

# Commentary on the *General Directory for Catechesis*

by Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke, D.D., J.C.D.

## Foreword

Catechesis lies at the foundation of the life of the Church. Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Nations, reminds us: “Faith, then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ.” (Rom 10, 17) His simple words remind us of the fundamental responsibility of the Church to hand on — by teaching — the doctrine and practice of the faith. In speaking about the sorely needed new evangelization at the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium, our Holy Father Pope John Paul II has emphasized the fundamental importance of sound catechesis, if the teaching and living of the Catholic faith with new energy and enthusiasm is to happen:

The new evangelization in which the whole continent is engaged means that faith cannot be taken for granted, but must be explicitly proposed in all its breadth and richness. This is the principal objective of catechesis, which, by its very nature, is an essential aspect of the new evangelization. Pope John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in America,” No. 69a

Because of the essential part of catechesis in the new evangelization, our Holy Father has given us the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992.

The late Father John A. Hardon, S.J., faithful theologian and master catechist, was profoundly aware of the need of well-prepared catechists for the new evangelization, for the future of the Church and for the service of the Church to the world. He was inspired to found an association of the faithful, the Association of Marian Catechists, which has as its purpose the spiritual and doctrinal formation of catechists to carry out the fundamental and essential service of catechesis.

Father Hardon has provided the complete directives for the spiritual formation of the catechists, based on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. The spiritual formation and practices of the spiritual life for Marian Catechists is clearly described in the *Marian Catechist Manual*. Hardon, John A., S.J., Marian Catechist Manual (Bardstown: Eternal Life, 2000), pp. 4 - 9

He also provided the doctrinal formation with his *Basic Catholic Catechist’s Course* and *Advanced Catholic Catechist’s Course*.

In addition, he provided ample resources for the ongoing doctrinal formation of catechists

with his Masters of the Spiritual Life Course, and with numerous books and series of audiotapes on the teaching of the Church regarding faith and morals. Many of Father Hardon's pamphlets, books and audiotapes are available through Eternal Life, a national Catholic pro-life apostolate: P. O. Box 787, Bardstown, KY 40004-0787; Tel. 1-800-842-2871; Fax 502-348-2224

With regard to the methodology of catechesis, Father Hardon rightly referred the Marian Catechists to the *General Directory for Catechesis* prepared by the Congregation for the Clergy, and approved and ordered to be published by our Holy Father Pope John Paul II on August 15, 1997. In the *Marian Catechist Manual*, Father Hardon states:

In accord with the directives of the Apostolic See, Marian Catechists employ a twofold vademecum in their apostolate: the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for doctrine and the *General Directory for Catechesis* for catechetical method.

Father Hardon, with whom I had been working for the promotion of the Marian Catechists, became aware of a commentary on the *General Directory for Catechesis* which I had written for the faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse. The commentary was originally published as a series in the Times Review, the official newspaper of the Diocese of La Crosse, from August 4, 1999 to January 13, 2000. Father Hardon then published the series in the *The Catholic Faith* and urged me to publish the complete commentary in book form, together with questions to assist the Marian Catechists in studying this important document.

Finally, I have completed the mission which Father Hardon gave to me. It pleases me to publish this commentary because of my hope that it will be of help to the Marian Catechists and to all catechists in carrying out their fundamental apostolate.

May God grant that the Commentary bear abundant fruit for the handing on the Catholic faith and its practice through catechesis for the new evangelization!

Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke  
Bishop of La Crosse  
August 22, 2001 - Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

## **Origin, Purpose and Goal of the Directory (1-13)**

Our children and young people look to the older generation to hand on to them — as a gift — the faith which the older generation first received as a gift from God through parents and grandparents. Among the older generation itself, there is the strong desire to be able to give a better account of their faith, so that they may live more fully what they believe and be more effective witnesses for those who seek God's truth and love found in

the Catholic faith.

On August 15, 1997, Pope John Paul II approved for publication the *General Directory for Catechesis* as the norm and instrument for the Church in fulfilling her fundamental responsibility of teaching the faith. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, in its Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, mandated the development and publication of a practical guide which would set forth the fundamental principles and the organization of the Church's catechetical mission on behalf of children, young people and adults. In 1971, in response to the Council's mandate, Pope Paul VI ordered the publication of the General Catechetical Directory, which set forth the norm for both the content and the method of handing on the Catholic faith through catechesis.

In the years since the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, there has been intense activity in catechesis. The intensity of the Church's concern for catechesis is perhaps best seen in the call for a universal catechism at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by Pope John Paul II on October 11, 1992. It is also seen in the publication of two important apostolic exhortations: the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World "Evangelii nuntiandi" (December 8, 1975) of Pope Paul VI and the Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time "*Catechesi Tradendae*" (October 16, 1979) of Pope John Paul II. The pontificate of our present Holy Father is marked above all by an extraordinary richness in the presentation of the doctrine of the faith and in the call for a more generous living of the faith in practice. All of the significant efforts of the Church over the past thirty and more years to communicate better the doctrine of the faith through catechesis have made it necessary to issue a new directory for catechesis which would be a worthy successor to the General Catechetical Directory of 1971.

Commenting on the developments in catechesis over the time since the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the *General Directory for Catechesis* rightly observes: "The course of catechesis ... has been characterized everywhere by generous dedication, worthy initiatives and by positive results for the education and growth in the faith of children, young people and adults." It further and correctly notes: "At the same time, however, there have been crises, doctrinal inadequacies, influences from the evolution of global culture and ecclesial questions derived from outside the field of catechesis which have often impoverished its quality." (No. 2) The need to confirm the recent progress made in the Church's catechetical activity and to remedy the deficiencies in carrying out the Church's fundamental responsibility of catechesis makes the latest revision of the directory for catechesis most timely.

What is the purpose of the *General Directory for Catechesis* and for whom is it intended? The General Directory sets forth the principles which are the foundation for the sound teaching of the faith. Only if these principles are understood and applied will the Church meet the challenge of catechesis in our time and overcome the significant difficulties which have been encountered in catechesis over the past decades. To be more specific, the *General Directory for Catechesis* sets forth both the nature of catechesis within the Church's mission of evangelization, that is the mission of announcing the Gospel of our

salvation to the world, and the content of catechesis as contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* is directed above all to the Bishops of the Church who are the first catechists and bear the primary responsibility for carrying out the apostolate of catechesis. However, many others in the Church share with the Bishop the responsibility to provide sound catechesis. Therefore, the *General Directory for Catechesis* states regarding its own intended readership: “Clearly it will be of use in forming those preparing for ordination to the Priesthood, in the continuing formation of priests and in the formation of catechists.” (No. 11) In the sense that every adult member of the Church is called to give an account of his or her faith before the world, the *General Directory for Catechesis* is directed to the whole Church. It is important for all in the Church to know the fundamental principles which are to direct the work of teaching the faith, and to know the basic truths and virtues to be communicated through that teaching.

Because it is addressed to the Bishops, priests, catechists and all the faithful, the *General Directory for Catechesis* has an immediate goal: the preparation of catechetical directories and catechisms for each portion of the Church, the local dioceses and groups of dioceses working together, perhaps through the local Conference of Bishops. The revised directory is a treasury of practical helps for the drawing up of local directories and catechisms which are complete and sound both in content and in methodology.

Questions on Origin, Purpose and Goal of the Directory (1-13)

## **Teaching the Faith in Today’s World (14-23)**

In the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us both the power of the seed (the Word of God) to produce its fruit (salvation) and the importance of the soil (individuals of every time and place) into which the seed is received in order that the seed realize its full potential. Reflecting upon the history of the Church up to our day, one can only wonder at all that the teaching of God’s Word over the Christian centuries has accomplished for the glory of God and the salvation of His holy people. It is clear that “Jesus Christ, present in the Church through his Spirit, continues to scatter the word of the Father ever more widely in the field of the world.” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, No. 15) The teaching of the Gospel has fostered and continues to foster the growth of a “civilization of love” in our world. However, catechesis can only achieve its end when the Gospel is received into hearts disposed to hear God’s Word and to put it into practice in daily living.

The Introduction of the *General Directory for Catechesis* rightly stresses the importance of our view of the world in carrying out the apostolate of catechetics. Our view of the world very much influences how we receive the teaching of the faith. If we understand

well the world as God has created it and redeemed it, then our own hearts will be well disposed and we will help others to be so disposed to hear God's Word as it comes to us in the Holy Scriptures and Tradition. Not only is it important for catechists to reflect upon their view of the world in order to carry out well their apostolate which is fundamental to the life of the Church, but it is also important to help the catechized to reflect upon their world view in order to dispose their minds and hearts to the truth and love of God communicated through catechesis.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* reminds us that there are three essential elements to the Christian view of the world.

“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, ....” (No. 16)

In every moment of catechesis, it is important to keep in mind the three essential elements of the truth about our world: 1) that it comes from God and, therefore, is good; 2) that the goodness of the world has been marred by man's sin, the original sin of our First Parents and actual sins committed by us; and 3) that Christ's Risen Life is given to us in the Church to overcome the evil of sin in our lives and to prepare day by day the Final Coming of Christ when all things will be restored to the goodness with which God the Father called them into being.

