further defined by the ever-growing presence of three qualities.

**Three Qualities of an Effective Catechist**

To deliver formation for adults that conform to the mind and heart of the Church, the first quality of an effective catechist is knowledge of the faith. This starting point is a daunting challenge. Given the depth and breadth of Catholic teaching, how can a catechist ever feel truly qualified? A couple of thoughts may help, especially for new catechists who typically have two concerns.

**Integral Knowledge of the Faith**

Above all, catechists want to ensure that their presentation of the faith is accurate. To this end, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* covers every aspect of the Deposit of Faith and speaks with clarity and precision. Since its publication in 1992, we catechists have for our use, study, and own deepening of the faith this “sure norm for teaching the faith” (CCC 3). Added to this, we now have the wonderful resource of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as a growing number of local catechisms for adults authored through bishops conferences in various nations, such as the one published for the United States in 2006.

At the same time, there may be a reluctance to become a catechist because of perceived gaps in one’s knowledge. Don’t let that hinder you. Remember that even St. Paul, who traveled extensively to spread the Good News, returned to Jerusalem to have certain teachings clarified (see Acts 15). In like fashion, return to the *Catechism* as needed. Prepare carefully, consult with others when necessary, and trust that your own knowledge will continue to grow as needed. As well, remember it is unreasonable to expect that a catechist would know everything, but it is very reasonable to expect that a catechist would know where to go for answers. Further, it’s important for those we’re catechizing to see us looking for the answers in the sources, so that they can know what to do and where to turn for themselves.
Catechetical Skill

The second quality of an effective catechist is to be able to discern and use appropriate methods, having judged them in the light of God’s own pedagogy, God’s own way of revealing his divine truth and divine love. The GDC describes the pedagogy of God in this way:

“God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” (Heb 12:7) The salvation of the person, which is the ultimate purpose of Revelation, is shown as a fruit of an original and efficacious “pedagogy of God” throughout history. Similar to human usage and according to the cultural categories of time, God in Scripture is seen as a merciful Father, teacher and sage. He assumes the character of the person, the individual and the community according to the conditions in which they are found. He liberates the person from the bonds of evil and attracts him to himself by bonds of love. He causes the person to grow progressively and patiently towards the maturity of a free son, faithful and obedient to his word. To this end, as a creative and insightful teacher, God transforms events in the life of his people into lessons of wisdom, adapting himself to the diverse ages and life situations. Thus he entrusts words of instruction and catechesis which are transmitted from generation to generation. He admonishes with reward and punishment, trials and sufferings, which become a formative influence. Truly, to help a person to encounter God, which is the task of the catechist, means to emphasize above all the relationship that the person has with God so that he can make it his own and allow himself to be guided by God (GDC 139).

Knowing the principles of the pedagogy of God enables us to judge every method in its own light together with pastoral attention, as much as possible, to each person’s circumstances and needs. The pedagogy of God as outlined by the Church, is discussed at greater length later in this program of study. The Church seeks to alert people to the effects and purpose of secular pedagogies often in use for catechesis, and how different these often are from the pedagogy of the faith that comes from God.

Pursuit of Holiness

The third quality of an effective catechist is a deep commitment to the pursuit of holiness. If the primary objective of the catechist is leading others to conversion, sharing knowledge of the faith is not enough. We should seek to inspire a desire to change. Since this is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, the catechist must be a docile instrument of divine grace. A faith-filled life speaks volumes to attract others to the faith. There is no substitute:

No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to him by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method (GDC 156).

Entering into the Mystery of Christ

All of us are called to enter into the mystery of Christ. This is true of the unbaptized person, the baptized Christian, and the Catholic. All are at different stages, and all are following the same call.

The beginning of a relationship with God is often built upon a relationship with someone who is already a practicing Christian; this is not infrequently a catechist. People who have been less connected to God as they deal with life’s challenges can be expected to be in an uncertain emotional state. Many adults who do not have faith in God as their anchor face unknowns of all sorts, and they may be nervous, shy, frightened, troubled, or apprehensive. Some know that, even if they change drastically, the conditions in their lives will not change. Many are aware of the consequences they face if they explore, and ultimately commit to, a life of faith in the Church: this path may mean conflict with or loss of family, friends, co-workers, or other acquaintances.
For such adults, it is a heroic effort to venture onto the journey to take God more seriously, and we can only admire their courage. No matter what their reason for desiring to seek God more fully, every one of them is a soul accepting and cooperating with the graces of the Holy Spirit. Such wonderful people deserve the best from each us — the witness of a converted heart and the close fellowship of Christian communion. The very first greeting in a parish setting, the nature of their reception, creates an instant impression that affects the heart and the mind of someone unfamiliar with a life close to Christ and his people.

However, what takes an adult from an initial motivation to come towards God all the way to being “not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ [since] 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” (CT 5)? Put another way, what does it mean to “enter into the mystery of Christ?”

**Mystery**

It may be helpful to first consider what the term “mystery” means in a Christian context. It does not imply things that cannot be known. Rather, it refers to those things that we would not have known on our own, something that had to be revealed by God about himself and his relationship with his people. When it is revealed, it is clear and makes sense. At the same time, the things of God are so profound they cannot be understood in their fullness:

Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate himself and the eternal decisions of his will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, he chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind. As a sacred synod has affirmed, God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the light of human reason (see Rom 1:20); but teaches that it is through his revelation that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human race (DV 6).

These may seem to be two competing ideas: Can we know or not? The answer is that we can know truly, but never fully. It may help to think of “mystery” in terms of relationship. There may be things about one’s spouse that are only known because the spouse chooses to reveal them, things that reveal the person’s most intimate character.

Yet even after decades of marriage, is it possible to fully know another person? Every human being is a mystery because each person has a unique spiritual soul that can only be known fully by its Creator, its Redeemer and its Sanctifier. In this Christian sense of mystery, one may know things with certainty revealed by one’s spouse, yet never fully plumb the beauty of their person. The same holds true in our relationship with Christ.

**The Mystery of Christ**

Why does the Church speak of Christ as a Mystery? Of the “Paschal mystery”? Of the “mysteries of our faith”? Let us remain clear that Christ is a mystery above all because he is God, the Son made man. Christ’s divinity, his divine Sonship, need not worry us as something difficult to explain and so best avoided.

What has been revealed we can know truly, clearly and with confidence. We can know *that* the incarnation took place but *how* it took place can only be fully known by God. We can *enter* the mystery truly and knowingly but never possess full knowledge of it; we can *enter* the paschal mystery truly and knowingly at Mass but never possess full knowledge of it; we can enter the mysteries of the Catholic faith and know them truly but, again, never possess full knowledge.
**Entering the Mystery**

In this light, entering into the mystery of Christ means to open one’s self — both intellect and will — to revealed knowledge about the person and saving work of Christ. This requires great humility, as we strive to conform our will to his. In the words of Pope John Paul II:

Catechesis aims, therefore, at developing an 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 (CT 20).

Conforming our lives to imitate Jesus is what it means to enter into the mystery of Christ. It is a phrase full of meaning perhaps best captured by John the Baptist’s assertion of faith that “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30). To be inserted into the mystery of Christ is nothing less than “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4) as God’s adopted sons and daughters (see Gal 4:5).

Entering into the mystery of Christ — to think, judge, act, love, and act like him — is therefore the Christian’s goal (see CCC 1694). Conversion of mind and heart is the path to that goal. Every intentional faith-related contact with an adult is to help with this process of “entering.” As you’ll see shortly, there are four means of conversion: Scripture, liturgy, systematic and organic catechesis, and Christian witness.

**Exercise 4-1**

How Am I Doing, Dad?

To help others to desire to ‘put on Christ’ (Gal 3:27) the catechist must thus first be committed to his or her own ongoing conversion to the Lord. For this reason, striving for holiness is a basic qualification of the catechist, so the first word he or she speaks is that of personal witness.

The role of a catechist entails more than teaching. In some respects, it approaches that of a spiritual guide leading people to Christ and his Church. This is why the topic of conversion is so important. With this in mind, a catechist examines his or her own spiritual life.

Take time now for quiet prayer. Ask our loving Father to help you see your soul as he sees it. Wait on the Lord for an answer. Then, address the following two questions in one paragraph each:

- What impacted you the most in this section’s reading so far?
- Are you making progress in the spiritual life in recent years? What is the one thing, more than anything else, that is stopping your advancement in the spiritual life?

As you pray the lectio divina in following sections, periodically return to what you wrote here.

**Four Means of Entering into the Mystery of Christ**

What motivates conversion? What are those things that most influence conversion, aiding our entrance into the mystery of Christ? They are: Sacred Scripture, liturgy, systematic catechesis, and Christian fellowship.

**Sacred Scripture: Called to Faith in the Word Made Flesh.**

Have you noticed that one may read the same passage of Scripture numerous times over the course of many years and still receive something fresh, insightful, and inspiring? This is because the Holy Spirit, as the primary author, speaks to hearts through Scripture, giving it the unique ability to simultaneously teach and inspire:
The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God’s Word and of Christ’s Body.… in the sacred books, the Father who is in Heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the Word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life (DV 21).

Notice in this text from the Second Vatican Council how the Church relates to the Scriptures as a means of an intimate exchange of love between the believer venerating the Lord Jesus and the Father manifesting his surpassing love for his people. In this exchange of love, Scripture is the initial language of faith. That is why we say Sacred Scripture is the basic means of entering into the mystery of Christ.

**Liturgy: Called to Holiness in Christ’s Saving Work.**

The *Catechism* defines liturgy as “the participation of the People of God in ‘the work of God’” (CCC 1069). Understood at its deepest level, liturgy is a gift from God in which he arranges and wills us to participate. It transcends that which is solely man-made; that is one reason the Church is watchful over the way we celebrate liturgy: it is not ours to do with as we will.

Further, liturgy itself catechizes. What we believe is reflected in our liturgies in both word and action. For example, after consecrating the host the priest steps back and genuflects — a gesture that speaks clearly to the fact that the host is no longer bread, but sacramentally Jesus himself. But most importantly, liturgy is the primary means of entering into the mystery of Christ. Through liturgy we receive not only God’s help but God’s life. We receive every grace needed for perfection. Because liturgy alone gives what it teaches, it is the prime means of entering into the mystery of Christ.

**Exercise 4-2**

*How’s My Parish Doing?*

In a paragraph each, briefly answer these questions:

† Make a list of the ways that Scripture is made present to participants in your parish’s adult formation efforts. How might you bring this means of conversion to bear more strongly?

† Make a list of the ways that liturgy is made present to participants in your parish’s adult formation efforts.

† How might you bring this means of conversion to bear more strongly?

If you are not involved in any adult formation work in your parish, simply brainstorm about different ways in which these two means of conversion can be made present to adults in your parish seeking to deepen their faith.

**Systematic Catechesis: Called to Hope in Christ’s Promises.**

An adult may come to a faith formation opportunity with mere seeds of faith. That faith is supposed to be nourished by the unfolding of all that Christ has revealed for the sake of our salvation, so that we might set ourselves to follow him. As discussed in earlier sections, the totality of revelation is known as the Deposit of Faith. The means by which this Deposit is delivered is referred to as systematic catechesis. Because of its focus on the totality of revelation, systematic catechesis is called the complete means of entering into the mystery of Christ, the word “complete” indicating a certain totality and comprehensiveness native to teaching as Christ taught: “all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15:15).
Christian Fellowship: Called Together in the Lord Jesus.

We should not think of Catholicism as a “me and Jesus” faith in which all that matters is repentance for sins and acceptance of Jesus as one’s Lord and Savior. God’s relationship with human beings has always, from the beginning of our creation, operated through familial covenants, an exchange of persons in which promises are made. God has always worked with his people this way, both with Israel and with the new Israel, the Catholic Church (see Lk 22:20).

On the first Pentecost, when St. Peter finished speaking to the crowd, “they were cut to the heart” and asked St. Peter and the apostles what they should do (see Acts 2:37). St. Peter instructed them to repent of their sins and to be baptized (see Acts 2:38), which incorporated them into the Body of Christ (see 1 Cor 12:13). God has fashioned our redemption to be interdependent, declaring that to love neighbor is to love God: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:31-46). Fellowship is necessary to the practice of Catholicism; love of the brethren teaches charity and forgiveness (see GDC 86). This human encounter, often the first place that an individual meets Christ, makes Christian fellowship the foundational means of entering into the mystery of Christ.

Exercise 4-3

Again, How's My Parish Doing?

In a paragraph each, briefly answer these questions:

Make a list of the ways that systematic catechesis is made present to participants in your parish’s adult formation efforts. How might you bring this means of conversion to bear more strongly?

Make a list of the ways that Christian fellowship is made present to participants in your parish’s adult formation efforts. How might you bring this means of conversion to bear more strongly?

If you are not involved in any adult formation work in your parish, simply brainstorm about different ways in which these two means of conversion can be made present to adults in your parish seeking to deepen their faith.

Understanding the Signs and Stages of Conversion

Faith is a gift from God. It can only be born in the intimacy of man’s heart as a fruit of that “grace [which] moves and assists him” (DV 5), and as a completely free response to the “promptings of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and turns it toward God” (GDC 55).

The Church sees conversion as an ongoing process that never ends. Conversion, seen as a progressive process, involves various stages of change. Simply stated, conversion involves a turning from something (sin and the choice of self), coupled with a turning towards something (God’s grace and the choice to sacrifice for love’s sake).

In his autobiography, St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) exclaimed, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” It is perhaps this same restlessness with life, coupled with the prompting of the Holy Spirit, that brings many people to opportunities for adult formation. The task of the catechist is to lovingly and patiently help people turn from sin to embrace the Person of Christ. But how do we know what is happening in the soul of another? Catechists, knowing some of the signs of authentic conversion from the experience of their own lives, can then be attentive to such signs in the lives of others.
1) **Interest in the Gospel.** A simple disposition toward belief or interest in the Gospel or Catholic Church is evidence of a response to the Holy Spirit’s invitation. Questions, even those that challenge us as catechists, are a sign of interest indicating a first step on the path of conversion.

2) **Awareness of sin.** The brokenness a person feels comes to be seen as the result of sin; a new awareness of personal sin grasps the soul.

3) **Personalization of faith.** Growing in an awareness of sin, an adult may move from understanding Jesus as humanity’s Savior in a generic sense, to a more personal understanding of what it means to be saved.

4) **Conviction to change.** Having become aware of personal sin and the need for redemption, an adult may show signs of a conviction to move away from sinful habits, reconcile with others, and lead a new life.

5) **Growth in humility.** Scripture and the writings of the great saints attest to humility as necessary for progress in the spiritual life. This humility is evidenced by the “assent of faith.” This is a disposition to accept the Church’s teachings even as one struggles to understand and implement that teaching in his or her life. There is a temptation for the novice in the spiritual life to adopt an attitude that says, “When I understand, I will believe.” But those more experienced in spiritual matters know that belief sometimes precedes understanding. The act of believing brings with it certain graces that illuminate the intellect. In turn, as the intellect informs the soul with truth, the will’s desire to do good increases. What was once an interior disposition is now action.

6) **Actions.** There is an increase of participation in worship and service to the community. Prayer life deepens. An adult begins to more intentionally take part in corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and thus catechists clearly see the fruit of interior conversion.

7) **Tension.** It is not uncommon for those undergoing deep conversion to experience tension. Conversion may create difficulties between an adult seeking to deepen in faith and their friends and family. This may cause a reordering of life’s priorities, lead to ethical questions about employment and create anxiety. Is a crisis always a bad thing? Periods of doubt, uncertainty, anxiety, and ‘cold feet’ are sometimes seen as abnormal. They are not. On-going conversion to Christ cannot occur without affecting the very depths of a person. Because conversion often brings with it significant life changes, you can expect that spiritual crises may arise. The catechist should expect and be prepared for this possibility.

These are seven of the most common signs of conversion. You should cultivate in yourself an ever-increasing awareness of the signs of conversion, so as to reassure those you seek to form and build upon the good things happening in their souls, as well as the benefit to you of discerning growth in your own spiritual life.

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**For Your Portfolio**

**Case Study: God Breaks into Time, and into a Boy’s Life**

Go to the following web link:

After read the beautiful story entitled “A Rite of Passage”, in a paragraph or two, identify in the description of Euphemius’ Easter Vigil in what ways he gives evidence of having experienced during the course of his formation in the faith the four different means of conversion (Sacred Scripture, liturgy, systematic catechesis, Christian fellowship).
For Your Portfolio

Checking Your Progress

Who are You in Christ and in His Church, and How Did That Happen?

Go to the following pair of web links:

Using this two brief articles as a guide, in 500 words or less (perhaps in bullet form), develop your own personal testimony as you might give it in an RCIA setting.

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

Understanding: General Directory for Catechesis, Part 5, 215-232
The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, Chapter 3, pp. 41-63

Change: Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2650-2719

Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 17th Century

“Sweet Lord, you are meek and merciful. Who would not give himself wholeheartedly to your service, if he began to taste a little of your fatherly rule? What command, Lord, do you give us as your servants? Take my yoke upon you, you say. And what is this yoke of yours like? My yoke, you say, is easy and my burden light. Who would not be glad to bear a yoke that does not press hard but caresses?”

~ St. Robert Bellarmine, Cardinal Archbishop of Capua ~

Ascent of the Mind to God
Section 5
Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Sacred Scripture

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

~ 2 Timothy 3:14-17 ~

C onsidering the above passage’s call to esteem the formative power of God’s Word, let’s take the next step . . .

We concluded the last section with an invitation to examine your spiritual life in light of your catechetical calling. The goal of this section is to begin this process; it is not to teach you how to teach spirituality to others.

As such, we turn now to the first of the living sources of the faith, to the Sacred Scriptures. And we begin not with questions concerning using the Scriptures to teach others. We begin by looking at how the Lord wishes to teach you through the Scriptures! Is your understanding growing and developing? Is your relationship with Jesus Christ alive and growing? Do you make time for daily prayer? Is there anything blocking your spiritual progress and that you have not begun to substantively address?

There is a variety of ways to develop your relationship with God. This section offers one of the treasures of our Catholic heritage as a tool for your own personal spiritual growth. Lectio divina is a way of reading Sacred Scripture, meditating on its meaning and allowing Christ to speak to you personally through it. In this section we outline how lectio divina is prayed, and suggest three Scripture passages as a starting point. In future sections we offer additional passages.

You may be tempted to rush through this section on your way toward material you hope to be more “practical.” But remember that the catechist is the “soul of every method” (GDC 156). The full quotation is “The charism given to him by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method.”

Becoming a catechist of adults is more than knowledge and training in technique. It involves a formation of the whole person — and it is, above all, the Lord who forms us, as he wishes.

So, see this section as a gift to yourself, a time to rest in God’s presence, the truest locus of a catechist’s formation. Nothing is more important to our work as catechists than our own loving relationship with God. Our ultimate effectiveness as catechists, no matter what our skill level, is directly related to our own prayer life. Open yourself to the graces our Heavenly Father has waiting for you in the Scriptures.
Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

➤ You’ll develop your understanding of how and why Sacred Scripture is foundational to the spiritual formation of catechists.

➤ You’ll have begun using *lectio divina* as a way of praying with Scripture in order to reach greater maturity in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ and become a more effective catechist.

**The Church’s View Concerning the Spiritual Formation of Catechists**

“And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mk 1:21-22). Have you ever marveled at this passage, or pondered its meaning for your work as a catechist? Jesus taught with authority. Is it possible for you, too, to teach as one who has authority? It is tempting to dismiss the thought.

With due respect for humility, are we not called as catechists to act in Jesus’ name? If so, what characteristics would cause other adults to see a catechist as one who teaches with authority? Certainly, many individuals could expound the same doctrine with equal skill. However, to teach with a sense of authority entails more than good technique and doctrinal knowledge; it requires an intimate relationship with our Father. For this reason, the Church stresses that “Whoever is called ‘to teach Christ’ must first seek ‘the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus’” (CCC 428).

The shouts of joy that emanated from the heart of St. Julie Billiart, founder of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, “Oh, how good is the good God!” should resonate through every catechetical session. If the catechist is what he or she should be, steeped in the love of Christ, the goodness of God will be evident.

It is not for the catechist to seek the detachment of closed eyes or withdrawal from the world, but an attachment to and immersion in the love and richness of the Person of Jesus. The catechist then pours forth without effort the teachings of the Church *ab imo pectore* (“from the bottom of the heart”). Whatever is taught is thereby immeasurably enhanced, and creates an indelible impression deep in the minds and hearts of adults you are seeking to reach.

It is the catechist’s attachment to the Person of Jesus that ultimately makes an “indelible impression” upon others. This requires a vibrant prayer life. To help others to desire to “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27), the catechist should thus first be committed to his or her own ongoing conversion to the Lord. For this reason, striving for holiness is a basic qualification of the catechist, so that “the ‘first word’ [he or she] speak[s] is that of personal witness” (ACCC 72). The catechist becomes a transparent witness to the working of God in his or her own soul.

Clearly, the Church sees the role of the catechist as not just teacher, but as a spiritual mentor and role model. Here the phrase comes to mind, “you cannot give what you do not have.” The catechist regards fellow adults not as students, but as individuals having the dignity of those destined to be the sons and daughters of God to whom the fullness of God’s plan is revealed incrementally.

The catechist is called to teach as Jesus taught, with words and actions, parables and signs, kindness and invitation. The catechist’s proclamation of Christ draws his or her listeners, within the community of the parish, into the truths of the faith and God’s invitation to divine love.
A catechist who is living his or her life from prayer is not just teaching from the head but also from the heart. Prayer is what takes knowledge from our heads, this knowledge being essential, and moves it to our hearts, giving it vibrancy and meaning, and allowing it to become lived. “We are to be living epistles, to be known and read by all men” (2 Cor 3:2).

The *Catechism* writes of how the whole of Christ’s earthly life, “his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking — is Revelation of the Father” (CCC 516). The whole of his life was like a continual catechesis.

Think of the catechists and teachers in your own life. These might be your grandparents or parents, or other members of the family; priests or religious; or other lay people such as your DRE or First Communion catechist. Think of those who have particularly helped you to understand the faith better. And think of those who have inspired you to a deeper commitment. What personal characteristics did they have that inspired your desire to know God more deeply?

In a single paragraph describe the personal characteristics of one particularly important mentor that you aspire to imitate.

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**A Catechist’s Spirituality Should Always Be Grounded in Scripture and the Key Doctrines**

Frank Sheed is one of the great master lay catechists of the last hundred years. Most of his works are in print and are excellent for deepening your faith and knowledge of doctrine. One small booklet that is currently out of print is called *Are We Really Teaching Religion?* Although originally intended for those teaching children, the portion quoted here is even more relevant for those who seek to be catechists for adults:

What I am going to say next, I say with the fullest sense of responsibility. Far too many of the Religion teachers I have met have seemed to me not really competent. You will say that my experience could be of only a small proportion of all Religion teaching. That is quite true. But it is larger than most people have had. I am going to analyze my impressions so that you may judge how far the standard I am suggesting is a right standard.

It seems to me that there are two elements of intellectual competence which should be a minimum for the teaching of religion:

1. The teacher of religion should be absolutely *soaked in the New Testament*, so that she knows what every key chapter in it is about; knows the line of thought of every book of it, could find her way about it blindfold. That seems to me an indispensable minimum and if a teacher just lets the New Testament go by, does not take too much account of it, merely looks it up when questions arise or uses it for texts to prove doctrines, then what she is really doing, by ignoring the Book, is snubbing the author of the Book. The author of the Book is the Holy Ghost. And if you snub the Holy Ghost, it is hard to see how you can count upon his cooperation in your class; and without his cooperation, it is hard to see how you will accomplish anything.
The teaching of religion is a kind of dialogue — I was almost going to say between
the Holy Ghost and the Holy Ghost — the Holy Ghost in you helping you to say the
truth, and the Holy Ghost in the student helping him to understand what you are
saying. It really is your work, you are not passive, you are not nothing — but the Holy
Ghost is acting in you if you let him. The same is true of the student — the student is
not passive, not nothing, but the Holy Ghost is helping him to understand what you say.
Ideally, one should know the whole of the New Testament; the Gospels must be known
thoroughly. In addition to reading the four Gospels, one should have a good harmony of
the Gospels, and live with it. That is number one of the qualifications which seem to me
to be an indispensable minimum.

(2) The teacher should be soaked also in the Church’s dogmas, soaked in them in
this sense that she knows them in so far as the Church has expounded them; and
further, that she is possessed by them. This experience of having the dogmas of the
faith come alive in the mind is a most fascinating psychological thing. It is not my
business to appraise the value of teaching the words of the Catechism, but I would like
to give a word of warning. The Catechism makes it possible for people to teach doctrine
without knowing doctrine.

But the teacher who is soaked in dogma, really afire with it, is not in the least likely
to confine herself merely to a repetition of Catechism words. The very essence of being
possessed by any truth at all is a desire to tell it. To be possessed by a truth and not to
long to communicate it would be impossible. The mark of the teacher who is possessed
by truth is an almost anguished desire to convey to others what is so rich a treasure to her.

Most of the religious teachers I have met do not seem to be in that sense soaked in
the dogmas; still fewer, one feels, are soaked in the New Testament. For the last thirty
years I have been teaching the faith at street corners. Throughout that time I have been
receiving the people who join the Catholic Evidence Guild, who want to be trained as
speakers, and finding out what they know. Those who come are not the worst Catholics,
obviously. They would not want to speak at street corners to their fellow citizens if they
were thoroughly bad Catholics.

We have probably a good average lot of Catholics; some of them have just left school,
some left school thirty or forty years ago, some are converts. Except for the recent
converts, the effort to find what they know is very depressing. The best of them know
the Catechism answers, but the moment one questions them as to the meaning of an
answer, there is trouble. They can nearly always get the first answer right, but if,
instead of going on to the next question, you question their answer, you find that the
foundation is chaos. Among them, over the years, have been a great number of school
teachers and they are just the same as the rest.

Many of those who come to us, the ones most recently at school, have been taught
apologetics and have been taught very well, though too often they have been trained to
answer yesterday’s questions and not today’s, so that when they meet a living objector,
the sword of their apologetic breaks in their hand, proves in fact to be no true sword, but
only a good imitation. However that may be, there is invariably one most extraordinary
thing about their apologetics. They have learnt the proofs of all sorts of Catholic
doctrines, but they do not know, and seem to have no desire to know, what the doctrines
themselves mean: they are at once uninformed and incurious about the realities which
they are so pleased to prove that the Church has. Thus they can prove, by evidence
internal and external, that the Gospels are authentic. I have hardly ever met one of
them who has read the Gospels” (Are We Really Teaching Religion?, pp. 20-23).
How Do You Respond?

How do you respond to that passage? We will be considering our knowledge and understanding of doctrine in a later section, so let’s stay with the Scriptures for now. How well do you know the Scriptures, especially the New Testament? What do you think of the “indispensable minimum”?

As an exercise, why not make a list of as many of the books of the New Testament from memory as you can manage, and next to each book write your own honest assessment of how well you know this book: very slightly? moderately well? very well indeed?

Then look at the list of books from a contents page of the Bible and add any remaining books that you may have forgotten.

Take your time with this exercise: completing this exercise is in itself a commitment to taking seriously the need to be soaked in Scripture. When you have finished, spend some time in prayer about the outcomes of this exercise, thanking God for his living Word.

Did You Know?

Acquiring the knowledge of Sacred Scripture described by Frank Sheed as necessary to a catechist is a process that results from both prayer and study. The Acts of the Apostles offers as models not only St. Paul, who described himself as one educated by one of the greatest of rabbis, Gamaliel (see Acts 22:3) but also St. Peter who, in his first recorded sermon on Pentecost, quotes verbatim not only four Psalms but also five verses from the prophet Joel (a minor prophet!) and a verse from the prophet Isaiah even though, according to the “rulers and elders and scribes” of Israel, he was an “uneducated, common” man (Acts 4:5, 13). Furthermore, St. Stephen, a “man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5), was one of the first seven deacons chosen so that the apostles would not have to “serve tables” (Acts 6:2) in the everyday distribution of food to widows (see Acts 6:1-6). During the speech that led to his martyrdom, St. Stephen, the “coffee and donuts” man if you will, quoted the Old Testament eight times and recounted the stories of Abraham, Moses, the golden calf made by Aaron, and the fate of many of Israel’s prophets and of Jesus himself. St. Peter and St. Stephen, the greatest and the least, the uneducated fisherman and the Jew with the Greek name, both knew Sacred Scripture thoroughly.

Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina

Every person who seeks God has a desire to know God’s personal direction for his or her life. Sometimes it’s a yearning to know the big picture; sometimes it’s a crisis-oriented cry for help. But whether we realize it or not, what we really need is not a God’s-eye view of our lives or a guiding voice; it is, rather, to know the Guide. More than the answer to a specific prayer, what truly matters is knowing that the Answerer has heard our cry and we have somehow sensed his Presence. The relationship is what really counts.

St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” Frank Sheed’s clear emphasis on the centrality of Scripture is therefore not only for the sake of gaining a biblical foundation for teaching doctrines, since simply studying the texts of the Bible is not an adequate foundation for you as a catechist. Being “soaked in the New Testament” — and, by extension, the Old Testament — must also flow from your encounter with Scripture. It is for this reason that this section also focuses strongly on that encounter, which is foundational for the spiritual life of any catechist.
How can you dispose your heart to hear from the Lord personally? How does he speak directly, concretely, recognizably, to your heart? More importantly, how can you learn to spend time with, be with Jesus, not for something you can get, but simply because of who he is? The Church offers to you the prayerful pondering of Sacred Scripture called lectio divina (divine reading), one of the most reliable and privileged meeting places for the very real, speaking-listening relationship of prayer.

Lectio divina can be seen as a natural result of the way God has touched and drawn human hearts down through the ages. As you sincerely spend time with the Word of God and seek to practice its direction, praying with Scripture becomes an integral part of your spiritual formation, always bearing good fruit.

Any kind of prayer time, including lectio divina, is helped by choosing a good time and place. Make an appointment, if you will, with the Lord. It is advantageous to select a time that is closest to your best time of day, acknowledging your personal early-bird or night-owl propensities. Find a place set apart: free from distractions, comfortable, pleasant, quiet (but not sleep-inducing!). Reposition a chair, face a picture of our Lord or a crucifix, light a candle, close the door. For some, spending this time in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament is both ideal and practical.

Bring to lectio divina your desire for God and your faithfulness to the committed time. You’ll quickly come to realize that Jesus is the initiator and Lord of this encounter; he desires it even more than you do. Allowing him to draw you to himself in this way, you’ll come to understand and join your exclamation to that of St. Paul as he says, “Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil 3:8). This knowing, this coming to be ever more deeply and intimately united with him, will draw you more and more strongly to this sacred time and place of heartfelt prayer. We hope you’ll establish this practice and that it remains with you throughout your life.

Lectio divina can be used with any passage from Scripture. However, in the context of your catechist training, we are guiding you to use specific Scripture passages, starting with three in this section. As you work through the Scripture passages below, you’re also asked to use one of the prayer worksheets at the end of this section. One of the worksheets presents a form of lectio divina along the model presented by St. Ignatius of Loyola. The second lectio divina worksheet follows the older Benedictine tradition. Use whichever you prefer. Make copies of either worksheet as you need to use in writing your responses to the specific Scripture passages that we recommend in this and subsequent sections and, if you wish, for your lectio divina prayer time thereafter.

It is good to initially limit yourself to lectio divina for 15 minutes. This may not seem sufficient, but rather than add time to complete the process, it is best to simply pick up where you left off the next day, taking two to three days, if necessary, to move through the progression outlined in the worksheet. Not exceeding the time period at first is actually very important. It facilitates the development of a steady, habitual discipline that will become natural and as much a part of your day as breathing. A feast-or-famine pattern of prayer cannot hold up in the constantly fluctuating circumstances and feelings of a busy life, and you need to develop the habit of lectio divina before you try to schedule a longer period of time for this form of prayer.

It’s important to realize how simple lectio divina is. Some think it is so simple that they may have missed the main point. What is ultimately taking place is that the Holy Spirit makes a connection between the passage in the Scripture and your own life. Each person wants to know what God is saying to him or her personally. That is what is so compelling. As you slow down your time spent with a passage of Scripture and practice the process of lectio divina — writing out or journaling each step can help tremendously here — you will come to understand a principle from St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises: it is not much intellectual knowledge, but to feel and taste things interiorly, that fill and satisfy the soul.
Exercise 5-3
Reflecting on God’s Infinite and Unconditional Love

Set aside 15 minutes every day to contemplate the Scripture passages below, reflecting on God’s infinite and unconditional love for you. Pray through these passages in order, one at a time, over the next week or so, using the lectio divina prayer worksheet to record your responses.

Begin your prayer time by asking for this specific grace: “Dear Lord Jesus, please grant me the grace of a deeper experience of your personal love for me.”

Luke 1:26-38 Mary’s “Yes” allows the Savior to come into the world.
Luke 2:1-20 God becomes man to save me.
Luke 2:41-50 Jesus is eager to begin his Father’s will.

These Scriptures dispose you to receive the graces of humility and obedience, and invite God’s help to grasp the immensity of his desire for your love. As you pray through the three passages ask yourself, “Have I received this grace?” If not, persist in your prayer for this grace, recalling the Lord’s words, “Ask, and it will be given you” (Mt 7:7). As you complete each worksheet, number and date it. Put your completed worksheets in a folder for safekeeping; we will return to these worksheets later.

In later sections, you’ll find more Scripture passages along with prayer for a specific grace. Continue working through the other parts of subsequent sections at your desired pace; keep in mind that God’s action in your heart and life cannot be squeezed into a timetable.

Common Misunderstanding:
Under-Read, Under Authority

The primacy of the Bible among Protestant Christians is coupled with the conviction that the ordinary person can interpret it. However, the Church is rightly cautious. St. Peter wrote that “our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Pt 3:15-16). Yet this isn’t an admonition to avoid reading Sacred Scripture and asking God to speak to our hearts. In fact, the Church has spoken authoritatively on only a very small proportion of Sacred Scripture with respect to correct interpretation. We as Catholics should draw our principal spiritual nourishment from God’s own words, which unlike other spiritual works speaks directly to our minds and hearts in the words the Holy Spirit has willed us to hear.

For Your Portfolio
Case Study: The Annunciation as a Model for Catechist and Disciples

In the lectio divina exercise above, one of the Scripture passages you were asked to prayerfully meditate on was Luke’s account of the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel’s visit to the Blessed Virgin Mary: “the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin...” (Lk 1:26-27).
As catechists, where are we in the story? Who do we identify with?

We are the messenger: “angelos” in Greek means “messenger.” In Scripture there are supernatural messengers, as here, and human messengers. Put yourself in the narrative: “the catechist, (your name), was sent by God to a parish in (your parish’s town) named (your parish’s name), to a person called (an inquirer)...”