Above all, the Church's view of the world, in carrying out the apostolate of catechesis, aims to foster a just order which is the foundation of peace in the world and the preparation of the “New Heavens and New Earth.” (cf. Rv 21, 1) The work of catechesis naturally inspires the catechist and the catechized to respond to the grace of the Resurrection by working for justice, especially on behalf of those in most need. Our Holy Father refers to this fundamental Christian inspiration as the “preferential option or love for the poor.” The Church's concern to foster a just order in our personal lives and in our society and world leads her to give primacy of place to the promotion of the respect for the dignity of the human person and the protection of human rights (the right to life, work, education, the formation of a family, participation in public life and religious liberty), which enable men and women to carry out their responsibilities in the world as sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of the only Son of God. The Church's concern for the human person and human rights is truly Catholic in the sense that it takes into account all of the essential dimensions of human life, including the cultural and religious dimensions. “What interests the Church is above all the integral development of the human person and of all peoples.” (No. 18) A central message of the Church's catechesis, when carried out with attention to the Church's view of the world, is the revelation of “the inviolable dignity of every human person.”

It is critical that the popular view of the world be confronted with the Church's view in order that the Word of God be effectively communicated. The Church searches out what

is good in contemporary culture, what will assist the handing-on and the receiving of the Word of God. At the same time, she must identify honestly the aspects of our culture which work against the teaching and the hearing of God's Word.

Among the cultural elements which favor or hinder the handing-on of God's Word, the *General Directory for Catechesis* notes several religious and moral factors. Religiously, there is a clear attraction to sacred things in our society and culture. The attraction to the sacred is positive for the handing-on of the faith, but it can be manipulated and misguided by sects and false religious movements, e.g. religious fundamentalism and the so-called New Age spirituality. All the more reason to provide a sound catechesis which responds to our culture's desire for the sacred with the truth of God's Word as it is taught in the Church. The religious factors in our culture which hinder catechesis are: 1) "a persistent spread of religious indifference" (No. 22), by which we fail to see or we simply ignore the hand of God at work in all of creation and in every human act; and, worse yet, 2) the denial of God's existence altogether or atheism. As the *General Directory* points out, the denial of God is often implicit in an explicit secularism by which we believe that the world is understandable without reference to its origin and destiny in God.

In the moral field, our culture is marked by confusion regarding the truth about the human person and human freedom. Just as religious indifferentism blinds man to the truth about God's relationship to all of reality, so moral relativism blinds us to God's law, especially in social and political aspects of our life, which frees us to act in truth and love.

Questions on Teaching the Faith in Today's World (14-23)

## **Strengths and Weaknesses of Our Catechesis (24-33)**

Before entering the discussion of the Part One of the *General Directory for Catechesis*, I conclude the presentation of the Introduction by looking at the effects which the Church's relationship with the world and relationships within the Church have on the handing-on of the faith through current programs of catechesis.

### **The Church in Relationship with the World**

The General Directory aptly points out that Christians as a leaven in the world are not immune from the influence of the world in the handing-on of the faith. On a positive note, the catechesis of children, young people and adults in our time has fostered in Christians the experience of the richness of mercy of God the Father, the renewed knowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation (the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ), the consciousness of the responsibility we all have for the mission of the Church,

and a heightened consciousness of social justice as constitutive of our Catholic faith. (No. 24)

On the other hand, the secularism and moral relativism pervasive in our culture have also had their negative effect on catechesis. There is a large group of non-practicing Catholics who still have some sense of belonging to the Church but who need to be reawakened to understand the Catholic faith and to practice it. There are also a number of members of the Church who are sincerely religious but who lack knowledge of the foundations of their faith. There are others who have not developed their understanding of the faith from the understanding they had achieved as children and who, therefore, need to understand their faith now from the perspective of adult life in the world. Finally, there are Catholics who, either because of their desire “to promote dialogue with various cultures and other religious confessions” or because of “a certain reticence on their part to live in contemporary society as believers,” fail to give a strong witness to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ alive for us in the Church. The only way to overcome the negative effects of our culture on Christian life and, therefore, on catechesis is through a **new evangelization**, a new presentation of the faith and its practice for children, young people and adults. (Nos. 25-26)

## Relationships within the Church

Clearly, relationships within the Church also have a profound effect on catechesis. The internal life of the Church today may best be considered from the perspective of the reception of the teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, especially as it is found in the four most critical documents: the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Sacrosanctum Concilium), the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (Lumen gentium), the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (Dei Verbum) and the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Gaudium et spes).

Positive results of the reception of the Council’s teaching may be seen in the understanding of the sacred liturgy as the “source and summit” of our life in the Church, in the “keener awareness” of the common priesthood of the baptized and of the consequent universal call to holiness, in the renewed appreciation of the Sacred Scriptures, and in the greater openness of Catholics to the mission of the Church which includes the evangelization of the world. (No. 27) But the Council’s teaching has not always been received with positive effect. The negative impact of the Council is usually owed to the failure to study seriously its teaching in the context of the perennial teaching and practice of the Church. Since the Council, there is noted, for example, the tendency to view the Church as an institution apart from the mystery of Christ alive within her through the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Some have manipulated the teaching of the Council to advance their own agenda, without respect for the integrity of the teaching, and thus have created serious divisions within the Church. The frequent characterization of members of the Church as “liberal” or “conservative” is a manifestation of this negative effect. Divisions within the Church harm evangelization, hindering the Church from presenting herself as she truly is, the communion of her members with God —

Father, Son and Holy Spirit — and with each other as true sons and daughters of God in God the Son Incarnate. (No. 28)

## **Vitality of Catechesis and Difficulties in Catechesis**

The examination of the influence exercised on catechesis by the relationship of the Church with the world and the relationships within the Church herself permits the General Directory to profile the vitality and the difficulties of catechesis today.

The General Directory notes a number of signs of vitality in contemporary catechesis:

- The devotion of many priests, consecrated persons and laity to the work of catechesis as fundamental to Church life;
- The “missionary character of contemporary catechesis,” which has brought so many of the unbaptized and the uncatechized into the Church;
- The central place which catechesis, especially of adults, has in the pastoral planning of dioceses and in the work of associations and movements within the Church;
- Improvement in the quality, in general, and in the depth of catechesis, especially recently. (No. 29)

The Directory also notes difficulties in catechesis in our time which must be addressed:

- The need for catechists to understand catechesis as “a school of faith,” that is a deepening of Christian life in all of its aspects: knowledge, prayer and worship, and witness;
- The need to base catechesis on the Holy Scriptures and Tradition, that is the need in catechesis to make “sufficient reference to the Church’s long experience and reflection” over the course of nearly two thousand years;
- The need to keep before our eyes the object of catechesis, communion with our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, to present the Catholic faith in its entirety, especially the entire truth of the mystery of Christ;
- The need to address the lack of presentation of certain essential truths of the faith, for example, the truth about the relationship of God and man, the truth about sin and grace, the truth about the Final Things; the serious need to make sure that catechisms and textbooks are not selective in their presentation of the Catholic faith, eroding the integrity of the understanding of the faith;
- The need to have a strong and full “link with the liturgy,” making liturgical symbols and rites, prayers and gestures, integral to the presentation of the faith;
- The need to overcome a false tension between method and content in catechesis and to found the teaching of the faith in a method which respects the fullness of the doctrine of the faith;
- The need to present the faith within a particular culture so that it is seen as truly “Good News for the lives of people and of society;”
- And the need to take up formation for the apostolate and for the missions as an essential task of catechesis. (No. 30)



# Reading the Signs of the Times

To read accurately God's will in our times and culture, the Church must view the situations in which she finds herself "within the perspective of the history of salvation." As the Directory for Catechesis points out, the Church's reading of the signs of the times always leads her to a renewed understanding of "the need for mission." The Directory stresses the following challenges and directions for catechesis in our time:

- it must be at the service of the evangelization of the Church, with a clear accent on the missions:
- it must be addressed to children, young people and adults;
- it must direct itself to the formation of the Christian life of the catechized;
- it must present the essential truths of the faith, emphasizing "life in Christ as the center of the life of faith;" and
- it must see as "its primary task the preparation and formation of catechists in the deep riches of the faith." (31-33)

Questions on Strengths and Weaknesses of Our Catechesis (24-33)

## Overview of the Directory and Divine Revelation (34-45)

The *General Directory for Catechesis* is divided into five parts.

- Part One is entitled "Catechesis in the Church's mission of evangelization." It describes the **proper character of catechesis** within the Church's entire ministry of teaching the Word of God. Having a correct understanding of catechesis is essential, for the way one understands the work of catechesis will very much determine how he or she carries it out.
- Part Two, "The Gospel Message," presents the **content of the faith** which is taught through catechesis. It describes both the source of catechesis in the Word of God, contained in Sacred Tradition and in Sacred Scripture, and the criteria for presenting the Word of God in catechesis. It also describes the content of catechesis as it has most recently been authoritatively set forth in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* promulgated by Pope John Paul II on October 11, 1992.
- Part Three discusses catechesis as first and foremost a work of the Holy Spirit and then examines the **different methods** used in catechesis.
- Part Four is devoted to the **diversity of persons** to whom catechesis is directed, a diversity of age, of development in the faith and the life of faith, of special circumstances of life, and of cultural contexts.
- Finally, Part Five presents the important aspects of **catechesis in the particular Church**, for instance in a diocese. It takes up:
  - the responsibility of bishops, priests, deacons, religious and lay faithful;
  - the formation of catechists;

the places in which catechesis is carried out; and  
the practical aspects of organizing catechesis.