This is where the story begins — with the messenger. The messenger is named, is someone particular. It is of value for a catechist — for you — to realize that God knows whom he has sent. The catechist, like the angel, is sent by God, is a messenger of the Trinity. Turn back to this passage in Scripture (Luke 1:26-38). Reflect on Mary’s response to the angel’s message. If you can identify with being a messenger of the Word, how would you also see yourself as the disciple in this narrative, listening to the messenger of the Word, carrying to you God’s desire that you take in that Word so that it could be given to others?

In one or two paragraphs, describe your thoughts on meditating on the Gospel passage from this perspective.

For Your Portfolio

Checking Your Progress
Is This Worth Your Time?

Read and reflect on the following quotation:

I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of lectio divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church — I am convinced of it — a new spiritual springtime. (from the Address of Pope Benedict XVI on the 40th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, September 16, 2005).

The goal of lectio divina is to help you develop your relationship with the Lord through praying with the Scriptures. Turn now to the Catechism and read paragraphs 2729-2745. In the light of this experience of lectio divina, which words or phrases about prayer strike you as particularly important for your own life? In 500 words or less, write about these points and about how you see lectio divina in your spiritual life.

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

Understanding: General Directory for Catechesis, Part 5, 233-242
The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, Chapter 4, pp. 65-71

Change: Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2725-2751

Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 6th Century

“Study your heart in the light of the holy Scriptures, and you will know therein who you were, who you are, and who you ought to be.”

~ St. Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspe ~
Lectio Divina

Praying Daily with Scripture ~ Ignatian Way

Read

Read the passage slowly, out loud if possible, simply to become familiar with it.

Reflect

Read the passage again, silently. Ask the Lord to let you read and “hear” it as if for the first time. What does it mean? Using your own words, tell this story in no more than 5 or 6 sentences...

Spontaneous Prayer

A. Pick one person from the passage: _________________________________.

Imagine that you are there, in this person’s “shoes.” What do you see, hear, smell, taste or touch? If the passage does not specifically name persons, simply see if the words themselves evoke any particular feeling or response in you.

B. How do you think this person or you yourself would feel in this situation?

C. Does this passage remind you of something or someone in your life? Is there anything you would say or do differently in this situation, either as the person in the Scripture passage or in the life experience that this situation brings to mind?

D. Have a “heart-to-Heart” talk with Jesus, sharing your honest feelings about anything that has come to mind as you reflect on this passage. It might be something that is weighing heavily on your heart, or something that moves you to a deep sense of gratitude and joyful praise.

E. Choose one word or phrase from this passage that has a special meaning for you: ____________________________________.

Resting in God

Read the passage again. Close your eyes. Think of your favorite picture of Jesus and LISTEN to HIM. Pause in silence before God. Spend this time in simple silence, waiting and quietly listening for whatever the Lord might “whisper” in your heart.

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Lectio Divina

Praying Daily with Scripture ~ Benedictine Way

Read

Read the passage slowly, out loud if possible, simply to become familiar with it.

Reflect

Read the passage again. Ask the Lord to let you read and “hear” it as if for the first time. After a moment of reflection, say aloud (in a group prayer setting) or write down (for individual prayer) any phrase that speaks to you.

Read the Scripture passage through slowly a third time, again out loud. After a moment of reflection, say aloud (in a group prayer setting) or write down (for individual prayer) any single word that speaks to you.

Spontaneous Prayer

After a moment of reflection, record in writing or note to others your answer to the following question: How does the reading and reflection lead you to pray?

Resting in God

Read the passage again. Close your eyes. Think of your favorite picture of Jesus and LISTEN to HIM. Pause in silence before God. Spend this time in simple silence, waiting and quietly listening for whatever the Lord might “whisper” in your heart.
Section 6
Seek to Know the Father through the Mystery of Yourself

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ —
I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold to you when I am away! —
I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion.

For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.... Look at what is before your eyes.

If any one is confident that he is Christ’s, let him remind himself that as he is Christ’s, so are we. For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame.... “Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.” For it is not the man who commends himself that is accepted, but the man whom the Lord commends.

~ 2 Corinthians 10:1-4, 7-8, 17-18 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to humility before God, let’s take the next step . . .

In Section 4 we developed the importance and nature of conversion to Jesus Christ in light of the work of the catechist. In the last section, we introduced you to the foundational spiritual value of Sacred Scripture, and why any diligent catechist should be regularly seeking to enter more deeply into relationship with the Lord through the prayerful reading of the Word of God.

Concluding Part II, this section places you at the feet of one of Church’s greatest spiritual masters, St. Francis de Sales. It is the longest section in this program of study, and arguably one of the most valuable to you. Its sole purpose is to encourage you and further enable your path to greater personal holiness. The Church desires this above all in the formation of catechists:

The formation of catechists is made up of different dimensions. The deepest dimension refers to the very being of the catechist, to his human and Christian dimension. Formation, above all else, must help him to mature as a person, a believer and as an apostle.... formation, above all, nourishes the spirituality of the catechist, so that his activity springs in truth from his own witness of life. Every theme covered by formation should feed, in the first place, the faith of the catechist. It is true that catechists catechize others by firstly catechizing themselves (GDC 238, 239, italics in original).

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

➤ You’ll better understand the Church’s call to you as a catechist to deepen your devotion to prayer and spiritual growth.

➤ You’ll gain a superlative mentor in your spiritual life who will help you to discern the depth of your commitment to seeking holiness.
You’ll enter into a classic set of spiritual exercises aimed at deepening your self-knowledge and detaching you more fully from sin and its effects.

You’ll be able to catechize more effectively for conversion as your understanding of your own spiritual life grows.

The Way of Bethlehem

The following statement — taken from the article “The Way of Bethlehem: A Spirituality for Catechists,” in The Sower periodical, July 2006, p.34 — encapsulates the continuing conversion required of effective catechists:

As catechists, we have committed ourselves to the path of life-long conversion. One of the wonderful things about our Catholic Church is the incredible ‘room’ she allows for a diversity of charisms and spiritualities in which this conversion takes place. These ways of conversion, no matter how varied, each have, as their source and end, the loving communion abiding within the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Through this multi-faceted means the Bride of Christ is being prepared, purified, and made ready for the final return of Christ and the consummation of love that is to come at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. This series offers some spiritual principles and attitudes that might be thought of as ‘the way of Bethlehem’ — a ‘spirituality’ or ‘way’ for catechists to live out this conversion in their daily lives.

The whole series of articles on The Way of Bethlehem runs continually from this opening statement in the July 2006 edition, up to and including the final article in the January 2008 edition, and this series is highly recommended as additional reading.

If you desire to subscribe to this journal (now renamed The Catechetical Review) and access back articles such as these, you can do so at the following website: www.catechetics.com.

So let us now look more closely at the centrality of Jesus Christ and of the Trinity in our own spiritual lives, as catechists.

Jesus Christ: The Heart of Christian Spirituality and Prayer

Through two millennia, the principal meaning of spirituality (the pursuit of holiness) for Christians has been the imitation of the mission, personality, values, and lifestyle of Jesus Christ, and the full appropriation of this through the direct and personal inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the individual Christian.

Western Christians articulated this mainly in terms of the imitation of Christ, while Eastern Christians articulated it mainly in terms of acquiring the Holy Spirit. Both have shared a theological articulation of this in terms of participation, through grace, in the mystical body of Christ – the Church, of which Jesus is the head. The means to this end are prayer, the sacraments, and the pursuit of the virtues.

The last paragraph is rather heavy going, and it can be boiled down to a simple statement. In short, for Christians, Jesus is the sole measure and criterion of holiness or spirituality. The values and personality of Jesus are the measure of holiness or spirituality in Christianity. A spirituality that is not based on him and orientated to him is not Christian, and if it is contrary to him then it is the pursuit of unholiness rather than holiness. The books of the New Testament make this plain with the sayings of Jesus and the teaching of the apostles that they present.
The GDC has re-emphasized the pivotal place in Catholic catechesis of establishing a personal relationship between a person and Jesus Christ as God. Thus one of the main aims of first-evangelization or primary catechesis (the first stage of catechesis) is to help a person seeking God to formulate his or her own first prayer to Jesus Christ. A first prayer to Christ has the significance to the Christian Church that child’s first word has to the child’s parents. This development should then be immediately deepened with prayer to God the Father, using the prayer that Jesus taught (the Our Father).

Western Christians have usually neglected prayer to the Holy Spirit, or introduced this prayer much later to those seeking deeper faith. School children may only encounter this in Catholic schools in adolescence (at exam time!). There is no reason why prayer to the Holy Spirit should be so deferred, even though the Christian priority is developing a prayer life focused on Jesus, and ultimately directed to God the Father. Regarding the importance of teaching others to pray, the GDC says:

Communion with Jesus Christ leads the disciples to assume the attitude of prayer and contemplation which the Master himself had. To learn to pray with Jesus is to pray with the same sentiments with which he turned to the Father: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication and awe for his glory. All of these sentiments are reflected in the Our Father, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and which is the model of all Christian prayer. The “handing on of the Our Father” is a summary of the entire Gospel and is therefore a true act of catechesis. When catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. This climate is especially necessary when the catechumen and those to be catechized are confronted with the more demanding aspects of the Gospel and when they feel weak or when they discover the mysterious action of God in their lives (GDC 85).

**Biblical Foundations of Spirituality**

Christian spirituality has its roots in the Old Testament experience of God. Knowledge of God deepened through the experience of liberation and God’s intervention in the shaping of the history of Israel and finally on to a greater emphasis on the individual’s awareness of God and an expectation of a coming age in which all people would come to know God.

So we need to explore the question of the state of human beings in relation to God. How possible is it for a human person to experience an interpersonal relationship with God? Our treatment of the Old Testament may lead us to think that there is no problem.

However, we must not be misled. On the one hand, the Old Testament is a marvellous record of the way God has intervened in human history in order to lead human beings to a knowledge of himself. On the other hand, the same Old Testament is also a testimony to the spiritually dead condition of the human race. Although called into a privileged relationship with God, Israel’s history is a tale of constant rebellion, of the dull state of the people’s minds and their inability to sustain any more than temporarily the relationship into which God had invited them. Jesus reminded his hearers of this:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, saying, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.”
Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate (Mt 23:29-38)

So much is this the case that the history of Israel is not only a revelation of God’s action in the world, it is also a revelation of the fallen state of the whole human race. Privileged though Israel was as God’s special people, her response served to disclose the general state of the human race.

God had made a covenant with the people of Israel but Israel was unable to remain faithful to her side of the agreement. Sin was the constant obstacle to God’s plan for union with his people. Again and again the covenant was broken and Israel had to look to God to re-establish the relationship. This experience taught Israel to look forward into the future to a time when God would act decisively in human history so that once and for all the heart of humankind would be changed:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer 31:31-34).

Passages like the one quoted indicate the expectation among the Israelites for a new and essentially different intervention of God. It would indeed be in the nature of a new covenant. We can see also from these verses from Jeremiah that what will be new about the new covenant will be the fact that something internal will be taking place within human beings. This is demonstrated by phrases such as, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. . . and they shall all know me. . . .”

This expectation arising in the Old Testament crystallises under the headings of salvation and the promise of the Messiah. A salvation from God was awaited which would be inaugurated by God’s Servant, the Messiah-King. This salvation was something needed by the human race. This was the state of things at the time of the birth of Jesus.

We can describe the state of humankind in terms of its relationship with God as a state of fallen-ness. In relation to the agency through which God works among human beings, we can say that fallen nature may be thought of as:

- A vessel in which the Spirit of God cannot dwell. There needs to be a new creation, which deals with sin and the fallen nature, so that the Spirit can ‘abide’ in the human race and a relationship with God be sustained.

- The human race’s refusal to submit to the Word of God — the human race has a mind that is unable to accept the Truth of God. Something is needed to break the hold of untruth and of Satan and thus enable the human mind to be once more formed by the Word of God.
The fallen-ness of the human race is essentially a New Testament doctrine. Although it appears first in Genesis 3 (the account of the disobedience of Adam and Eve and its consequences) and surfaces again in several of the Wisdom books, this teaching about the human condition is more clearly articulated by St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans. In the fifth chapter of Romans St. Paul highlights the plight of the human condition by contrasting Adam with Christ. It was through Adam that sin and spiritual death came into the world, while justification and life have come through Christ.

From the point of view of the spiritual condition of humankind the place of spiritual renewal and transformation is Jesus Christ himself. After that transformation takes place in Jesus then the same transformation becomes possible for every human being through a kind of participation in Christ. As St. Paul says in the Second Letter to the Corinthians:

> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come (2 Cor 5:16-17).

So, union and participation in Christ is union with a new kind of humanity — one in which the fullness of spiritual life is now a possibility.

**Prayer in Spirituality**

Prayer is not an exercise in which we are simply passive. Prayer involves effort on our part, even if the real fruit depends on God. We also must not rely on our interior feelings, or see them as a sign of true prayer. These are merely encouragements to persevere in the struggle to pray and not indications of the reality or depth of our prayer. God does give what is termed consolations and sweetness from time to time.

The primary wellspring of all prayer is the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church into the fullness of Christ’s truth and the believer into the fullness of the life of prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God and from this principle stems our life of prayer. The Holy Spirit who prompts from within also directs the other wellsprings which cause that living water to flow up in our hearts. We are provided with many ‘short cuts’ which promise a deep spiritual experience. Some advocate the pure Word of God as the means which the Holy Spirit uses to draw us into union with God. Others say that certain techniques will help. Others again see in signs like prophecy and speaking with tongues, the evidence of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

The source of the wellsprings is always Christ and therefore all prayer must relate to the Incarnate Son of God who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and who seeks to form us in his image. We must recognize that the Word of God is a source, but so also is the prayer of the Church, the liturgy, which provide the basis for our ability to live out the life of faith, our hope, and our love. In our Baptism we have become a holy people and a spiritual house consecrated to serve God in our worship of him. Prayer expresses the very essence of the Church as a community. There is no contradiction between common public prayer and private prayer. In fact there is an interdependence between the two. Christ is at the center of our prayer, the true, and eternal priest. We who pray are continually taken up into his worship which he presents in his victorious humanity to the Father.

The Word of God and the liturgy need the ‘internal’ assistance of the three virtues which we call ‘infused by God’ by the gift of his grace: faith, hope, and love. Without them we cannot draw on the liturgy and the Word of God. It is a mistake to think that we must wait for the ideal circumstances, the spiritual environment, the special feeling of closeness to God to lift up our hearts in prayer. Apart from the fact that the special feeling is no indication of the appositeness of prayer, to wait for ideal circumstances may involve a long delay during which time we have missed the opportunity to pray. Prayer penetrates every moment of our lives and allows us to convert everything we do during the day into a prayer.
Spirituality in the Life of the Church Over the Centuries

The Church’s approach to leading people towards spiritual awakening and growth, and her practice of nurturing the life of her members has undergone many changes and developments. These changes have not necessarily been a single process of development and improvement but instead reflect a whole history of growth and decline and renewed growth.

We can roughly divide the history of Christianity following the earliest years of the spread of the Church into a number of periods: the Patristic period (up to the 6th century); the Monastic period (between the 5th and 12th centuries); the Schools (12th to the 17th centuries); and the 17th century until the Second Vatican Council. Each of these periods manifests its own characteristics in the way it viewed the spiritual life, its formation and development.

The Patristic age coincides with the expansion of Christianity in Eastern and Western Europe and thus was a time of major concern with instruction, initiation and formation of pagans who were abandoning their traditional religions and seeking entry into the life of the Church. It was also a period of development of major doctrines of the Christian Creed, clarified and determined in the midst of much tension and controversy. These controversies did not take place in halls of universities removed from the everyday life of the market place; they were at the heart of the social and political life of towns and cities. The Church’s influence on the individual spiritual lives of believers was readily palpable. Not least of the consequences of this was that spiritual life was seen to be the inheritance of every baptized believer.

The Monastic period, roughly between the 6th and 12th centuries, produced in the Church a shift of emphasis from the spiritual life of every baptized person to the particular life style of those who had chosen to leave the everyday world and enter a religious house or monastery. The monasteries were regarded as great centers of the spiritual life. As the centuries passed, monasteries became abundant to a degree that is hard for us to even imagine today. The main features of monastic life were prayerful copying and reading of the Scriptures, monastic Liturgy (the regular joint celebration of chanted prayer called the Divine Office), the teachings and homilies that attended the Liturgy, and the ministry of hospitality. During this period there was much writing on the development and growth on interior spiritual life, but it was usually written for the monk or nun either in community with other religious or as he or she lived in the isolation of a cell.

The later Middle Ages saw another great shift of emphasis; this time from the monasteries to the universities. The growth of the universities as centers of Christian teaching began in the 12th century. Although the monasteries continued to exist and flourish, now a new class of people interested in the Christian life emerged. These were the scholars of the universities who were adopting completely new methods and approaches to theology. The rediscovery of the writings of the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle lead to a new deductive scientific approach to truth. There were now the beginnings of a separation between the reasoning with faith (a process of the mind) and entry into the mystery of God (a process of the heart).

Initially, this separation was not evident. In fact, a fruitful integration was maintained by the best theologians and spiritual writers of the period: the Victorines (Hugh and Richard); the Dominican theologians, St. Albert and St. Thomas Aquinas; the Franciscan, St. Bonaventure. However, a split was developing. Theology, on the one hand, became increasingly a purely speculative and intellectual exercise, while on the other there grew a great interest in mysticism and spiritual experience. In particular, in the 14th century, there was the rise of speculative mysticism represented by the German Dominican Meister
Eckhart and his followers. They were concerned with speculation about the ascent of the soul into God. In the end the speculative aspect began to be exaggerated, with the result that by the 14th century an anti-speculative reaction in the spiritual movement began in the lowlands called *Devotio Moderna* — a movement which has left us a writing which still commands a great popularity even today: the *Imitation of Christ*, by the monk Thomas à Kempis, a sign of the spiritual renewal so much needed by the Church after a period of excessive speculation.

*Devotio Moderna* was to spawn what is still regarded as a golden age of spiritual writers — first, St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, and then the Spanish Carmelite mystics: St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. It is in these spiritual giants that the understanding of the psychology of the spiritual life reaches its highest point in this period.

The final period dates from the 17th century down to the present day. In France there was an intense interest in the spiritual life. On one hand, there was a renewed interest in mysticism and spiritual experience, and on the other, writers like St. Francis de Sales, sought to make the spiritual life accessible to all believers by a novel focus on the laity. This was the object of his famous work *Introduction to the Devout Life*, which is explored in considerable detail in the following portion of this section.

However, the overriding tendency of this period was for spiritual writers to systematise the journey towards perfection into various steps and stages, all clearly identifiable and based on certain principles. This systematisation leaned heavily on the methodology of Scholastic theology. And so the study of the spiritual life came to be a branch of theological studies principally of interest to those studying for the priesthood or religious life. The study of this became a subsection of moral theology within the new seminaries for the training of priests which grew up as part of the Catholic Counter-Reformation after the Council of Trent in the 16th century. The main part of moral theology dealt with what was seen to be of obligation for all Christians, while ascetical and mystical theology was concerned with the pursuit of perfection. This approach once again had the effect of removing the spiritual life from ordinary people and restricting it to those religious men and women who had chosen ‘a higher way.’

**The Second Vatican Council**

The early 1960s marked a new turning point in the long history of spiritual formation. The bishops at the Second Vatican Council in Rome in the early 1960s had met together primarily to discuss the role and mission of the Church as it faced an increasingly atheistic and indifferent world. And yet this world was advancing as never before in technology, the human sciences, international relations, and humanistic concerns. There was also a deep consciousness of the scandal of divisions among Christian churches and the ways that this reality seriously hindered the mission of the Church to the world. The bishops wanted to ask the question: How could the Church enter into dialogue with the world in order to contribute to the world’s aspirations and hopes; and how also could it speak to the world about the goal and purpose for which God created her?

The results of the bishops’ deliberations are the documents of the Second Vatican Council. A central document of the Council was the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, known often by its Latin title *Lumen Gentium*, taken from the opening sentence of the document which begins: “Christ is the light of humanity...” The opening paragraph sets out the mind of the bishops and what they hoped to achieve. At the heart of all the teaching of the Council we find the Church being described as unfailingly holy:

This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as uniquely holy, loved the Church as his Bride, delivering himself up for her. He did this that he might sanctify her. He united her to himself as his own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God’s glory. Therefore in the Church, everyone, whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the apostle: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (*Lumen Gentium* 39).
That universal call to holiness — to laity, to clergy, to religious, to all ages, all eras, all souls — was a theme emphasized at the Council and by all popes subsequent to it. To aid with responding to that call as catechists of adults, we have chosen a saint and Doctor of the Church that stands out in the Catholic spiritual tradition for his charism of spiritual guidance for the laity.

Why St. Francis de Sales as a Spiritual Guide for this Program of Study?

As mentioned in the previous section, the remainder of this section features the life and work of St. Francis de Sales. We want to establish for you why we have chosen St. Francis de Sales as our principal spiritual guide in this section, and specifically his *Introduction to the Devout Life* as our spiritual guidebook.

St. Francis de Sales lived from 1567 to 1622, mostly in the southeastern part of France adjacent to Switzerland and Italy. He was of noble birth, and became a priest and eventually bishop of Geneva, despite never gaining access to the city because it was a stronghold of the Calvinist form of Protestantism, at that time dangerously hostile to the Catholic faith. St. Francis first heard the call to teach the truths of the Catholic faith from his bishop:

> When the bishop of Geneva begged for missionaries to evangelize the Calvinist stronghold of Chablis, Francis boldly requested to undertake this difficult and dangerous task. Facing possible martyrdom, with little or no support, he and a fellow priest embarked to bring the people of Chablis back to the Church.... By the time St. Francis left the Chablis region, nearly all the 60,000 people had returned to the Catholic Church (*Sermon in a Sentence: St. Francis de Sales*, selected and arranged by John P. McClernon, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003, pp. 23-24).

All who knew him attested to observing in St. Francis a catechetical method marked by a gentle invitation and a compellingly attractive presentation of the truths of the Catholic faith grounded in the love of Jesus Christ.

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**Did You Know?**

Not yet a year ordained, Francis de Sales made known that he would go anywhere in the diocese to which he was assigned to restore Calvinist adherents to Catholicism. A few months later, the Calvinist authorities of Geneva intimidated nearly everyone into avoiding Francis’ sermons, or even listening to him teach. In addition, there were four attempts on his own life. Francis knew that there had to be another way to communicate the truths of the faith and refute the errors of Calvinism. Undaunted, Francis decided to take advantage of the popularity of little printed pamphlets. Shortly after the first anniversary of his ordination, and throughout the following year, he wrote and had printed 85 pamphlets, as he had announced to the Calvinist authorities in advance that he would do, and distributed them to private homes and put in public places. So brilliantly were these written that even official intimidation had less and less effect, and in short order his sermons became well attended. Less than ten years later, when *Introduction to the Devout Life* was published by now-Bishop Francis de Sales, he was attacked from a new quarter, some of his fellow bishops and some priests because of his clarion call to holiness for every Christian, no matter his or her state in life, and his message that the means of and path to sanctity must fit each person’s life. Despite these critics, St. Francis de Sales is the father of lay spirituality, and he paved the way for the universal call to holiness that is one of the great hallmarks of the Second Vatican Council.
Why *Introduction to the Devout Life*?

In addition to his superb gifts as a catechist, St. Francis became a magnificent spiritual guide for lay men and women. His written works became, and remain, spiritual classics. One of the many translators and editors of *Introduction to the Devout Life* wrote in his own introduction to this masterwork:

> When [it] first appeared, it was recognized as a masterpiece …, and for more than three centuries there has been no dissent from this judgment. Its greatness lies in many things: in its originality, its completeness, its sincerity, its balance, its penetration, and its style. It is one of those rare productions of human genius which are completely successful in what they wish to do…. The greatness of this work is shown in what may be called the symmetry of the saint’s thought. Throughout the work the most delicate balance and the most perfect proportion are everywhere preserved. Everywhere he avoids the extremes that lead to danger or are themselves dangerous (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, translated and edited by John K. Ryan, New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1950, pp. x-xi).

An editor of a little book of St. Francis’ writings wrote:

> We are all born to be saints. God wills nothing less than our personal holiness. The lofty goal of personal sanctity is not the private domain of devout monks and nuns (as was the prevailing thought at the time of Francis) but is very much possible and obtainable for all people, regardless of the circumstances of their vocation and state of life. Up until the sixteenth century no one wrote about or lived this message more than St. Francis de Sales… He was a champion of the common man and woman — and considered the spiritual direction of the lay people of his diocese to be his primary calling and duty as a bishop of the Church (*Sermon in a Sentence: St. Francis de Sales*, p. 21).

And yet we should not think that St. Francis is so far beyond us that it is impossible to follow his spiritual direction, as two editors of a book of daily meditations using his writings make clear:

> We turn to St. Francis de Sales, doctor and master-teacher, so that he may teach us true and heartfelt devotion, appealing to all, derived as it is from the Gospel and at a level that all can understand (*Every Day with Saint Francis de Sales: Teachings and Examples from the Life of the Saint*, “Introduction” by Father Arnold Pedrini, SDB and Father Augustine Archenti, SDB, New Rochelle NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1985, p. xi).

Many popes have confirmed this high praise. Bl. Pope Pius IX, in proclaiming St. Francis de Sales a Doctor of the Church in 1877, wrote:

> Clement IX … regarded Francis’ teaching to be of such value that, before he was pope, he said that de Sales through his celebrated writings had fashioned a kind of holy arsenal for the benefit of souls … Benedict XIV … hastened to affirm that the works of the Genevan prelate had been written with a divinely acquired knowledge… And so it is not surprising that many persons eminent both for their brilliance and their teaching … have followed Francis as their teacher and guide and have drawn much in their own writings from his. [He] … should be counted among the most distinguished teachers Christ our Lord has given to his spouse, the Church (*Dives in Misericordia Deus*, November 16, 1877).

Pope Pius XI offered even higher praise when he wrote, commemorating the third centenary of St. Francis de Sales’ death:

>
Would that this book, the most perfect of its kind in the judgment of his contemporaries, as at one time it was in the hands of all, were now also read by all; so that then Christian piety might everywhere flourish again, and the Church of God might rejoice in seeing sanctity common among her children (From an encyclical letter dated January 26, 1923, quoted in *Introduction to the Devout Life* edited and translated by Allan Ross, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2009, reprinted from the work published by The Newman Press, Westminster MD, 1948).

St. Francis was witness to how joyous and loving service to the will of God could produce immense holiness. St. Vincent de Paul, to whom St. Francis was a spiritual father, wrote to Pope Alexander VII, who beatified and canonized St. Francis: “I know of no man on earth who so resembled Jesus Christ as Francis de Sales.” One of only 36 Doctors of the Church, St. Francis de Sales is an ideal mentor to us as lay catechists.

### Common Misunderstanding:

**Why the Church Canonizes Clergy**

Among the declared saints of the Catholic Church, clergy — popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, and deacons — seem disproportionately numerous. The ordinary lay Catholic can exclaim, “How can the life of an ordained man, no matter how saintly, be a model for my life amid the slings and arrows of family life and earning a living?” But the Church’s purpose in canonizing saints such as St. Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva, is twofold: to not only give us models of holy living despite difficulties and setbacks (even if they don’t involve crying babies, wayward teenagers, broken marriages, or unemployment), but also because they are given wisdom, counsel, and understanding — gifts of the Holy Spirit — in superabundant measure for the sake of the their flocks, and for our sake as well. The *Introduction to the Devout Life* is an example of immeasurably valuable and useful spiritual direction for lay Catholics of any generation. Examples of similarly gifted “universal spiritual directors” in the 20th century include Pope John Paul II and the American Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, both of whose causes for canonization are underway.

### Entering In

The remainder of this section is taken entirely from *Introduction to the Devout Life*. The book has five parts; you are about to read and pray through the first one. At the end of this section, and of all the remaining sections, selections from the other five parts of St. Francis’ book are suggested for your benefit in the “Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It” section. This would be immensely worth your time. In his preface to his book, St. Francis called the person he addresses “Philothea,” which he explained is “a name signifying one who loves God, or at least desires to do so.”

In this section St. Francis’ text is occasionally interspersed with exercises to help you as a catechist focus your formation and assimilate what you’ve read. When you come to the part of St. Francis’ text where he presents to you ten meditations, you’ll note that he suggests using them “one after another, in the order in which they come, only taking one each day.”

Unless you have already done so with this book at some other point in your adult life, we strongly recommend that you do just that — take your time with the meditations, giving God the space needed to allow each one to impact you as their author intended. You may want to proceed with the other sections so that you can continue to make progress while not rushing to complete this section.
Exercise 6-3
Having Ears to Hear

As you read chapters 1 and 2 below, identify and perhaps highlight the one sentence from each chapter that you find most striking for your own life.

Introduction to the Devout Life — Part 1: Practices Suitable to the Soul’s Guidance

CHAPTER 1 — True Devotion

You aim at a devout life, Philothea, because as a Christian you know that such devotion is most acceptable to God’s divine majesty. But seeing that the small errors people are wont to commit in the beginning of any undertaking are apt to wax greater as they advance, and to become irreparable at last, it is most important that you should thoroughly understand wherein lies the grace of true devotion — and that because while there undoubtedly is such a true devotion, there are also many spurious and idle semblances thereof; and unless you know which is real, you may mistake, and waste your energy in pursuing an empty, profitless shadow. Arelius was wont to paint all his pictures with the features and expression of the women he loved, and even so we all color devotion according to our own likings and dispositions. One man sets great value on fasting, and believes himself to be leading a very devout life, so long as he fasts rigorously, although the while his heart is full of bitterness — and while he will not moisten his lips with wine, perhaps not even with water, in his great abstinence, he does not scruple to steep them in his neighbor’s blood, through slander and detraction. Another man reckons himself as devout because he repeats many prayers daily, although at the same time he does not refrain from all manner of angry, irritating, conceited, or insulting speeches among his family and neighbors. This man freely opens his purse in almsgiving, but closes his heart to all gentle and forgiving feelings towards those who are opposed to him; while that one is ready enough to forgive his enemies, but will never pay his rightful debts save under pressure. Meanwhile all these people are conventionally called religious, but nevertheless they are in no true sense really devout. When Saul’s servants sought to take David, Michal induced them to suppose that the lifeless figure lying in his bed, and covered with his garments, was the man they sought (see 1 Sm 19:11-16); and in like manner many people dress up an exterior with the visible acts expressive of earnest devotion, and the world supposes them to be really devout and spiritual-minded, while all the time they are mere lay figures, mere phantasms of devotion.

But, in fact, all true and living devotion presupposes the love of God — and indeed it is neither more nor less than a very real love of God, though not always of the same kind; for that love shining on the soul we call grace, which makes us acceptable to his divine majesty — when it strengthens us to do well, it is called charity — but when it attains its fullest perfection, in which it not only leads us to do well, but to act carefully, diligently, and promptly, then it is called devotion. The ostrich never flies — the hen rises with difficulty, and achieves but a brief and rare flight, but the eagle, the dove, and the swallow, are continually on the wing, and soar high — even so sinners do not rise towards God, for all their movements are earthly and earthbound. Well-meaning people, who have not as yet attained a true devotion, attempt a manner of flight by means of their good actions, but rarely, slowly and heavily; while really devout men rise up to God frequently, and with a swift and soaring wing. In short, devotion is simply a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which divine love works in us, and causes us to work briskly and lovingly; and just as charity leads us to a general practice of all God’s commandments, so devotion leads us to practice them readily and diligently. And therefore we cannot call him who neglects to observe all God’s commandments either good or devout, because in order to be good, a man must be filled with love, and to be devout, he must further be very ready and apt to perform the deeds of love. And forasmuch as devotion consists in a high degree of real love, it not only makes us ready, active, and diligent in following all God’s commands, but it also excites us to be ready and loving in performing as many good works as possible, even such as are not enjoined upon us, but are only matters of counsel or inspiration.
Even as a man just recovering from illness, walks only so far as he is obliged to go, with a slow and weary step, so the converted sinner journeys along as far as God commands him but slowly and wearily, until he attains a true spirit of devotion, and then, like a sound man, he not only gets along, but he runs and leaps in the way of God’s commands, and hastens gladly along the paths of Heavenly counsels and inspirations. The difference between love and devotion is just that which exists between fire and flame — love is spiritual fire and when it bursts into flames it is called devotion — and what devotion adds to the fire of love is that flame which makes it eager, energetic and diligent, not merely in obeying God’s Commandments, but in fulfilling his divine counsels and inspirations.

CHAPTER 2 — The Nature and Excellence of Devotion

Those who sought to discourage the Israelites from going up to the Promised Land, told them that it was “a land that devours its inhabitants” (Nm 13:32) that is, that the climate was so unhealthy that the inhabitants could not live long, and that the people thereof were “men of a great stature” who looked upon the newcomers as mere locusts to be devoured (see Nm 13:32-33). It is just so, Philothea, that the world runs down true devotion, painting devout people with gloomy, melancholy aspect, and affirming that religion makes them dismal and unpleasant. But even as Joshua and Caleb protested that not only was the Promised Land a fair and pleasant country, but that the Israelites would take an easy and peaceful possession thereof (see Nm 14:6-9), so the Holy Spirit tells us through his saints, and our Lord has told us with his own lips, that a devout life is very sweet, very happy, and very loveable.

The world, looking on, sees that devout persons fast, watch and pray, endure injury patiently, minister to the sick and poor, restrain their temper, check and subdue their passions, deny themselves in all sensual indulgence, and do many other things which in themselves are hard and difficult. But the world sees nothing of that inward, heartfelt devotion which makes all these actions pleasant and easy. Watch a bee hovering over the mountain thyme — the juices it gathers are bitter, but the bee turns them all to honey — and so tells the worldling, that though the devout soul finds bitter herbs along its path of devotion, they are all turned to sweetness and pleasantness as it treads — and the martyrs have counted fire, sword, and rack but as perfumed flowers by reason of their devotion. And if devotion can sweeten such cruel tortures, and even death itself, how much more will it give a charm to ordinary good deeds? We sweeten unripe fruit with sugar, and it is useful in correcting the crudity even of that which is good. So devotion is the real spiritual sweetness which takes away all bitterness from mortifications; and prevents consolations from disagreeing with the soul: it cures the poor of sadness, and the rich of presumption; it keeps the oppressed from feeling desolate, and the prosperous from insolence; it averts sadness from the lonely, and dissipation from social life; it is as warmth in winter and refreshing dew in summer; it knows how to abound and how to suffer want; how to profit alike by honor and contempt; it accepts gladness and sadness with an even mind, and fills men’s hearts with a wondrous sweetness.

Ponder Jacob’s ladder — it is a true picture of the devout life; the two poles which support the steps are types of prayer which seeks the love of God, and the sacraments which confer that love; while the steps themselves are simply the degrees of love by which we go on from virtue to virtue, either descending by good deeds on behalf of our neighbor or ascending by contemplation to a loving union with God. Consider, too, who they are who trod this ladder; men with angels’ hearts, or angels with human forms. They have wings wherewith to fly, and attain to God in holy prayer, but they have likewise feet wherewith to tread in human paths by a holy gracious intercourse with men; their faces are bright and beautiful, asm much as they accept all things gently and sweetly; their heads and limbs are uncovered, because their thoughts, affections and actions have no motive or object save that of pleasing God; the rest of their bodies is covered with a light shining garment, because while they use the world and the things of this life, they use all such purely and honestly, and no further than is needful for their condition — such are the truly devout. Believe me, dear child, devotion is the delight of delights, queen of the virtues, the perfection of love. If love is the milk of life, devotion is the cream thereof; if it is a fruitful plant, devotion is the blossom; if it is a precious stone, devotion is its brightness; if it is a precious balm, devotion is its perfume, even that sweet odor which delights men and causes the angels to rejoice.
CHAPTER 3 — Devotion is Suitable to Every Vocation and Profession

When God created the world he commanded each tree to bear fruit after its kind (see Gn 1:12), and even so he bids Christians — the living trees of his Church — to bring forth fruits of devotion, each one according to his kind and vocation. A different exercise of devotion is required of each — the noble, the artisan, the servant, the prince, the maiden and the wife; and furthermore such practice must be modified according to the strength, the calling, and the duties of each individual. I ask you, my child, would it be fitting that a bishop should seek to lead the solitary life of a Carthusian? And if the father of a family were as regardless in making provision for the future as a Capuchin, if the artisan spent the day in church like a religious, if the religious involved himself in all manner of business on his neighbor’s behalf as a bishop is called upon to do, would not such a devotion be ridiculous, ill-regulated, and intolerable?

Nevertheless such a mistake is often made, and the world, which cannot or will not discriminate between real devotion and the indiscretion of those who fancy themselves devout, grumbles and finds fault with devotion, which is really nowise concerned in these errors. No indeed, my child, the devotion which is true hinders nothing, but on the contrary it perfects everything; and that which runs counter to the rightful vocation of any one is, you may be sure, a spurious devotion. Aristotle says that the bee sucks honey from flowers without damaging them, leaving them as whole and fresh as it found them — but true devotion does better still, for it not only hinders no manner of vocation or duty, but, contrariwise, it adorns and beautifies all. Throw precious stones into honey, and each will grow more brilliant according to its several color — likewise every vocation becomes more agreeable when united with devotion — family duties are lighter, married love truer, service to our King more faithful, every kind of occupation more acceptable and better performed where that is the guide.

It is an error, nay more, a very heresy, to seek to banish the devout life from the soldier’s guardroom, the mechanic’s workshop, the prince’s court, or the domestic hearth. Of course a purely contemplative devotion, such as is specially proper to the religious and monastic life, cannot be practiced in these outer vocations, but there are various other kinds of devotion well-suited to lead those whose calling is secular, along the paths of perfection. The Old Testament furnishes us examples in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, Job, Tobias, Sarah, Rebecca and Judith; and in the New Testament we read of St. Joseph, Lydia and Crispus, who led a perfectly devout life in their trades — we have St. Anne, Martha, St. Monica, Aquila and Priscilla, as examples of household devotion, St. Cornelius, St. Sebastian, and St. Maurice among soldiers — Constantine, St. Helena, St. Louis, the Blessed Amadeus, and St. Edward on the throne. And we even find instances of some who fell away in solitude — usually so helpful to perfection, — some who had led a higher life in the world, which seems so antagonistic to it. St. Gregory dwells on how Lot, who had kept himself pure in the city, fell in his mountain solitude. Be sure that wheresoever our lot is cast we may and must aim at the perfect life.

CHAPTER 4 — The Necessity of a Guide

When Tobias was bidden to go to Rages, he was willing to obey his father, but he objected that he knew not the way — to which Tobit answered, “Find a man to go with you” (Tb 5:3), and even so, Philothea, I say to you, if you would really tread the paths of the devout life, seek some holy man to guide and conduct you. This is the precept of precepts, says the devout [St. Teresa of] Avila — seek as you will you can never so surely discover God’s will as through the channel of humble obedience so universally taught and practiced by all the saints of olden time.

When the blessed Teresa read of the great penances performed by Catherine of Cordova, she desired exceedingly to imitate them, contrary to the mind of her confessor, who forbade her to do the like, and she was tempted to disobey him therein. Then God spoke to Teresa, saying, “My child, you are on a good and safe road — true, you see all this penance, but verily I esteem your obedience as a yet greater virtue” — and thenceforth St. Teresa so greatly loved the virtue of obedience, that in addition to that
due to her superiors, she took a vow of special obedience to a pious ecclesiastic, pledging herself to follow his direction and guidance, which proved an inexpressible help to her. And even so before and after her, many pious souls have subjected their will to God’s ministers in order to better submit themselves to him, a practice much commended by St. Catherine of Siena in her Dialogue. The devout Princess St. Elizabeth [of Hungary] gave an unlimited obedience to the venerable Conrad; and one of the parting counsels given by St. Louis [of France] to his son ere he died was, “Confess yourself often — choose a single-minded, worthy confessor, who is able wisely to teach you how to do that which is needful for you.” “A faithful friend,” we are told in Holy Scripture, “is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure” (Sir 6:14), and again: “A faithful friend is an elixir of life; and those that fear the Lord will find him” (Sir 6:16).

These sacred words have chiefly reference, as you see, to the immortal life, with a view to which we specially need a faithful friend, who will guide us by his counsel and advice, thereby guarding us against the deceits and snares of the Evil One — he will be as a storehouse of wisdom to us in our sorrows, trials and falls; he will be as a healing balm to stay and soothe our heart in the time of spiritual sickness — he will shield us from evil, and confirm that which is good in us, and when we fall through infirmity, he will avert the deadly nature of the evil, and raise us up again.

But who can find such a friend? The wise man answers, “Whoever fears the Lord” (Sir 6:17), that is to say, the truly humble soul which earnestly desires to advance in the spiritual life. So, Philothea, inasmuch as it concerns you so closely to set forth on this devout journey under good guidance, do you pray most earnestly to God to supply you with a guide after his own heart, and never doubt but that he will grant you one who is wise and faithful, even should he send you an angel from Heaven, as he sent to Tobias.

In truth, your spiritual guide should always be as a Heaven-sent angel to you — by which I mean that when you have found him, you are not to look upon him, or trust in him or his wisdom as an ordinary man; but you must look to God, who will help you and speak to you through this man, putting into his heart and mouth that which is needful to you; so that you ought to hearken as though he were an angel come down from Heaven to lead you thither. Deal with him in all sincerity and faithfulness, and with open heart; manifesting alike your good and your evil, without pretense or dissimulation. Thus your good shall be examined and confirmed, and your evil corrected and remedied — you will be soothed and strengthened in trouble, moderated and regulated in prosperity.

Give your guide a hearty confidence mingled with sacred reverence, so that reverence in no way shall hinder your confidence, and confidence in no way lessen your reverence: trust him with the respect of a daughter for her father; respect him with the confidence of a son in his mother. In a word, such a friendship should be strong and sweet; altogether holy, sacred, divine and spiritual. And with such an aim, choose one among a thousand, St. Teresa says — and I say among ten thousand, for there are fewer than one would think capable of this office. He must be full of love, of wisdom and of discretion; for if either of these three be wanting there is danger. But once more I say, ask such help of God, and when you have found it, bless his holy name; be steadfast, seek no more, but go on simply, humbly and trustfully, for you are safe to make a prosperous journey.

Exercise 6-4

What is the Goal and Do I Need a Guide?

Pause at this point in your reading. Consider and answer briefly the following:

_resource

Reflect on your ideas of what it means to be holy. How did you acquire this understanding?

If you currently have a spiritual director, what is your relationship with that person compared to St. Francis’ statements on the subject? If you do not have a spiritual director, list the benefits you might gain by obtaining one.
CHAPTER 5 — The First Step Must be Purifying the Soul

“The flowers appear on the earth.” (Song 2:12) says the Heavenly Bridegroom, and the time for pruning and cutting is come. And what, my child, are our hearts’ flowers save our good desires? Now, so soon as these begin to appear, we need the pruning-hook to cut off all dead and superfluous works from our conscience. When the daughter of a strange land was about to espouse an Israelite, the Law commanded her to put off the garment of her captivity, to pare her nails, and to shave her head (see Dt 21:12), even so the soul which aims at the dignity of becoming the spouse of Christ, must put off the old man, and put on the new man, forsaking sin: moreover, it must pare and shave away every impediment which can hinder the love of God. The very first step towards spiritual health is to be purged from our sinful humors. St. Paul received perfect purification instantaneously, and the like grace was conferred on St. Mary Magdalene, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Pelagia, and some others, but this kind of purgation is as miraculous and extraordinary in grace as the resurrection of the dead in nature, nor dare we venture to aspire to it. The ordinary purification, whether of body or soul, is only accomplished by slow degrees, step by step, gradually and painfully.

The angels on Jacob’s ladder had wings, yet nevertheless they did not fly, but went in due order up and down the steps of the ladder. The soul which rises from out of sin to a devout life has been compared to the dawn, which does not banish darkness suddenly, but by degrees. That cure which is gradually effected is always the surest; and spiritual maladies, like those of the body, are wont to come on horseback and express, while they depart slowly and on foot. So that we must be brave and patient, Philothea, in this undertaking. It is a woeful thing to see souls beginning to chafe and grow disheartened because they find themselves still subject to imperfection after having made some attempt at leading a devout life, and well-nigh yielding to the temptation to give up in despair and fall back; but, on the other hand, there is an extreme danger surrounding those souls who, through the opposite temptation, are disposed to imagine themselves purified from all imperfection at the very outset of their purgation; who count themselves as full-grown almost before they are born, and seek to fly before they have wings. Be sure, Philothea, that these are in great danger of a relapse through having left their physician too soon. “It is but lost labor to rise up early and late take rest” (see Ps 127:2) unless the Lord prosper all we do.

The task of purifying the soul cannot, may not, end as long as we live. We must not be disturbed by our imperfections, since for us perfection consists in fighting against them, and it is impossible to fight them unless we can see them, or to overcome them if we do not face up to them. Our victory does not consist in being insensible to them, but in not consenting to them, and we are not consenting to them as long as they displease us. In fact, for the growth of humility we must sometimes be wounded in this spiritual warfare, but we shall never be conquered unless we lose either courage or life itself. Moreover, imperfections and venial sins cannot destroy our spiritual life, which is only to be lost through mortal sin; consequently we have only need to watch well that they do not imperil our courage. David continually asks the Lord to strengthen his heart against cowardice and discouragement; and it is our privilege in this war that we are certain to gain victory so long as we are willing to fight.

CHAPTER 6 — Purification from Mortal Sin

The first purification to be made is from sin — the means whereby to make it, the sacrament of Penance. Seek the best confessor within your reach, use one of the many little books written in order to help the examination of conscience. St. Francis suggests Grenada, Bruno, Arias, Augez, authors little known now, though we have the substance of their teaching in numerous valuable helps for those who are preparing for confession, such as “Pardon through the Precious Blood,” “Helps for Confirmation and First Communion” (Masters), “Manual for Confession,” “Repentance,” (Rev. T. T. Carter), “Hints to Penitents” (Palmer), Brett’s “Guide to Faith and Piety,” Crake’s “Bread of Life” (Mowbray), “Paradise of the Christian Soul,” etc. Read some such book carefully, examining point by point wherein you have sinned, from the first use of your reason to the present time. And if you mistrust your memory, write down the result of your examination. Having thus sought out the evil spots in your conscience, strive to detest them, and to reject them with the greatest abhorrence and contrition of which your heart is capable, bearing in mind these four things, that by sin you have lost God’s grace, rejected your share in Heaven, accepted the pains of Hell, and renounced God’s eternal love.
You see, my child, that I am now speaking of a general confession of your whole life, which, while I grant it is not always necessary, I yet believe will be found most helpful in the beginning of your pursuit after holiness, and therefore I earnestly advise you to make it. Not infrequently the ordinary confessions of persons leading an everyday life are full of great faults, and that because they make little or no preparation, and have not the needful contrition. Owing to this deficiency such people go to confession with a tacit intention of returning to their old sins, inasmuch as they will not avoid the occasions of sin, or take the necessary measures for amendment of life, and in all such cases a general confession is required to steady and fix the soul.

But, furthermore, a general confession forces us to a clearer self-knowledge, kindles a wholesome shame for our past life, and rouses gratitude for God's mercy, which has so long waited patiently for us — it comforts the heart, refreshes the spirit, excites good resolutions, affords opportunity to our spiritual Father for giving the most suitable advice, and opens our hearts so as to make future confessions more effectual. Therefore I cannot enter into the subject of a general change of life and entire turning to God, by means of a devout life, without urging upon you to begin with a general confession.

CHAPTER 7 — Purification from Attachment to Mortal Sin

All the children of Israel went forth from the land of Egypt, but not all went forth heartily, and so, when wandering in the desert, some of them sighed after the leeks and onions — the fleshpots of Egypt. Even so there are penitents who forsake sin, yet without forsaking their sinful affections; that is to say, they intend to sin no more, but it goes sorely against them to abstain from the pleasures of sin; they formally renounce and forsake sinful acts, but they turn back many a fond lingering look to what they have left, like Lot's wife as she fled from Sodom. They are like a sick man who abstains from eating melon when the doctor says it would kill him, but who all the while longs for it, talks about it, bargains when he may have it, would at least like just to sniff the perfume, and thinks those who are free to eat of it very fortunate.

And so these weak cowardly penitents abstain awhile from sin, but reluctantly — they would fain be able to sin without incurring damnation — they talk with a lingering taste of their sinful deeds, and envy those who are yet indulging in the like. Thus a man who has meditated some revenge gives it up in confession, but soon after he is to be found talking about the quarrel, averring that but for the fear of God he would do this or that; complaining that it is hard to keep the divine rule of forgiveness; would to God it were lawful to avenge one's self!

Who can fail to see that even if this poor man is not actually committing sin, he is altogether bound with the affections thereof, and although he may have come out of Egypt, he yet hungers after it, and longs for the leeks and onions he was wont to feed upon there! It is the same with the woman who, though she has given up her life of sin, yet takes delight in being sought after and admired. Alas! of a truth, all such are in great peril.

Be sure, Philothea, that if you seek to lead a devout life, you must not merely forsake sin; but you must further free your heart from all attachments to sin; for, to say nothing of the danger of a relapse, these attachments will be constant sources of weakness and discouragement, preventing you from doing good diligently, readily and frequently, which is the essence of true devotion.

Souls which, in spite of having forsaken sin, yet retain such likings and longings, remind us of those persons who, without being actually ill, are pale and sickly, languid in all they do, eating without appetite, sleeping without refreshment, laughing without joy, dragging themselves around rather than walking with deliberateness. Such souls as I have described lose all the grace of their good deeds, which are probably few and feeble, through their spiritual weariness.
**CHAPTER 8 — How to Effect this Purification**

The first inducement to attain this second purification is a keen and lively apprehension of the great evils resulting from sin, by means of which we acquire a deep, hearty contrition. For just as contrition (so far as it is real), however slight, when joined to the virtue of the sacraments, purges away sin; so, when it becomes strong and urgent, it purges away all the attachments which cling around habits of sin. A moderate, slight hatred makes men dislike its object and avoid his society; but when a violent, mortal hatred exists, they not only abhor and shun the person who excites it, but they loathe him, they cannot endure the approach of his relations or connections, nor even his likeness or anything that concerns him.

Just so when a penitent only hates sin through a weakly although real contrition, he will resolve to avoid overt acts of sin; but when his contrition is strong and hearty, he will not merely abhor sin, but every affection, every link and tendency to sin. Therefore, Philothea, it behooves us to kindle our contrition and repentance as much as we possibly can, so that it may reach even to the very smallest appearance of sin. Thus it was that Mary Magdalene, when converted, so entirely lost all taste for her past sin and its pleasures, that she never again cast back one thought upon them; and David declared that he hated not only sin itself, but every path and way which led thereto. This it is which is that “renewing of the soul” which the same prophet compares to the eagle’s strength (see Ps 103:5).

**Spiritual Reflection with Our Saintly Guide**

Pause at this point in your reading. Consider and answer briefly the following:

1. Firstly, write a summary of each of the above chapters in a single sentence.
2. Then, in a short paragraph, record what you have found most challenging and interesting thus far.

**MEDITATION**

Now, conduct the following meditation (CHAPTER 9 — FIRST MEDITATION) carefully, at this stage, before writing and submitting your final piece of work this year. Then, during the weeks between your Year 1 and Year 2 studies, complete the remaining meditations (numbers 2 to 10), at regular intervals. If you practice them steadfastly, they (by God’s grace) will root out both sin and its affections from your heart. It is to that end that we have prepared them: use them one after another, in the order in which they come, only taking one each day, and using that as early as possible, for the morning is the best time for all spiritual exercises — and then you will ponder and ruminite it through the day. If you have not as yet been taught how to meditate, you will find instructions to that purpose in the second Part [see the Introduction for internet sources of the entire Introduction to the Devout Life].

**CHAPTER 9 — FIRST MEDITATION: Our Creation**

**Preparation**

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask him to inspire you.

**Considerations**

1) Consider that but a few years since you were not born into the world, and your soul was as yet non-existent. Where were you then, O my soul? The world was already old, and yet of you there was no sign.

2) God brought you out of this nothingness, in order to make you what you are, not because he had any need of you, but solely out of his goodness.

3) Consider the being which God has given you; for it is the foremost being of this visible world, adapted to live eternally, and to be perfectly united to God’s divine majesty.
**Affections and Resolutions**

1) Humble yourself utterly before God, saying with the Psalmist, O Lord, I am nothing in respect of you — what am I, that you should remember me? (see Ps 8:4). O my soul, you were yet lost in that abyss of nothingness, if God had not called you forth, and what of you in such a case?

2) Give God thanks. O great and good Creator, what do I not owe you, who did take me from out that nothingness, by your mercy to make me what I am? How can I ever do enough worthily to praise your holy name, and render due thanks to your goodness?

3) Confess your own shame. But alas, O my Creator, so far from uniting myself to you by a loving service, I have rebelled against you through my unruly affections, departing from you, and giving myself up to sin, and ignoring your goodness, as though you had not created me.

4) Prostrate yourself before God. O my soul, know that the Lord he is your God, it is he that has made you, and not you yourself. O God, I am the work of your hands; henceforth I will not seek to rest in myself, who am nothing. Wherein have you to glory, who are but dust and ashes? How can you, a very nothing, exalt yourself? In order to my own humiliation, I will do such and such a thing — I will endure such contempt — I will alter my ways and henceforth follow my Creator, and realize that I am honored by his calling me to the being he has given; I will employ it solely to obey his will, by means of the teaching he has given me, of which I will inquire more through my spiritual Father.

**Conclusion**

- Thank God. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and praise his holy name with all your being, because his goodness called me forth from nothingness, and his mercy created me.

- Offer. O my God, I offer you with all my heart the being you have given me, I dedicate and consecrate it to you.

- Pray. O God, strengthen me in these affections and resolutions. Dear Lord, I commend me, and all those I love, to your never-failing mercy. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY.

- At the end of your meditation linger a while, and gather, so to say, a little spiritual bouquet from the thoughts you have dwelt upon, the sweet perfume whereof may refresh you through the day.

**For Your Portfolio**

**Case Study: You**

In light of the last three sections of this program of study, all of which have focused on the nature of spirituality and the call to deep conversion, in a paragraph or less write a personal mission statement for your life as a Catholic.

Following this, in a second paragraph or less write a personal mission statement for your calling as a catechist within the heart of the Church. More so than most of these exercises, it would be of great value to take this to prayer, and to take your time in developing what you really want to say.

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.
Summarizing Where We’ve Been in this Spiritual Journey

- When the love of God leads us do good diligently, readily, and frequently it is called perfection.
- “Love is spiritual fire and when it bursts into flames it is called devotion.”
- The world tries to say that devout people are unhappy, thus making devotion undesirable.
- “Devotion is the delight of delights, queen of the virtues, the perfection of love.”
- The practice of devotion must be adapted to the duties, strength, and activities of each individual.
- “Every vocation becomes more agreeable when united with devotion.”
- Pray for and seek a good and suitable person to guide you in the spiritual life.
- “We must not be disturbed by our imperfections, since for us perfection consists in fighting against them.”
- We are always victorious provided we are willing to fight.
- The first purgation is of sin and the means is the sacrament of Confession.
- A general confession is strongly recommended, but not absolutely necessary.
- Some have a reluctance to give up attachment to sin, which causes spiritual weariness.
- To help root out both sin and attachment to sin, ten meditations are encouraged.
- Sin is only shameful when we commit it, but it is transformative when it is met with confession, repentance, and deep contrition.
- Engage in a resolution to serve God in mind, body, and soul.
- Receive the Lord in Holy Communion as a seal on your heart.
- No matter how small, venial sins offend God.
- These offenses are contrary to devotion because they entangle the soul in bad habits and imply a determination to offend God.
- Many activities are morally indifferent acts, but may have affections that are damaging to devotion.
- There is no nature so good that it cannot be tainted by evil habits; nor any nature so bad it that it cannot be brought under control and overcome by God’s grace.

For Your Portfolio

Checking Your Progress

Moving From Spiritual to Catechetical

As this three-chapter Part II concludes, in 500 words or less, write a reflection on the following questions:

-dess In a paragraph, and bearing in mind the call to holiness, how have you been called to on-going conversion in terms of how you relate to people, things, and time?

-dess In a second paragraph, how have you been called to conversion through efforts you have made to catechize others (perhaps just your own family), through providing care for others, and through the liturgy?

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.
This section concludes Part II. Its goal has been to consider deeply the nature of conversion and the surpassing importance of a catechist’s spiritual life. In light of this goal, please answer the following:

⚠️ What are the two most pressing questions that arise for you from your study of these sections?

⚠️ What are the two most surprising things that you encountered in Part II?

Forward your answers to your program director. (They will not be used to assess your progress, but rather to provide your program director with the opportunity to gain a sense of what are your greatest needs as you continue to study the craft of catechesis to adults.)

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

Understanding: General Directory for Catechesis, Part 5, 243-248
The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, Chapter 4, pp. 71-77

Change: Introduction to the Devout Life, Part 2, 1-13

Meditation: Consider — My purpose is to know and love God. Do I really remember daily why I was made?
Read — 1 John 2:1-29
Pray — Jesus my Jesus, place me next to you this hour more than the last.

Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 19th Century
“The first end I propose in our daily work is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner he wills it; and thirdly to do it because it is his will.”
~ St. Elizabeth Ann Seton ~
SECOND TO TENTH MEDITATIONS

The remaining text below from St. Francis de Sales is to be undertaken as you choose anytime after the second study day of this program. It can extend after the third study day if you prefer. The goal is to take your time with these meditations. Near the end of this text, there is a single exercise added to assist you with interior reflection.

CHAPTER 10 — SECOND MEDITATION: Why We Were Created

Preparation

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask him to inspire you.

Considerations

1) God did not bring you into the world because he had any need of you, useless as you are; but solely that he might show forth his goodness in you, giving you his grace and glory. And to this end he gave you understanding that you might know him, memory that you might think of him, a will that you might love him, imagination that you might realize his mercies, sight that you might behold the marvels of his works, speech that you might praise him, and so on with all your other faculties.

2) Being created and placed in the world for this intent, all contrary actions should be shunned and rejected, as also you should avoid as idle and superfluous whatever does not promote it.

3) Consider how unhappy they are who do not think of all this — who live as though they were created only to build and plant, to heap up riches and amuse themselves with trifles.

Affections and Resolutions

1) Humble yourself in that hitherto you have so little thought upon all this. Alas, my God, of what was I thinking when I did not think of you? What did I remember when I forgot you? What did I love when I loved you not? Alas, when I ought to have been feeding on the truth, I was but filling myself with vanity, and serving the world, which was made to serve me.

2) Abhor your past life. I renounce you, vain thoughts and useless reasoning, frivolous and hateful memories: I renounce all worthless and false friendships, all unprofitable and harmful habits, and miserably ungrateful self-indulgence, I will not have any part in you.

3) Turn to God. My God and Savior, you shall henceforth be the sole object of my thoughts; no more will I give my mind to ideas which are displeasing to you. All the days of my life I will dwell upon the greatness of your goodness, so lovingly poured out upon me. You shall be henceforth the delight of my heart, the resting-place of all my affections. From this time forth I will forsake and abhor the vain pleasures and amusements, the empty pursuits which have absorbed my time — the unprofitable ties which have bound my heart I will loosen henceforth, and to that end I will use such and such remedies.

Conclusion

❖ Thank God, who has made you for so gracious an end. You have made me, O Lord, for yourself, that I may eternally enjoy the immensity of your glory; when shall I be worthy thereof, when shall I know how to bless you as I ought?

❖ Offer. O Dearest Lord, I offer you all my affections and resolutions, with my whole heart and soul.

❖ Pray. I entreat you, O God, that you would accept my desires and longings, and give your blessing to my soul, to enable me to fulfill them, through the merits of your dear Son’s Precious Blood shed upon the cross for me. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY. Gather your spiritual bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 11 — THIRD MEDITATION: The Gifts of God

Preparation

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask him to inspire you.

Considerations

1) Consider the material gifts God has given you — your body, and the means for its preservation; your health, and all that maintains it; your friends and many helps. Consider too how many persons more deserving than you are without these gifts; some suffering in health or limb, others exposed to injury, contempt and trouble, or sunk in poverty, while God has willed you to be better off.

2) Consider the mental gifts he has given you. There are many who are half-witted, idiotic, insane, yet you are not of their number. Again, God has favored you with a decent and suitable education, while many have grown up in utter ignorance.

3) Further, consider his spiritual gifts. You are a child of his Church. God has taught you to know himself from your youth. How often has he given you his sacraments? What inspirations and interior light, what reproofs, he has given to lead you aright; how often he has forgiven you, how often delivered you from occasions of falling; what opportunities he has granted for your soul’s progress! Dwell somewhat on the details; see how loving and gracious God has been to you.

Affections and Resolutions

1) Marvel at God’s goodness. How good he has been to me, how abundant in mercy and plenteous in loving-kindness! O my soul, be you ever telling of the great things the Lord has done for you!

2) Marvel at your own ingratitude. What am I, Lord, that you remember me? How unworthy am I! I have trodden your mercies under foot, I have abused your grace, turning it against your very self; I have set the depth of my ingratitude against the deep of your grace and favor.

3) Kindle your gratitude. O my soul, be no more so faithless and disloyal to your mighty Benefactor! How should not my whole soul serve the Lord, Who has done such great things in me and for me?

4) Philothea, refrain from this or that material indulgence; let your body be wholly the servant of God, who has done so much for it: set your soul to seek him by this or that devout practice suitable thereto. Make diligent use of the means provided by the Church to help you to love God and save your soul. Resolve to be constant in prayer and seeking the sacraments, in hearing God’s Word, and in obeying his inspirations and counsels.

Conclusion

- Thank God for the clearer knowledge he has given you of his benefits and your own duty.
- Offer your heart and all its resolutions to him.
- Ask him to strengthen you to fulfill them faithfully by the merits of the death of his Son. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY. Gather your bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 12 — FOURTH MEDITATION: Sin

**Preparation**

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask him to inspire you.

**Considerations**

1) Consider how long it is since you first began to commit sin, and how since that first beginning sin has multiplied in your heart; how every day has added to the number of your sins against God, against yourself and against your neighbor, by deed, word, thought, and desire.

2) Consider your evil tendencies, and how far you have followed them. These two points will show you that your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head, or the sand on the seashore.

3) Apart from sin, consider your ingratitude towards God, which is in itself a sin enfolding all the others, and adding to their enormity: consider the gifts which God has given you, and which you have turned against the Giver; especially the inspirations you have neglected, and the promptings to good which you have frustrated. Review the many sacraments you have received, and see where are their fruits. Where are the precious jewels wherewith your Heavenly Bridegroom decked you? With what preparation have you received them? Reflect upon the ingratitude with which, while God sought to save you, you have fled from him and rushed upon destruction.

**Affections and Resolutions**

1) Humble yourself in your wretchedness. O my God, how dare I come before your eyes? I am but a corrupt being, a very sink of ingratitude and wickedness. Can it be that I have been so disloyal, that not one sense, not one faculty but has been sullied and stained — not one day has passed but I have sinned before you? Was this a fitting return for all my Creator's gifts, for my Redeemer’s Blood?

2) Ask pardon — throw yourself at the Lord’s feet as the prodigal son, as the Magdalene, as the woman convicted of adultery. Have mercy, Lord, on me a sinner! O living fountain of mercy, have pity on me, unworthy as I am.

3) Resolve to do better. Lord, with the help of your grace I will never again give myself up to sin. I have loved it too well; henceforth I would abhor it and cleave to you. Father of mercy, I would live and die to you.

4) In order to put away past sin, accuse yourself bravely of it, let there not be one sinful act which you do not bring to light.

5) Resolve to make every effort to tear up the roots of sin from your heart, especially this and that individual sin which troubles you most.

6) In order to do this, resolve steadfastly to follow the advice given you, and never think that you have done enough to atone for your past sin.

**Conclusion**

- Thank God for having waited till now for you, and for rousing these good intentions in your heart.
- Offer him all your heart to carry them to good effect.
- OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY. Pray that he would strengthen you.
CHAPTER 13 — FIFTH MEDITATION: Death

Preparation

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask him to give you his grace. Imagine yourself on your deathbed, incurably ill.

Considerations

1) Consider the uncertainty as to the day of your death. One day your soul will quit this body — will it be in summer or winter? In town or country? By day or by night? Will it be suddenly or with warning? Will it be owing to sickness or an accident? Will you have time to make your last confession or not? Will your confessor or spiritual father be at hand or will he not? Alas, of all these things we know absolutely nothing: all that we do know is that die we shall, and for the most part sooner than we expect.

2) Consider that then the world is at end as far as you are concerned, there will be no more of it for you, it will be altogether overthrown for you, since all pleasures, vanities, worldly joys, empty delights will be as a mere fantastic vision to you. Woe is me, for what mere trifles and unrealities I have ventured to offend my God? Then you will see that what we preferred to him was nought. But, on the other hand, all devotion and good works will then seem so precious and so sweet — why did I not tread that pleasant path? Then what you thought to be little sins will look like huge mountains, and your devotion will seem but a very little thing.

3) Consider the universal farewell which your soul will take of this world. It will say farewell to riches, pleasures, and idle companions; to amusements and pastimes, to friends and neighbors, to husband, wife and child, in short to all creation. And lastly it will say farewell to its own body, which it will leave pale and cold, to become repulsive in decay.

4) Consider how the survivors will hasten to put that body away, and hide it beneath the earth — and then the world will scarce give you another thought, or remember you, any more than you have done to those already gone. “God rest his soul!” men will say, and that is all. O death, how pitiless, how hard you are!

5) Consider that when it quits the body the soul must go at once to the right hand or the left. To which will your soul go? What side will it take? None other, be sure, than that to which it had voluntarily drawn while yet in this world.

Affections and Resolutions

1) Pray to God, and throw yourself into his arms. O Lord, be you my stay in that day of anguish! May that hour be blessed and favorable to me, if all the rest of my life be full of sadness and trial.

2) Despise the world. Forasmuch as I know not the hour in which I must quit the world, I will not grow fond of it. O dear friends, beloved ones of my heart, be content that I cleave to you only with a holy friendship which may last for ever; why should I cling to you with a tie which must be broken?

3) I will prepare for the hour of death and take every precaution for its peaceful arrival; I will thoroughly examine into the state of my conscience, and put in order whatever is wanting.

Conclusion

- Thank God for inspiring you with these resolutions: offer them to his majesty: entreat him anew to grant you a happy death by the merits of his dear Son’s death. Ask the prayers of the Blessed Virgin and the saints. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY.
- Gather your bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 14 — SIXTH MEDITATION: Final Judgment

**Preparation**

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask him to inspire you.

**Considerations**

1) When the time comes which God has appointed for the end of this world, and after many terrible signs and warnings, which will overwhelm men with fear — the whole earth will be destroyed, and nothing then left.

2) Afterwards, all men, save those already risen, shall rise from the dead, and at the voice of the archangel appear in the valley of Jehosaphat. But alas, with what divers aspects! For some will be glorious and shining, others horrible and ghastly.

3) Consider the majesty with which the sovereign Judge will appear surrounded by all his saints and angels; his cross, the sign of grace to the good and of terror to the evil, shining brighter than the sun.

4) This sovereign Judge will with his awful word, instantly fulfilled, separate the evil and the good, setting the one on his right hand, the other on his left — an eternal separation, for they will never meet again.

5) This separation made, the books of conscience will be opened, and all men will behold the malice of the wicked, and how they have contemned God; as also the penitence of the good, and the results of the grace they received. Nothing will be hid. O my God, what confusion to the one, what rejoicing to the other!

6) Consider the final sentence of the wicked. “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.” Dwell upon these awful words. “Go,” he says — for ever discarding these wretched sinners, banishing them for ever from his presence. He calls them “cursed”: O my soul, what a curse, a curse involving all other maledictions, all possible evil, an irrevocable curse, including all time and eternity; condemning them to everlasting fire. Think what that eternity of suffering implies.

7) Then consider the sentence of the good. “Come,” the Judge says — O blessed loving word with which God draws us to himself and receives us in his bosom. “Blessed of my Father” — O blessing above all blessings! — “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” O my God, and that kingdom will know no end!

**Affections and Resolutions**

1) Tremble, my soul, at the thought. O God, who will be my stay in that hour when the pillars of the earth are shaken?

2) Abhor your sins, which alone can cause you to be lost when that fearful day comes. Surely I will judge myself now, that I be not judged — I will examine my conscience, accuse, condemn, punish myself, that the Judge may not condemn me then. I will confess my faults, and follow the counsels given me.

**Conclusion**

- Thank God for having given you means of safety in that terrible day, and time for repentance. Offer him your heart, and ask for grace to use it well. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY.
- Gather your bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 15 — SEVENTH MEDITATION: Hell

_Preparation_

Place yourself in the presence of God, and humbly ask his help. Imagine yourself in a dark city, reeking with the flames of sulfur and brimstone, a city whose inhabitants can never escape.

_Considerations_

1) Like those in this city, the lost are in the depths of Hell — suffering indescribable torture in every sense and every member; and that because having used their members and senses for sin, it is just that through them they should suffer now. Those eyes which delighted in impure vicious sights, now behold devils; the ears which took pleasure in unholy words, now are deafened with yells of despair — and so on with the other senses.