Now that we have surveyed the whole presentation in the General Directory, we can begin to look carefully at each part.

Part One discusses the initiative of God which is at the foundation of catechesis. There would be no teaching of the word of God, if God did not first reveal Himself to us. For the fullest understanding of Part One, the study of the teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council contained in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* “*Dei verbum*” is essential.

Divine Revelation is God’s personal communication of Himself to us. God reveals Himself to us in **His creation of all things** and in His keeping of created things in being. When we reflect on the deepest nature of things, we can arrive at a certain knowledge of God as the source and destiny of all things. Already in Creation, God manifested His desire to be in communication with us, giving us alone, among his earthly creatures, the capacity to know Him and to love Him.

God the Father fulfilled most perfectly His desire to have communion with us by **sending His Son in our human nature** through the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, God desired that we share as fully as possible in His life. He brought to realization His desire by sending His Son into the world as a brother to all His children, to all those whom He created in His own image and likeness.

We call **salvation history** the gradual realization of God’s plan to adopt us as His sons and daughters in His only-begotten Son. God revealed Himself and His saving love for us in time and space, through deeds and words, events and the divinely-inspired words which interpret those events for us. The *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council made it so clear for us that the Father’s saving deeds and words are inseparable from one another:

“As a result, the works performed by God in the history of salvation show forth and bear out the doctrine and realities signified by the words; the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they contain.” (No. 2) It is impossible to know God as He desires to reveal Himself to us apart from a knowledge of salvation history.

The manner of God’s revelation of Himself to us is the manner of our proclamation of His saving love, what we call **evangelization**. Evangelization must therefore be both deed and word, witness to God’s life in us and announcement of God’s life given to us in the Church. Catechesis, within the whole work of evangelization, primarily hands on the deeds and words of Divine Revelation. Clearly, catechesis presents Divine Revelation not just in its historical aspect, the saving deeds and words of God in the past, but in its actuality, God’s saving plan as it continues to be realized in the life of the catechized. (cf. No. 39)

**Our Lord Jesus Christ**, the fullness of the revelation of God the Father, must be the **center of all catechesis**, and the Gospels which interpret the saving deeds and words of Our Lord Jesus must be the **constant point of reference** in catechesis.

“It is common knowledge that among all the inspired writings, even among those of the New Testament, the Gospels have a special place, and rightly so, because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Savior.” (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, No. 18)

Catechesis which does not communicate a deep knowledge and love of the Savior is not catechesis, the handing-on of Divine Revelation.

The **Church**, the Body of Christ, was called into being by the Savior to **bring His saving deeds and words to all peoples** of all times and places. The Church came to birth through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus. She is founded upon the Apostles to whom the Savior gave the Holy Spirit for the preaching of the Gospel to all the nations. “The Apostles, by words, deeds and writings, faithfully discharged this task.” (No. 43) The responsibility of safeguarding and handing-on the doctrine of the Apostolic faith and the integrity of its practice belongs to every member of the Church. The Savior so equipped the Church that she faithfully keeps and transmits the Apostolic Tradition:

“The Gospel is conserved whole and entire in the Church: the disciples of Jesus Christ contemplate it and meditate upon it unceasingly; they live it out in their everyday lives; they proclaim it in their missionary activity.” (Ibid.)

The **authenticity of the conservation and transmission of Divine Revelation**, the Word of God contained in Tradition and Scripture, is guaranteed. The Magisterium or teaching office of the Church, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, serves the whole Church in the authentic interpretation of the Word of God.

“But 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. Yet this 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.” (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, No. 10)

The Church is rightly called the “universal sacrament of salvation,” for she transmits Divine Revelation through evangelization. Through evangelization, she both teaches God’s plan for our salvation and communicates the grace of salvation through the administration of the Sacraments.

## Catechesis and Evangelization (46-59)

Catechesis is part of the dynamic process of evangelization in the Church.

Evangelization, which is the reason for the existence of the Church, is the bringing of the Gospel to all our brothers and sisters, of every time and place, so that the Gospel may take root in their hearts and bring forth the civilization of love, according to God's plan. Evangelization is carried out by various means: proclamation of the Gospel, witness to the Gospel, teaching of the doctrine of faith, administration of the Sacraments, and the love of neighbor. Evangelization cannot be reduced to any one of these means but is all-encompassing: "witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, interior change and social transformation." (No. 46)

The dynamic of the process of evangelization is made up of the following moments: **missionary activity** directed toward those without faith or are indifferent to the faith and its practice; **initial catechesis** on behalf of those who accept the faith and those who are completing their initiation into the faith; and **pastoral activity** on behalf of the members of the Church who are of mature faith. (Nos. 47-49)

The ministry of the Word of God is fundamental to evangelization, for, if the Gospel is to be brought to all men and women, our Lord Jesus Christ must be named and taught. The ministry of the Word of God, in which the Holy Spirit is the primary agent, communicates Divine Revelation by means of human words. (No. 50)

The *General Directory for Catechesis* indicates the principal functions of the ministry of the Word of God in the dynamic process of evangelization:

The **primary proclamation** which is addressed to nonbelievers, to those who have rejected the faith or are living "on the margins of Christian life," and to members of other religions; the primary proclamation includes "the religious awakening of the children of Christian families;"

**Christian initiation** by which those who, with the help of God's grace, choose to follow Christ are introduced into the doctrine of the faith, into the life of prayer and worship, and into the witness of the life of the virtues;

Christian initiation is accomplished fundamentally by catechesis closely connected with the reception of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist); this catechesis is carried out on behalf of unbaptized adults who are catechumens, baptized adults who seek full communion in the Catholic Church, baptized Catholics who need to complete their Christian initiation or are returning to the practice of the faith, and baptized children and young people who are growing in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and its practice; the Catholic education and formation which takes

place in homes, in Catholic schools and in programs of religious education belongs to this function of the ministry of the Word of God;

The **permanent catechesis** by which those who have been fully initiated into the faith are helped to deepen their knowledge and practice of the faith throughout a lifetime;

The **sacred liturgy** in which the ministry of the Word of God has an integral part; most important is the homily; also included are instructions given during the preparation and the celebration of the Sacraments; participation itself in the Holy Eucharist must be seen as “a primary means of education in the faith;”

The study of **sacred theology** by which the truths of the faith are studied systematically and scientifically in order to achieve a deeper understanding of them. (No. 51)

Evangelization by its very nature invites man to a conversion to our Lord Jesus Christ, by which “the believer unites himself to the community of disciples and appropriates the faith of the Church.” (No. 53) The conversion to Christ is both “trustful abandonment to God” and “a loving assent to all that he has revealed to us.” (No. 54) By its nature, conversion to Christ includes all aspects of a person’s life and penetrates to the very depths of the person’s being. Through conversion to Christ, the Christian “finds what he had always been seeking and he finds it superabundantly,” the truth about God, about himself and about his destiny in God. (No. 55)

Conversion, like evangelization, is a dynamic process marked by certain moments:

**Interest in the Gospel** awakened by the first proclamation or call to faith; with the help of God’s grace, the nonbeliever or the indifferent person or person of another religion is attracted to the Catholic faith but without yet a firm decision;

**Firm decision** for the Gospel after a seeking of the truth, inspired by the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the events of salvation;

The **profession of faith** which follows upon the catechesis which has introduced the believer into a deeper knowledge of the faith and into the Christian way of life;

The **journey toward perfection** for which the profession of faith is the foundation, sustained by **adult catechesis**, within which the homily has a preeminent place. (Nos. 56-57)

The treatment of catechesis as part of the dynamic process of evangelization concludes with a presentation of the different socio-religious situations in which evangelization is carried out. The *General Directory for Catechesis* distinguishes three basic situations which require a specific response of evangelization.

In the **first situation**, our Lord Jesus Christ is entirely unknown or the Christian

community is not sufficiently developed so that it can witness and proclaim the Catholic faith to others. The response of the Church to the first situation is missionary activity directed toward young people and adults. The Church directs herself to the unbaptized and invites them to conversion. Catechesis here is carried out within the catechumenate.

In the **second situation**, the Church is solidly established and her members “are fervent in their faith and in Christian living.” (No. 58) The response of the Church is a well-developed pastoral activity so that the Church’s members may grow in their knowledge of the faith and its practice. Regarding the second situation, the *General Directory for Catechesis* observes: “In such contexts it is vital that catechesis for children, adolescents and young people develop various processes of well articulated Christian initiation which permit these to arrive at adulthood with mature faith which makes evangelizers of those who have been evangelized.” (No. 58)

In the **third situation**, which is called intermediate, “entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.” (Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Redemptoris missio, No. 33) The Church responds to the third situation with “a new evangelization,” directed to the baptized of all ages for whom the Gospel and faith are no longer interiorly appropriated. As the *General Directory* clearly points out, today the three different situations “oftentimes co-exist in the same territory.” (No. 59) It is important, then, to keep distinct the three responses of the Church and to employ them appropriately: the Church must carry out its primary missionary activity on behalf of the unbaptized; the catechesis of catechumens is the model for all other forms of catechesis; the catechesis of adults must be considered “the chief form of catechesis,” toward which all the other necessary forms of catechesis are directed. In other words, the necessary and fundamental catechesis of children and young people is directed toward their adult knowledge and practice of the faith.