2) Beyond all these sufferings, there is one greater still, the privation and pain of loss of God’s glory, which is for ever denied to their vision. If Absalom cared not to be released from exile, if he might not see his father’s face (see 2 Sm 14:32), how much sorer will it be to be deprived for ever of the blessed vision of God?

3) Consider how insupportable the pains of Hell will be by reason of their eternal duration. If the irritating bite of an insect, or the restlessness of fever, makes an ordinary night seem so long and tedious, how terrible will the endless night of eternity be, where nothing will be found save despair, blasphemy and fury!

_Affections and Resolutions_

1) Read the prophet’s descriptions of the terrors of the Lord (Is 33:14): “Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?” Ask your soul whether it can face them — whether you can bear to lose your God forever?

2) Confess that you have repeatedly deserved to do so. Resolve henceforth to act differently, and to rescue yourself from this abyss. Resolve on distinct definite acts by which you may avoid sin, and thereby eternal death.

_Conclusion_

- Conclude as before: Give thanks, offer yourself, pray. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY.
- Gather your bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 16 — EIGHTH MEDITATION: Heaven

Preparation

Place yourself in the presence of God, and ask his help.

Considerations

1) Represent to yourself a lovely calm night, when the Heavens are bright with innumerable stars: add to the beauty of such a night the utmost beauty of a glorious summer’s day — the sun’s brightness not hindering the clear shining of moon or stars, and then be sure that it all falls immeasurably short of the glory of Heaven. O bright and blessed country, O sweet and precious place!

2) Consider the beauty and perfection of the countless inhabitants of that blessed country — the millions and millions of angels, cherubim, and seraphim; the glorious company of apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and saints. O blessed company, any one single member of which surpasses all the glory of this world, what will it be to behold them all, to sing with them the sweet song of the Lamb? They rejoice with a perpetual joy, they share a bliss unspeakable, and delights unchangeable.

3) Consider how they enjoy the presence of God, who fills them with the richness of his vision, which is a perfect ocean of delight; the joy of being for ever united to their Head. They are like happy birds, hovering and singing for ever within the atmosphere of divinity, which fills them with inconceivable pleasures. There each one vies without jealousy in singing the praises of the Creator. “Blessed are you forever, O dear and precious Lord and Redeemer, who does so freely give us of your own glory,” they cry; and he in his turn pours out his ceaseless blessing on his saints. “Blessed are you — my own forever, who have served me faithfully, and with a good courage.”

Affections and Resolutions

1) Admire and rejoice in the Heavenly country; the glorious and blessed new Jerusalem.

2) Reprove the coldness of your own heart for having hitherto so little sought after that glorious abode. Why have I so long lingered indifferent to the eternal happiness set before me? Woe is me that, for the sake of poor savorless earthly things, I have so often forgotten those Heavenly delights. How could I neglect such real treasures for mere vain and contemptible earthly matters?

3) Aspire earnestly after that blessed abode. Forasmuch, O dear Lord, as you have been pleased to turn my feet into your ways, never will I again look back. Go forth, my soul, towards your promised rest, journey unweariedly to that hoped-for land; wherefore should you tarry in Egypt?

4) Resolve to give up such and such things, which hinder you on the way, and to do such others as will help you on your journey.

Conclusion

❖ Conclude as before: Give thanks, offer yourself, pray. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY.
❖ Gather your bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 17 — NINTH MEDITATION: The Choice of Heaven

**Preparation**

Place yourself in the presence of God. Humble yourself before him and ask him to inspire you.

**Considerations**

1) Imagine yourself alone with your good angel in an open plain, as was Tobit on his way to Rages. Suppose the angel to set before you Heaven, full of delights and joys; and on the other hand Hell, with all its torments. Contemplate both, kneeling in imagination before your guardian angel. Consider that you are most truly standing between Hell and Heaven, and that both the one and the other are open to receive you, according to your own choice.

2) Consider that the choice you make in this life will last forever in the next.

3) Consider too, that while both are open to receive you according to your choice, yet God, who is prepared to give the one by reason of his justice, the other by reason of his mercy, all the while desires unspeakably that you should select Heaven; and your good angel is urging you with all his might to do so, offering you countless graces on God’s part, countless helps to attain to it.

4) Consider that Jesus Christ, enthroned in Heaven, looks down upon you in loving invitation: “O beloved one, come unto me, and joy for ever in the eternal blessedness of my love!” Behold his mother yearning over you with maternal tenderness — “Courage, my child, do not despise the goodness of my Son, or my earnest prayers for your salvation.” Behold the saints, who have left you their example, the millions of holy souls who long after you, desiring earnestly that you may one day be for ever joined to them in their song of praise, urging upon you that the road to Heaven is not so hard to find as the world would have you think. “Press on boldly, dear friend,” they cry. “Whoso will ponder well the path by which we came hither, will discover that we attained to these present delights by sweeter joys than any this world can give.”

**The Choice**

1) O Hell, I abhor you now and for ever; I abhor your griefs and torments, your endless misery, the unceasing blasphemies and maledictions which you pour out upon my God.

2) Turning to you, O blessed Heaven, eternal glory, unfading happiness, I choose you forever as my abode, your glorious mansions, your precious and abiding tabernacles. O my God, I bless your mercy which gives me the power to choose — O Jesus, Savior, I accept your eternal love, and praise you for the promise you have given me of a place prepared for me in that blessed new Jerusalem, where I shall love and bless you forever.

3) I accept the graces which our Lady and the saints obtain for me and promise to make my way to join their company, traveling hand in hand with my guardian angel, who will lead me there.

**Conclusion**

❖ Conclude as before: Give thanks, offer yourself, pray. OUR FATHER, HAIL MARY.
❖ Gather your bouquet of thoughts.
CHAPTER 18 — TENTH MEDITATION: The Choice of the Devout Life

Preparation

Place yourself in the presence of God, and humbly ask his help.

Considerations

1) Once more imagine yourself in an open plain, alone with your guardian angel, and represent to yourself on the left hand the Devil sitting on a high and mighty throne, surrounded by a vast troop of worldly men, who bow bareheaded before him, doing homage to him by the various sins they commit. Study the countenances of the miserable courtiers of that most abominable king — some raging with fury, envy, and passion, some murderous in their hatred — others pale and haggard in their craving after wealth, or madly pursuing every vain and profitless pleasure — others sunk and lost in vile, impure affections. See how all alike are hateful, restless, wild: see how they despise one another, and only pretend to an unreal self-seeking love. Such is the miserable reign of the abhorred tyrant.

2) On the other hand, behold Jesus Christ crucified, calling these unhappy wretches to come to him, and interceding for them with all the love of his precious heart. Behold the company of devout souls and their guardian angels, contemplate the beauty of this religious kingdom. What lovelier than the troop of virgin souls, men and women, pure as lilies — widows in their holy desolation and humility; husbands and wives living in all tender love and mutual cherishing. See how such pious souls know how to combine their exterior and interior duties — to love the earthly spouse without diminishing their devotion to the Heavenly Bridegroom. Look around — one and all you will see them with loving, holy, gentle countenances listening to the voice of their Lord, all seeking to enthrone him more and more within their hearts. They rejoice, but it is with a peaceful, loving, sober joy; they love, but their love is altogether holy and pure. Such among these devout ones as have sorrows to bear, are not disheartened thereby, and do not grieve overmuch, for their Savior's eye is upon them to comfort them, and they all seek him only.

3) Surely you have altogether renounced Satan with his weary miserable troop, by the good resolutions you have made — but nevertheless you have not yet wholly attained to the King Jesus, or altogether joined his blessed company of devout ones — you have hovered between the two.

4) The Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. Louis, St. Monica, and hundreds of thousands more who were once like you, living in the world, call upon you and encourage you.

5) The crucified King himself calls you by your own name: “Come, O my beloved, come, and let me crown you!”

The Choice

1) O world, O vile company, never will I enlist beneath your banner; forever I have forsaken your flatteries and deceptions. O proud king, monarch of evil, infernal spirit, I renounce you and all your hollow pomp, I detest you and all your works.

2) And turning to you, O sweet Jesus, King of blessedness and of eternal glory, I cleave to you with all the powers of my soul, I adore you with all my heart, I choose you now and ever for my King, and with inviolable fidelity I would offer my irrevocable service, and submit myself to your holy laws and ordinances.

3) O Blessed Virgin Mother of God, you shall be my example, I will follow you with all reverence and respect.

4) O my good angel, bring me to this Heavenly company, leave me not until I have reached them, with whom I will sing forever, in testimony of my choice, “Glory be to Jesus, my Lord!”
Such meditations as these, Philothea, will help you, and having made them, go on bravely in the spirit of humility to make your general confession — but I entreat you, be not troubled by any sort of fearfulness. The scorpion who stings us is venomous, but when his oil has been distilled, it is the best remedy for his bite — even so sin is shameful when we commit it, but when reduced to repentance and confession, it becomes salutary and honorable. Contrition and confession are in themselves so lovely and sweet-savored, that they efface the ugliness and disperse the ill savor of sin. Simon the leper called Magdalene a sinner (see Lk 7:40), but our Lord turned the discourse to the perfume of her ointment and the greatness of her love. If we are really humble, Philothea, our sins will be infinitely displeasing to us, because they offend God — but it will be welcome and sweet to accuse ourselves thereof because in so doing we honor God; and there is always somewhat soothing in fully telling the physician all details of our pain.

When you come to your spiritual father, imagine yourself to be on Mount Calvary, at the feet of the crucified Savior, whose Precious Blood is dropping freely to cleanse you from all your sin. Though it is not his actual Blood, yet it is the merit of that outpoured Blood which is sprinkled over his penitents as they kneel in confession. Be sure then that you open your heart fully, and put away your sins by confessing them, for in proportion as they are put out, so will the precious merits of the Passion of Christ come in and fill you with blessings.

Tell everything simply and with straightforwardness, and thoroughly satisfy your conscience in doing so. Then listen to the admonitions and counsels of God’s minister, saying in your heart, “Speak, Lord, for your servant listens.” It is truly God to whom you hearken, forasmuch as he has said to his representatives, “He who hears you hears me” (Lk 10:16). Then take the following protest, as a summary of your contrition, having carefully studied and meditated upon it beforehand: read it through with as earnest an intention as you can make.

CHAPTER 20 — Solemn Resolution

Standing in the presence of God and of all the company of Heaven, having considered the infinite mercy of his Heavenly goodness towards me, a most miserable, unworthy creature, whom he has created, preserved, sustained, delivered from so many dangers, and filled with so many blessings: having above all considered the incomprehensible mercy and loving-kindness with which this most good God has borne with me in my sinfulness, leading me so tenderly to repentance, and waiting so patiently for me till this present year of my life, notwithstanding all my ingratitude, disloyalty and faithlessness, by which I have delayed turning to him, and despising his grace, have offended him anew: and further, remembering that in my Baptism I was solemnly and happily dedicated to God as his child, and that in defiance of the profession then made in my name, I have so often miserably profaned my gifts, turning them against God’s divine majesty — I, now coming to myself prostrate in heart and soul before the throne of his justice, acknowledge and confess that I am duly accused and convicted of treason against his majesty, and guilty of the death and Passion of Jesus Christ, by reason of the sins I have committed, for which he died, bearing the reproach of the cross; so that I deserve nothing else save eternal damnation.

But turning to the throne of infinite mercy of this eternal God, detesting the sins of my past life with all my heart and all my strength, I humbly desire and ask grace, pardon, and mercy, with entire absolution from my sin, in virtue of the death and Passion of that same Lord and Redeemer, on whom I lean as the only ground of my hope. I renew the sacred promise of faithfulness to God made in my name at my Baptism; renouncing the Devil, the world, and the flesh, abhorring their accursed suggestions, vanities and lusts, now and for all eternity. And turning to a loving and pitiful God, I desire, intend, and deliberately resolve to serve and love him now and eternally, devoting my mind and all its faculties, my soul and all its powers, my heart and all its affections, my body and all its senses, to his will. I resolve never to misuse any part of my being by opposing his divine will and sovereign majesty, to which I wholly immolate myself in intention, vowing ever to be his loyal, obedient, and faithful servant without any change or recall.
But if unhappily, through the promptings of the enemy, or human infirmity, I should in any way fail in this my resolution and dedication, I do most earnestly resolve by the grace of the Holy Spirit to rise up again so soon as I shall perceive my fall, and turn anew, without any delay, to seek his divine mercy. This is my firm will and intention — my inviolable, irrevocable resolution, which I make and confirm without any reserve, in the holy presence of God, in the sight of the Church triumphant, and before the Church militant, which is my mother, who accepts this my declaration, in the Person of him who, as her representative, hears me make it. Be pleased, O eternal, all-powerful, and all-loving God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to confirm me in this my resolution, and accept my hearty and willing offering. And inasmuch as you have been pleased to inspire me with the will to make it, give me also the needful strength and grace to keep it. O God, you are my God, the God of my heart, my soul, and spirit, and as such I acknowledge and adore you, now and for all eternity. Glory be to Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER 21 — Conclusion of this First Purification

Having made this resolution, wait attentively, and open the ears of your heart, that you may in spirit hear the absolution which the Lord of your soul, sitting on the throne of his mercy, will speak in Heaven before the saints and angels when his priest absolves you here below in his name. Be sure that all that company of blessed ones rejoice in your joy, and sing a song of untold gladness, embracing you and accepting you as cleansed and sanctified. Of a truth, Philothea, this is a marvelous deed, and a most blessed bargain for you, inasmuch as giving yourself to his divine majesty, you gain him, and save yourself for eternal life. No more remains to do, save to take the pen and heartily sign your protest, and then hasten to the altar, where God on his side will sign and seal your absolution, and his promise of Paradise, giving himself to you in his sacrament, as a sacred seal placed upon your renewed heart. And thus, dear child, your soul will be cleansed from sin, and from all its affections.

But forasmuch as these affections are easily rekindled, thanks to our infirmity and concupiscence (which maybe mortified, but which can never be altogether extinguished while we live), I will give you certain counsels by the practice of which you may henceforth avoid mortal sin, and the affections pertaining thereto. And as these counsels will also help you to attain a yet more perfect purification, before giving them, I would say somewhat concerning that absolute perfection to which I seek to lead you.

CHAPTER 22 — Purification from Attachment to Venial Sin

As daylight waxes, we, gazing into a mirror, see more plainly the soils and stains upon our face; and even so as the interior light of the Holy Spirit enlightens our conscience, we see more distinctly the sins, inclinations and imperfections which hinder our progress towards real devotion. And the selfsame light which shows us these blots and stains, kindles in us the desire to be cleansed and purged. You will find then, my child, that besides the mortal sins and their affections from which your soul has already been purged, you are beset by sundry inclinations and tendencies to venial sin; mind, I do not say you will find venial sins, but the inclination and tendency to them. Now, one is quite different from the other.

We can never be altogether free from venial sin — at least not until after a very long persistence in this purity; but we can be without any affection for venial sin. It is altogether one thing to have said something unimportant not strictly true, out of carelessness or liveliness, and quite a different matter to take pleasure in lying, and in the habitual practice thereof. But I tell you that you must purify your soul from all inclination to venial sin — that is to say, you must not voluntarily retain any deliberate intention of permitting yourself to commit any venial sin whatever. It would be most unworthy consciously to admit anything so displeasing to God, as the will to offend him in any way. Venial sin, however small, is displeasing to God, although it is not so displeasing as the greater sins which involve eternal condemnation; and if venial sin is displeasing to him, any clinging which we tolerate to mortal sin is nothing less than a resolution to offend his divine majesty. Is it really possible that a rightly disposed soul can not only offend God, but take pleasure therein?
These inclinations, Philothea, are in direct opposition to devotion, as inclinations to mortal sin are to love — they weaken the mental power, hinder divine consolations, and open the door to temptations — and although they may not destroy the soul, at least they bring on very serious disease. “Dead flies make the perfumer’s ointment give off an evil odor,” says the wise man (Eccl 10:1). He means that the flies which settle upon and taste of the ointment only damage it temporarily, leaving the mass intact, but if they fall into it, and die there, they spoil and corrupt it.

Even so venial sins which pass over a devout soul without being harbored, do not permanently injure it, but if such sins are fostered and cherished, they destroy the sweet savor of that soul — that is to say, its devotion. The spider cannot kill bees, but it can spoil their honey, and so encumber their combs with its webs in course of time, as to hinder the bees materially.

Just so, though venial sins may not lose the soul, they will spoil its devotion, and so cumber its faculties with bad habits and evil inclinations, as to deprive it of all that cheerful readiness which is the very essence of true devotion; that is to say, if they are harbored in the conscience by delight taken therein. A trifling inaccuracy, a little hastiness in word or action, some small excess in mirth, in dress, in gaiety, may not be very important, if these are forthwith heeded and swept out as spiritual cobwebs — but if they are permitted to linger in the heart, or, worse still, if we take pleasure in them and indulge them, our honey will soon be spoilt, and the hive of our conscience will be cumbered and damaged. But I ask again, how can a generous heart take delight in anything it knows to be displeasing to its God, or wish to do what offends him?

Exercise 6-6

The Struggle to Desire Christ More Than My Sins

In one paragraph for each bullet below, consider and answer the following:

Make a list (privately of course) of what you would consider to be your most common or recurring venial sins. Look at each and ask yourself (again, privately) if they weren’t considered sins, would you want to do them?

Reflect on the result of this, and make a list (for the exercise itself) of the things you find attractive about Jesus as a person.

Make a list of the reasons why Confession makes you uncomfortable or is hard to want to do.

CHAPTER 23 — Purification from Attachment to Useless and Dangerous Things

Sports, parties, plays, festivities, pompoms, are not in themselves evil, but rather indifferent matters, capable of being used for good or ill; but nevertheless they are dangerous, and it is still more dangerous to take great delight in them. Therefore, Philothea, I say that although it is lawful to amuse yourself, to dance, dress, feast, and see seemly plays — at the same time, if you are much addicted to these things, they will hinder your devotion, and become extremely hurtful and dangerous to you. The harm lies, not in doing them, but in the degree to which you care for them. It is a pity to sow the seed of vain and foolish tastes in the soil of your heart, taking up the place of better things, and hindering the soul from cultivating good dispositions.

It was thus that the Nazareans of old abstained not merely from all intoxicating liquors, but from grapes fresh or dried, and from vinegar, not because these were intoxicating, but because they might excite the desire for fermented liquors. Just so, while I do not forbid the use of these dangerous pleasures, I say that you cannot take an excessive delight in them without their telling upon your devotion. When the stag has waxed fat he hides himself amid the thicket, conscious that his fleetness is impaired should he be in need to fly: and so the human heart which is cumbered with useless, superfluous, dangerous attachments becomes incapacitated for that earnest following after God which
is the true life of devotion. No one blames children for running after butterflies, because they are children, but is it not ridiculous and pitiful to see full-grown men eager about such worthless trifles as the worldly amusements before named, which are likely to throw them off their balance and disturb their spiritual life? Therefore, dear child, I would have you cleanse your heart from all such tastes, remembering that while the acts themselves are not necessarily incompatible with a devout life, all delight in them must be harmful.

CHAPTER 24 — Purification from Evil Inclinations

Furthermore, Philothea, we have certain natural inclinations, which are not strictly speaking either mortal or venial sins, but rather imperfections; and the acts in which they take shape, failings and deficiencies. Thus St. Jerome says that St. Paula had so strong a tendency to excessive sorrow, that when she lost her husband and children she nearly died of grief: that was not a sin, but an imperfection, since it did not depend upon her wish and will. Some people are naturally easy, some oppositions; some are indisposed to accept other men’s opinions, some naturally disposed to be cross, some to be affectionate — in short, there is hardly any one in whom some such imperfections do not exist.

Now, although they are natural and instinctive in each person, they may be remedied and corrected, or even eradicated, by cultivating the reverse disposition. And this, my child, must be done. Gardeners have found how to make the bitter almond tree bear sweet fruit, by grafting the juice of the latter upon it, why should we not purge out our perverse dispositions and infuse such as are good? There is no disposition so good but it may be made bad by dint of vicious habits, and neither is there any natural disposition so perverse but that it may be conquered and overcome by God’s grace primarily, and then by our earnest diligent endeavor. I shall therefore now proceed to give you counsels and suggest practices by which you may purify your soul from all dangerous affections and imperfections, and from all tendencies to venial sin, thereby strengthening yourself more and more against mortal sin. May God give you grace to use them.

**Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!**

**Understanding:**  
*General Directory for Catechesis*, Part 1, 84-91  
*The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, Chapter 5, pp. 79-89

**Change:**  
*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part 2, 14-21

**Meditation:**  
Consider — My life needs the Eucharist. Do I really know how valuable it is to Satan for me to stay away from Mass each day?  
Read — John 6:48-58  
Pray — Jesus my Jesus, give me a love for your precious Body broken for me.

**Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 20th Century**

“It is as easy now as it was in the time of Jesus Christ to say No, to deny or to put to one side the truth of faith. You who call yourself a Catholic have to start from Yes. Later after some study, you will be able to explain the reasons for your certainty, and that there is no contradiction — there can be none — between Truth and science, between Truth and life.”  
~ St. Josemaría Escrivá ~  
*Furrow*
Part III

The Ecclesial Method: How Do I Unfold the Life-Changing Truths?

Analyzing My Faith: What Must I Teach? What Do They Have Know?

Analyzing My Situation: How Do These Participants Come to Faith?

Analyzing Myself: How Do I Become an Excellent Catechist?

Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus:

“My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me” (John 7:16).

St. Paul did this when he was dealing with a question of prime importance:

“I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you” (1 Corinthians 11:23).

What assiduous study of the Word of God transmitted by the Church’s Magisterium,

what profound familiarity with Christ and with the Father,

what a spirit of prayer, what detachment from self

must a catechist have in order that he can say:

“My teaching is not mine”!

~ Pope St. John Paul II ~

Catechesi Tradendae, paragraph 6
My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me.

~ John 7:16
Section 7

The Ecclesial Method: How Do I Unfold the Life-Changing Truths?

Of this Gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me by the working of his power.

To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the Heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord.

~ Ephesians 3:7-11 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to make known the plan of the mystery, let’s take the next step . . .

In Part I (Sections 1-3) we explored the role of the catechist in the larger context of the ministry of conversion, and specifically introduced the central concept of organic and systematic catechesis. In Part II (Sections 4-6) we considered deeply the nature of conversion and the surpassing importance of a catechist’s spiritual life. In the final piece of this program of study, Part III (Sections 7-10), we unpack the ways in which good methodology enables you as a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace. In this section, we explore a method that is uniquely suited to the goals of catechesis for adult learners.

You may find that, from this point on, you need to spend a bit more time to complete an individual section, for the sake of providing sufficient practice in the skills of catechesis to give you a sense of real competence. Although mastery comes only with actual experience using good methodology over time, the material in this part will help make mastery more possible for you.

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

► You’ll walk through the five steps of the ecclesial method, and see how to use it effectively.

► You’ll become more deeply attuned to the vital need to prepare yourself well for your catechetical work, and discover how to find help to do so.

► You’ll be given an opportunity to apply these five steps to several doctrines, and then to the Mass, and finally to one of the foundational truths.

The Five Steps of the Ecclesial Method

What we are going to explain and explore in this section is a way to unfold the Church’s teachings so as never to forget the need to suit the content to the learner. In good catechesis nothing is canned – we teach people, not topics. Therefore, all “topics” must be fitted to those we teach. One venerable and well-tested way of doing this is called the ecclesial method. It is not termed “ecclesial” (which means “of the church”) because it appears in a Magisterial document or enjoys any specific endorsement by the Church.
Rather it is termed an “ecclesial” approach because its steps flow from a study of the Church’s many catechetical saints (St. John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, St. Frances de Sales, St. Francis Xavier, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John Bosco, among others). This study found commonalities in the ways that such saints taught the faith, and further sought to come up with terminology to express those observations.

This method, as well as the resulting names given to the five steps, was authored by a master catechist, Monsignor Francis D. Kelly. He published this “ecclesial approach” in a book written to analyze the state of catechesis in the Church at the third millennium, *The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis at the Third Millennium*, Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999. It was his intent to lay out the basics of this method, and then “hope that the creativity of publishers and teachers will give them further development” (p. 117).

It is important for us to recognize that, however well suited the ecclesial method is for teaching adults, it is not to be thought of as the “one and only” best approach: “The Church, in transmitting the faith, does not have a particular method nor any single method” (GDC 148).

On the other hand, “the catechist recognizes that method is at the service of revelation and conversion” and, therefore, “the content of catechesis cannot be indifferently subjected to any method” (GDC 149). The method must serve the content. The ecclesial method was developed with this understanding clearly in view, and over the years it has proven its worth. So, for the purpose of this program of study, it is very useful to learn this method well. But you should not feel bound to it, as if a single method could trump all other considerations and situations. Having added this caution, we will now look at each step of this method, and why it has been found to be so well suited to forming adults.

A few comments from Msgr. Kelly’s book are useful to form the context for the method:

Catechesis is based on and directed by divine revelation: God’s gratuitous intervention in history by which “from the fullness of his love, he addresses men as his friends ... in order to invite and receive them into his own company” (DV 2). God revealed both himself and the mystery of his will and plan in a process that began with Abraham, climaxed in Jesus Christ, and is continually reflected on by the Spirit-filled Church.

Catechesis serves revelation by being a means by which its message and mystery are made accessible and relevant to the women and men of each age. The challenge of the catechist is to be faithful to God’s Word and to help the modern person see how this revealed Word is the answer to their own deepest longing for truth, goodness and love. Catechesis therefore is above all at the service of divine revelation, and its method must reflect that reality (p. 85).

Msgr. Kelly continues by asking us to take note of the ever-present call to conversion and new life:

A catechetical methodology, influenced by this view of revelation and faith, will want to help modern people to withdraw from the frenetic pace of modern life, from the tyranny of communications and entertainment media that provide constant but superficial stimulation, and help them to hear the One who says, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10).

Catechesis will accordingly be seen not primarily as an exercise in self-realization but as an opening-up of the mind and spirit to the work of the Holy Spirit. At times this encounter will call our human experience and feelings into the realm of God’s judgment. It will always lead to conversion of life and to a counter-cultural existence (p. 89).
Msgr. Kelly further points out that it is critical that the method he lays out assumes that an initial conversion has occurred in those being catechized. What is needed at this point is a method suited to help their faith grow:

Catechesis in an ecclesial context envisions believers who have already been in some way evangelized and who have made an initial response of faith to the God who has approached them in Jesus Christ. Catechesis seeks in some organized fashion to give growth to this seed of faith, to nourish it, and to develop a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ and its meaning for the lives of those who are served.

In order for this to happen, I suggest that catechetical methodology might include five steps. These are:

1) preparation
2) proclamation
3) explanation
4) application
5) celebration (pp. 116-117).

The most suitable application of this five-step method is after the work of basic evangelization has successfully led adults to the “beginnings of the spiritual life” and an “initial conversion and intention to change their lives” (RCIA ritual book, 42). In other words, this is not a method for laying out the kerygma, but for unfolding the Deposit of Faith after some degree of communion with the Lord has been attained, as well as in the many forms of continuing life-long catechesis.

**Exercise 7-1**

Good Methodology Begins with Me

Go to the following weblink:

This set of pages will introduce you to the five-step method, and give you an understanding of how each step applies to an adult setting.

In a paragraph, consider how you currently prepare to catechize, and compare it to what is being said in this reading about the importance of your ability to be an authentic witness to the truths you teach, and to be well-formed in those truths through study of Sacred Scripture and the Catechism. If you do not currently do adult catechesis, then reflect on what impact this might have on your preparation in the future.

The usefulness of the ecclesial method, or any method or instrument for teaching, is always relative to the diligence of the catechist in being ready. No method can take the place of that: “The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists” (GDC 234). Again, as in Sections 4-6, the personal formation of the catechist takes center stage. For any doctrine it important for a catechists to seek what the GDC calls a “biblico-theological formation” intended to “afford the catechist an organic awareness of the Christian message, structured around the central mystery of the faith, Jesus Christ” (GDC 240). This begins with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, but not as if you are referencing a textbook from which you will pull out a bullet list of points to make. The ecclesial method is not a form of laying out a teaching from a textbook, but a form of living catechesis. Until a catechist, until you, immerse yourself in the method to give it the vitality of a loving witness, it remains dead on the page.
To further emphasize the flexible and individual aspects of preparing to teaching, and to better communicate the importance of your judgment as a catechist, the following five exercises are designed to help you apply this to your own parish situation.

**Exercise 7-2 ➡️ Preparation**

As the reading in this section has noted, the *preparation* refers to your personal time and effort to diligently ready yourself for a catechetical session, as well as to the conditions that help adults disengage from other preoccupations and be present to the Holy Spirit’s desire to deepen their conversion.

Prayer is central to both of these aspects of your *preparation*. In one or two paragraphs, reflect on the following questions:

 succesfully

Do you pray in some way privately before you teach? In your own situation, what do you think is reasonable to expect of yourself in this regard? How should a catechist pray for his/her own work?

As a way to open a session teaching adults, are you able to readily pray extemporaneously (spontaneously in a group setting without a prepared text or a pre-memorized prayer)? If so, what importance do you think this has a witness to participants? If not, what causes this to be tough or undesirable for you?

**Common Misunderstanding:**

The Catechist at Prayer

*It is not unusual for a catechist to assume that preparing for a specific session is principally a matter of gathering together what can be taught about a specific truth of the faith, and assembling a set of Scriptural quotations and paragraphs from the Catechism to be used as illustrations or “proofs” of what is to be taught. This omits the more important part of the catechist’s preparation, which is to read Sacred Scripture and the Catechism prayerfully so that what is planned to be taught is not, principally, “head knowledge” but rather is a product of heartfelt conviction that these truths are life-giving and that adults you may teach are spiritually starving for them.*

**Exercise 7-3 ➡️ Proclamation**

The *proclamation* initiates, animates, and sets the discussion in motion. It is supposed to be good news, filled with hope and a call to draw near to God. This is part of what helps make the ecclesial method effective. Every catechetical session begins with a hopeful message.

With this observation in mind, together with what you’ve read about how to handle this part of the ecclesial method, consider these three doctrines: 1) Purgatory, 2) the Sanctity of Human Life, and 3) Papal Infallibility. Develop a brief *proclamation* for each one that suits the situation in your parish and the adults that you serve. If you are not currently active in teaching adults, then develop these statements in whatever way you judge would work best.
Exercise 7-4 Explanation

The explanation step of the ecclesial method is the unfolding of the essential truths of a given doctrine in a way that develops organically from what you have prayed and what you have proclaimed. Where it suits the doctrine you are teaching, telling stories is crucial to effectively communicating various aspects of our faith because people more readily respond to a narrative approach.

Taking up the three doctrines from the previous exercise (Purgatory, the Sanctity of Human Life, and Papal Infallibility), create in a paragraph for each doctrine a story related to your own life or a story related to a saint’s life, chosen to develop some aspect of these doctrines.

Exercise 7-5 Application

The application can take many forms, as was discussed in your reading for this section. Its basic goal is to ensure that your catechesis remains grounded in the question: What does this mean for them? It is this step of the ecclesial method that is the key to catching their attention and keeping their interest in the faith focused not just on understanding, but also on the call to change — the call to personal conversion.

Once again making use of the three doctrines you’ve been developing (Purgatory, the Sanctity of Human Life, and Papal Infallibility), think of a particular person, well-known to you, who is currently at your parish, or a person who has entered the Catholic faith recently. Thinking about this person’s life circumstances, answer the following questions in one paragraph each about these three doctrines:

Why would it really matter to this person’s life if this doctrine were true or not true? What would be lost for this person if he or she never knew it was true?

What do you find utterly amazing about this doctrine that you would most like to share with this person?

Exercise 7-6 Celebration

The celebration also can take many forms. Its basic goal is to address the question: How can we thank God and acclaim his wonderful truth together? This is essential to the method because if the Holy Spirit has willed to work through your efforts to diligently unfold a given truth of the faith, then it is vital to allow adults to respond to that moment of grace. This greatly aids the movement from the head to the heart, from understanding to change — a movement from intellect to will.

Making use of our trio (Purgatory, the Sanctity of Human Life, and Papal Infallibility) for a final time, in a short paragraph each, develop the following for these three doctrines:

Compose a simple prayer that relates to you personally, that offers thanks for this truth in your own walk with God.

Compose a simple prayer to be prayed with a whole group of adults that would offer thanks specifically for God’s great mercy in revealing this truth to the human family.
The Mass as a Paradigm for the Ecclesial Method

It may be helpful for you to consider the five steps of the ecclesial method in light of the Mass. Consider below the parts of the Mass as arranged into the five steps of the ecclesial method:

✧ **Preparation** — Opening Hymn and Procession, Penitential Rite, Gloria

✧ **Proclamation** — Collect (Opening Prayer)

✧ **Explanation** — Liturgy of the Word and Homily

✧ **Application** — Profession of Faith, Prayers of the Faithful, Procession of Gifts (Offertory)

✧ **Celebration** — Above all the Liturgy of the Eucharist and Reception of the Eucharist, but also the Closing Prayer and Recession.

The Mass is not set up primarily to be some kind of lesson in an academic sense, but there are certainly significant catechetical aspects to this most central liturgy, and any liturgy for that matter. The guidelines in the *Lectionary for Mass* make this point:

> The present Order of Readings for Mass, then, is an arrangement of biblical readings that provides the faithful with a knowledge of the whole of God’s Word, in a pattern suited to the purpose. Throughout the liturgical year, but above all during the seasons of Easter, Lent, and Advent, the choice and sequence of readings are aimed at giving Christ’s faithful an ever-deepening perception of the faith they profess and of the history of salvation. Accordingly, the Order of Readings corresponds to the requirements and interests of the Christian people. The celebration of the Liturgy is not in itself simply a form of catechesis, but it does contain an element of teaching. The Lectionary of the Roman Missal brings this out and therefore deserves to be regarded as a pedagogical resource aiding catechesis (LFM 60-61).

The reason for drawing your attention to this is less for the purpose of demonstrating the catechetical aspect of the Mass, and more for inviting you to think about how your catechetical work could benefit from seeing the liturgy as a paradigm for how the ecclesial method works. Take note that the Mass is not able to have its full-intended impact on an adult if an initial and prior evangelization has not occurred.

The Mass does not seek to evangelize as much as to build upon the foundation of a conversion already begun. In the same way, the ecclesial method, as was noted earlier in this section, depends upon the presence of an initial conversion in those being catechized, so that their hearts are open to what we are preparing, proclaiming, explaining, inviting them to apply to their lives, and to celebrate as a truth accepted and valued.

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**Did You Know?**

The foundational truth about the Person of Jesus was the doctrine that presented the greatest difficulty for the early Church to clearly describe. The record of that centuries-long effort can be found in both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds, which devote the greatest number of doctrinal statements to Jesus Christ as God and man. Fr. Romano Guardini, an Italian-born educator and theologian who lived nearly all his life in Germany and was a mentor of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, described this effort in his book *The Humanity of Christ*: “Early Christology sought,
as its first task, to establish, beyond any shadow of doubt, that Jesus of Nazareth was more, and other, than a mere creature. Our minds ... can no longer comprehend the passion with which for centuries the early Christians fought out the issues of Christology — a passion which can, in spite of its many all too human features, yet be called holy. In the end, the declaration affirming Christ to be the eternal, consubstantial Son of the Father was established as a pillar of truth never again to be shaken. The second phase came when the Christian mind saw clearly that the Son of God had truly become man in Christ. It was not that he had come merely to dwell in a man; he came as an actual member, indeed, as the crucial and all-important member, in the whole history of the human race....

[T]he divine rigor of this true incarnation had to be purified from every notion which, while apparently affirming a maximum of incarnation, in fact destroyed its reality, because it substituted for a personal event one which, in spite of the appearance of sublimity, still remained at the natural level: namely, the confusion of the natures.... As so arose the concept of one person in two distinct natures, a concept which exceeds the capacity of the human mind, to be sure, but which guarantees the integrity of the God-Man.”

Praying with Scripture: *Lectio Divina*

Section 5 introduced you to the practice of praying with Scripture (*lectio divina*) with a series of three reflections on God’s unconditional love. You were invited to pray for the specific grace to know God’s personal love for you. In the series of Scripture passages in this section, we reflect on personal sin, which is central to understanding the saving truths of the Gospel and learning to deeply desire the ever-continuing process of reconciliation with the Father as our lives unfold.

**Exercise 7-7**

Reflecting on Personal Sin

Set aside 15 minutes every day to contemplate the Scripture passages below, reflecting on the sin in your own life. Pray through these passages in order, one at a time, over the next week or so, using a copy of the *lectio divina* prayer worksheet found in Section 5 to record your responses.

Begin your prayer time by asking for this specific grace: “Dear Lord Jesus, please grant me the grace of intense sorrow for my sins, to come to a deep realization of my powerlessness to respond to your love.”

**Gen: 3:1-19**  God promises me a Savior immediately after the sin of our first parents.

**Ps: 51**  Be merciful, Lord, for I have sinned.

**Lk: 15:11-32**  God’s abundant mercy.

These Scriptures dispose you to receive the grace of sorrow, and invite God’s help as you struggle with habitual sin. Consider receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation during this time. Although an option, remember the spiritual value of the prayer worksheets (found in Section 5) for these *lectio divina* sessions.
Case Study: Doing Catechetical Preparation for a Doctrine

If you were to give a teaching to a group of adults, how would you go about finding the Scriptural texts that you would like to use? Let’s take a doctrine with great richness in the Catechism: The Christian family. In the Catechism, turn to the main index and look up the word “family.” You will find a wealth of entries! If the teaching you were giving was the first time this subject was raised with a group of adults, it would cover more basic aspects of the Christian family.

Using this index list, look up paragraphs you think are relevant to a basic teaching on this subject, and search for Scriptures either quoted in those paragraphs or given as footnotes below the paragraphs. In doing so, answer the following questions in a list:

✧ What Scriptures would you select to use for your own study and prayerful reflection as you prepare to teach?
✧ What Scriptures would you actually use in the teaching itself with those adults?

For Your Portfolio

Checking Your Progress

Expressing Succinctly Why It All Matters

“The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life” (CCC 234). As such, the doctrine of the Trinity is the most essential of the five foundational truths. In your Catechism, read paragraphs 232-260. *Take your time with this.* Using the ecclesial method effectively depends not only on teaching the faith correctly (this is the “what” of a doctrine, so to speak), but also on teaching the faith as a testimony to *why* the faith matters to *you* personally and should matter to those you are teaching (this is the “so what” of a doctrine).

In 500 words or less, briefly answer these four questions:

✧ Why does it matter to *you* that God’s nature is that of a community of Persons, a family?
✧ How might faith in the Trinity allow *you* to grow in a personal desire for God?
✧ How does God’s nature (a community of Persons whose life is love) determine what he allows to happen in *your* life?
✧ The inner life of God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is characterized by mutual love. How can *you* reflect this in your own Christian life and relationships?

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.

Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

Understanding: General Directory for Catechesis, Part 3, 148-162
The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, Chap. 6, pp. 91-100

Change: Introduction to the Devout Life, Part 3, 1-10

Meditation: Consider — My heart and my mind can trust this good God. Do I really give all things over to his Lordship?
Read — Matthew 10:28-39
Pray — Jesus my Jesus, show me what is not yours in my life.

Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 19th Century

“By union with God we shall gain hearts… Without this union we will but make a little noise.”
~ St. Julie Billiart ~
Section 8

Analyzing My Faith: What Must I Teach? What Do They Have to Know?

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the divine training that is in faith; whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith.

Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the Law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

~ 1 Timothy 1:2-7 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to hold firm to a Godly foundation, let’s take the next step . . .

In the last section we explored the ecclesial method and discussed how it is uniquely suited to the goals of catechesis with adults. In this section we look at ways for catechists to understand the truths of the faith more deeply so that those saving truths can be unfolded more effectively.

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

❖ You’ll grasp what it means to analyze doctrine in light of the five steps of the ecclesial method, so as to better meet the needs of those you catechize, and why the practice of doing so fosters your own growth as a catechist.

❖ You’ll better understand how to make yourself understood as a catechist to ensure you are really connecting with those you teach, and therefore really serving the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.

❖ You’ll more deeply explore how Sacred Scripture and the Catechism help you to understand the truths of the faith.

❖ You’ll be introduced to the value of observing other catechists.

Understanding Doctrines at a More Demanding and Wonderful Level

In our deeper exploration of various doctrines, this section’s purpose is more catechetical than theological; our intention here is more to understand doctrine in light of how it is passed on to another, than in how it is reflected upon in your interior life. Throughout this program of study you have been intentionally invited to consider many ways and means of adult catechesis at a personal level. Some of the questions may have occasioned for you inner hesitations, perhaps even painful realizations. There have been many questions which have asked you to consider your inward disposition for the sake of manifesting outwardly an ever-deepening conviction: “The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith” (GCM 8; italics added). In this section, then, we are turning this statement of the Church’s desire into a question: What is essential? Or, as the section title asks: What must I teach? What do they have to know?
These questions imply that we can’t teach everything we would wish to — there simply isn’t time. Any veteran teacher of the faith, at any level, knows well that there is never enough time. This realization then begets the questions above. If there is not enough time for all things to be said, then we should consider how to judge what must be said. This judgment is never general. So many elements of teaching adults are left to the catechist to determine, simply because that is where the individual needs of adults are discovered, lovingly engaged, and, with God’s grace, satisfied. However helpful, pre-published doctrinal outlines are generic, and therefore the work needed to make them more than flat lectures remains undone — until they are taken up by a catechist, by you, who knows “the specific adults with whom one is working, their ... human and religious needs, their expectations, faith experiences, and their potential” (ACCC 56).

Let us return to Frank Sheed, whose encouragement to deepen our devotion to Sacred Scripture was voiced in Section 5, and has been built upon in subsequent sections by on-going opportunities to use lectio divina. Frank Sheed was a superlative formator of catechists, specifically those called to evangelize adults in the often less-than-friendly and very demanding setting of street corners and other open-to-all forums. In one of his talks given to catechists of children, he detailed in what condition of faith he normally found those adults who received significant catechesis as children, and then years later came to him for formation.

In the lengthy quotation below, he begins by pointing out that there is a difference between knowing truth to a level of personal satiation, and knowing truth to a level that can really help others come to God in trust. To do this, he starts with two examples of how adult students come to him, seemingly able to prove aspects of the Catholic faith they profess:

1) They can prove that the soul of man is spiritual, that man therefore is a union of spirit and matter: but what the union means, how things so disparate are in fact united, they do not know. Over and over again, one has had some such dialogue as this: “Is the soul in every part of your body? — Yes — Is it in your thumb? — Yes — Then, if your thumb were cut off, what would happen to the soul that had been in it?” A fool of a question, perhaps. But the answers reveal that the vast majority have not a notion of what the phrase “union of spirit and matter” means, so do not know what a man is, and apparently have never even wondered.

2) They can prove that the pope is infallible, but they do not know the meaning of infallibility. You can discover this by asking, “Why, if the pope is infallible, does he summon a General Council? If he cannot teach error, why have a council to prevent his teaching error?” To be unable to answer this question (which most of them are) is not to know the difference between being prevented from teaching error and being able to teach truth, and therefore not to know what infallibility means. But they can prove it all right. Students thus drilled in the arguments but unconcerned about the realities have not been taught by teachers soaked in the New Testament or soaked in the dogmas. They come to the Evidence Guild classes and start to learn; and you can see beginning to grow in them the excitement that is born of a sense of being initiated into divine mysteries — an excitement they were quite capable of having at any stage in their career. As the realization comes to life — we see this invariably — there begins also to grow the desire to communicate, to go out and tell these truths to people who have not got them: the feeling that it is intolerable that there should be anybody who has not had at least an opportunity of having them, of knowing these marvelous things. Please do not misunderstand me. I know that one can be a good Catholic, one can be saved, one can be a saint, with very little notion of the content of Catholic doctrine. But it still remains true that, to one who loves God, every new truth learned about God is a new reason for loving him, and it still remains true that every doctrine contains light for the mind, and nourishment for the soul, and that this light and nourishment remain locked up in it for anyone who has never been taken inside it, to see what is there (Are We Really Teaching Religion?, p. 23).
Frank Sheed goes on to point out what, in his view, generally leads to this problem of formation:

[They] lack two things overwhelmingly. They lack the shape of reality as expressed in the dogmas, and they lack any inside knowledge of what the individual dogmas mean. A great devotion, willingness to do God’s will, devotion to the Church’s laws, devotion to the sacraments, devotion to the Mass — these things are there, but side by side with a chaotic picture of what it all means.

I have already glanced at the lack of grip on individual dogmas. Take now the question of the shape of reality. Catholicism means the union of men with God in Christ. That is Catholicism, that is all of Catholicism. That is the fact they should have standing up clear and clean from all the mass of things they know. As they come through school, they have learnt a great number of things, but there is no order, no hierarchy, in the things they have learnt about the faith. They have all sorts of pious practices, good salutary practices, rubbing shoulders, so to speak, with essentials. They hardly know which is which, they are all there together in a kind of — I was going to say rag-bag, but that would be rude — they are all there in a kind of heap. The absolutely essential activities of Catholicism and the quite desirable but non-essential pious practices — all there together — the Trinity hardly larger than our Lady of Fatima! They need some framework on which they can arrange their knowledge, to which all the rest can be related, and I suggest the simple definition of Catholicism I have just quoted: the union of men with God in Christ. We are incorporated with Christ and thereby united with the Father and with one another.

The union of men with God in Christ is Catholicism; and, that being so, whatever else they are clear or vague about, whatever else they remember or do not remember, they should be absolutely clear on what God is, what man is, what Christ is, what union is. Those four should stand out like a great plateau — you can arrange all the other things around these. Those four they really should know. Do they know them? (Are We Really Teaching Religion?, pp. 22-23).

This question can also be addressed to us as catechists of adults. In referring several times above to the essentials, Frank Sheed is taking us down the same path we’ve been studying throughout these sections, that the central work of catechesis is about growing in your relationship with God so that you can understand who God is, who you are in him, and to what he has called you. This then demands that you diligently strive to place your relationship with God at the service of passing on that relationship to others in the form of the truths that bring to light the face of Christ:

… that the truths should be seen as parts of an organic whole, like features in a face, and that face should be known intimately and seen everywhere: the “shape” of reality must become a permanent mental possession … [I]f this is achieved, then [those we catechize] will never be able to see anything without at the same time seeing God and man and Christ and the union of men with God in Christ, will never be able to judge any problem that arises in his life without seeing it in relation to God’s will and the supernatural life and the Beatific Vision.

Any teacher of any subject must know far more than he has to impart: with knowledge it is as with the voice, you get your effects with what you are not using: the speaker at the limit of his voice, the teacher at the limit of his knowledge, each in his own way sounds thin and tinny: what is being held in reserve gives resonance to what is being used. The religion teacher, then, will be always thrusting deeper into the inwardness of the doctrines. And she will be living ever more consciously and intensely in the seen reality: a teacher will be able to introduce the children into the world of reality in which she herself is wholly living and rejoicing to live, just as she will teach more vividly the geography of a country she has lived in and loved (Are We Really Teaching Religion?, pp. 23-24).
This is no less true for us as we seek to catechize adults. Let us then ask ourselves: Who are the people we wish to serve? Why are they coming to us? What do they want to know? What do they already know? These questions again speak to the importance of relationships. By pursuing the answers, the catechist can more readily speak to the interests, needs, and questions that God has lain on each heart. And in doing so, we are then able to address the earlier questions in anything but a generic way: What is essential? What must I teach? What do they have to know?

These questions were implied by the structure of the ecclesial method detailed in the last section. Certainly, developing its elements — from preparation all the way to celebration — involves making catechetical judgments that are based on your consideration of who you are catechizing at that time. In the following sections of this section, we offer you several ways to sharpen your insights into the catechetical needs you can expect to find in adults.

**First Step: Deepening Your Preparation**

As you seek to cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work of preparing hearts for the truth that will be unfolded in a teaching session, ask yourself the following question: Where are these adults coming from as they enter this session with me today?

Many things happen or don’t happen that make adults more or less able to benefit from and contribute to their own catechesis. Where they’re coming from is never irrelevant — whether it’s from a boring job, a tough job, a long-deserved raise. From a quick dinner, or no dinner. From an argument with a teenage son, or the evening news half-watched. From leaving home with a nice spousal send-off, or another guilty departure from an unsupportive spouse. From an almost-accident on the street in front of the parish, or a headache without any painkiller in the glove compartment. From a phone call telling of a newborn niece, healthy and happy, or an email with a great list of jokes about political doings. From an ordinary day like most others, or a day unlike most others.

The preparation step seeks to communicate with people where they are, and then only suggest that God’s truths have something eminently relevant to light their paths forward towards — towards what? — always in some way towards trust (faith), towards a better end (hope), towards real meaning (love).

The preparation step begins to take them there, somehow — through the first sincere greeting and conversations of the evening, the willingness to help get a cup of coffee, a hand on the shoulder, a smiling face that doesn’t walk off to someone else too quickly.

As much as anything you’ve prepared to say or to have them do, this is a catechist’s call, and the results of such interactions may change your intentions, especially if a significant event (bad or good) has happened. This is the major reason it is important to become comfortable with extemporaneous prayer: you spontaneously lift them, hearts and minds and personal concerns, to God in the company of all the family of those seeking to share and grow in faith together.

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**Exercise 8-1**

**How, Then, Shall We Pray?**

In the *Catechism*, read paragraphs 2659-2660. These two paragraphs give emphasis to the “today” of prayer, that “it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday, not tomorrow, but today.”

Then turn in the *Catechism* to paragraphs 456-460, where it lays out the four reasons for the Incarnation. Now, imagine you recently became aware that a middle-aged person in your group had been diagnosed with cancer, and that you knew the group could be told of this. Looking at these four reasons that Jesus came to us, consider how someone facing cancer might value these truths.

In a brief paragraph, compose a prayer that takes the ancient event of the Incarnation into the “today” of that group’s desire to love and encourage this person.
Common Misunderstanding: A "Sticking" Conversion

Those who have been involved in RCIA are too often astonished that new Catholics fall away from the practice of their new faith. Yet conversions that do not “stick” are an all-too-common fact of the Christian initiation process. This failure most often arises from a conversion that involves the head but not the heart. As a catechist, your preparation for each session should pay careful attention to how your teaching can help move hearts. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the most well-known American Catholic evangelist of the 20th century who wrote many books and won awards during several years of Sunday-night network television shows in the 1950s, wrote this about conversion in Peace of Soul: “Every conversion starts with a crisis: with a moment or a situation involving some kind of suffering, physical, moral, or spiritual … This crisis is accompanied, on the one hand, by a profound sense of one’s own helplessness and, on the other hand, by an equally certain conviction that God alone can supply what the individual lacks…. The soul becomes the battlefield of a civil war during a conversion…. This crisis in the soul is the miniature and cameo of the great historical crisis of the City of God and the City of Man. There must be in the soul the conviction that one is in the grip of and swayed by a higher control than one’s own will; that, opposing the ego, there is a Presence before whom one feels happy in doing good and before whom one shrinks away for having done evil. It is relatively unimportant whether this crisis … be sudden or gradual. What matters is struggle between the soul and God, with the all-powerful God never destroying human freedom. This is the greatest drama of existence…. In this crisis, one becomes conscious that he has become a stage wherein two great powers are waging war; his soul itself is with one power one moment and the other power at another moment…. There is a fear of what may lie ahead in the future, and a dread of continuing on as at present. The spirit calls to renouncement of old habits, but the flesh is reluctant to break the chains. Once these two currents of inner frustration and Divine Mercy meet, so that the soul realizes that God alone can provide what it lacks, then the crisis reaches a point where a decision must be made. In this sense, the crisis is crucial — it involves a cross. The crisis itself can take a thousand different forms, varying from souls that are consistently good to those that are deeply sinful. But in both these extremes there is a common recognition that the conflicts and frustrations cannot be overcome by one’s own energy.”

Second Step: Deepening Your Proclamation

The proclamation you offer in teaching adults flows from what could be called the “premise” of the doctrine to be unfolded. The premise is the underlying truth upon which the doctrine is based. It is not necessarily the definition. For example, let’s say you happened to have a wooden chest at the foot of your bed, and in that chest you stored sweaters for winter (assuming as well that you are living somewhere not in proximity to the equator). If you decided you wanted to label the chest to tell all others visiting your bedroom what was contained within, how would your label read? “Sweaters” you might say. This would certainly be an accurate definition of the contents. Let’s instead say you wanted to help others, by your labeling, to better understand why that chest is in your life, what purpose it has for you. So, instead your label becomes something like, “Warmth and color for a cold, gray winter.” This, you note, is not a definition, but it helps the visitor to understand the reason for it being important to you, not just what happens to lie below the lid of the chest. It gets beyond the “what” to the “so what.”
Similarly, with unfolding the truths of the faith, a proclamation statement should invite adults to consider a doctrine’s *purpose* relative to other things, relative to their needs, relative to their world.

Frank Sheed, writing to those he is training for the street corners, elaborated:

The work, then, of showing what a doctrine means is the speaker’s principal occupation on the platform. And this, I have suggested, is more than a matter of definition. It involves showing what the doctrine implies, what things flow from it: not simply how it works (though that is of great importance) but what richness of truth is folded up in it, what light is cast upon God, or man, or nature.

Thus the speaker is taking care of two things already suggested as requisite if the man is to accept: he is showing what the doctrine means and what its importance is. He is also taking care of the — practically — necessary third, that the hearer should come to want it (*Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, p. 14).

To be able to make this jump in your catechesis — from a distant, more academic stating of a truth to a practical call to delve into something *vital* for your adult participants’ today and for their eternity — means that you are in touch with two realities: 

1) Why the given truth that you are teaching matters to you and has impacted your life, and
2) Why it should matter to the people you are catechizing. Put another way: why do you care if it’s true or not, and why should they? This is what a *proclamation* invites us to enter into.

**Exercise 8-2**

*When Keeping It Short Means Keeping It Powerful*

Succinctness is also important in a good *proclamation*, learning to say things with efficiency and brevity.

In one sentence, or even one phrase, give your answer to this question:
How has the Church’s teaching on...

1) being made in the image and likeness of God  ...impacted my life?
2) the providence of the Father  ...impacted my life?
3) the redemptive value of suffering  ...impacted my life?

Now, think of an adult you know (especially a recent convert if you know any well). In one sentence, or even one phrase, for each of the aspects of the faith listed above, answer this question: “How might the Church’s teaching on ______ impact that person’s daily life?”

Further practice of succinctness is always helpful. This optional (and very demanding) exercise might be greatly helpful to you: Try to make a proclamation statement for each of the three aspects of the faith listed above. Try to focus on what you would judge to be the *absolute essence* of each one by using no more than *seven words* for each *proclamation*.

**Third Step: Deepening Your *Explanation***

There are so many things about the Catholic faith that are good to say, that are beautiful, that are life-giving truths. But not all can be said to those adults you seek to catechize. Some must be left to later, to be discovered and valued by those adults at other points in their lives. The *essentials* are those aspects of the doctrine that cannot be left to chance that those adults will get them on their own.
The Value of Fidelity to the Basics to Discern the Essentials of a Doctrine

This will always consist of what could be called the basics of the doctrine. As those giving catechesis, our task is to highlight the wonderful basics. The basics are the best, the sweetest, those aspects of God’s life and love for us that our Father most urgently wants us to know; those things that will cause in his children the deepest consolations and satisfactions. It is the basics, these great revealed truths, that we will contemplate in joy here and for the rest of eternity.

As catechists, we should never desire to go beyond this into the realm of that which is perhaps interesting at some level, but not essential, not based in the certitudes that our Lord protects within the Church’s Tradition. Pope Benedict XVI notes the wayward path of an all-too-numerous collection of biblical scholars in recent decades, and its impact on the “minds of the Christian people at large”:

[T]he situation started to change in the 1950s. The gap between the “historical Jesus” and the “Christ of faith” grew wider and the two visibly fell apart…. As historical-critical scholarship advanced, it led to finer and finer distinctions between layers of tradition in the Gospels, beneath which the real object of faith — of Jesus — became increasingly obscured and blurred….

If you read a number of these reconstructions one after the other, you see at once that far from uncovering an icon that has become obscured over time, they are much more like photographs of their authors and the ideals they hold. Since then there has been growing skepticism about these portrayals of Jesus, but the figure of Jesus himself has for that very reason receded even further into the distance.

All these attempts have produced a common result: the impression that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus and that only at a later stage did faith in his divinity shape the image we have of him. This impression has by now penetrated deeply into the minds of the Christian people at large. This is a dramatic situation for faith, because its point of reference is being placed in doubt: Intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air (Jesus of Nazareth, pp. 11-12 of the foreword).

This has impacted the “people at large” in good measure due to catechists and homilists who are willing to allow the latest theological hypotheses that tickle the ear to be taught indiscriminately alongside or even in place of that which are the essential truths revealed for the sake of our salvation. Catechists of adults in particular, due to the mature subjects of our work, are called to the highest standard of delivering the truth, “not in mutilated, falsified or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor” (CT 30).

Determining the essentials of a doctrine not only means rejecting that which opposes catechetical fidelity and would mire the simplicity and accessibility of the basic truths with ill-considered complications and theories, but also considering whether your teaching in some way leads adults to the foundational truths.

We have already done several exercises on this in past sections, and here we are making the further point that one vital way to determine what cannot be left to chance that they will get on their own is to demonstrate how any doctrine you teach connects to the five foundational truths. This is an essential of any catechesis of adults, simply because it places all teachings on their foundation, thereby making clear that this or that doctrine is essential and cannot be “dropped” without doing harm to the whole of revelation.
Exercise 8-3

Hooking into the Hierarchy of Truths

In the Catechism, read the following paragraphs 210-211, 268-271, 1730-1742, 1846-1848. In a sentence each, answer the following:

- In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice are clearly rooted in the life and work of the Trinity?
- In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice flow from the life and work of Jesus on earth?
- In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice are dependent on the grace won in the Paschal mystery?
- In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice help us to understand our dignity as human beings and our vocation to holiness?
- In what way does this outline show that mercy and justice are related to the work of the Church and its dispensation of sacramental grace?

The point you are looking to confirm here for your work as a catechist is: of all the things you decide to include as essentials in your teaching of a given doctrine, ensure that clear connections to the five foundational truths are among those essentials.

Did You Know?

The chairman of the commission of 12 cardinals and bishops that was responsible for drafting the Catechism of the Catholic Church was Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, elected in 2005 to succeed Pope John Paul II as Pope Benedict XVI. The commission’s cardinals and bishops represented the most important Vatican offices and major cultural groups within the Church. The common language of this commission — made up of native German, English, Spanish, Italian, French, Tamil, Polish, and Slovakian speakers, among others — was French, so the CCC was first published in that language and then translated into its official Latin text.

The Value of Knowing the Backgrounds of Your Adults to Discern the Essentials of a Doctrine

In deciding what is essential to teach about a given truth of the faith, we cannot forget who is on the journey. This takes our judgment of the essentials to the local level, to the people you are teaching, in the current moment (if you’re not currently teaching adults, then reflect on past situations you may know).

For example, let’s consider some broad-brush aspects of the RCIA process. In a general hypothetical, many parishes on the west coast of the United States find that there are many RCIA participants who are Asian catechumens. Many parishes in the northeastern United States commonly find people from mainline Protestant backgrounds coming as inquirers to RCIA. In this very broad “localization” the point could be made that few Asian catechumens will have need of as detailed a catechesis on the Reformation era’s disagreements compared with participants typical to the northeast.
This one-dimensional example suggests that defining the essentials for different groups of people depends on a judgment of not only what points to make in a catechesis, but also how deep to go on certain points. A person from a non-liturgical Baptist background will need a different depth of explanation for a teaching on liturgy than a typical inquirer from an Anglican or Jewish background. Therefore this issue of depth is a matter of determining the essentials: What do they need to know? It is useful here to note again the importance of developing relationships with those being catechized, so that some sense of the depth needed can at least be informed by some personal familiarity, rather than being pure guesswork.

The Value of the Catechism to Discern the Essentials of a Doctrine

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is an extraordinary work on many levels. First, it is noteworthy for the degree of collaboration underpinning the writing of the text. Begun in 1986, it was prepared over a six-year period with an editorial committee that —

[examined] the observations of numerous theologians, exegetes, and catechists, and above all, of the Bishops of the whole world, in order to produce a better text. In the committee various opinions were compared with great profit, and thus a richer text has resulted whose unity and coherence are assured...

It can be said that this Catechism is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church, who generally accepted my invitation to share responsibility for an enterprise which directly concerns the life of the Church. This response elicits in me a deep feeling of joy, because the harmony of so many voices truly expresses what could be called the “symphony” of the faith. The achievement of this Catechism thus reflects the collegial nature of the Episcopate; it testifies to the Church’s catholicity” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum, 2 at the front of the CCC).

The Catechism is an excellent example of what is meant by “the mind of the Church.” The extensive global collaboration ensures that its contents reflect the faith of the universal Church, rather than any one voice. The Catechism is an authentic expression of the heart and mind of the Church.

Second, the Catechism is more than a reference text. “The Catechism of the Catholic Church ... is offered to every individual who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15) and who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes” (Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution Fidei Depositum, 3). Clearly, in promulgating the Catechism, the pope did not view it as a text only for theologians and clerics, but as a gift of the Church given to all the faithful.

Third, the Catechism is a systematic and organic document laid out in four parts: The Profession of Faith (Creed), The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (Liturgy and Sacraments), Life in Christ (how to live a moral Christian life), and Christian Prayer. Doctrines are linked to each other through extensive cross-referencing. Every paragraph of the Catechism is numbered in bold. In the margins of the CCC text, smaller italicized numbers indicate additional paragraphs related to the topic at hand. As you explore the cross-references in the Catechism, you’ll discover that every teaching is grounded in all four pillars. There is an organic unity to what Catholics believe and celebrate, and how we live and pray. As you delve deeper into the Catechism, appreciate the unity and beauty of Catholic doctrine.

Specifically related to determining the essentials of an individual doctrine, it is useful to quote the description given in a book written to help catechists develop their craft through the use of the Catechism:

[Let us look at the guidance that the Catechism provides for us in our selection of teaching points for any topic. Let us take one section as an example: God as “The Almighty” (see CCC 268-278). How does the Catechism assist us in selecting teaching points?]
The first point to note is the divisions of the section. We see that there are three bold subheadings, prefaced by an introductory paragraph. We might guess — and we would be correct — that there are three main points being taught in this section about the almighty nature of God. The structure, and then the number of paragraphs, is an important guide to how many key points are being taught.

Second, if we then look at the introductory paragraph to this topic, CCC 268, we will note that there are three italicized words there: “universal,” “loving,” and “mysterious.” The Catechism is telling us what the three essential points are in its teaching on this subject. (We can confirm this by a careful reading of the paragraphs under each subheading.)

Subheadings and the use of italics in the text are two important aids that the authors of the Catechism have provided in order to assist us in our selection. At this point, we can be attentive also to what seems to be points of emphasis, where the authors are highlighting the importance of a particular idea. It is worth noting key phrases indicated by words such as “important” or “fundamental,” or words that recur frequently. In CCC 268, for instance, we can note the phrase “great bearing,” which alerts us to the fact that something highly significant for the understanding of the subject is being announced (The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis, pp. 95-96; italics in original).

Exercise 8-4

A Wonderful Catechism Interlacing the Wonderful Truths of the Faith

To fully appreciate the degree to which the Catechism is cross-referenced, let us assume you wish to prepare a teaching on original sin, and want to discover what the Catechism has to say. To begin, turn to the subject index in the back of the Catechism and find the heading for “sin.” Then look down the column for the subheading of “original sin.”

Under the topic of original sin you’ll find several references to paragraphs in the Catechism, two of which are paragraphs 390 and 397.

↓ Find para. 390 in the Catechism. This paragraph explains how to read the account of the fall of Adam and Eve. In the margin of para. 390 you’ll see “289” indicating a cross-reference to para. 289.

↓ Turn to para. 289. There you’ll find a deeper explanation of the first three chapters of Genesis in which the story of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve are set. Notice the margin of para. 289. It contains a reference to paragraph 390. Thus, para. 289 and 390 mutually reference each other. Para. 298 contains a second reference pointing us to para. 111, which speaks to the proper interpretation of Scripture for the Creation narrative. This is typical of how the Catechism links one aspect of the truth to another that more fully explains context and meaning.

↓ Now turn to para. 397. List the four cross-references that relate to para. 397 and read them. In a sentence for each, reflect on how these four cross-references help in deciding what is essential to teach concerning “man’s first sin.”

Fourth Step: Deepening Your Application

The wonderful basic truths of faith will only be perceived as wonderful if they are presented as such by living witnesses in an authentic manner. Truth demands a witness. Jesus frequently speaks of bearing witness to himself, especially in the Gospel of John (see, for example, Jn 1:7-8, 5:36, 15:26-27), and the Acts of the Apostles emphasizes the importance of witnesses to Jesus and to his Resurrection (see Acts 3:15, 10:39). A key to helping some aspect of the truth really apply to adults’ lives is how they see you loving the truth. Let your passion show. It can be contagious, and will always stand in contrast to the chief threat to passing on the faith meaningfully — the indifference of the surrounding secular culture, and often of many Catholics they will meet. Frank Sheed insightfully commented on the secular attitude that is now undeniably common:
People as a whole do not care much who is put in place of Christ, what commandment gets broken, how anyone goes to God — since Christ, commandments and going to God are well outside their field of present interest. Nor does anyone care much how long the world took to make or who man’s ancestor might be. All that is gone. They know that such questions exist — but not for them. They have forgotten the details of the controversies, they have forgotten that they themselves ever cared. Indifference lies over all such things. They have not come to deny the existence of God or the supremacy of Christ, they have simply turned their mind elsewhere. They are not sufficiently interested to doubt… Allusion to old arguments, quotations of the texts of Scripture that have been flung back and forth for centuries, leave them unmoved because [they are] uninformed (Catholic Evidence Training Outlines, pp. 11-13).

This is sometimes the actual condition of adults whose motivations to come to our sessions are less than what they should be, but it is certainly the condition of the wider culture in which they live, unfortunately even some of the parishes in which they may be seeking to participate.

From this follows that proof has ceased to be the apologist’s principle weapon. Prove to a modern crowd that our Lord instituted Confession — they will simply say “what if he did?” Prove that he was God and they will say, “What if he was?” Prove that the pope is not the anti-Christ — they can but yawn and ask, “Who then is?” Proof is wasted on a man who is not interested in the question... We have already said that for proof to move him, a man must understand what the thing means that one wants him to accept...

If a man does not know — really know — what you mean by God, what use is there in proving there is one? What is the use of proving that Christ was God? Or again, if a man does not grasp with his whole mind the meaning and importance of revealed and certain truth, what have you gained by proving to him that the Church is infallible? Or, to take one other example, if a man does not know what virginity means — not simply as a definition, but in all the immense richness of what it signifies and implies as to the whole meaning of life — what is the use of establishing that our Lady was a virgin? (Catholic Evidence Training Outlines, pp. 13-14; italics in original).

Even if many adults are not indifferent to the importance of proofs, helping them to apply the truths of the faith to their daily lives still must take cues from their true needs, which will, if they decide to live evermore deeply the Catholic way of life, include interacting in a culture dominated by indifference. Catechesis that is ever-mindful of the need for conversion will address what it means to be Catholic to others and with others. It is teaching that is calling adults to consider truth as lived in their existing relationships. The question posed earlier: What do they need to know? can here become: What do they need to be able to offer to others who will challenge the rightness of being passionately Catholic? There are some helpful ways to shape the application of doctrines to suit this need: by considering the common misunderstandings, the Scriptural foundation, and the related doctrines.

**Considering the Common Misunderstandings**

Insufficient or ineffective catechesis has left many people in our parishes with a false understanding of the doctrines of the faith, not to mention how uninformed and unformed many people are at the point they decided to seek further understanding of their faith. False understandings held by Catholics as well as those seeking to become Catholics could be listed endlessly and with endless nuances varying with each soul. Some false understandings, however, are found in a given culture as a general feature, present in very many of the members of society and very often in its leaders or those looked to for “conventional wisdom” or as “trend setters.” Such falsehoods found so frequently could be called “common misunderstandings.”
For example, in modern Western culture, many secularists view faith as a “blind leap” and thus somehow incompatible with reason or prudence; many Protestants view Sacred Scripture as the only source of divine revelation; many Fundamentalist Christians view Catholics as Mary-worshippers; many relativists view the Church as arrogant, exclusivist, or close-minded. These generalizations can help us to form the essentials of our catechesis because, if ignored entirely when doctrines related to these falsehoods arise, these common misunderstandings will remain and may prevent a more wholehearted trust from developing in a person’s heart. The potential harm to conversion becomes clear, if people we teach get the impression that we are unfolding and discussing doctrines apart from the context of a culture that rejects them. Attempting to identify and address such issues is therefore crucial to judging what is essential to teach about a doctrine. Preparing a catechesis with this in mind forces practicality and application. This aspect of the application is the key to catching adults’ ears and keeping them wanting to know, because it is catechesis meeting them where they are. It is also a highly evangelizing form of catechesis because it is by definition in dialogue with the culture, with challenges to faith, and with people’s spoken and unspoken concerns, doubts, and confusions. Two more detailed examples may help, by just listing some of those common misunderstandings that are found in Western culture.