Catechesis is only properly understood within the context of evangelization; it is an essential moment of the dynamic process of evangelization. As a moment of evangelization, it is missionary in nature and is a fundamental way by which the Church fulfills her missionary mandate from Our Lord Jesus Christ. (No. 59)

Questions on Catechesis and Evangelization (46-59)

## **Catechesis and the Other Elements of Evangelization (60-76)**

Catechesis is an integral part of evangelization and, therefore, is best understood in relationship to the other elements of evangelization: the primary proclamation carried out in missionary activity; the celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation; the ordinary life or pastoral activity of the Church; and teaching of religion in schools.

## **Catechesis and the primary proclamation**

The first element of evangelization, which is the primary proclamation, is directed to those who do not yet believe and to those who are religiously indifferent. Its goal is a proclamation of the Gospel which is at the same time a call to conversion.

Catechesis is complementary to the primary proclamation, for it “promotes and matures initial conversion, educates the convert in the faith and incorporates him into the Christian community.” (No. 61) The primary proclamation responds to Our Lord’s command: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” (Mk 16, 15) Catechesis responds to the need of the one who converts for further instruction in the faith and its practice in preparation for Christian initiation: “The man who believes in it and accepts baptism will be saved...” (Mk 16, 16)

The *General Directory for Catechesis* points out that it is not always easy “to define the boundaries of these activities.” (No. 62) Sometimes those being catechized, in fact, first need conversion. Therefore, the Church normally requires a prior stage to catechesis, what is called the pre-catechumenate or pre-catechesis, in order to be certain that the catechized has first accepted the faith. Even though a diocese carries out catechesis with attention to pre-catechesis, it must also have in place a proper program of primary proclamation for those who are not yet believers or remain in religious indifference.

## **Catechesis and the Sacraments of Christian Initiation**

Catechesis follows upon the primary proclamation and conversion, and it prepares the convert for the reception of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation by introducing him or her to “the mystery of salvation and an evangelical style of life.” (No. 63) Catechesis provides the solid foundation upon which all development of understanding and of practice of the faith will rest. Without catechesis, the missionary effort or primary proclamation would remain fruitless, and the pastoral activity of the Church would lack solid foundations.

Faith requires Baptism. Our Lord commanded us to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (cf. Mt 28, 19) Catechesis prepares the unbaptized to make the profession of faith required for Baptism. By a well-ordered and complete presentation of the doctrine of the faith through catechesis the catechized is readied to make the profession of faith and to be baptized. The *General Directory for Catechesis* lists the following characteristics of the catechesis which prepares the unbaptized for the Sacraments of Initiation:

Catechesis must be comprehensive and systematic, for the purpose of catechesis is to introduce the catechized into the full mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ;

Catechesis must be complete, providing “education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith” (No. 67); in other words it must not only be instruction but also introduction into the following of Christ in daily living;

Catechesis must concentrate on the essentials and fundamentals of the faith and its practice, in view of the development of the faith and its practice in the individual through the ordinary pastoral activity of the Church.

## **Catechesis and ongoing formation in the faith**

Once catechesis has accomplished its goal of a basic instruction in the faith and introduction into its practice, the Christian community bears the responsibility of helping the catechized to continue developing his or her understanding and practice of the faith, to engage in ongoing conversion of life. (No. 69) The continuing formation in the faith is sustained primarily through participation in the Holy Eucharist, hearing the Gospel and sharing in Christ’s Sacrifice. Clearly, the homily at Sunday Mass and other Masses is the eminent means by which the knowledge and practice of the faith acquired through catechesis is deepened and developed.

The other forms of continuing catechesis or formation in the faith are: 1) the study of the Sacred Scripture, especially through *lectio divina* (the reading of the Word of God, the meditative reflection upon it, and the application of it to daily life); 2) the Christian reading of events, especially through the study of the Church’s social doctrine; 3) liturgical catechesis which studies the prayers, the signs and the gestures of the sacred liturgy, and is directed to the fuller participation in the sacred liturgy; 4) occasional catechesis regarding a particular aspect or circumstance of home life or of the life of the Church or of society; 5) initiatives of spiritual formation aimed chiefly at deepening prayer life and witness through works of justice; and 6) theological study which helps the believer to be better equipped to give an account of his faith. (No. 71) As the *General Directory for Catechesis* points out, it is critical that there be coherence between the catechesis for Christian Initiation and the continuing catechesis. (No. 72)

## **Catechesis and religious instruction in schools**

The *General Directory for Catechesis* addresses itself to the relationship of catechesis to religious instruction in the schools, which takes various forms in the Church throughout the world. For us in the United States, religious instruction in schools can only happen in the Catholic school. Religious instruction in the Catholic schools is catechesis but also something more. It is the illumination of whole of the student’s education by the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. In both regards, it is important that religious instruction in the Catholic schools be carried out with the same seriousness and completeness as instruction in the other subjects. Religious instruction should not be viewed as secondary but must occupy a place with the other academic subjects, so that an interdisciplinary study can be accomplished. (No. 73) Religious instruction in the Catholic school is also accompanied



by catechesis, the homily, liturgical catechesis, and so forth.

For students who are believers, religious instruction in the Catholic school helps them to deepen their understanding of the doctrine of faith. For those who are experiencing doubts regarding the faith, religious instruction provides the opportunity to know “what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply.” (No. 75) For nonbelieving students, religious instruction will be the primary proclamation of the faith.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* concludes the discussion of catechesis as part of evangelization by pointing out the responsibility of each diocese to set forth guidelines regarding the education in the faith and its practice for children, adolescents and young people through Christian family life, through catechesis and through the Catholic school. It is important that the formative duties of the family, of catechetical programs and of the Catholic schools be set forth in their relationship to one another.

Questions on Catechesis and the Other Elements of Evangelization (60-76)

## **The Nature, Object and the Tasks of Catechesis (77-91)**

Once the *General Directory for Catechesis* has placed catechesis in the proper context of evangelization in the Church, it describes catechesis in particular.

### **The Nature of Catechesis**

What is the nature of catechesis? Catechesis is an activity of the Church by which she continues the teaching mission of our Lord Jesus, under the inspiration and with the strength of the Holy Spirit. The Church is our mother; we come to life as children of God in the Church. As mother, the Church is also teacher: she transmits to her children “the faith which she herself lives.” She transmits the faith in a way which leads the catechized to deepen their faith and renew their lives in Christ. Doing the work of catechesis is responding to the life of the Holy Spirit within us through Baptism and Confirmation, and nourished through the Holy Eucharist, by transmitting the faith and its practice to the catechized. The catechized, for their part, draw upon the grace of the Holy Spirit given to them in Baptism to respond to the handing-on of the faith and its practice. (Nos. 78-79)

### **The Object of Catechesis**

What is the object of catechesis? Catechesis seeks to strengthen and develop the communion of the catechized with our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Baptism, the

catechized have come to life in Christ; they have become sons and daughters of God in His only-begotten Son. Catechesis helps them to know Christ more fully. Coming to know Christ more fully means knowing more fully God the Father Who sent Him into the world and the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father and Son to us in the Church. It also means knowing more fully the Church herself, Christ's Mystical Body. What is more, it means coming to know more fully all our brothers and sisters in the human family, whom Christ came into the world to save, to restore to communion with God the Father.

The object of catechesis, the fuller communion with Our Lord Jesus, is achieved through the profession of faith with ever greater understanding and adherence. To profess faith in Jesus Christ is always to profess faith in the Triune God; to come to know more deeply Jesus Christ is to come to know more deeply God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. By helping us to make more wholeheartedly the profession of faith, catechesis also helps us to express our faith in the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments, and to live "the commitments which it entails." (No. 82)

When we confess our faith in God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — , we make it clear that love of God and of neighbor is the heart of our life and activity. The confession of faith frees us from any worship of false idols: "gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2113)

The profession or confession of faith is made as an individual but in and through the Church. Professing our faith means accepting, with all of our brothers and sisters in the Church, the Church's mission, even to the point of suffering persecution and death. (*General Directory for Catechesis*, No. 83)

## The Tasks of Catechesis

The object of catechesis is achieved by carrying out certain tasks which are all necessary and closely related to each other. The General Directory of Catechesis indicates that the tasks of catechesis are first seen in the mission of Our Lord Jesus, the Master: He taught His disciples to pray, He inculcated in them the Gospel virtues, and He prepared them to bring the Gospel to others. (Nos. 84 and 87)

Catechesis must **promote knowledge of the faith**. The catechized, having come to a first knowledge of Christ, desire to know Him more and more through the study of Tradition and the Holy Scriptures. This task is the deepening of the understanding of the Profession of Faith or Creed. The deeper knowledge of the faith not only helps the catechized to live more fully in Christ but also prepares him or her to give an account of the faith to others. (No. 85a)