First, papal infallibility: It is confused with impeccability (never sinning), its history is thought to be quite recent (it was “invented” at the First Vatican Council in 1870), and it is thought to be a consequence of a perceived authoritarianism within the Church (“the Church should be more democratic; claiming infallibility is arrogant”) or an inability to keep up with modern times (“the Church is outmoded and shouldn’t think that way”).

Second, sin: Sin is viewed as another form of authoritarianism or outdatedness, or specific sins are seen as not sinful (“I can worship God just as well in the beauty of his creation as in church”; “it’s OK to divorce because God wants me to be happy”; “God would never send someone to Hell”; “God’s commandments are just arbitrary”; “the Church makes up all these rules but God wouldn’t approve of any of that”). Consider how such common misunderstandings would impact what you would consider essential to teach about these doctrines in an adult setting.

It is also helpful to note that a form of addressing misunderstandings is teaching what something isn’t. For example, St. Paul used this technique when he explained to the Corinthians that “love is patient and kind” (1 Cor 13:4), went on to explain at length what love is not: “Love is not jealous or boastful” (1 Cor 13:4 and following), and then returned to what love is: “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:7). We use this technique frequently in everyday life. In giving directions, we might say, “If you go past the grocery store, you’ve gone too far.” In this way, we illuminate the correct path by pointing out those that are in error. Contrast is a wonderful tool to help those you teach to see and overcome their common misunderstandings.

Exercise 8-5
Revealing the Confusions All Around Us

Consider these three truths of the faith: Angels, Hell, and the Holy Spirit. Each certainly could be said to be misunderstood in modern times, perhaps to the extent of dismissal by many, even derisive laughter at those who profess belief in them.

For each of these three truths, make a list of the common misunderstandings that you are aware of in the culture around you (ask others to give you input if needed). As you make up these lists, consider in what ways this might change how you teach these truths of the faith, making an assumption that at least some (maybe most) of these common misunderstandings exist in adults around you.
**Considering the Related Doctrines**

As we studied in Section 3, the faith is an organic unity; its doctrines are not independent. Often, while explaining a certain doctrine, if a catechist makes a connection with related doctrines, the result will be that people you teach grasp something that was previously hidden to them.

How does this doctrine relate to others? is not the question. Instead it should be: What relationship does this doctrine have with other truths that would make it more likely for me to find meaning in my life? Again, we have returned to relationships — those among doctrines that shed light on those between believers and God, between believers and other souls. Frank Sheed elaborated this point eloquently:

Catholic doctrine must be presented as a totality and not as a collection of doctrines: or to put it more simply, Catholic doctrines and practices must be shown as a pattern and not as a pile: or if a third effort may be permitted to express an idea easier to see than to say: they must be shown as parts of an organism and not as items on a list. The average non-Catholic holds whatever beliefs he does hold simply as items on a list, with no relation to each other save that they are on the same list; thus he can drop any doctrines he pleases, with no effect whatever on those he chooses to retain. But the doctrines revealed by God are so related that each is bound up with each and none can be rejected without weakening the whole fabric.

The key to both problems — the presentation of Catholicism as a life and as a totality — is the same, the doctrine of the supernatural life.

For first, this doctrine shows Catholicism as the life it is and gives meaning to everything the Church does. Every single action of the Church — Mass, sacraments, sacramentals, teaching, everything — is directed to the supernatural life. The presence or absence of the supernatural life at death is absolutely decisive of the soul’s eternal destiny. Christ our Lord gave, as the purpose of his coming, that men might have it. Quite literally then, unless the doctrine is understood, the Church’s whole action remains in the dark. Catholicism cannot be comprehended without it. It is necessary, then, in the forefront of all Evidence Guild teaching.

And second, this doctrine is the key to the pattern of the totality of Catholic doctrine. Once the crowd has grasped what we mean by God, then the whole of his dealings with man can be shown in their relation to the supernatural life: the creation of man with it, the fall and loss of it, Incarnation and Redemption, the foundation of the Church, death and the hereafter: all these are seen as parts of one coherent whole once the doctrine of the supernatural life has been grasped...

Whatever doctrine is being treated, a certain living quality must be aimed at. There are two ways principally in which this may be retrieved.

1) Wherever possible, doctrines should be shown in action. Thus a particular doctrine may be shown as the energizing principle in a Scripture incident or some episode from the life of a saint.

2) They should be shown that in Catholicism they can find a key to the meaning of their own lives.

Chief emphasis has been laid upon two ways of showing Catholicism as a living thing — one being to show it as energizing in the life of Christ and his saints, the other being to show it as throwing a flood of light on the life of every day (*Catholic Evidence Training Outlines*, pp. 20-22).
Exercise 8-6
Practice Making Connections

In the *Catechism* read paragraph 89. Doctrines (dogmas is a suitable equivalent here) are not just related; they are related in a way that provides meaning — offering a path. A path to what? To Jesus Christ, who alone, “by revealing the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling” (GS 22).

Consider these three doctrines: *Conscience, Resurrection of the Body*, and the *Corporal Works of Mercy*. Make a list of the four doctrines of our faith you think are *most closely related* to each one. Use the *Catechism* if you wish, or just simply make a list using your current sense of doctrine.

Considering again these same three doctrines, come up with, in a single sentence for each, how that doctrine connects to the *sacred liturgy* (you may wish to not limit this to articulating connections to the Mass only, but also the broader liturgical reality that the Church understands).

Considering once more these same three doctrines, come up with, in a single sentence for each, how that doctrine helps a believer to understand the way God uses *suffering* to make a soul more perfect, and how God invites a believer to offer up suffering for the spiritual good of others.

**Considering the Scriptural Foundation**

The words of Sacred Scripture are energized with the life of the Holy Spirit, and in this way the beauty of the Father’s plan shines through to each person who hears God’s Word with an open heart. The Story, is the history of the “wonderful works of God” from the moment of creation until now. The Second Vatican Council tells us that Scripture is a love letter from the Father whose central message is Christ (CCC 104). The People of God are not just any people — they are a people with a story. In the various forms of catechesis to adults we are telling that Story — not only your story or another person’s story — God is telling his Story through us. Someone who is seeking God is becoming part of the Story; they are adopting the heritage of a family. All that has been revealed by God fits into that Story, as its context, and all doctrine is in turn grounded in Sacred Scripture.

This is important in its own right because all adults in the faith need to see the personal relevance of that Story to what God desires for their lives. Sacred Scripture is also critical for the purpose of judging the *essentials* of a given doctrine. This is different than “proof-texting.” The practice of proof-texting is not bad in itself, but it can distort catechesis. Catechesis must have a *balance*: in terms of how much time to spend on a point of doctrine, how much emotion and stress to place on an aspect of faith, how much depth to give in addressing a question, how much personal witness to give in certain areas of the teaching, etc. If it is unbalanced, this is usually because the catechist is making judgments in teaching that are grounded too much in shifting sands: strongly-held political views, dramatic life experiences, personality quirks, misleading reading, bad theology, etc.

That sense of balance exercised by the catechist must come from *somewhere*. There is only one source of balance that will suffice to form a catechist in making consistently good decisions in teaching the essentials. This is Scripture itself, in the context of the living Tradition, as Pope John Paul II wrote:

Catechesis will always draw its content from the living source of the Word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures, for “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred Deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church,” as was recalled by the Second Vatican Council, which desired that “the ministry of the Word — pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction ... — (should be) healthily nourished and (should) thrive in holiness through the Word of Scripture.”
To speak of Tradition and Scripture as the source of catechesis is to draw attention to the fact that catechesis must be impregnated and penetrated by the thought, the spirit and the outlook of the Bible and the Gospels through assiduous contact with the texts themselves; but it is also a reminder that catechesis will be all the richer and more effective for reading the texts with the intelligence and the heart of the Church and for drawing inspiration from two thousand years of the Church’s reflection and life. The Church’s teaching, liturgy and life spring from this source and lead back to it, under the guidance of the pastors and, in particular, of the doctrinal Magisterium entrusted to them by the Lord (CT 27; ellipsis and parentheses in original).

There are no catechetical “tricks” in using Sacred Scripture that are relevant here. Using Sacred Scripture to decide the essentials of what must be taught, and with what emphasis, can only be done by, “assiduous contact with the texts themselves.” This ability to make good catechetical judgments springs from Sacred Scripture because it is there that catechists learn how those witnesses from its pages have lived and incorporated grace into a response of love for God and neighbor. Its pages teach the balance of the Master, the balance of his first catechists — the apostles and disciples — and the ways in which souls responded or failed to respond, deepened in trust, or fled into an abyss of doubt, sought God’s heart, or sought only their frivolous desires and whims. It teaches how all this works — all that makes teaching for understanding and change possible.

And this can only be lifted from those sacred pages by those who live in them regularly, with prayerful docility to hear the Master Teacher’s voice, mediated by that Church whose own voice the Spirit guards. Section 5, which encourages your practice of lectio divina, is critical to the goals of this program of study because of what it offers your interior life. Here, as we noted at the beginning of this current section, our intention is more to understand doctrine in light of how it is passed on to another, than how it is reflected upon in your interior life. This then is a second reason to seek that “assiduous contact.” It not only brings balance to your interior life, but also to your catechetical work.

Exercise 8-7

Scripture in the Lead

In proof-texting, Sacred Scripture follows and backs up things already decided and laid out. In teaching for conversion, to discover what is essential to help those seeking conversion, Sacred Scripture must instead lead. This is called allowing Sacred Scripture to drive your teaching.

In a paragraph, reflect on what you currently do (or have expectations of doing) in your use of Sacred Scripture to catechize, compared to what is being suggested here. Has your understanding changed? If so, in what way?

Fifth Step: Deepening Your Celebration

As was noted in the last section, it is vital to allow participants to respond to the moment of grace offered to them by the Holy Spirit through the work of the four previous steps. This greatly aids the movement from the head to the heart; from understanding to change — a movement from intellect to will.

The celebration step is not to be dismissed as a help to determining what is essential to teach, and judging what adults need to know. This may sound odd since this step occurs after the teaching itself.

If you have experience in working with adults, consider the way we often discover that a person has a pastoral need, an intellectual doubt, or a desire to know. Such things frequently come to light as a result of a new experience with God — one that may be surprising, frightening, deeply consoling, even confusing — a moment when grace breaks through and a response rises up and makes itself known to those engaged in serving in that person.
Creating a context for this moment of grace to occur is a major goal of the celebration step. On the other side of it, in a teaching session, a person may have perceived something in themselves that was not as recognizable or as urgent until it was taken to prayer. That opportunity for prayer is the celebration step, and its fruits are our opportunity to discover the catechetical needs of those we serve.

Faith is a gift from God. It can only be born in the intimacy of the human heart as a fruit of that “grace [which] moves and assists him” (DV 5), and as a completely free response to the “promptings of the Holy Spirit who moves the heart and turns it toward God” (GDC 55). Because this life of ongoing conversion and journeying towards perfection is the normal life every Christian is called to live, the working of passing on the faith to other adults should be thoroughly steeped in this understanding.

As catechists, putting thoughtful effort in the celebration step is a recognition that “when catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. This climate is especially necessary when the catechumen and those to be catechized are confronted with the more demanding aspects of the Gospel and when they feel weak or when they discover the mysterious action of God in their lives” (GDC 85).

Let Your Passion and Your Struggle Show!

To be able to form pastorally effective and catechetically appropriate opportunities for prayer in the celebration step, it is important to be in touch with the things to celebrate and sorrow over in your own faith life.

Now, read this Scripture, authored by St. Paul with careful attentiveness:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, of there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Phil 4:4, 7-8)

Consider the following questions to help you identify the “wonderful works of God” in your life and the ways you may be daily acting that quench the Holy Spirit’s desire to give you peace with God:

▽ How have I allowed forms of crudeness, rashness, destructiveness, harshness in the world around me to unnecessarily receive my attention, or even entertain me?

▽ How have I experienced my heart being softened by Jesus to another’s needs?

▽ How have I loved those who are difficult to love?

▽ How have I found joy in the Lord and in his Church?

▽ What are the blessings in this moment that come to mind from God’s hand to me today?

Select two of questions above – maybe the harder ones for you personally. In one paragraph each answer the questions you have selected and determine one way that each could be lift up in a prayerful way or in song (maybe a celebration, maybe a lamentation). For example: if you sought to reflect on how the sacrificial love of Jesus impacts your life, you might decide to express that in prayer by meditating on the Litany of the Sacred Heart, and you might further suggest a context in which that prayer could occur (with a certain hymn, or using a certain piece of art, or done in a certain place).
Praying with Scripture: *Lectio Divina*

In Section 5, you began the practice of *lectio divina* by reflecting on God’s astonishing love for you. In the last section, you reflected on three scriptural passages that showed you God’s merciful love even when you sin, and invited you to pray for the grace of deep repentance out of love for God.

In the series of Scripture passages in this section, you are asked to reflect on Jesus’ public ministry and teaching, unfolding the message to hear the truths of the faith in which participants are to believe and by which they are to live so that they might repent of their sins and live more deeply in the kingdom of the Father.

### Exercise 8-9

**Reflecting on the Life of Christ**

Set aside 15 minutes every day to contemplate the Scripture passages below, reflecting anew on the life of Christ. Pray through these passages in order, one at a time, over the next week or so, using a copy of the *lectio divina* prayer worksheet found in Section 5 to record your responses.

Begin your prayer time by asking for this specific grace: “Dear Lord Jesus, please grant me the grace to know you more intimately, love you more intensely, and follow you more faithfully.”

- **Matthew 3:13-17**  
  Jesus is called forth by his Father to begin his work.

- **John 2:1-11**  
  Jesus’ response is called forth by Mary; his public ministry begins.

- **Mark 1:14-18**  
  Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God is at hand and calls followers to him.

These Scriptures dispose you to receive the graces of loving obedience and supernatural charity, and invite God’s help to love him for himself alone. As you complete each prayer worksheet, number and date it. Put your completed worksheets in a folder for safekeeping.

### For Your Portfolio

**Case Study: Wonderful or Wanting — Spotting Good Methodology**

Observing other catechists is one of the most important tools to help you improve your ability to make good catechetical judgments. To really gain from an observing experience, you have to be using the right criteria. This exercise will provide one set of criteria.

If you are currently serving in some kind of ministry to adults, select a teaching by another catechist to observe. If this is not possible, then either select a teaching that may be available on CD or DVD (as long as it is still basic adult catechesis), or make an appointment to visit a teaching at a nearby parish. The teaching you select may or may not prove to be “good” relative to your criteria. Nonetheless, noting what is *missing*, as well as the skill of what *is* presented, are both invaluable helps to form yourself in an awareness of the marks of good catechesis.

In observing the teaching you have selected, very briefly answer the following questions either during the observation or immediately afterward:

- How did the catechist seek to prepare participants’ hearts for the teaching to be given?
- What common misunderstandings were addressed?
- What connections were made between doctrines or aspects of the faith?
- What Scriptures were used?
- How did the catechist seek to allow participants to celebrate the goodness of the truths proclaimed?
- What was your overall impression of whether this catechist was able to connect with the participants in a way that aimed at personal conversion?
Catechesis is most effective when it is systematic and organic. The *Catechism*, with its referenced interconnections, is a superlative example of an organic presentation of the faith. The four parts are related one to another: the Christian mystery is the object of faith (first part); it is celebrated and communicated in liturgical actions (second part); it is present to enlighten and sustain the children of God in their actions (third part); it is the basis for our prayer, the privileged expression of which is the *Our Father*, and it represents the object of our supplication, our praise and our intercession (fourth part) (FD 2).

In this exercise we explore the organic nature of the faith. Below are listed the four parts of the *Catechism*, along with the paragraphs in each part:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Speaks to…</th>
<th>Paragraphs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One:</td>
<td>The Profession of Faith</td>
<td>26-1065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two:</td>
<td>The Celebration of the Christian Mystery</td>
<td>1066-1689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three:</td>
<td>Life in Christ</td>
<td>1690-2557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four:</td>
<td>Christian Prayer</td>
<td>2558-2865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this breakdown, and the cross-references found in the *Catechism*, demonstrate how a doctrine found in Part One is related to each of the other three parts of the *Catechism*. As a starting point, find and read paragraph 215 in the *Catechism* concerning the doctrine “God is truth.” Considering what we’ve covered in this section about seeing the interconnections among doctrines, cite at least one paragraph from Part Two, Part Three, and Part Four of the *Catechism* that relates to this teaching of the faith.

In 300 words or less, describe how paragraph 215 in Part One of the *Catechism* is related to the other three parts. Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.

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**Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!**

**Understanding:** *General Directory for Catechesis*, Part 2, 119-136  
*The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, Chapter 6, pp. 100-107

**Change:** *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part 3, 11-23

**Meditation:** Consider — My everything and my anything is his gift to me. Do I really have a thankful heart in small things?  
Read — Matthew 6:19-34  
Pray — Jesus my Jesus, thank you for your goodness in giving me my next breath.

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**Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 16th Century**

“If you have too much to do, with God’s help you will find time to do it all.”

“So, after daring to approach your most loving heart, and to plunge my thirst into it, I received a promise from you of a garment made of three parts: these were to cover my soul in its nakedness … they were peace, love, and perseverance. Protected by this garment of salvation, I was confident that I would lack nothing but all would succeed and give you glory.”

~ St. Peter Canisius ~
Section 9
Analyzing My Situation:
How Do These Participants Come to Faith?

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law — though not being myself under the law — that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law — not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ — that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

~ 1 Corinthians 9:10-22 ~

Considering the above passage’s call to serve souls at all costs to self, let’s take the next step . . .

In the last two sections we have studied aspects of how to form a teaching using the ecclesial method, including ways to determine the essentials of a doctrine and communicate it effectively to adults. Now we will move from looking at doctrine to looking at adults themselves, and considerations that will heighten our ability to be of service to their desire for communion with God and with the People of God. Knowing those to be catechized is a common refrain of this program of study. In this section we delve into helping you really see the people that God has called into your care.

Stepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

❖ You’ll grasp how to accommodate adults’ diverse ways of gaining understanding, engaging all the senses in learning, thereby aiding the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.

❖ You’ll be able to use questions as a teaching tool to invite participants into dialogue through the use of well-framed questions.

❖ You’ll gain further opportunities to observe other catechists and, in turn, potentially have your own teaching critiqued.

Understanding Adult Learning Styles

How do adults learn and change? Not only children but also adults have preferred ways — learning styles — to discover and delve into something new. All appeals to the intellect come through the senses. Sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell are all avenues to the intellect. Some people prefer to learn through sight — perhaps a book, pamphlets or handouts, internet sites, or art. Others prefer to learn through hearing and enjoy classes, discussions, dialogue, storytelling, books on CD, and music. Some combine both by seeking out DVDs or internet video. Yet others prefer learning with a strong tactile component, perhaps needing to take notes during a talk, preferring workbooks, or making pilgrimages or visits to a meaningful sites or building to get their hands as well as their heads around it. Furthermore, people learn at different levels of abstraction. Some people like orderly outlines, lists, and charts; others learn best through examples and models. Any effort to teach adults cannot ignore differences among learners. You as a catechist should be constantly alive to the use of these instruments in fashioning your message and its delivery.
To serve the work of conversion, it is helpful to become a student of your own learning. How do you learn and change? When you desire to learn something, what is the preferred way that you go about it? It can also be useful to reflect on your own behavior when someone else is the catechist or homilist: What kept my attention during that teaching? When was I least aware or least interested in the direction the teaching was taking?

Each of us learns in ways suited to our own tendencies, and most catechists have a good awareness of how they themselves prefer to learn. However, unless otherwise trained, a person normally teaches in whatever way he or she likes to learn. Usually this is not done deliberately; instead catechists who are insufficiently alive to others’ differences in learning styles usually are doing so because they do understand how they themselves learn, but have not sufficiently reflected on the fact that many adult do not learn in their way. When catechists fail to appeal to all learning styles, the result is often that some they teach fully receive their teaching and others do not. This may result in the mistaken conclusion that some were able to “get it” and some weren’t. Rather it is much more likely that most, if not all, could have “gotten it” if their catechists had taught in methodologically diverse ways.

The ability to recognize different learning styles and needs is, as with so many elements of adult catechesis, dependent upon building relationships. This means seeking to be a catechist who listens and is willing to engage in dialogue:

A central feature [of the adult formation process] is the establishment of a friendly and dialogical rapport. This means that the didactic moment must be integrated into a broader and more elaborate faith journey… Of fundamental importance is the dialogical approach which, while recognizing that all are called to the obedience of faith (see Rom 1:5), respects the basic freedom and autonomy of adults and encourages them to engage in an open and cordial dialogue. In this way, they can make known their needs and can participate, as they should, as subjects or agents in their own catechesis and in that of others (ACCC 55, 57).

This allows us to discover how participants learn and how they desire to learn, which makes for a favorable context for change — begetting an openness to conversion.

**Exercise 9-1**

**Detailing Your Situation**

Go to the following link on the Vatican website and read in this document (called Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community) paragraphs 54-58: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_14041990_acat_en.html

In considering why adults are willing to initially come to any form of catechesis at a parish, and why they choose to stay or not, answer the following questions in one brief paragraph each:

 '=', What do you think are the primary practical barriers in our culture to adults being motivated to want to come to a place where they could learn and grow spiritually?

 '=', In the course of your parish’s ministry to adults, (to the degree that you are aware) what different forms of learning are used to reinforce understanding the core truths of the faith, and encouraging their practice?

','= What are the ways that your parish’s adult ministries aim to help participants retain what has been taught, through discussion and opportunities for living out their growing faith in acts of Christian service?

','= What are the ways that your parish’s adult ministries help people think critically about their life choices and discern gradually but substantively how to transfer what they are learning to their daily lives?
Becoming a Student of Reception

It’s common to hear people comment on the delivery of a talk, speech, homily, or other public speaking effort. The term *delivery* can refer to many things, from the method to the content to the perceived personality of the one speaking. Anyone studying the art of teaching should be concerned, however, with not so much the delivery, but rather the *reception*. Delivery is about *you*; reception is about *them*. Becoming a student of reception means making it your constant concern to discover two things: 1) how adults, *in general*, learn and change, and 2) how those participating in your parish’s adult ministries *this* year learn and change.

This idea of being reception-focused rather than delivery-focused is really just another way to say that a catechist is focused on *outcomes*. In a teaching, and in preparing to teach, becoming forgetful of self, coming out of yourself, and thinking more about them than about yourself can’t be accomplished without practice.

For specific catechetical sessions, afterward it means getting into the habit of asking yourself questions like: Did I *lose* their attention? If so, when *exactly* did that occur? What kept their attention *best* during that session? Who is it that was *least* focused on the teaching I was giving? Who was *easiest* to engage; who was *hardest*? Did I *feel* like I “had” them? Did they *get* it? How would I *know* this? How would I *know* if I failed?

In a macro sense, being outcome-focused can also mean asking yourself some questions about the evidence of conversion at the end of a period of catechesis, such as at the conclusion of an RCIA year: Did the adults who attended these teachings end up seeming like they really *need* the Mass more? Do they really have an *attachment to Jesus* that is restless for more? Do they seem to really desire to help *others* get to Heaven? Do they really have hearts *thankful* for God’s gifts? Do they really seem to *need* God in their daily lives? Do they evidence a desire to sin *less each day*?

**Exercise 9-2**

*Exploring a Great Mystery*

For catechists, as opposed to any other kind of teacher, one of the most critical things to know about those we serve is how faith *happens*. It is difficult to become reception-focused if we don’t really know how faith is received. Of course, this is fundamentally God’s action in a willing soul, but catechists are channels of the grace God gives to move souls.

Once again, go to the following link on the Vatican website and read in this document (called *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community*). This time read paragraphs 34-38:  

In light of what you have read, consider these two questions:

ˌ Why does the desire for God exist in human hearts?

ˌ What does it mean *in practice* for a person to believe in God?

In a paragraph, reflect on what you think would be the answer to the second question rephrased in this way: How would I know if someone I was catechizing was growing in faith; what would it look like?

There are specific catechetical habits that mark a catechist who is genuinely aware of really helping participants to grow in faith. The most obvious one is whether you pray for those whom you are teaching. Another is a willingness, almost a need, to substantively discuss the impact of your catechesis on those it is aimed at serving, preferably not too long after you’ve taught them. Did they *get* it?
One bellwether means to recognize when you are not sufficiently aware of those being catechized is how you introduce Catholic terminology and whether you explain terms as they are introduced. For example, it is very common for a catechist who was raised as a Catholic to casually refer to “CCD” (an acronym for a form of weekly religious instruction for children that was used in the U.S. for decades), without it ever occurring to him or her that some adults in the group typically would have no idea what the acronym means or to what it refers. Some catechists use terms like “Carmelite, “orders,” votive,” or phrases like “offer it up,” and “prayers of the faithful,” with painfully little awareness of how foreign this language can seem to others.

When something like this occurs in a teaching, it not only causes a glitch in understanding and a distraction while a listener tries to figure out what that might be, but also clearly says that the catechist is not really in touch with those being taught. This can also occur for certain terms when their common cultural meaning is different from their meaning within the Catholic tradition. For example, if a catechist teaches about freedom, without explaining what Catholics mean by “freedom,” then his or her use of the term will be entirely misunderstood and, perhaps, rejected.

Consider the example below from outside a catechetical context. It is part of a light-hearted list that Beloit College in Wisconsin developed to help its professors better relate to students entering in 2010:

- They have never heard anyone “ring it up” on a cash register.
- There has always been only one Germany.
- “Google” has always been a verb.
- A coffee has always taken longer to make than a milkshake.
- Madden has always been a game, not a Superbowl-winning coach.
- Young women’s fashions have never been concerned with where the waist is.
- Small white holiday lights have always been in style.
- They have always preferred going out in groups, as opposed to dating.
- They are wireless, yet always connected.
- Bad behavior has always been getting captured on amateur videos.
- Beach volleyball has always been a recognized sport.
- They have always “dissed” what they don’t like.
- “Outing” has always been a threat.
- Scientists have always been studying global warming to confirm its existence.
- Ringo Starr has always been clean and sober.

Some of the things on this list may or may not be familiar to you. But all of the things on this list make a simple point: that generational experiences are relevant for college teachers to be able to understand 18-year-olds. In a setting for adults at a parish, the differences between catechists and participants may or may not be generational, but they are always religious, whether it is a difference of tradition, upbringing, or simply a depth of commitment. Many catechists make simple but very destructive errors by not sufficiently reflecting on this fact. To this degree, their teaching becomes less relevant, less clear, more frustrating, and even unnecessarily offensive.

Catechists who introduce Catholic terminology too soon, or without explanation, usually: 1) truly do not know what terms many adults in the culture are commonly unfamiliar with, or 2) are self-concerned (perhaps due simply to shyness or inexperience).

Diligent preparation can heighten your awareness of others’ needs so that you can strive to understand and overcome your ignorance or inexperience. An attitude of single-minded concern that your teaching must be received with understanding can overcome your shyness or your unconscious “it’s all about me” attitude.
Let’s think about an RCIA group for example. Make a list of 20 common Catholic terms (not technical theological terms such as transubstantiation) that are likely to be unfamiliar to a non-Catholic. If you want to make the exercise more challenging for yourself, include terms that are defined by the secular culture in one way, but by the Church in another (such as the word “freedom”).

Using Art as an Aid to Conversion

Beauty has universal appeal. Our language is replete with adjectives of appreciation: a gorgeous head of red hair, a sweeping aurora, an angelic baby, a lovely flower, a breathtaking sunset — all descriptions of a beauty not of our making. All such beauty is a reflection of the glory and grandeur of God himself. God is omnipotence (all power), omniscience (all knowledge), goodness, truth, wisdom, justice, mercy, and love; he is beauty. All of creation manifests God’s nature.

God, the tremendous Lover, gave humanity the capacity to create new things, to imitate his own creative power. Throughout the ages, we have manifested an appreciation of beauty, and expressed a sense of the beautiful in art. Art communicates in ways words cannot:

Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words … Indeed, art is a distinctively human form of expression; beyond the search for the necessities of life which is common to all living creatures, art is a freely given superabundance of the human being’s inner riches. Arising from talent given by the Creator and from man’s own effort, art is a form of practical wisdom, uniting knowledge and skill, to give form to the truth of reality in a language accessible to sight or hearing (CCC 2500-2501; italics in original).

Throughout the life of the Church, sacred art has been a favored way to do this. The inspired creations of the greatest architects, sculptors, artisans, painters, composers, and authors — the great cathedrals with their stained glass and statuary — Scripture in stone, marble, and glass; the sublime Pieta and awe-inspiring David of Michelangelo; the Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci; the soul-lifting compositions of Mozart, Bach, Handel, and Beethoven and the grand, formal beauty of Gregorian chant; and the great prayers, homilies, and spiritual writings of the saints — are the ways we use beauty in worship and praise of the author of all beauty. As human reflections of God’s creation, art and music and literature should lift up the heart and mind in love and adoration of the giver of all artistic inspiration.

Note that the Catechism refers to art as “practical wisdom.” It is a very practical catechetical tool, for we have all heard the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Art can present complex ideas or stories in a single image. Sacred art goes even deeper, expressing the transcendent mystery of God: “Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier” (CCC 2502).

Stained-glass windows, icons, sculpture, mosaic, music, and architectural forms have been used as catechetical tools for centuries, especially in churches during the long period when the great proportion of people were illiterate. Sacred art is still used today in the Church’s catechetical work. For example, the 14 images in the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are intended to tell the entire story of salvation.
Among the adults we teach, there will always be those who more easily grasp a concept through an image. Even if you, as a catechist, prefer to teach through verbal explanation, good methodology suggests other options suited to those who best learn visually. A beautiful sacred image linked to a specific teaching captures the main point and remains with people long after a teaching session is complete. Thus, the wise catechist seeks every opportunity to use sacred art, and to engage not just the intellect but also the senses. How might this be done?

As a starting point, create a “sacred space” in the room where sessions for adults are held. The sacred space is a focal point for the group. It is a place of honor where the Bible can be placed on a stand on a beautiful cloth of the appropriate liturgical color, and perhaps candles, and a standing crucifix or an icon, picture, or statue of Jesus or Mary. A sacred space reminds participants that this is not a class in economics or a mere chat about personal feelings, but an opportunity to encounter God, and the environment reflects this fact.

To supplement the sacred space, you might display artwork that speaks directly to the teaching being given. For example, the painting of the doubting Thomas (“The Incredulity of Thomas”) painted by Caravaggio (1571-1610) beautifully illuminates the theological virtue of faith (you can view this piece with commentary at this website: www.wga.hu/frames-eh.html?html/c/caravagg/06/34thomas.html). The expression on Thomas’ face as he puts his hand into Jesus’ side says more than any number of words. Moreover, Thomas appears to be looking straight ahead, rather than at Jesus’ wound, just as a blind man would do. Thus, art communicates on a deeper level, expressing without words the spiritual heart of Thomas.

What if you are unschooled in art? You need not have a degree in art history. Much great art is available online; prints can be purchased relatively inexpensively. For example, the Web Gallery of Art (www.wga.hu) is a virtual museum and searchable database of European painting and sculpture of the Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassic, and Romantic periods (1100-1850). The site contains over 20,000 reproductions, along with picture commentaries, biographies of artists, guided tours, period music, a downloadable catalogue, and free postcards of your favorite art that can be emailed to yourself or others and then printed. Prints and oil paintings can also be ordered.

Other sources included CDs of sacred art collections, the many affordably priced Catholic companies such as Leaflet Missal Company (www.leafletonline.com), Catholic Direct (www.catholicdirect.com) and Autom (www.autom.com), and other major secular web sellers such as All Posters (www.allposters.com) and Ebay (www.ebay.com). In The Catechetical Review, a quarterly catechetical journal published by Franciscan University of Steubenville, there are two regular sections called “Art Notes” and “Learning Through Art” which can help any catechist learn to use art as a teaching tool (including a beautiful centerfold of the art being discussed).

Over time, acquiring a reasonable collection of poster-size or smaller unframed color prints for your catechetical work is not prohibitively expensive. Unframed art can also be easily stored flat in sleeves. Most inexpensive easels have clips at the top that can position a print for display. Some catechists invest in sacred art to decorate their homes, and then use these pieces from time to time in their catechetical work. As they teach, the artwork serves as a focal point to reinforce their words or even the primary teaching image. You’ll find that many participants are not only more apt to remember an image, which in turn will help them remember the teaching, but also frequently react at a deeper emotional level than might otherwise be attainable.

For auditory learners, sacred music as a form of art has an exceptionally long history within the Church, springing from the roots of the Hebrew Psalms in Sacred Scripture, which plainly were meant to be sung. There is evidence throughout the New Testament of hymns and canticles. The oldest extant music in the Latin Church is Gregorian chant, with written notations by the 10th century, and it is this form of liturgical music that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council acknowledged “as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services” (SC 116). The Council, however, encouraged other kinds of sacred music as well, including the traditional music of other cultures (see SC 119) and new compositions (see SC 121).
As with sacred art, sacred music communicates the incommunicable. An adult can more readily learn the *yearning* of Advent, the *joy* of Christmas, the *sorrow* of the Passion and deep repentance for their own sins, the *exultation* of Easter, and the love of God, our Blessed Mother, and the saints through music than any other medium of art.

Adults who learn best by touching and doing are not forgotten by Mother Church. As a catechist, you can see to it that those you teach are given an opportunity to look up Scripture along with you, or to take notes or fill in blanks as you teach. You can arrange for participants to make a local pilgrimage, to a cathedral or basilica or shrine or even participation in an outdoor Stations of the Cross. You can provide an opportunity for participants to reverently touch sacred vessels, objects, and vestments, to rehearse receiving Holy Communion, and to receive anointings with sacred oil.

Adults who are blind are a special case of learning by touch, and they can gain immensely from not only being given the opportunity to feel liturgical objects — symbolic and beautiful embroidery on a chasuble or cope or stole, elegant lace and the fine fabric of an alb, the shape of Jesus and the feel of the nails on a crucifix — that can be appreciated even without sight.

And it should not be overlooked that the Church addresses not only the senses of sight and hearing and touch in her liturgies, but also the entire bodily being of God’s people with gestures, odors, and taste — the Sign of the Cross with holy water, genuflection, standing and sitting and kneeling during Mass, incense and the scent of beeswax candles, and the taste of the sacramental elements of bread and wine.

**Exercise 9-4**

*Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*

Using the internet sources described in this section, locate a work of religious art. If you do not have access to the internet, select a work of art in a local Catholic church — a stained-glass window, painting, fresco, or sculpture.

↓ In a paragraph, describe how you might incorporate this artwork into a presentation on some aspect of the faith.

↓ In a second paragraph think of another aspect of the faith for which this *same* piece of art could be used, and describe how you would do so.