Catechesis must **lead to full, conscious and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy**. Through catechesis, the catechized are educated in the most privileged encounters we

have with Christ in the Church: the Sacred Liturgy, especially the Sacraments. The deeper understanding of the meaning of the Profession of Faith must necessarily lead to the deeper understanding of how the faith is expressed in the Sacred Liturgy. (No. 85b)

Catechesis must give **moral formation**. Knowledge of Christ necessarily entails accompanying Christ along the Way of the Cross, the way home to God the Father. Catechesis prepares the catechized to witness to Christ in the manner of their daily living. The Sermon on the Mount, by which Christ teaches the full meaning of the Ten Commandments, is the constant point of reference for catechesis in providing moral formation. (No. 85c)

Catechesis must **teach how to pray**. Deeper friendship with Jesus Christ means praying with Him, especially in the words which He Himself has taught us: the Our Father. All of the sentiments which Our Lord Jesus expresses in the Our Father are taught in catechesis: “adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication and awe for [the Father’s] glory.” (No. 85d)

Catechesis must **educate for community life**. Catechesis inculcates in the catechized the virtues which foster the life of the Church: “the spirit of simplicity and humility...; solicitude for the least among the brethren...; particular care for those who are alienated...; fraternal correction...; common prayer...; mutual forgiveness.” (No. 86b)

Education for community life inspires the desire of Christian unity. Catechesis promotes true ecumenism to the degree that it provides the catechized with a full and clear presentation of the Church’s teaching. The presentation of the Church’s teaching should include the “elements of faith” which the Catholic Church shares with other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.

Catechesis **provides initiation into the mission**. Catechesis prepares the catechized to be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world: in their work or professional life, recreation and cultural activity. At the same time, it introduces the catechized into direct service of the Church, in accord with their vocation in life.

In introducing the catechized into the mission of the Church, catechesis should foster very much the vocations to the ordained priesthood and to the consecrated life in its various forms, so that the catechized whom God the Father is calling to these vocations will be assisted in responding for the building-up of the Body of Christ.

Education for the mission includes preparation for respectful conversation with persons of other religions, for example, Judaism or Islam. With regard to dialogue with persons of other religions, the catechized should be reminded of their duty to proclaim faith in Jesus Christ. (No. 86c)

Catechesis employs two principal means to fulfill its tasks: “transmission of the Gospel message and experience of the Christian life.” (No. 87)

## **Conclusion**

Although the catechesis of the baptized is fundamentally different from pre-baptismal catechesis, the *General Directory for Catechesis* shows how the stages of the catechumenate are the inspiration of the gradual nature of catechesis: the parallel importance of catechesis and the Sacraments of Initiation; the responsibility of the whole community for catechesis; the centrality of the mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ in all catechesis; the relationship of the faith to the actual situation of the catechized or inculturation; and catechesis as a true school of the faith which is carried out systematically and gradually. (Nos. 88-91)

Questions on The Nature, Object and the Tasks of Catechesis (77-91)

## **The Source of Catechesis and the Criteria for Presenting Catechesis (92-118)**

### **The source and sources of catechesis**

The source of catechesis must always be the Word of God transmitted in Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Scriptures, and interpreted by the Magisterium. The “deposit of faith,” as Saint Paul calls it, is the object of the continual reflection of the Church, so that she may both carefully guard it and faithfully proclaim it.

Sacred Tradition hands on in its integrity the Word of God which our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have entrusted to the Apostles. Sacred Scripture is the Word of God committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Magisterium provides the authentic interpretation of the Word of God in the Church. These are the principal sources of catechesis. (Nos. 94-95)

There are also subsidiary sources of catechesis which have developed: 1) from the meditation upon the Word of God by the People of God, under the guidance of the Magisterium; 2) from the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, in which the Word of God is proclaimed; 3) from the Christian witness of the saints over the Church’s almost 2,000 years of history; 4) from theological research which helps the faithful to deepen their understanding of the faith; and 5) from the religious and moral principles which take root in society and culture. (Nos. 95-96)

### **Criteria for presenting catechesis**

The criteria for the presentation of the Word of God are closely related to one another

because they flow from the same source, our Lord Jesus Christ. (No. 97)

First of all, the message must be **centered on Our Lord Jesus Christ** who not only transmits the Word of God but actually is the Word of God Incarnate. All catechesis must lead to a deeper knowledge of and closer adherence to the person of our Lord Jesus. Likewise, Christ is the center of the story of salvation which catechesis strives to present. Because Christ is the center of catechesis, the catechist must be certain to present always what Christ “teaches about God, man, happiness, the moral life, death, etc. without in any way changing his thought.” (No. 98d). The Gospels, therefore, must be at the heart of catechesis. (No. 98)

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Divine Son of God. Catechesis centered on Christ is therefore also **centered on the Holy Trinity**. Knowledge and love of Christ is at the same time knowledge and love of God the Father who sent Him into the world and of God the Holy Spirit by Whom He was anointed and with Whom God the Father and He have anointed every believer. Catechesis teaches about the most intimate life of God and leads the catechized to a profession of faith in God, liberating him or her for obedience to God’s will. Knowledge of the life of the Holy Trinity also teaches us that we, made in the image and likeness of Christ, are called to be brothers and sisters of one another as sons and daughters of God in God the Son. (No. 99)

Catechesis conveys **the message of freedom from sin and joy in the grace** which God the Father gives us in order that we may do what is right and good during the days of our earthly journey and may be with Him in His heavenly Kingdom in the life which is to come. It is the proclamation of the justice of God by which consciences are rightly formed and the hope of eternal life is nourished. (No. 103)

The message of freedom from sin in catechesis is also a **“message of liberation,” directed to the poor** with the same sensitivity of the Master Himself. The teaching of the Gospel leads one to be always attentive to those who suffer poverty, hunger or other painful experiences. Catechesis prepares the catechized to work toward the liberation of one’s neighbor; it inspires in the catechized “a preferential option for the poor,” which reaches out to the whole Church. Liberation must not be understood as solely economic or political or social or doctrinal, but of the whole man, including his relationship with God. (No. 104)

Catechesis is **ecclesial**, that is it takes place within the Church. “Catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways.” (Ibid., No. 105) The faith which is transmitted through catechesis is the faith of all the saints: the Apostles, martyrs, great teachers of the faith and missionaries. It is the one faith and by its transmission fosters the unity of all believers. (Nos. 105-106)

Catechesis **respects the historical character of the mystery of salvation**. Catechesis must be biblical in order to present salvation history. Doctrinal catechesis, presenting the

Creed and Christian morality, must be attentive to the history of salvation which is written each day in the life of believers. Likewise, the presentation of the sacraments should refer to the great events of salvation history which are relived anew in the life of the Christian. In short, catechesis should teach the faith which uncovers God's self-revelation in the sign of the Incarnation, in the sign of the Church, and in the "signs of the times." (Ibid., Nos. 107-108)

Catechesis **inculturates the Gospel**. It addresses the Gospel truth to the deepest reality of individuals and their culture. It takes up what is compatible in the culture, but it will also have to purify and transform what is contrary to the Gospel. Inculturation through catechesis is delicate and must be carried out gradually by catechists who are deeply rooted in their faith and in their culture, by local catechisms, by catechetical institutes and through apologetics which puts the faith in dialogue with culture. (Nos. 109-110)

Catechesis **presents the Gospel in its integrity**. The catechist must avoid any partial or distorted presentation of the doctrine of the faith. The entire message of the Gospel must be presented gradually and with respect for the capacity of the catechized to receive it. This criterion demands that the catechist neither diminish the truth of the Gospel to avoid rejection nor exaggerate the truth of the Gospel by imposing heavy burdens which the Gospel itself does not impose. The close connection between the inculturation of the Gospel and the respect for the integrity of the Gospel is clear. It is the missionary aspect of the faith which will keep the catechist true to the Gospel "without falling into closed inflexibility or into facile accommodations which enfeeble the Gospel and secularize the Church." (No. 111-113)

The message transmitted is **comprehensive and hierarchical**. The truths of the faith are based upon one another, and some have a higher priority because the others depend upon them. The presentation of salvation history can only be understood in reference to Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostles' Creed is an excellent reflection of the hierarchy of the truths of the faith. In the presentation of the Sacraments, "the Holy Eucharist occupies a unique place to which all of the other sacraments are ordained." (No. 115) In the moral order, the great commandment of love of God and neighbor has primacy of place. In the presentation of prayer, the Our Father uncovers the dispositions and desires of the one who prays. (Nos. 114-115)

Catechesis should **reveal man to man**. Seeking to place the catechized in ever fuller communion with our Lord Jesus, the catechist will relate the human experience of the catechized to the experience of the Incarnate Son of God. In the very first catechesis, it is important to show how the Gospel responds to the deepest desires of the human heart. In biblical catechesis, the interpretation of the present is sought in the events of salvation history, especially in the life of the Savior and of the early Church. In teaching the Creed, the catechist will present the doctrines of the faith as the "sources of life and light" for daily living. (No. 117) Moral catechesis relates the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes to the human virtues. Liturgical catechesis relates liturgical signs and symbols to the deepest human experiences. (Nos. 116-117)

The question of the order in which the doctrine of the faith is to be presented is left to the local ecclesial community which has the responsibility to present the whole of the Gospel according to the methods best adapted to the circumstances of the place and times. (No. 118)

Questions on The Source of Catechesis and the Criteria for Presenting Catechesis (92-118)

## **The Criteria for Presenting Catechesis: The Content of Catechesis (119-136)**

### ***The Catechism, a synthesis of the faith***

From the very beginning of her life, the Church has developed brief statements of the essential truths of the faith. These are found in the New Testament, in ancient professions of faith and in liturgical texts. Twice thus far in the history of the Church, there has been the need to put together a catechism or complete and systematic presentation of the faith, drawing upon the official brief statements developed over the centuries. At the Council of Trent, it was decided to draw up the first such catechism, which served the Church well up to our times. On October 11, 1992, Pope John Paul II promulgated the second universal catechism, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* plays an essential part in the work of catechesis as it unfolds in every part of the Church throughout the world. (No. 119)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides catechists with a complete statement of the Church's faith which they seek to hand on to the catechized. It is a statement of the faith which is enriched by references to the Holy Scriptures, Apostolic Tradition, the Magisterium, and authoritative theologians and spiritual writers. The *Catechism* was presented by Pope John Paul II "as a point of reference for the authentic presentation of the content of the faith." (No. 120b) It stands out among any other references for catechists because it was presented to the whole Church with the apostolic authority of the Holy Father.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* goes hand in hand with the *Catechism*. The *Catechism* provides the norm for the **content of catechesis**. The General Directory provides the norm for the **method of catechesis**. In fact, in distinction from the last directory for catechesis, presented in 1971, that is before the development of the *Catechism*, the new directory does not provide a synthesis of the contents of catechesis. Rather, in what pertains to the content of catechesis, it simply refers to the *Catechism*. (Nos. 119-120)

### ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***

The *Catechism*, which offers a systematic presentation of the Church's teaching regarding faith and morals, serves a number of **important purposes** in the life of the Church. It promotes the unity of the Church by assisting her members to make a full and coherent profession of faith. It provides for all believers a clear and reliable statement of what the Church believes. In this respect, the Catechism is "an obligatory point of reference for catechesis." (No. 121a) It is also the reference text for the development of local catechisms. In fact, the Catechism encourages the Church in its various localities to develop catechisms which take account of local historical and cultural situations. The *Catechism* is universal; it pertains to the whole Church throughout the world. Local catechisms pertain to the Church in a particular place and time. (No. 121)

The *Catechism* follows a **structure** based on the four fundamental aspects of our life in Christ: what we believe or the Creed (belief in God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — and in His plan for our salvation); the celebration and communication of what we believe in the Sacraments (the sacramental life by which we receive divine grace); how we act because of what we believe or the Ten Commandments (the moral life: loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as self); and how we pray because of what we believe or the Our Father (the life of daily prayer during our earthly journey by which we anticipate with hope our meeting of God at the end of time). As can be seen, the structure of the Catechism makes it very apt for carrying out the basic tasks of catechesis. (No. 122)

The *Catechism* is **inspired** by the fullness of the revelation of the Triune God in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It is **centered on** the Incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, it is **inspired by** the mystery of man called to share in the life of God. The mystery of man is, in fact, also revealed in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus. (No. 123)

What **type of literature** is the *Catechism*? The *Catechism* can be described in the following way. It is an official text by which the Church presents what she believes, celebrates, lives and prays in brief and precise formulations. It presents only what is "fundamental and common" to the Catholic faith; it does not present private opinions or positions of particular schools of theological thought. Lastly, it is universal, giving a complete picture of the Catholic faith, incorporating the teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, especially in the light of religious and moral concerns of our time. It does not provide an adaptation of the presentation which is suited to the local culture or to the age, spiritual maturity or condition in society or in the Church of the catechized. It is local catechisms which provide such an adaptation of the presentation of the faith. (No. 124)

The *Catechism* has a particular relationship to what the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council called "the precious **deposit of Christian doctrine.**" It helps to transmit the complete and pure doctrine of the faith. As such, it helps the catechized to read and pray over the **Sacred Scriptures**. Catechesis, therefore, should be rich in references to the divinely revealed Word of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures. Through the Catechism, the catechist knows how to present the Word of God in all its truth. (Nos. 125-128)



Likewise, the *Catechism* makes frequent references to the **Fathers of the Church**, helping the catechized to see how the doctrine of the faith has been taught, celebrated and practiced. The sayings of the Fathers of the Church help us to see how catechesis must proceed by stages, in imitation of the stages of coming to faith, baptism and full life in the Church. Especially through the Fathers of the Church, we come to appreciate the importance of the assent of the intellect and will to the truth of the faith and of the various dimensions of the life of faith: Creed, Sacraments, Ten Commandments and *Our Father*. (Nos. 129-130)

## Local catechisms

Local catechisms are developed and promulgated by individual Bishops or the Conference of Bishops. They aim to address fully the doctrine of the faith to the local culture and to the different circumstances of age and condition of the catechized. The local catechism strives to present the faith in the most accessible language without in any way compromising the truth or completeness of the faith. (No. 131)

What kind of literature is the local catechism? It is official because it comes from the local Bishop or Bishops. Like the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it presents a synthesis of the whole doctrine of the faith. It, too, constitutes a point of reference for catechesis. (No. 132) To what does the local catechism adapt the presentation given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*? “This synthesis of the faith must exhibit the adaptations which are required by ‘the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial conditions among those to whom it is addressed.’” (No. 132) It will, therefore, make frequent references to the experiences of the catechized, to the relationship of the lived faith to the local culture, to social conditions and to the concrete situation of the Church.

Clearly, the local catechism will have constant reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The goal of the local catechism is to adapt the presentation of the full content of the *Catechism*. The development of local catechisms, in fact, manifests the Catholic nature of our faith. It addresses the one faith to every culture. It also shows the unity of all the local Churches in the one Church established by Christ, as it is also expressed in the communion among all Bishops. Lastly, the local catechism, together with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is “a renewing leaven of catechesis in the Church.” (Nos. 133-136)

Questions on The Criteria for Presenting Catechesis: The Content of Catechesis (119-136)

## The Art of Teaching the Faith (137-147)

Part Three of the *General Directory for Catechesis* takes up the question of the art of teaching or pedagogy of the faith.

What does it mean to say that the teaching of the faith is the work of the Holy Spirit? It means that the catechist cooperates in God the Father's communication of His truth and love to His sons and daughters, most perfectly in the sending of the His only-begotten Son into the world for our salvation. The norm of all catechesis is the revelation of God the Father to us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The catechist shares in the mission of Christ to reveal God the Father to His children. (Nos. 137-138)

How does God the Father teach His children? He accepts His children as they are, and He works to free them from sin and to draw them to Himself. God the Father works through the events of each person's life to reveal Himself and to form a bond of faithful love with the person.

The pedagogy or art of teaching of the catechist should imitate the pedagogy of God. The catechist should help the catechized to see the hand of God at work in the events of life. Through catechesis, the catechized comes to a deeper appreciation of his or her relationship with God. (No. 139)

Our Lord Jesus Christ exemplifies the art of teaching of God the Father. The disciples had direct experience of Christ's teaching through His words and deeds. They have given us a picture of His teaching in the Gospels. The following traits of His teaching are found clearly in the Gospels.

Our Lord Jesus always received others, especially the poor and sinners, "as persons loved and sought out by God;"

Our Lord Jesus always presented the truth and love of God the Father without compromise;

He always showed forth a sensitive and strong love which helped others to overcome sin, and to respect and foster life;

He constantly invited and urged others to "a manner of living sustained by faith in God, by hope in the Kingdom and by charity to one's neighbor;"

He used all the various means of interpersonal communication, for example, "word, silence, metaphor, image, example, and many diverse signs." (No. 140)

When Our Lord Jesus Christ invited His disciples to follow Him with all their mind and heart, He handed on to them His art of teaching as a fundamental way of sharing fully in His saving mission.

In her turn, the Church has followed the art of teaching of God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ. In a certain sense, the whole life of the Church is an education in the faith. As we say, the Church is our Mother and Teacher. Down the Christian centuries, we find a wealth of catechetical pedagogy in the Church: the lives of the saints and of catechists;

the various ways of living the Christian faith and of communicating the faith to others, for example, catechisms; and a rich collection of catechetical practices and texts.

God the Father's art of teaching is discovered in the action of the Holy Spirit in the catechized, leading the catechized to draw close to the Father by becoming more and more like God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The finality of all catechesis is the deeper communion with God the Father which comes about by becoming more and more like Christ. The catechized becomes more like Christ to the degree that he or she responds to the promptings of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. "For this reason," the *General Directory for Catechesis* concludes, "there cannot be teachers of the faith other than those who are convinced and faithful disciples of Christ and of his Church." (No. 142)

The art of teaching the faith, following the divine example, has the following characteristics:

it helps the catechized in his or her relationship with God by which God saves us from sin and frees us to love Him and our neighbor; the art of teaching the faith stresses the free initiative of God in loving us, the dignity of man as the recipient of God's love and the response of love which God's initiative requires of man;

it respects the mystery of God the Father's communication with man: its divine origin and its adaptation in expression to situations of persons and cultures (No. 143);

it esteems the experience of the faith in the Church;

» "it is rooted in interpersonal relations and makes its own the process of dialogue" (Ibid.);

it employs signs, linking words and deeds, teaching and experience;

it expresses the "inexhaustible divine love," and therein finds its power.