**Using Handouts and Other Forms of Reading as an Aid to Conversion**

One of the most time-intensive aspects of teaching can be the preparation of handouts. The Association for Catechumenal Ministry (ACM) (<www.acmrcia.org>), publishes the *RCIA Participant’s Book*, which features a content-rich, beautifully constructed, and endlessly printable and copyable collection of 380 handouts in a compact CD-ROM format. It includes handouts on doctrines, lives of the saints, conversion testimonies, liturgical year pieces, prayers, Psalms, and other pertinent topics. In addition to the ACM, there are many companies producing excellent and sizable collections of handouts in the form of engagingly written pamphlets with attractive art and photography. Some of these include: New Hope Publications (<www.newhope-ky.org>), Catholic Answers (<www.catholic.com>), Our Sunday Visitor (<www.osv.com>), and the Catholic Truth Society (<www.cts-online.org.uk>).

Handouts such as these are used in many forms of adult catechesis to support the verbal communication of the faith, and therefore deliberately go into greater detail than a typical spoken catechesis. This allows the handouts to provide not only more depth on a given subject, but also more references to Sacred Scripture, as well as helpful references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Some participants find this essential to gain a clearer understanding of some aspect of the faith, while others may not feel the need to read much beyond what they have understood from the verbal teaching. The handouts allow for this flexibility.
In contexts such as RCIA, handouts can also be given to sponsors or team members to support their explanation of certain questions. As we have seen, the language of doctrine requires a certain precision. Well-chosen handouts provide an accurate yet readable explanation of key aspects of the faith. In addition to handouts given out at catechetical sessions, consider also the value of encouraging adults you teach to subscribe to or get on the mailing list of certain Catholic catalogs, newspapers, or magazines. Samples of these can be brought into one or more sessions so that participants can thumb through them. By this method of catechesis, you can extend the influence of your initial teaching. These resources can also address questions and needs that may have gone unidentified during the length of teaching or discussion, and also help participants to develop a deeper Catholic worldview.

**Common Misunderstanding: Art of the Mind**

It's all too easy as a catechist to forget that using art is not restricted to those things we can perceive by the external senses — sight, hearing, etc. There's an “internal sense,” the imagination, which can understand what is merely described, without it being physically present. This is an especially compact, and forceful, way of communicating the truths of the faith. A master of imaginative images was Fr. Ronald Knox, a 20th century convert to Catholicism who had been an Anglican priest. In *The Creed in Slow Motion*, he wrote: “Somebody ought to paint a picture of the Good Shepherd coming to rescue his sheep, and the sheep trying to get away.” What an image of human sinfulness and resistance to God's love! In the same book, he compared the conversion of St. Paul as coming “on board the Ark of Christ like a sailor who had been shanghied in the slums of a sea-port.”

Imaginative images are not always visual. In one of his sermons, Fr. Knox used an odor he remembered to describe Jesus turning “away from self-satisfied virtue, with its indefinable scent of floor-polish.” These kinds of imaginative images not only are whimsical but carry the ability to catch our interest based on everyday human behavior and commonplace memories.

**Exercise 9-5**

**Pick the Paper to Go With Your Posit**

Using the internet sources described in this section, explore one of the collections of handouts published by these Catholic companies. Choose two of the following: the *Four Marks of Church*, *Matrimony*, the *Blessed Virgin Mary*, the *Existence of God*, the *Communion of Saints*, *Temptation and Sin*. For two of these, list a couple of handouts you might select to accompany your teaching on the subject.

**Using Technology as an Aid to Conversion**

In our media-saturated age, the use of DVDs, CDs, movies, television, and radio might be thought to come naturally to us as catechists. In writing about this subject, Pope John Paul II claimed electronic media as a proper form of communicating the truths of the faith:

Communication permeates the essential dimensions of the Church which is called to announce to all the joyful message of salvation. For this reason, the Church takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the communications media as pathways providentially given by God to intensify communion and to render more penetrating the proclamation of his Word. The media permit the manifestation of the universal character of the People of God, favoring a more intense and immediate exchange among local churches, and nourishing mutual awareness and cooperation” (RD 6).
In the same apostolic letter, the pope wrote that the “media provide a providential opportunity to reach people everywhere, overcoming barriers of time, of space and of language; presenting the content of faith in the most varied ways imaginable; and offering to all who search the possibility of entering into dialogue with the mystery of God, revealed fully in Christ Jesus” (RD 5).

Technological advances in multiple forms of media present many challenges and opportunities for us as catechists. As catechists, it is part of our task to meet others “where they are.” Spreadsheets, laptops, databases, word processing software, PDFs, local area networks, and wireless internet access are all technological advancements that can aid us. Most younger participants, in every part of the world, are eager consumers of electronic media. Pope John Paul II pointed out that the internet “habituates persons to interactive communication” (RD 9), and Pope Francis has a presence on a number of social media forms. Thus, avoidance of technology as a tool of evangelization can actually be counterproductive.

Our use of media and other kinds of electronic technology should be carefully chosen. We must ask ourselves: Is the Gospel being communicated through these various forms of media? Is the Gospel complete, or watered-down? Does it communicate the splendor as well as the fullness of the truth? Not only do we need to be using quality media that will measure up to — in content, in quality (including production quality), and in interest — and contend with its secular counterparts, but we also need to realize that media consumption affects those we teach profoundly. Technology is able to enhance and bring efficiency to our catechetical endeavors in ways apart from the art of presentation. When we point someone to an elegantly-designed Catholic website, show an entertaining and solidly catechetical DVD, or run a PowerPoint presentation with embedded video clips, we send the message that the Gospel is relevant and ever-fresh. These powerful electronic tools give speed to the spread of the good news to “all nations” (Matt 28:19).

However, nothing can replace the person of the catechist and that all-important one-to-one relationship between the catechist and the catechized. The GDC says:

No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to [the catechist] by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only his own human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of texts and other work instruments... the personal relationship of the catechist with the subject is of crucial importance (para. 156; italics added).

Like the shrewd servant of Luke 16, our Lord is calling us to be artful in our temporary stewardship of these resources so as to spread his kingdom, his Church, upon the face of the earth. He calls us to take up the gift of technology to communicate his saving message. We are therefore challenged to remember that communication technology ranks “among the marvelous things which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use and to make known the truth” (RD 9). Though our instruments of evangelization and catechesis may differ from our predecessors, the Gospel remains unchanged, ever fresh, and perennially powerful.

Using Small Groups as an Aid to Conversion

Because relationships are so crucial to conversion, catechetical work with adults needs to include deliberate structures to foster relationships. It could be said that ministries for adults should have as much fellowship content as doctrinal content. The best means to this, beyond the catechist’s own initiative in seeking to know participants, is well-run small groups. As was noted earlier in this section, adults need to “make known their needs ... as subjects or agents in their own catechesis and in that of others” (ACCC 57).
Since adult formation is an endeavor that has ever-deepening conversion as its goal, problems and challenging situations will always arise and are a normal and necessary part of the conversion process. In some cases, issues will be immediately evident; in other cases, they will be discovered as you and others working with you establish relationships with participants, or they will develop as part of the journey of deepening conversion. Some issues are moral or doctrinal, others are matters related to Church law, and still others are basic relationship concerns. Some issues may be difficult to work with or will take extended periods of time to help someone work through. In all cases, these pastoral matters need to be addressed and not ignored, precisely because in addressing such issues adults have an opportunity to choose God’s way of life and truth. The pastor and other parish clergy, ministry leaders and team members, and godparents and sponsors of adults have a responsibility to help individuals identify issues where conversion of heart, mind, and action may be needed and to pastor them as they work through these issues.

In a pastorally healthy RCIA process, for example, small groups become the primary place where pastoral needs are discovered, and therefore become the initial source of help. It is important to value both the explicit proclamation of the truth as certitudes, and the openness to discuss those truths candidly and vigorously in light of the complexities of human life experience, doubts, pains, joys, and hopes. A catechist who understands the tremendous value of well-run small groups in the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion will then seek to reach souls using such groups, with an assurance that dialogue can lead to a deep trust of those certitudes, rather than away from them into a morass of opinion and relativism masquerading as “pastoral sensitivity.” In our attitude as catechists, this balance of teaching and dialogue flows from:

- a conviction that salvation comes from Christ and that, therefore, dialogue does not dispense one from proclamation, that the Church is the ordinary way of salvation and that only she possesses the fullness of revealed truth and salvific means. As Pope John Paul II confirmed, while referring to Redemptoris Missio: “One cannot place on the same level God’s revelation in Christ and the scriptures or traditions of other religions. A theocentrism which did not recognize Christ in his full identity would be unacceptable to the Catholic faith…. Christ’s missionary command remains permanently valid and is an explicit call to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them, in order to bring them the fullness of God’s gift.” Dialogue should not, therefore, lead to religious relativism (GCM 15).

Did You Know?

**Small groups are an acknowledged part of how adults learn.** Respectful conversation and give-and-take might, at first, be tentative. Yet, when given sufficient time and acquaintance, small groups become not only a source of fellowship but also an indispensable part of the process of assimilating the truths of the faith to foster conversion of heart.

Using Questions as an Aid to Conversion

Our own verbal teaching, private conversations with those we teach, small group dialogue, as well as times set aside for questions and answers, can all bring out questions, intended or not. Be grateful for questions: it means that someone is interested! Questions asked by participants are always good. It is important though, that catechists not relate to questions passively, much less view them as potential distractions. Good catechists invite and work for questions.

It is helpful to consider the following questions: When does learning begin? Was there ever a time in your own education when a particular teacher left you feeling lost? The teacher may have expounded on several ideas with great passion, but left you wondering, “What is the point here?” If at some level that question was not satisfied, you may have continued to be present, but you had to force yourself to pay attention, unaided by any internal need to know.
If you have had this experience, you discovered that learning does not begin when the teacher simply starts to speak. Rather, it begins when the learner fashions a well-framed question in his or her mind, a question of such interest that it demands an answer. When the learner “owns” a question, when it strikes to the core of his or her own curiosity, then the proper dynamic is at work for real engagement. Learning has begun.

To be clear, we are not talking about simple factual questions like, “In what year was the D-Day Battle fought?” Rather, we are talking about broader questions, such as: “What would have happened if the Allies had not prevailed at Normandy? How would it have changed the face of Europe?” While dates are important, these larger questions are more interesting and present a framework that tie together otherwise disparate facts. In turn, they elicit other, more detailed questions.

When participants in adult catechesis feel lost or bored, it is often because they have not considered these larger questions or their underlying importance, or have not been helped to do so. One hallmark of a great catechist is the ability to initiate curiosity with a well-framed question, and guide those being catechized to ask their own questions along the path toward conclusions. This is accomplished through a series of guided questions posed by the catechist to elicit thought, discussion, and conclusions from participants. It demands thoughtful preparation on the part of the catechist, but when well executed, this method gives participants a chance to experience, in the midst of an indifferent culture, that truth is surprisingly relevant, and more important, to consider the invitation to conversion at a more personal level.

*The Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses this question and answer format effectively. It begins with broad and intriguing questions. The first question asks, “What is the plan of God for man?” The uninitiated may very well be taken aback by this question. It prompts in the reader several questions of his own. “Do you mean to say that God has outlined a way for us to live? How could that be? Has anyone ever really talked to God? If it’s possible to talk to God, I’d like to see how that’s done!” Thus, in one seemingly innocent but provocative question, the Compendium sets in motion an inquiry that leads the reader to recognize his or her own innate desire for God.

Logically, the Compendium then speaks to the emotion just aroused. The second question asks, “Why does man have a desire for God?” At this point, the reader may well ask, “Is this the restlessness that I’ve been feeling? Am I really able to converse with God? How is that possible? What must I do? Is it possible to know God? Is it something that can be learned?”

The Compendium anticipates this response, and addresses the reader’s concerns in its third question, “How is it possible to know God with only the light of human reason?” The Compendium’s answer is that we can envision that the universe has to have a beginning and seems to have an end, or purpose — that it is not meaningless (although many people today indeed assert that there is no beginning and no purpose to existence even though these assertions are contrary to millennia of human thought and experience). The Compendium also states that the highest good, infinite truth, and infinite beauty are reasons to know God with certainty. Our own experience of these things — the fact that we can recognize good and hate evil, the fact that we can know truth and even discover the laws of the universe, and the fact of unutterable beauty and of our aversion to ugliness — tells us that, somehow, goodness, truth, and beauty are ways of understanding God.

The Compendium’s fourth question asks whether reason alone is enough to know the mystery of God. From the preceding paragraph, we can conclude that it is not, that the light of reason alone is not enough. We all know that vast numbers of people don’t really grasp the idea of God, and that some actually reject the possibility that God exists. The Compendium assures the reader that we all stand “in need of being enlightened by God’s revelation” so that “even in the present condition of the human race [religious and moral truths] can be known by all with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error” (*Compendium*, pp. 5-6). God reveals himself to us to give us the truth about himself and the certainty that he exists and who he is, and thereby does away with the limitations and errors of unaided reason.
The answer, of course, only spurs on more incredulous questions in the mind of the reader. “We can know religious truth with certainty? How can this be? I thought only science offered certainty! I was taught — perhaps assumed — that in matters of faith there could be no certitude.” In just over a single page, the Compendium has turned our reader’s worldview upside down. Now the natural curiosity of the intellect, coupled with the soul’s desire for God, may very well carry the reader deeper into the Compendium. Such is the power of well-framed questions presented in a thoughtful sequence.

The catechist who understands how to use questions possesses a powerful catechetical tool. Let’s apply this technique to one of the five foundational truths: the Blessed Trinity.

Thinking in terms of the ecclesial method, a catechist might be tempted to state a proclamation and launch directly into an explanation of the Trinity. However, consider an adult participant’s frame of reference. He or she may have heard the term “Trinity” in the past, but how many might have invested time in pondering a Triune God? For that matter, participants may not have paused to examine their own conception of God, having never considered the most basic questions such as: Who is God? What is he like?

Thus, after preparing hearts with prayer and Sacred Scripture, the catechetical session might well begin with these very questions. They arouse curiosity and elicit in each participant his or her own search for truth. Imagine a catechetical session that begins like this:

[Rhetorical questions:] “Who is God? What is he like?” (pause) “How should I think about God?” (pause) “What are his characteristics?”

[Proclamation:] “The one God is three divine Persons, each having the fullness of the divine nature, who live in a perfect communion of love. This is the central belief of our faith.”

Admittedly, explaining the doctrine of the Trinity is no easy task. To engage each individual in pondering this mystery, the catechist uses rhetorical questions as a prelude, then asserts the proclamation. But the dialogue has only begun. After the proclamation, a participant may very well silently wonder, “Why is this important? What does it have to do with my life? How do I know this is true? Why does it matter that it’s true?”

At this point, questions inviting dialogue can be used to engage participants and draw from them several learning points. Let us examine how this technique is used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogue Question Posed by Catechist</th>
<th>Possible Response/Comment by Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it possible for humans to fully comprehend God?</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why not?</td>
<td>God is infinite, we are finite. He is Creator, we are his creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But is it possible to know something about God?</td>
<td>I suppose. (General agreement on this point.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the word “transcend” mean?</td>
<td>To go beyond? ( Unsure.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, it means “to go beyond.” To go beyond what?</td>
<td>To go beyond limits? ( Still unsure.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes. In the case of the topic at hand, “transcend” means to go beyond the limits of human understanding. That’s why we say that we have a transcendent God. Would you agree that God is transcendent?</td>
<td>Makes sense to us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So you agree that we have a transcendent God; we can know something about him, but not everything. Let’s start with the basics. How do your friends conceive of God? Is God a person or force?

Obviously, in our culture there are many different perceptions of God. You already agreed that God is transcendent. How then is it possible to know God? Is it possible to know which conception of God is the accurate one?

Yes, of course, the Bible tells us about God. In the God of the Bible, do we see God as an impersonal force or as a person?

(The catechist has on hand several Scripture quotes from the session plan illustrating the personal relationship between God and man.)

Hearing these Scripture quotes, taken from both the Old and New Testaments, and spanning several centuries, does this God sound like an impersonal force or a person concerned for our welfare?

Hearing these Scripture passages, could you conclude that God is not an impersonal force, but a Person?

So you would agree that God is a Person?

Can anyone say, from experience, that God is active in our lives?

Is everyone willing to accept that God is a Person?

I started the discussion by stating that God is three divine Persons, a Trinity of Persons. Does the Bible specifically use the word “Trinity”?

Good point. The Trinity is implied, even though the actual word “Trinity” is not used. How many here are familiar with the Lord’s Prayer?

For those who know it, how does this prayer begin?

Some of you are aware that this prayer comes from Scripture, from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verse 9. So Jesus is telling us to think of God as a Heavenly Father?

So in Jesus’ own testimony, we are to think of God as not only a Person, but also as a Father.

(After a pause, this question elicits a variety of notions about God. Some have friends who see God not only as Creator, but as existing in his creation. Some see him as one who created but no longer “interferes” in the affairs of humanity. Others see God as an impersonal force. The group is surprised to discover so many conceptions of God.)

It’s not possible.

(Disagreement) It is possible, because the Bible tells us about him.

(Those who have read at least some Scripture testify that God presents himself as a person in relationship with the nation of Israel, and later, through Jesus, with all of humanity.)

A person.

Sounds reasonable to us.

Yes.

(Several people offer examples.)

Yes. But how does that get us where you said you were going? To the Trinity?

Don’t know; haven’t read the whole thing. Would it have to use the word “Trinity,” or could it be implied?

(Most indicate some familiarity.)

“Our Father...”

Yes.

(A variety of answers. Some look stumped.)
In fact, this was very nearly a new concept for the Jews of Jesus’ time. Very rarely in the Old Testament does God call himself “Father,” or is called “Father” by one of the prophets. (Surprise. Most of the people in the room find thinking of God as Father very comfortable.)

Now, we know from the Bible that Jesus never called himself Father, but spoke of his obedience to his Father. (Agreement by those who know something of the Bible.)

But Jesus in several places in the Bible called himself God, or allowed someone else to do so. It is plain that some of the people hearing him thought he was committing blasphemy by claiming to be God, and wanted to put him to death for doing this. It is really important that you see this (reads a Gospel quote). Do you agree that these verses are saying this?

Yes.

I also want to reinforce this by reading a few places outside the Gospels to show that belief in Jesus as God existed from the very beginning of Christianity (reads quotes from several epistles, plus revelation). Do you see it?

Yes.

Now, Jesus told us on the night before he died — among the last things he said before he was taken prisoner — that he and the Father are one. One! The Father is not alone! He and the Son are, in some mysterious way we can’t fully comprehend, the one God!

(Reactions ranging from curious to enthusiastic to awed agreement.)

How do we know that there is a third person, a Trinity? Does Scripture say anything about this?

(Uncertainty.)

The same night before Jesus died, when told us about the unity between himself and the Father, he also made a promise, that the Father would send “the Counselor, the Holy Spirit” after Jesus himself left. Then Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to strengthen them.

Is anyone here familiar with the story of Pentecost? Can you describe what happened?

(Perhaps someone will give a description of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. If no one is familiar with Pentecost, the catechist could simply read the account of Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit, then read the account of Pentecost (Jn 14:16, 26; Jn 16:7; and Acts 2:1-21.).)

The Holy Spirit also appears, very often as “the Spirit of God,” in the Old Testament (reads several quotes). But these quotes don’t make it clear that the Holy Spirit is actually a separate Person, do they?

No.

It’s actually much clearer in the New Testament. We see at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came as wind and flame. This doesn’t seem personal, but we can understand that these are symbolic of his presence.

(Reluctant agreement but some skepticism.)

Let’s continue exploring what the Bible says. In several places in the Gospels, we see a cloud, hear God the Father’s voice, and see the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (reads several quotes). So it seems as though the Holy Spirit is something — or Someone — distinct from the Father, even though we see him only in symbolic ways (which is actually more than we ever “see” the Father). (Agreement is a little less skeptical.)
Now, there is one last place we can look for the Holy Spirit, the New Testament books outside the Gospels, just as we looked at the Acts of the Apostles for the story of Pentecost. I want to read some quotes to you, and I specifically want to point out that, when the Holy Spirit is referred to, the pronoun that is used is not the Greek for “it” but the Greek for “him” — that is, for a person, not an impersonal force (reads quotes).

You’re right; no, they don’t. But we can turn to those same books to see two things: first, that the Holy Spirit is always spoken of in terms of the action of God, or in the same phrases with the Father and Jesus Christ (reads quotes). Second, these same books insist on the One God (reads quotes). So we see that one God consists of three divine Persons, and that this has been the belief of Christians from the very beginning.

Of course (hands out a list of the quotes to everyone). Now, I want to bring up one final point. What do you think God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — do “all day” “up there”? Sure, it is wonderful to know that God is a Trinity of Persons, but why does that matter; why did God reveal this to us?

What I want to do is to add one final thought, which will help you understand God, and to understand his actions — including making you and me — more completely.

Here is one last quote, of immense importance: 1 John 4:8-10 tells us that “God is love” and then tells us that God so loves us that he (that is, the Father) sent his Son “to be the expiation for our sins.” Now, we’re not talking about an “attribute” of God (goodness, truth), but what his very being is — and it is love. And out of this very being, the Father was willing to allow his Son to be sacrificed, and the Son was willing to be sacrificed, so that we might live in the intimate embrace of Trinitarian love forever!

I’ve taken you along a very difficult line of reasoning and evidence, but I want you to understand that we have arrived at a magnificent and glorious place: the one God is not alone; he is a family of Persons whose life is love. Each of the Persons of the Trinity “spends his time” in full, complete, self-giving love. And that love is so full, so immense, so abundant that God created us to share his life with him. Not because he needed us — but because love wants to share, to overflow, to include! So the Trinity is the most important, the most appealing, and the most meaningful thing we know about God. GOD IS LOVE — AND HE LOVES US AND WANTS US TO LOVE HIM AND BE WITH HIM FOREVER!
Notice the boldfaced statement in the left-hand column above. Rather than simply stating this point, the dialogue presented above engaged participants in a way that helped them discover this truth of the faith. With each well-framed question the catechist evoked comments that led to the next answer.

**Pitfalls in Teaching Doctrines**

As the Deposit of Faith is unfolded, temptations arise that can severely hobble the success of your catechesis. Some of these are highlighted below, each with an accompanying exercise to give you practice in anticipating and avoiding these pitfalls.

These pitfalls are less likely to be a problem if you are presenting the basic Gospel message, which is less susceptible to becoming detached from some of the “basics” noted below simply because it is narrative by nature. Catechesis in other contexts is much more likely to become “academic” in ways that can divorce the truths of the faith from the needs, doubts, and hopes of participants, as well as from the larger context of the story of salvation itself.

1) **Pitfall: Not Showing How the Truths of the Faith Help Believers Draw Closer to God**

   It is a common temptation to present a doctrine as something that should be fleshed out in an adult formation session in the same way that it is presented in a catechism.

   For example, in teaching the Ten Commandments you might want to make sure you’ve covered all ten, named the list of sins against each, identified virtues and vices related to each, etc. Catechisms are full of “lists” — three of this, four of that, seven of many things — that seem eminently suited to a teaching outline. You would find yourself teaching the truths of the faith like any other form of knowledge, the “what” overwhelming the “why.”

   Pope John Paul II wrote that 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” (CT 5).

   To help guard yourself against this pitfall, ask yourself the following question when preparing each of your teachings: **By the end of this teaching on... (you fill in the doctrine) ...will it be clear to participants how this aspect of our Catholic faith will help them love God more deeply?**

   ![Exercise 9-6](image)

   **Why Teach It If Jesus Can’t Be Found In It?**

   Doctrines often covered in passing on the faith to adults include: Holy Orders, the Cardinal Virtues, Matrimony, the Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Ten Commandments, Anointing of the Sick, Vocations, the Social Teachings of the Church, the Natural Law.

   Select two of these doctrines and, in a single sentence for each, state how the doctrine helps a believer to get closer to Jesus.

2) **Pitfall: Losing Sight of the Fact That These Truths Are Not Ends in Themselves**

   When Jesus walked the earth, he proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand (see, for example, Mt 4:17, Mk 1:15, Lk 4:43, Jn 3:3). We were made to spend an eternity in the intimate embrace of the Triune God who is love. *Every truth* revealed by God is given to help us attain the one purpose of our existence:
Catechesis transmits this message of the kingdom, so central to the preaching of Jesus. In doing so, the message “is gradually deepened, developed in its implicit consequences,” and thus manifests its great repercussions for man and the world. In its drawing out the Gospel kerygma of Jesus, catechesis underlines the following basic aspects: Jesus, with the kingdom, proclaims and reveals that God is not a distant inaccessible Being, “a remote power without a name” but a Father, who is present among his creatures and whose power is his love. This testimony about God as Father, offered in a simple and direct manner, is fundamental to catechesis. Jesus shows, at the same time, that God, with the coming of his kingdom offers the gift of integral salvation, frees from sin, brings one to communion with the Father, grants divine sonship, and in conquering death, promises eternal life (GDC 101-102).

Thus, presenting a truth of the faith as something that has value unconnected with God’s purpose in revealing it can transform that truth into an abstraction, something that is interesting, perhaps exciting, but not vitally important to an adult participant’s very existence.

To help guard yourself against this pitfall, ask yourself the following question when preparing each of your teachings: By the end of this teaching on... (you fill in the doctrine) ...will it be clear to participants how this aspect of our Catholic faith will help them attain eternal life?

**Exercise 9-7**

How is This Truth Going to Help Me Get Where I’m Wanting to Go?

Using the list of doctrines from Exercise 9-6, select two (they need not be the same two you previously selected) and, in a single sentence for each, state how the doctrine points a believer to the final goal of life, communion with the Father.

**3) Pitfall: Failing to Keep the Deposit of Faith in the Context of Spiritual Warfare**

As catechists, we need always to keep in mind the story of our first parents, the intimacy with God violated and destroyed by sin; as we read in the Book of Wisdom, “God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the Devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it” (Wis 2:23-24).

And St. Peter reminds us that “your adversary the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour” (1 Pt 5:8). Failing to keep in view Satan’s powerful and unrelenting attempts to derail the movement of participants toward God is akin to putting defenseless lambs at the mercy of St. Peter’s roaring lion. Pope Paul VI asks catechists to help these lambs become combatants themselves in the endless war against the power of sin and death by means of their own strengthening self-denial and acceptance of suffering:

This kingdom and this salvation, which are the key words of Jesus Christ’s evangelization, are available to every human being as grace and mercy, and yet at the same time each individual must gain them by force — they belong to the violent, says the Lord, through toil and suffering, through a life lived according to the Gospel, through abnegation and the cross, through the spirit of the beatitudes (EN 10).

To help guard yourself against this pitfall, ask yourself the following question when preparing each of your teachings: By the end of this teaching on... (you fill in the doctrine) ...will it be clear to participants how this aspect of our Catholic faith will help them combat sin and Satan in their lives?
**Exercise 9-8**

**How Does This Truth Help Me Fight the Battle for My Soul?**

Using the list of doctrines from Exercise 9-6, select two of these doctrines and come up with (in a single sentence for each) a statement of how each doctrine directly opposes the work of Satan in a person’s soul.

**4) Pitfall: Insufficiently Connecting Doctrines to Real-World Experiences**

Some people come to adult formation opportunities with many kinds of sin, failure, sorrow, and disappointment in their lives. They can unrealistically expect that “joining a church” will somehow make everything all right, that the pain will go away and that their former lives can be forgotten. Others come thinking that their life is “OK” or “pretty good,” but hoping that participating will make things even better, that perhaps going to church more regularly will make them feel more “spiritual.” There are many variations on these themes; all have in common the unrecognized necessity to change, to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4), to “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27) regardless of what it might cost while fully expecting that it will lead to unimagined joy. Pope John Paul II reminds us catechists:

No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional (EN 44). It is useless to play off orthopraxis against orthodoxy: Christianity is inseparably both. Firm and well-thought-out convictions lead to courageous and upright action; the endeavor to educate the faithful to live as disciples of Christ today calls for and facilitates a discovery in depth of the mystery of Christ in the history of salvation. It is also quite useless to campaign for the abandonment of serious and orderly study of the message of Christ in the name of a method concentrating on life experience. No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience, that is to say without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). Nor is any opposition to be set up between a catechesis taking life as its point of departure and a traditional, doctrinal and systematic catechesis. Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church’s memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living active “Tradition.” This revelation is not however isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it. It is concerned with the ultimate meaning of life and it illumines the whole of life with the light of the Gospel, to inspire it or to question it (CT 22).

To help guard yourself against this pitfall, ask yourself the following question when preparing each of your teachings: *By the end of this teaching on... (you fill in the doctrine) ...will it be clear to participants how this aspect of our Catholic faith will help them perceive the call to holiness within the sufferings, joys, and experiences of daily life?*

**Exercise 9-9**

**All Right, So What If It’s True?**

Using the same list of doctrines from Exercise 9-6, select two of these doctrines and come up with (in a single sentence for each) a statement of each doctrine’s essential importance in the Christian life. In other words, why it matters to daily life that this aspect of the faith is true rather than false.
Case Study: A New Set of Criteria to Spot Good Methodology

As we discussed in the last section’s case study, observing other catechists is one of the most important tools to help you improve your ability to make good catechetical judgments. This current section discussed a number of catechetical methods aimed at looking at adult participants themselves, and considerations that will heighten your ability to be of service to their desire for communion with God and with the People of God.

At the end of this program of study you will find a page titled, “Adult Catechist Evaluation Form.” It is double-sided, thereby giving you two copies. You may make other copies as you need. This form will be used in this section’s case study as well as in the final section of this program.

If you are currently serving in a ministry to adults, select a teaching by another catechist to observe. If this is not possible, then either select a teaching that may be available on CD or DVD (as long as it is still basic adult catechesis), or make an appointment to visit a teaching at a nearby parish. The teaching you select may or may not prove to be “good,” relative to your criteria. Nonetheless, noting what is missing, as well as the skill of what is presented, are both invaluable helps to forming yourself in an awareness of the marks of good catechesis.

In observing the teaching you have selected, use the form provided to evaluate it. The criteria used on this evaluation form are intended to help you consider all critical aspects of methodology. Using the 1 to 5 scale on this form, consider that your standards should be sufficiently demanding that it should be rare that a catechist would rate a “5” on any given point.

In one paragraphs, reflect on at least two things that this evaluation form helped you to consider more deeply about your own catechetical work.

Expressing Succinctly and Creatively the Beauty in Great Suffering

The aesthetic aspect of doctrine in catechesis should become part of a mature Catholic perspective. This means considering whether our explanations of the faith adequately express not simply the rightness of a given doctrine but also its beauty. By definition, beauty is a pleasing quality, whether found in a person, physical object, or idea. For example, a smile, sunset, or articulately expressed idea can be innately pleasing. By extension, we are attracted to beautiful things.

In the Catechism, read paragraphs 1427-1433 on the conversion of the baptized and interior penance. Goodness and authentic beauty go hand-in-hand. In this sense, one of the most genuinely beautiful things is a soul that has reached a place of true repentance and is seeking deeper conversion. As a Catholic, you should be seeking to live your life so that all things that are not in some way true or good spiritually, are not considered aesthetically good or beautiful to you.

In 500 words or less, outline how you would explain two or three of the main points in this brief section of the Catechism in a way that not only informs the mind of what is good and true, but also lifts the spirit towards the beauty of these points. Seek to creatively show not only the reasonableness of the two or three points you have chosen, but also their beauty, indicating how you might use art, music, technology, handouts, questions, or other elements discussed in this section.

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.
Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

**Understanding:**
*General Directory for Catechesis*, Part 4, 163-170
*The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, Chapter 7, pp. 109-127

**Change:**
*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part 3, 24-30

**Meditation:**
Consider — My human desires need to surrender to his divine desires. Do I really desire to sin less each day?
Read — Hebrews 12:1-14
Pray — Jesus my Jesus, help me to love you more than sin in this next moment.

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**Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 20th Century**

“We, too, while again giving catechists our warmest praise, exhort them to meditate even more attentively on the happiness of soul which this work brings, and never to cease from making the greatest efforts, under the guidance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to cultivate better the study of religion and their own spiritual formation. Catechists must learn from the hierarchy not only the rudimentary elements of the faith, but also the practice of virtue and a fervent, sincere love for Christ. Instrumental in the establishment and subsequent abundant growth of new Christian communities is the care devoted to increasing the numbers of those who effectively help the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and to perfecting their formation for any other labors they may have to perform in order to carry out their task in the most effective and perfect manner.”

~ Pope St. John XXIII ~
*Princeps Pastorum*, 42
I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification.

~ 1 Corinthians 2:1-7 ~

C onsidering the above passage’s call to give, in humility, the most essential of all messages, let’s take the next step . . . This is the final section of Part III, and of this entire program of study. In Part I (Sections 1-3) we explored the role of the catechist in the larger context of the ministry to adults, and specifically introduced the central concept of organic and systematic catechesis. In Part II (Sections 4-6) we considered deeply the nature of conversion and the surpassing importance of a catechist’s spiritual life.

In the final piece of this program of study, Part III (Sections 7-10), we have been seeking to unpack the ways in which creative methodology enables you as a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace. In the previous section we looked at adult participants themselves, and considerations that heighten our ability to serve their desire for communion with God and with the People of God. In this final section, we return to what the GDC calls “the soul of every method” — to you, the catechist (see GDC 156).

S tepping forward into this section, here’s your destination . . .

- You’ll consider, in summary fashion, the missionary call of the catechist to be a witness to deep conversion.
- You’ll be invited to pray through a catechist’s examination of conscience.
- You’ll explore key aspects of teaching style to raise your awareness of certain skills.
- You’ll understand the value of finding good catechetical mentors, and be encouraged to seek one.

M ission and Witness

The catechist, far more than the usual Catholic, should, because of his or her more-prominent position in the conversion process, strive for virtue and the cultivation of true holiness. It is an obligation of one’s duty of state. This has been a constant refrain throughout this program of study. Our response to the call to holiness, to the degree that it becomes our deeply desired goal, constitutes a quiet radiance that eventually seasons all the words and acts of Christ’s catechists.
Our own emotional involvement in the work of adult catechesis should be positive and intense enough to become evident: that we have and show love for God’s truth, see its beauty and reveal it, feel the splendor of the Person that is at the center of the Father’s revelation, have a quiet enthusiasm that pulsates in our very demeanor and flow of words.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to the participants in the Ecclesial Diocesan Convention of Rome in 2005, eloquently stated the central role of the catechist:

The central figure in the work of educating, and especially in education in the faith, which is the summit of the person’s formation and is his or her most appropriate horizon, is specifically the form of witness. This witness becomes a proper reference point to the extent that the person can account for the hope that nourishes his life (see 1 Pt 3:15) and is personally involved in the truth that he proposes. On the other hand, the witness never refers to himself but to something, or rather, to Someone greater than he, whom he has encountered and whose dependable goodness he has sampled. Thus, every educator and witness finds an unequaled model in Jesus Christ, the Father’s great witness, who said nothing about himself but spoke as the Father had taught him (see Jn 8:28). This is the reason why prayer, which is personal friendship with Christ and contemplation in him of the face of the Father, is indispensably at the root of the formation of the Christian and of the transmission of the faith.