In short, the art of catechesis favors the growth of the catechized into the likeness of Christ, with the Holy Spirit as Helper and Guide. By so doing, the art of teaching the faith is the art of assisting others to return to God the Father in love and holiness of life.

Catechesis is carried out by humans who employ human means but it is a participation in the saving mission of Christ, the saving action of God the Father. Therefore, catechists must be on guard that they are presenting the truth of the faith and not their private ideas or some ideology. Catechists will employ a teaching art which permits them to promote the full adherence of the catechized to God and to the content of the Christian message which makes full adherence to God possible. They will also help the catechized to develop in all dimensions of the faith: knowledge, prayer and worship, and the life of the virtues. Ultimately, the catechist helps the catechized to give himself or herself to God, especially in "the vocation to which the Lord calls." (No. 144) In this regard, catechesis is

fundamental to the apostolate of vocations by which the Church helps young people to know their vocation in life and to embrace it with their whole being.

To conclude, catechesis seeks to imitate the pedagogy of God the Father who finds the means to communicate with His children in the diverse experiences of their lives. The great challenge of catechesis is find the means of communication which respect fully the truth of the faith and the concrete situation of the catechized. By so doing, catechesis assists the catechized to make of their lives a gift of sincere and pure love to God the Father and the neighbor.

Questions on The Art of Teaching the Faith (137-147)

## **Method in Catechesis (148-162)**

### **Diversity of Methods**

In teaching the faith, the Church does not use any single method but rather employs a variety of methods as long as they are consonant with the pedagogy of God, that is are coherent with the doctrine of the faith to be taught. Down the Christian centuries, different methods have been employed according to the gifts both of the catechists and of the catechized. Whatever the method employed, the goal of catechesis has always been the same: the education of the catechized in the faith.

### **Relationship of Method and Content**

If catechesis is to be true both to God's Word and to the catechized, the method and the content of catechesis must be carefully related. It is false to think that method is neutral with regard to the content of the faith to be communicated. The way of handing on the faith must be "adequate to the nature of the message, to its sources and language, to the concrete circumstances of ecclesial communities as well as to the particular circumstances of the faithful to whom catechesis is addressed." (No. 149a)

One method has special importance both in the long history of catechesis and also today. It is the documentary method which presents the Bible, the Creed, the Sacred Liturgy and the Church herself. It is a method in which the mass media can be effectively employed.

### **Inductive and Deductive Methods**

When talking about the method of catechesis, frequently the terms inductive and deductive are employed. By the inductive method, facts (the history of salvation, the liturgical rites, the history of the Church, contemporary events) are presented to uncover

their relationship to God's revelation of Himself to us. It is sometimes called the kerygmatic method because it fits so well the presentation of God's plan for our salvation. "Kerygmatic" comes from the Greek word for preaching and proclaiming. Through the kerygmatic method, the events of salvation are, first of all, proclaimed, and then their application to daily life is made.

The deductive method strives to present facts and explain them in terms of their causes. It is not opposed to the inductive method, but in catechesis it can only work well in conjunction with the inductive method. After all, God's revelation of Himself is His initiative and is not reached by merely human reasoning.

## **Human Experience in Catechesis**

The place of human experience in catechesis must be carefully examined and evaluated. Catechesis should help the catechized to become more aware of their experiences and to weigh them in the light of the Church's teaching. Otherwise, the catechized will not be helped in living a responsible life before God.

Experience helps to make the doctrine of the faith understood. We remember how our Lord Jesus used a variety of experiences to teach the truth of the Gospel. With regard to personal experience, it is the place in which God manifests Himself to us, even as He most perfectly manifested Himself in the taking of our human nature by God the Son. The catechist has the solemn responsibility to help the catechized to view the experiences of daily life in the perspective of the Gospel and Church teaching. Only then will catechesis lead to a deepening Christian life.

## **The Place of Memorization in Catechesis**

Through catechesis, the Church hands on her living memory. Memorization helps the catechized to appropriate into their very being the truths of the faith.

What should be memorized? The principal formulations of doctrine which are a common language and culture for all the faithful. Clearly, the formulations will be most effectively memorized after the doctrine involved has been thoroughly presented. Among the formulations of doctrine, there should also be memorized key passages from the Holy Scriptures, important texts of the Sacred Liturgy and the common Christian prayers (The Sign of the Cross, Apostles' Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary, Act of Contrition, etc.).

The *General Directory for Catechesis* refers to the memorized formulations as blossoms which grow in the context of a deeper understanding of the faith. The memorized formulations should call to mind the personal and communal experiences to which they relate.

## **The Role of the Catechist**

There is no method which can replace the service of the catechist. The catechist brings to the method the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a sound spiritual life and the witness of the virtues. The catechist is an important instrument by which God's Word reaches us. Therefore, his or her "cultural vision, social condition and lifestyle must not be obstacles to the journey of faith." ( No. 156b) The good catechist will be keenly aware of the need to nourish his or her faith through study and, most of all, prayer.

It goes without saying that the personal relationship between the catechist and the catechized will have a profound positive effect.

## **Active Participation of the Catechized**

If catechesis is to achieve its noble end, the deeper knowledge and love of God, then the catechized must be invited and encouraged to respond actively to God's love for them. Some of the forms of active participation of the catechized in catechesis are: prayer, public worship, participation in the other Sacraments, works of justice and peace, the life of the virtues. Catechesis should help the catechized to live what they are learning.

## **The Community and Group in Catechesis**

The community of the faithful is obviously "a point of concrete reference for the faith journey of the individuals." (No. 158) The catechized look to the community for witness to the truth of the faith. Within the relationship to the community, there is also need for "person-to-person" contact in certain key aspects of our Christian life.

The group can assist very much the learning of the faith. With children, the group helps to form sociability. The group also helps the personality development of the child. Finally, the whole study of the faith uncovers the responsibility which we as a body share for the salvation of the world.

## **Means of Social Communication**

The media are for many "the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large." (No. 160) Therefore, the use of the media (television, radio, press, tape recordings, video and audiocassettes, compact discs, etc.) must be integrated into whatever other methods are employed in catechesis. Some of the media are expensive to employ, but if parishes share them, the high costs become feasible.

The use of the media must be founded upon the knowledge, competence and preparation

of the catechist. In this regard, the great challenge is to permeate with the truth of the faith the culture created by the media.

Media professionals should be encouraged to employ their skills in the presentation of the Gospel. Families should be assisted to employ the media for the building up of family life, avoiding uses of the media which attack the family. Young people who have grown up with the contemporary media and are so influenced by them must be helped to employ them in a way which helps them to grow in the faith and its practice.

Questions on Method in Catechesis (148-162)

## **Those to Be Catechized (163-175)**

Part Four of the *General Directory for Catechesis* treats the adaptation of catechesis to those to whom it is directed. Our Lord Jesus Christ, from the very beginning of His public ministry, announced that His saving message was for all, “beginning with the most disadvantaged.” Before ascending to the right hand of the Father after His Resurrection, He sent forth His disciples to preach the Gospel to all the nations. (No. 163) Throughout her history and no less today, the Church applies many different approaches to teach the faith to a great variety of persons who experience many different circumstances of life.

Because the baptized are called to grow and develop in the faith and its practice, they have the right to an adequate catechesis. The Church has the corresponding duty to provide them an apt catechesis. The right of each of the baptized to an adequate catechesis is also the right of the whole community of faith which depends upon the teaching of the faith for its vitality and development.

The faith or the Word of God to be communicated is one but those to whom it is communicated live in a diversity of circumstances and cultures. If catechesis is to be true nourishment for the faith of the catechized, the catechist must employ energy and creativity in addressing the faith to persons who are different in culture, age, spiritual maturity and their relationship to the Church. Most importantly, catechists must attend to the profound interior unity of the catechized: the questions, hopes and needs which lie in the heart. (No. 170)

## **Catechesis According To Age**

It is most natural that catechesis adapt itself to the age of the catechized, for the faith is meant to develop within the catechized as he or she grows in years. Also, each age of life presents challenges to the faith which catechesis helps a person to meet. In looking at the adaptation of catechesis to age, it is helpful to use as the point of reference the catechesis of adults to which the catechesis of all the other age groups is directed as its fulfillment.

# Adults

Adults to be catechized are found in a variety of conditions:

adults who are living their faith and want to deepen it;

baptized adults who have not received an adequate catechesis, who have not brought to fulfillment the gift of faith received in Baptism and perhaps Confirmation, or who have fallen away from the practice of the faith;

unbaptized adults;

adults who come from Christian communities which are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

In the catechesis of adults, it must be kept in mind that they have the duty to bring to maturity the gift of faith received in Baptism or to be received in Baptism. Likewise, they are responsible for their own lives and the life of society, and undergo personal and societal changes and crises. The faith of adults, therefore, is in need of constant enrichment, development and protection. In presenting the faith to adults, attention must be given to their difficulties and actual experiences; to the distinctness of their call to holiness as laity, that is the call to sanctify every dimension of the life of the world; to the community which should encourage and foster growth in the knowledge and practice of the faith; and to their pastoral care and their participation in the Sacred Liturgy and in the Church's witness of charity.