In this way, Pope Benedict wisely called us to the importance of prayer, to the preeminence of the spiritual life. In that spiritual life, every catechist discovers the Father’s call to join in the mission of the Son:

Catechists must have a deep spirituality, i.e., they must live in the Spirit, who will help them to renew themselves continually in their specific identity. Their spirituality is closely bound up with their status as lay Christians, made participants, in their own degree, in Christ’s prophetic, priestly and kingly offices. The need for a spirituality proper to catechists springs from their vocation and mission. It includes, therefore, a new and special motivation, a call to sanctity.

Pope John Paul II’s saying: “The true missionary is the saint,” can be applied without hesitation to the catechist. Like every member of the faithful, catechists are “called to holiness and to mission,” i.e., to live out their own vocation “with the fervor of the saints.” Catechists’ spirituality is also conditioned by their apostolic vocation, and therefore should bear the marks of: openness to God’s Word, to the Church and to the world; authenticity of life; missionary zeal; and devotion to Mary (GCM 6; italics in original).

The document just quoted above goes on to say: “To be able to educate others in the faith, catechists should themselves have a deep spiritual life. This is the most important aspect of their personality and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation. The real catechist is a saint” (GCM 22).

This is daunting. And yet this is doable — in God. So long as this daunting call drives us to prayer, instead of driving us away in fear, then all things become possible (see Lk 1:37). What we have to give — Who we have to give — is worth surmounting this fear. To see a single soul receive the message of salvation in joy, in thanks, in hope — to see God change a life through our help — what an unparalleled privilege! As St. John wrote, it is this that, year after year in working with adults, over and over again completes our joy (see 1 Jn 1:4), until that day when we attain that timeless completion of he who “fills all in all” (Eph 1:23).
Exercise 10-1

Participating in the Mission of the Master

In our missionary call as catechists, the Church says that we are participants, in our own degree, “in Christ’s prophetic, priestly and kingly offices” (GCM 6).

Jesus the Priest calls us to seek to heal others, to pray with and for others, and to sacrifice for others.

Jesus the Prophet calls us to speak the truth with clarity and humble conviction, and to proclaim a message of liberation from the slavery of sin and the despair of hopelessness.

Jesus the King calls us to lead as servants, and to call others to a kingdom beyond this world’s powers and pleasures.

Considering this threefold call, in three brief paragraphs answer the following questions:

What is your greatest concern, doubt, or fear about this understanding of your mission as a catechist?

What most inspires you about this vision of the catechist’s mission?

What most surprises you about this vision?

For Your Portfolio

Case Study: The Experience of Questioning It All

As darkness gathered, Emily sat in her car in the parking lot of the church, her heart hammering and her mind whirling. She had plucked up the courage to actually get this far; could she go in and join the group she could see milling around in the light spilling from the windowed door? Would they welcome her, or even speak to her once they found out she’d been a Catholic? Was she sure that Jesus had really led her to this Protestant community, loving though her friend had assured her it was? Her doubts made her feel as though she was choking.

Emily thought back to what had brought her to this parking lot. She had been raised as a Catholic in a home where her parents went to Mass only sporadically. They told her that the family could worship God just as well taking one of their favorite hikes, enjoying the beauty of his creation. They sent her to the parish school of religion on Sundays but didn’t insist that she go as she got older. Their family friends were not Catholics and they frequently criticized their parish pastor. They felt that being a good person was largely a matter of kindness. She knew that she and her brother Jason were the only children her parents had wanted, because having too many children would only do more damage to the environment, about which they were passionate. She had been using contraceptives for many years; her mother had told her that she would prefer her daughter not engage in premarital sex, but that, if she chose to do so, she needed protection against an unwanted pregnancy. Emily, in fact, had had only two affairs while in school and had cohabited with only one man since she’d entered the workforce.

As she sat nerving herself to get out of the car, Emily thought warmly of her friend Madison. The two of them sat near each other in the large office in which they worked, and talked all the time about fashion and celebrities. But she quickly learned that Madison’s values were different. After they had been friends for a few months, Madison began bringing up the name of Jesus. Emily saw that Madison had a strong connection to Jesus, one that she, Emily, had never experienced. Emily realized, too, that Madison had a strong faith in God and that she felt that seeking to be good and generous and loving were things God wanted her to do. One day, Emily asked Madison what church she belonged to, and Madison replied by inviting her to an inquiry class that was beginning in a couple of weeks. Eager to strengthen her friendship with Madison, Emily immediately agreed to go.

Despite Emily’s parents’ lukewarm approach to their faith, she remembered that her Sunday-school teachers had taught that Catholicism was the true faith founded by Jesus. Were they wrong? She didn’t recall warming to them the way she warmed to Madison. She felt that Madison had “something” — Emily wasn’t sure what — and she wanted it herself. If the Catholic faith were true and sufficient, wouldn’t it show in her parents, her pastor, her Sunday-school teachers? Knowing Madison, she knew there had to be more to life than what she’d experienced so far. Her high-school boyfriends? No love there! Her “live-in”? He’d found someone he liked better and walked out with little more than “we had a good time while it lasted, eh?”
As the designated night approached, Emily began having cold feet. She had never thought she’d question herself, her life, and her upbringing this severely. Her heart had twisted in fear. What if she was wrong? How would she know, really know, what was the right thing to do — what God wanted of her? She had asked herself if she really wanted to do this, to take this leap into the unknown, to change her comfortable if ordinary life, to turn her back on her parents’ lives and decisions. But she had gotten into her little car and driven the few miles to Madison’s church. Now, she got out of her car, took a deep breath to brace herself, and walked slowly toward the lit door.

Put yourself in Emily’s place and imagine your thoughts and emotions if you were to consider leaving the Catholic Church for a Protestant denomination. Make a list of emotions and feelings Emily might be experiencing sitting in the parking lot of that Protestant church. Looking at your list, knowing that many inquirers feel similarly approaching our Catholic parishes, take a moment to pray about what kind of person you should be to welcome such individuals into the experience of growing in the faith, not just in RCIA, but in any setting for adults.

Catechist’s Examination of Conscience

We catechists teach to fulfill our mission to draw other adults into a relationship of love with Christ and his Church. In addition to having God-given talent, and the necessary knowledge and skills, we as catechists — beginner or experienced — should engage in an ongoing process of formation so that we become so like Christ that participants want to embrace and be embraced by Christ himself whom we represent and personify. As catechists we should seek, as fully as possible with God’s help, to be Christlike, to be other Christs: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Formation makes us catechists into educators, that is, teachers who cannot only instruct but form those whom we teach. To make this possible, we should have a clear Christian identity that arises from a deep Christocentric faith. The Church provides a means of self-reflection for those teaching adults:

- In general, the catechist of adults, whether a priest, religious or lay person, must have an adult faith and be capable of supporting and leading other adults on their journey of growth in the faith... Stability and living the Christian faith as a member of the ecclesial community are basic requirements for catechists. They must mature as spiritual persons in the concrete tasks they perform, in such a way that the “first word” they speak is that of personal witness. To this must be added a professional competence, or the ability to sustain a catechetical journey with their brothers and sisters... More precisely, an indispensable quality of catechists is the wise insight which allows them to go beyond the interpretation of texts to a deep grasp of vital issues and contemporary problems, and to be able to critically interpret present day events and the “signs of the times.” Other requirements are the ability to listen and dialogue, encourage and reassure, form relationships, work in teams, and build community. There must also be a sense of being sent by the Church and of being accepted by the community, whose journey they share in a fraternal spirit... In a word, the catechist of adults will be a sufficiently balanced human being, with the flexibility to adapt to different circumstances (ACCC 71-73).

The process of catechizing is itself part of our formation in the faith, and can be used by each of us as a means to reflect on our personality as a catechist, how readily we relate to other adults, especially if we have the social sensitivity appropriate to this calling.

Exercise 10-2
A Look into You

On the page following the text of this exercise, you will find a “Catechist’s Examination of Conscience” on the personality of the catechist. Pray through this examination of conscience and answer the following two questions in a brief paragraph:

- What is the one thing that you would like to work on the most in your catechetical personality?
- How could you more regularly seek this one thing in your daily prayer life?
Catechist’s Examination of Conscience

But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children.
So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

~ 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

Read the above passage from Scripture. As you encounter and seek to invite souls to join you in discovering the love of God, deeply, prayerfully consider the following questions and statements about your own heart attitude and actions.

When I think about my Catholic faith, and my mission as a catechist...

When I discuss with or teach the Catholic faith to other adults...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You’re doing one of the most important jobs on earth, and Satan doesn’t like you, so expect this all to be rather hard.</td>
<td>Do I consider it a privilege to be chosen by God as a bearer of his message of mercy and hope for this time, this place, and for these souls?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guard and grow diligently what has been entrusted to you by almighty God.</td>
<td>Do I accept mediocrity in my catechetical work in any way at all, even a little bit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People listen to those who listen to them.</td>
<td>Can I honestly say that I listen well? Or am I often just waiting to get in my next point?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not reject criticism; we are not expected to like it, but there is often no progress without it.</td>
<td>Do I seek to get to know those I share the faith with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For all that you’re called to be for others, remember God delights in you for your own sake.</td>
<td>Do I know anything about their lives? Do I even know their names?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strive as a child; pray as a child. God is so interested in your details.</td>
<td>Do I care about them, or are they more just objects to receive what I have to say; to be “set straight” by my opening their minds to the truth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach as a witness to joy.</td>
<td>Do I find in my personality a sense of: Being easily angered? Being easily turned to a sour attitude? Holding grudges after strong disagreements? Not smiling much when I teach or share the faith?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Am I insecure about not having “all the answers” in a discussion of my faith? Does it cause me to need to “get it all said”? Does it cause me to avoid questions or those who ask questions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does my way of discussing faith indicate a need to be “proved” right?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do I pray for myself? Do I pray for those I am seeking to catechize, really?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do I see God as a good employer, or more as a good Father?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would those who know me best describe me as: Gentle? Inviting? Easily forgiving? Outwardly joyful about my faith?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further Honing Catechetical Competence through Eye Contact, Voice Usage, and Body Language

The “Catechist’s Examination of Conscience” among other things encouraged you to “grow and guard diligently what has been entrusted to you by almighty God.” Perhaps we may find ourselves reminded of St. Paul’s exhortation at the end of his First Letter to Timothy, his disciple and fellow teacher of the faith: “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you” (1 Tm 6:20). As this program of study comes to a close, this section seeks to offer you some final challenges to hone your skills as a catechist. A fatal attitude is to look upon one’s training as finished. We should incessantly seek to improve: revise, expand, delete, intensify, beautify, and exemplify everything that we must transmit. It is the Lord’s work that has been placed in our hands.

In the previous section’s case study, you used the “Adult Catechist Evaluation Form” to consider a teaching of your own choosing. Let’s look at this form again to examine some specific points of method (for this purpose there is the double-sided page at the end of this section).

Look at the section a little below the middle of this page, under the subheading “Method.” The first two lines ask catechists to consider eye contact and the use of hand motions, expressions, and movement. Eye contact is one of the most crucial skills of a good catechist. It is certainly the case that a solicitation of participants’ questions or thoughts, small-group discussion, group dialogue during a teaching, and individual conversations afterward will all give a catechist insight into how a teaching is being received, but for those portions of a teaching in which such means are not used, it is indispensable for a catechist to learn to closely observe participants as truths are unfolded to them. As well, even during interactive portions of a catechetical session, there is much to be learned from watching participants’ faces, especially those not as fully engaged.

Very often, unless otherwise trained, most catechists (and speakers in general) will unconsciously begin to make eye contact with only those faces in the room that seem to be responding most positively. During a teaching, the presence of a person with a happy face and a head nodding in apparent agreement will soon attract a catechist’s eye contact in great disproportion to others in the room. For example, in an RCIA setting, it can even get to the point that if the most positive faces in the room are from RCIA team members, godparents, or sponsors then the catechist will begin to make eye contact only with them. Often the result of this unconscious action is that the catechist mentally shifts to teaching them, instead of participants, usually evidenced by an increasing use of terminology and phrases that may be meaningless or confusing to non-Catholics.

If a catechist can’t make eye contact with all participants, then he or she has no real sense of how the teaching is being received in the moment. What will be missed? A confused look on someone’s face (or maybe many faces) that signals a need to stop and clarify or repeat, to slow down, or to back up and come at a point from another direction, or to directly ask the quizzical ones a question. A change in expression that indicates some encouraging level of understanding or recognition. A slight shift in the mouth and slight clouding of the eyes that lets you know emotions have been stirred to the point of tears. A sleepy-eyed look (maybe from a long day, a good meal, or lackluster teaching) that calls you to work harder to engage a particular person, or simply to pause for a coffee or tea break. A questioning look that may benefit from an opportunity to ask one. An angry look that may need pursuing immediately, or perhaps in private after the session. A sudden turning down to write, implying you’ve perhaps said something of value.

All of these, and other reactions you observe as you teach, point to one of the most important aspects of relationships in your catechetical work: yes, you may be diligently seeking to build relationships with participants in many ways in addition to the actual catechesis, but does the importance of knowing who you are teaching now extend fully to knowing them as you are teaching?
Beyond eye contact, it is important to become fully aware of your voice tone and body language. In adult catechesis we are always teaching participants as friends, and thus normally use a conversational tone. Observing master catechists in this regard will increase your sensitivity to the impact of your own facial expressions and voice: increased or decreased voice volume, repetition, dramatic pauses, laughter, expressions of passionate conviction or sincere compassion, even allowing yourself to tear up as the truth stirs you. Body language is as much of a communicator as any other aspect of teaching. Some catechists who are “interrupted” by a questioner will unconsciously cross their arms together as they listen to that “unwanted” question — thereby sending a universally recognized negative signal. Some catechists who prefer a podium of some sort will cling to it for dear life, perhaps as a physical expression of nervousness or because of an over-dependence on notes that tie them to that post. Some catechists seem not sure what to do with their arms, and some use the same arm motions so often that, if teaching adolescents, such actions would become the subject of mimicry. Some catechists may fiddle with something — their hair, a pen, a paperclip, pages of notes, even buttoning and unbuttoning a shirt button — completely unaware that some participants can become immensely distracted by such “tics,” totally derailing their ability to emotionally or intellectually engage with the teaching.

All these things can be humorous, and human. But because they are also disturbing, they can also seriously decrease your effectiveness. The case study in the previous section asked you to observe a catechist and evaluate his or her teaching. In the case study of this section, we ask you to submit your own teaching to the same evaluation (if this is possible in your current situation). Although the case study only requires you to do so once, by one person, it is of course much more valuable to have your catechetical efforts evaluated repeatedly over time, and by as many people as you can ask to do this for you.

**Did You Know?**

The gift of laughter is an asset every catechist should cultivate. Not in the sense of a comedian with a “routine,” but in the sense of St. Philip Neri whose mirth attracted all who met him. The famous 20th century English writer G. K. Chesterton wrote in Orthodoxy: “[A] characteristic of the great saints is their power of levity. Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly…. Pride is the downward drag of all things into an easy solemnity, [for it] flows out of men naturally; but laughter is a leap…. Satan fell by the force of gravity.” Humility and a sense of the absurd are the foundation of humor that a catechist can use to rib oneself and to deftly incorporate the foibles and eccentricities of the common experience of everyday life into one’s teaching.

**Exercise 10-3**

**Human Vessels to Carry Divine Truths**

Why do you think God works through human beings instead of doing all things by himself? In the Catechism, read paragraphs 302-314. In the mystery of God’s providence, he invites us to be instrumental in our own salvation, and — astoundingly — in the salvation of others. We are most assuredly subordinate to God as the prime cause, but we are not superfluous to his plan. By his provident choice, we matter. And thereby, the details matter in our efforts to serve his plan.

Reflect on this in light of the importance of working to master skills like eye contact, voice usage, and body language in your teaching — all very human things that can greatly enhance or seriously harm your ability to teach for conversion in adult catechesis.

In a brief paragraph, answer the following question: Why do you think God allows the communication of his life-changing and soul-saving truths to be so often dependent upon our human skills?
Mentorship

As we have studied throughout this program, becoming an excellent catechist is a work of delving into the richness of faith that is our priceless inheritance from those who have gone before us in the teaching vocation. It is our call to learn, and learn to value, the sources which have always sustained the ministry of the Word:

- **THE FOUNDATION:** In the Gospels we learn of the Person of Christ — his humanity and divinity, his work, his message, his intent in coming, his relation to the Father, and his work entrusted to the Holy Spirit. We become engrossed in his life, demonstrated in a life of giving — in the most complete meaning of the word.

- **THE BREADTH AND DEPTH:** In St. Paul and the other New Testament writers we learn of the immensity and the depth of Christ’s teaching and the significance of his life and messages. Doctrine comes to light and life in these sacred texts. The writers of the epistles lay out the faith and show how to apply it, safeguard it, and spread it.

- **THE RADIANCE:** In the great spiritual writers we learn of the passion, beauty, splendor, richness, grandeur, and necessity of the faith in daily life and its indispensable value in the pursuit of God on earth and ultimately in eternity.

All three levels of learning are essential in the cultivation of the mind and heart, soul and body of a truly effective, fruitful catechist. What you read is indispensable in the acquisition of virtue, your advance toward sanctity, and your acquaintance with new, great ideas, truths, and fresh ways to see and present the wonderful works and workings of God. Such sources of enrichment are the daily bread and drink for the catechist.

Yet all the inspired writing in the world will not alone make you a great catechist. You should seek to become more competent by seeing and hearing great catechists in action. Carefully analyze what you see (hand gestures, body movements, special actions, facial expressions, movements of the hands and eyes, etc.) and also analyze with care what you hear (tone of voice, techniques for emphasis, evidence of emotion, injection of humor or fear or disgust or gentleness, use of softness of voice to emphasize an effect, how the eyes and hands accompany verbal effectiveness). Practice, primarily in the form of imitation, of what you have seen and heard should be repeated until you have confidence that what has been seen and heard, analyzed and imitated, has been absorbed and actually has become part of yourself. Learn all you can from master catechists. Make use of their techniques — but make what you learn your own. Do not try to become them. While using what you have seen as effective in others, retain your own spirit. If your effort is sincere and diligent, the Holy Spirit will do his part.

**Exercise 10-4**

You and Mother Church

On the page following the text of this exercise, you will find a page titled “What is the Church.” This material was taken from a book by Catholic author and screenwriter Myles Connolly. At this point in the book, his character, Dan England, has just been asked by a houseguest, in a somewhat off-handed manner, “just what he considered the Church to be?”

Read this page, preferably in a prayerful context, and answer the following in one or two paragraphs: In Section 6 of this program, you were asked to write a personal mission statement for your life as a Catholic, and then a personal mission statement for your calling as a catechist within the heart of the Church. Now, as you conclude this program of study, would you change anything you have written in these statements in light of the two texts you have just read? If yes, what and why? If not, why not?
What is the Church?

The Church to me is all important things everywhere. It is authority and guidance. It is love and inspiration. It is hope and assurance. It is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is our Lady and St. Joseph. It is St. Peter and Pope Pius XII. It is the bishop and the pastor. It is the catechism and it is our mother leaning over the crib teaching us our evening prayers. It is the cathedral at Chartres and the cross-tipped hut on Ulithi Island. It is the martyrs in the Colosseum and the martyrs in Uganda, the martyrs at Tyburn and the martyrs at Nagasaki. It is the wrinkled old nun and the eager-eyed postulant. It is the radiant face of the young priest saying his first Mass, and the sleepy boy acolyte with his soiled white sneakers showing under his black cassock.

It is the spire glimpsed from a train window and the cruciform miniature of a church seen far below on the earth from an airplane. It is six o’clock Mass with its handful of unknown saints at the communion rail in the gray dark and it is pontifical High Mass with its crowds and glowing grandeur in St. Peter’s. It is the candle-starred procession after evening Benediction in St. Patrick’s and the Rosary, the night before the burial, at a succoed funeral parlor in Los Angeles. It is El Greco’s soaring Assumption in Toledo and it is the primitive pink and blue angels on a mission altar in Peru. It is the Sistine Choir and it is the May procession of Chinese children singing the Regina Coeli in Peking.

It is the Carthusian at prime on Monte Allegro and the Jesuit teaching epistemology in Tokyo. It is the Scheutveld Father fighting sleeping sickness in the Congo and the Redemptorist fighting prejudice in Vermont. It is the Benedictine, the Augustinian, the Passionist, the Dominican, the Franciscan. It is all religious and especially the great unnamed Order of the Parish Priest.

It is the Carmelite Sister lighting the tapers for vespers in the drear cold of Iceland and the Sister of Notre Dame de Namur making veils for First Communion in Kwango. It is the Vincentian Sister nursing a Negro Baptist dying of cancer in Alabama and the Maryknoll Sister facing a Communist commissar in Manchuria. It is the White Sister teaching the Arabs carpetmaking in the Sahara and the Good Shepherd Sister in St. Louis giving sanctuary to a derelict child, a home to a lamb who was lost. It is the Little Sister of the Poor salving the sores of a forgotten old man in Marseilles, the Grey Sister serving the destitute in Haiti, the Blessed Sacrament Sister helping a young Negro write poetry in New Orleans. It is the Sister of Charity. . . . It is all the Sisters everywhere.

It is the crippled woman who keeps fresh flowers before our Lady’s altar and the young woman catechist who teaches the barefooted neophytes in the distant hills.

It is the girl who gives up her bridge to drive the Sisters to the prisons and the homes of the poor, and it is the woman who goes from door to door begging for help in the orphanage. It is the proud mother of the priest and the heartbroken mother of the criminal. It is all mothers and sisters everywhere who weep and suffer and pray that sons and brothers may keep the faith.

It is the youth climbing the September hill to the seminary, his heart sure of him calling, and it is the lost priest stumbling, groping, seeking vainly afar the God he can hold in his hands, a stranger among men always and everywhere. It is the bad sermon and the good, the false vocation and the true. It is the tall young man who says the Stations of the Cross every evening and it is the father of ten who wheels the sick to Mass every Sunday morning at the County Hospital.

It is St. Martin and Martin de Porres, St. Augustine and St. Phocas, Gregory the Great and Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Ambrose and Charles de Foucauld, St. Ignatius and Ignatius the Martyr, St. Thomas More and St. Barnabas. It is St. Teresa and St. Philomena, Joan of Arc and St. Winefride, St. Agnes and St. Mary Euphrasia. It is all the saints, ancient and new, named and unnamed, and all the sinners.

It is the stained-glass window with the ragged hole from a boy’s baseball, and the small red sanctuary lamp sputtering in a dark and empty church. It is the bursting out of the Gloria on Holy Saturday and the dim crib at dawn Mass on Christmas. It is the rose vestments on Laetare Sunday and the blue overalls of the priest working with the laborers in a mine in the Ruhr.

It is the shiny, new shoes and shiny, reverent faces of the June bride and groom kneeling before the white-flowered altar at nuptial Mass, and it is the pale, troubled young mother at the baptismal font, her joy mingled with distress as she watches her first-born wail its protest against the sacramental water. It is the long, shadowy, uneven line of penitents waiting outside the confessional in the dusk of a wintry afternoon, each separate and solemnly alone with his sins, and it is the stooped figure of the priest, silhouetted against the headlights of a police car in the darkness of the highway as he says the last prayers over a broken body lying on the pavement beside a shattered automobile.

It is the Magnificat and it is grace before meals. It is the worn missal and the chipped statue of St. Anthony, the poor box and the cracked church bell. It is peace and truth and salvation. It is the Door through which I entered into the faith and the Door through which I shall leave, please God, for eternity.
Praying with Scripture: *Lectio Divina*

Section 5 spoke of the impact of the Sacred Scripture on the spiritual life of the catechist. You were given three Scriptures and a particular grace for which to pray. You were then guided to follow this sequence in subsequent sections. Spend some time reviewing this experience of praying with the Scriptures.

In doing so, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how God has responded to your prayers. This will serve as a way to increase your openness to further movements of grace. In a very simple and introductory way, this practice models *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

*The Spiritual Exercises*, truly a gift to the Catholic Church, were given by God to St. Ignatius in the 16th century. After a conversion experience in his own life, he handed these spiritual exercises on to his followers. They have proven to be an occasion of ongoing conversion of mind and heart, allowing persons to follow Jesus with greater faith, hope, and charity leading to spiritual freedom. Christians in the 21st century find his spiritual exercises as beneficial as did St. Ignatius’ followers.

Earnestly seeking in prayer each specific grace allows you to grow more deeply in love with Jesus and desirous to follow him more closely. The graces you sought as you prayed with certain passages of Scripture are summarized below:

- A deeper experience of God’s love for you.
- A greater recognition of your personal sin and reception of his healing forgiveness.
- A more intimate relationship with Jesus in order to love him more intensely and so to follow him more faithfully.
- A deeper experience of sorrow and grief as you stay with him in his sufferings borne on your behalf and because of your sins.

You may have noticed that the majority of the Scripture passages that you prayed are found in the mysteries of the Rosary. The mysteries of the Rosary have long been understood to provide a summary of the entire Gospel (see RVM 1). This is significant as the Gospel message is about, first and foremost, God’s love for you; and then, not only your desire to receive his love, but in turn, your desire to give his love. You hand on this gift of God’s love by serving your neighbor through a life of dying to selfishness and sin and rising to new life in Christ.

When all is said and done, we can never forget that all of the above is the work of God’s grace, and speaks of the “primacy of grace” (NMI 38). In your prayer, we hope that you personally encountered Christ as the Holy Spirit made a connection between the Scripture passage and your own life.

A wonderful way to continue the habit of praying with Scripture is by using the *lectio divina* prayer worksheet with one of the readings from the Mass of the day. Remember the power of asking for a particular grace needed in your daily life as you pray with Scripture passages.

With the ongoing practice of praying with God’s Word, you’ll be continually listening to Jesus speak to you personally, receiving the direction of the Holy Spirit concretely in your daily life, and falling ever more deeply in love with him. *This* is what will allow you to become a more effective catechist for Christ Jesus, our Lord!
The gift of teaching is entrusted to an individual and this gift is to be used for the good of the community (see 1 Cor 12:7-29). Your formation in the Word of God and in the teachings of the Church must be extensive because you can’t give what you don’t have. Jesus called men who were skilled fishermen, a tax collector, and others whose chosen work we do not know. But to make his recruits converters of souls, he had to remake them for the special mission to which they were called. He spent years training them, and then after this training, he gave them the right spirit: the Holy Spirit.

Once gifted with the Holy Spirit, they exploded into their ministry, and spent the rest of their lives changing minds and hearts and souls in every corner of the Roman Empire, and beyond. Their efforts began the worldwide spread of the Catholic Church. It is in their footsteps that you carry on, under the apostolic leadership that continues in the Church graced and guided by the Spirit of Truth. It is an exalted calling.

**Common Misunderstanding:**

**The Great Club of Sinners**

In some way, many faithful Catholics are bothered, even scandalized, by the misdeeds and flagrant sinfulness of other Catholics, lay and clergy, and by dark deeds done by Catholics in the name of the Catholic Church. Yet that is not how we should see the Church now, or how we should see her history. Fr. Karl Adam, a 20th century theologian who shares the Bavarian German nationality of Pope Benedict XVI, concluded his classic Spirit of Catholicism with these words:

“God willed a Church which in her ripening and perfecting should be the fruit of the true grace-inspired life of the faithful, of their prayer and love, of their fidelity, penitence, and devotion, and therefore he did not found her from the beginning as a thing complete and perfect... God permits so much weakness and wretchedness in the earthly Church just because he is good... For how might we ... who are constantly stumbling, constantly struggling, and never spotless... gladly adhere to a Church which displayed holiness not as a chaste hope but as a radiant achievement? Her very beauty would be a stumbling block to us. Her glory would accuse and condemn us... [W]e love our Church in spite of, nay just because of, her poor outward appearance. The Catholic affirms the Church just as she is. For in its actual form the Church is to him the revelation of divine holiness, justice, and goodness... Though his mother be travel-stained with long journeying, though her countenance be furrowed with care and trouble — yet, she is his mother. In her heart burns the ancient love. Out of her eyes shines the ancient faith. From her hands flow ever the ancient blessings. What would Heaven be without God? What would the earth be without this Church?”

Mother Church throws open her doors, as widely as possible, and issues a standing invitation to all. Indeed, it has been said many times that the only requirement for admission is that one be a sinner. For the Church does not hold herself out as a community made up solely of the saved or the saintly; rather, “here comes everybody!”
Case Study: Being Humbled to Be Raised Higher

As we discussed in the last section’s case study, observing other catechists is one of the most important tools to help you improve your ability to make good catechetical judgments. This current section discussed aspects of methodology aimed at looking at yourself as a catechist.

At the end of this section you will find the double-sided page entitled, “Adult Catechist Evaluation Form.” Again, you may make copies as you need. If you are in a situation where this is possible, select at least one person to evaluate you (if this is not possible, during the timeframe of this course of study, then seek to do so at some point in the future).

In giving this form to someone who will observe your teaching, be sure they understand the criteria used on the sheet, as well as the 1 to 5 scale. As with your own observations, it is important to communicate to those evaluating you that their standards should be sufficiently demanding that it should be rare that you would rate a “5” on any given point.

After you have given a catechesis that has been evaluated by at least one person, complete the following: In one or two paragraphs, reflect on your experience of being observed and how it has been of benefit to your growth as a teacher of the faith.

Checking Your Progress

Being Raised Higher By Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Throughout this program of study you have come across the ideas, words, and witness of many individuals who could serve as catechetical mentors for you. All of the quotes and names that have been brought before you in some way in each of these 10 sections have been offered with this intention. Some, like St. Irenaeus and St. Augustine, are Fathers of the Church. Others, such as St. Josemaría Escrivá and Msgr. Francis Kelly, are from our own time. Some were popes and bishops, like Pope John Paul II and St. Anthony Mary Claret; others were laypersons, like St. Catherine of Siena and Frank Sheed. Their lives, their writing, and in many cases the organizations they have been led by the Holy Spirit to found and form, can and should be sources of catechetical learning in which you place your trust, and seek your own inspiration in the Spirit.

The last learning goal in this program, then, is aimed at opening up for you further avenues of learning the craft of catechesis. Select one of the more than 25 individuals cited or quoted throughout the 10 sections of this program. Using the internet or other resources available to you, research this person in some depth, sufficient to allow his or her life to mentor you as a catechist.

In 500 words or less, answer the following questions:

Why did you choose this person?

What did you discover of value to you spiritually?

What did you discover of value to you in learning the craft of catechesis?

What most surprised you about this person?

Who else are you curious about researching?

Forward to your program director your answer for assessment.
**For Your Portfolio**

Wrapping Up Part III (and the Program)

This section concludes Part III. Its goal has been to unpack some of the ways in which good methodology enables you as a catechist to more fully serve as a channel of grace. In light of this goal, please answer the following:

1. What are the two most pressing questions that arise for you from your study of these sections?
2. What are the two most surprising things that you encountered in Part III?
3. What’s the next step for you in your ongoing formation as a catechist?

Forward your answers to your program director. (They will not be used to assess your progress, but rather to provide your program director with the opportunity to gain a sense of what are your greatest needs as you continue to study the craft of catechesis to adults.)

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Optional but Wonderful — To Really Master It!

**Understanding:**  
*General Directory for Catechesis*, Part 4, 171-176  
*The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Craft of Catechesis*, Chapter 8, pp. 129-153

**Change:**  
*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part 3, 31-41

**Meditation:**  
Consider — My human efforts need to surrender to his divine efforts in me. Do I really desire to help others get to Heaven?  
Read — 2 Corinthians 6:1-11  
Pray — Jesus my Jesus, give me your heart for others.

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*Be Inspired by a Catechist Saint from the 6th Century*

“So who am I to be a watchman, for I do not stand on the mountain of action but lie in a valley of weakness? Truly the all-powerful Creator and Redeemer of mankind can give me in spite of my weaknesses a higher life and effective speech; because I love him, I do not spare myself in speaking of him.”

~ Pope St. Gregory the Great ~

*Excerpt from a Homily on Ezekiel*
There is only one thing to do here below: to love Jesus, to win souls for Him so that He may be loved. Let us seize with jealous care every least opportunity of self-sacrifice. Let us refuse Him nothing – He does so want our love!”

~ St. Therese of Lisieux to her sister Celine
**Adult Catechist Evaluation Form**

**CATECHIST**  |  **TEACHING**  |  **DATE**
---|---|---

**Scale of Evaluation:** 1 = needs to be addressed as a weak area, 2 = needs improvement, 3 = acceptable, 4 = good, 5 = outstanding.

### Preparation and Proclamation
- Teaching was planned and organized; catechist was clearly ready to go
- Appropriate arrangement of environment and sacred space
- Suitable opening prayer/Liturgy of the Word/music for this doctrine/topic
- Delivered a statement of truth to “ring in their ears”

### Explanation and Application

**Content:**
- Focused the teaching on how it helped someone get closer to God/Jesus
- Use of Scripture was well-paced, and with adequate context
- Used stories in a functional and succinct manner
- Included some element of personal witness in the teaching
- Incorporated a knowledge of participants lives’ into the teaching
- Connected the teaching with real life (what does this mean for them?)
- Included some reference to the importance of the liturgy/sacramental life
- Made reference to previous teachings (if applicable) to create connections
- Avoided unfamiliar terms/defined essential new terms
- Clearly was thinking about the participants while teaching
- Displayed a clear mastery of the subject matter
- Explanations were clear and helpful for those not used to “churchy” culture

**Method:**
- Maintained eye contact with participants on both sides of the room
- Used hand-motions, expressions, and movement
- Evidenced independence from written notes where appropriate
- Teaching given in a faith-filled way (these truths are certitudes to me!)
- Teaching given in a hope-filled way (Heaven is real; God is trustworthy!)
- Teaching given in a loving way (good teacher = humble, friendly teacher)
- Teaching given in a respectful way towards other faiths/individuals

### Celebration
- Suitable concluding prayer/music for this topic or for the liturgical calendar
- Upbeat closing (thanking God; acclaming his wonderful truth together)

**What most impacted you in a positive way about this teaching?**

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**My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.**

~ John 7:16 ~

### Teaching Tools

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The most precious gift that the Church can offer the bewildered and restless world of our time is form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.

~ Guide for Catechists, Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, para. 8 ~
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**CATECHIST**

**TEACHING**

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### Celebration

- Suitable concluding prayer/music for this topic or for the liturgical calendar
- Upbeat closing (thanking God; acclaiming his wonderful truth together)

*What most impacted you in a positive way about this teaching?*

### Overall comments:

**Total teaching time:** _____ minutes

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