The faith must be presented to adults in its entirety, helping them to address the truth of the faith to "the difficulties, doubts, misunderstandings, prejudices and objections of today." (No. 175) Catechesis should help us to grow in the faith through participation in the Sacraments, and spiritual direction and retreats. At the same time, adults catechesis assists us in viewing our culture with the eyes of faith. It helps us to assess rightly what is good for the life of society and what is destructive, to respond to the moral questions of our day, to see how the social teaching of the Church applies to the circumstances of daily living, and to help us see the unity of faith and reason and so to avoid fundamentalism or subjective and arbitrary interpretations of the faith.

Catechesis of adults may take different forms. There should always be available for adults the systematic presentation of the entire faith. In addition, there is the catechumenate for the unbaptized; catechesis developed around the Liturgical Year; catechesis according to particular responsibilities in the Church, for example, a particular apostolate; catechesis suited to significant events, for example Marriage or the baptism of a child, or to critical moments of life, for example sickness, or to special events and experiences, for example military service or emigration; catechesis on the Christian use of free time and travel; and catechesis for special events in the life of the Church and



society.

## **Infants and Young Children**

Those who give life to children and have brought them to the Church for baptism have the responsibility to foster the development of the gift of faith within them. In the catechesis of infants and young children, certain factors must be kept in mind:

infancy and childhood as the decisive time of first socialization in the family, the school and the Church;

the introduction of the child into the life of the Church through the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist), and the Sacrament of Penance;

the human formation which is fundamental for growth in the life of faith, for example, the development of trust, self-giving, sharing, etc.;

the teaching of prayer and a first introduction to the Bible;

the family and the school as the two vital places of education and of catechesis, with emphasis on the irreplaceable role of the family.

With regard to the last factor, the teaching of the faith in the Catholic school or in other parish religious education classes will only achieve its effect to the degree that the family is fully involved. Pastors and teachers of religion should have as a first and primary goal the involvement of parents in the catechesis of their children. In this regard, we must not forget that the catechesis of their children is a wonderful occasion of adult catechesis for parents.

Lastly, the Church must show special concern for children who lack support in the family for their growth in the faith and its practice or who have no family at all. Today, many children are not even baptized. Others have been baptized but have not received the help by which the seed of faith within them can grow.

Questions on Those to Be Catechized (163-175)

## **Catechesis of Young People and the Aged, and for Special Situations (177-214)**

### **Catechesis of Young People**

In its treatment of the catechesis of young people, the *General Directory for Catechesis* rightly observes that the young are at one and the same time the most vulnerable to “the spiritual and cultural crisis gripping the world” and the repositories of hope for a renewed Church and world. (No. 181) The catechesis of young people is most critical in helping them to deal with the great challenges of faith in our society and culture, and in developing in them the virtues by which they will become strong members of the Church and good citizens.

In taking up the catechesis of young people, three distinct phases of human development must be recognized: pre-adolescence, adolescence and young adulthood. The *General Directory for Catechesis* underlines the need for special attention to pre-adolescence which it calls a “negated age-group,” readily susceptible to the allurements of secularism and materialism and to the abandonment of the practice of the faith. The General Directory declares categorically: “Youth catechesis must be profoundly revised and revitalized.” (Ibid.)

Catechesis of youth means the direct presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in language which young people can understand and with sensitivity to the difficulties which they are undergoing. Young people must be not viewed solely as the “objects of catechesis” but also as its subjects, taking up the call which God the Father gives them to witness to Christ in the world. (No. 182)

The General Directory asks that local Catechetical Directories state the appropriate means of catechesis of youth, keeping in mind the following directions:

attention to the diversity of religious condition of youth: the unbaptized, those who have not completed their Christian initiation; those who are in crisis regarding the faith; those who have suffered a crisis of faith, abandoned the faith and are in need of spiritual helps;

attention to the social and educational situation of youth so that catechesis is part of their total pastoral care;

the use of group activity, perhaps through already established youth associations, which includes spiritual direction “as an important element.” (No. 184)

Finally, particular forms of catechesis of youth may include: youth catechumenate for the unbaptized; catechesis for Christian initiation for those who have not made their First Confession, received First Holy Communion or been confirmed; catechesis on special subjects; catechesis in the context of meetings of youth. Whatever the form of youth catechesis, it should assist above all growth in Christian freedom, the formation of a correct conscience and “an education for love.” Clearly, such catechesis will foster the response to vocation which is the most critical task facing the young person, and the expression of the missionary aspect of every vocation.

# Catechesis of the Aged

The aged must not be seen as “passive objects” but rather as active members of the Church with the right to catechetical instruction. In their catechesis, special attention must be given to possible “isolation” and “marginalization.” (No. 186) Catechesis is, in fact, an important tool for the aged to overcome isolation and marginalization, and remain active participants in Church life.

According to “the condition of faith” of the aged person, catechesis can further develop an already “rich and solid faith” or it can be the moment for a renewed practice of the faith among those who, for whatever reason, have grown tepid. Also to be taken into consideration is the possibility of some lingering hurt which the older person carries with him or her and which requires reconciliation.

Finally, catechesis of older persons helps them to take up their important role of catechist for children and young people who look to them as elders. Catechesis of the aged fosters the “dialogue of the generations.” (No. 188)

## Catechesis for special situations

The *General Directory for Catechesis* takes up a number of special situations to which catechesis must be sensitive.

Catechesis of persons with special needs should be personalized and adequate, and should be carried out by catechists who are specially prepared. (No. 189)

Catechesis of the marginalized (immigrants, refugees, nomads, traveling people, the chronically ill, addicts and prisoners) should be carried out in accord with the teaching in the Parable of the Last Judgment. (No. 190)

Catechesis of special groups (workers, professionals, artists, scientists, university students) is recommended, keeping in mind the need of prepared catechists; (No. 191)

Catechesis takes careful note of the environment of the catechized, especially whether the setting is rural or urban. (No. 192)

Regarding the socio-religious context, the following must be noted.

Catechesis faces the challenges presented by life in a highly secularized society and culture. The faith needs to be “constantly nourished and sustained.” (No. 193) Effective catechesis calls to the mind of the catechized all of the fundamentals of the faith, fosters conversion, and helps the catechized to give an account of what he or she believes to others. (No. 194)

Catechesis cultivates an appreciation of the positive aspects of popular devotions, especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and is attentive to the purification of the negative aspects, for example, “errors or fanaticism, superstition, syncretism, or religious ignorance.” (Nos. 195-196)

Catechesis should take account of ecumenism, presenting the Catholic faith in its integrity and helping the catechized to understand the sad divisions among Christian churches and ecclesial communities, the special relationship of the Catholic faith to the Jewish faith, and the distinct elements of other religions. (Nos. 197-200)

Catechesis should help the catechized deal with the new religious movements (sects and cults) whose doctrines and practices “are alien to the content of the Christian faith.” (No. 201)

Regarding the socio-cultural context, catechesis faces the challenge of inculturating the faith. Inculturation requires a deep appreciation of the various cultures in which the catechized live so that the Gospel may accomplish its finality of elevating and transforming culture. Inculturation manifests the transcendence of the faith which cannot be expressed adequately in any one culture. It also fosters new expressions of the doctrine of the faith, according to the diversity of cultures. In any case, the integrity of the faith must always be preserved. (Nos. 202-205) Clearly the communications media have a critical role to play in the work of inculturation because of their special capacity for transmitting the Gospel. (No. 209)

In meeting the challenge of inculturation, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an indispensable tool and measure. (No. 210) In a culture like our own, in which the faith has been taught for generations, inculturation means new evangelization, the teaching of the faith which is “new in ardor, methods and expression.” (Pope John Paul II, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “The Church in America,”* 22 January 1999, No. 6)

Bishops have the responsibility to guide efforts at inculturation. They do so by promoting the widest possible catechesis to “overcome ignorance and misinformation, the great obstacle of every attempt at inculturation;” by doing pilot projects of inculturation under careful supervision, by providing catechetical directories in the various languages of the faithful; and by providing for the communication and communion between the diocese, and other dioceses and the Holy See, which guarantees “a more valid and up-to-date inculturation.” (No. 214)

Questions on Catechesis of Young People and the Aged, and for Special Situations (177-214)

## **Catechesis in the Particular Church: Those Who Carry Out Catechesis (215-**

# 232)

## **The particular Church or Diocese**

Part Five of the *General Directory for Catechesis* addresses the place in which catechesis is done, namely the diocese or its equivalent, for instance, the military ordinariate. The particular Church is brought into being from the universal Church and makes the universal Church present throughout the world. In the particular Church, as in the universal Church, the pillars upon which the life of the Church is built are the teaching of the Gospel and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. (No. 217)

Catechesis is at the foundation of the life of the Church in the diocese. Through catechesis, the diocese provides to the faithful and to those who are seeking the faith an education and formation which permits them to know the faith, to celebrate it and to live it in the world. (No. 218)

## **Catechesis in the particular Church or Diocese**

Catechesis has a fundamental importance in the whole life of the diocese. It is marked by the following characteristics.

The entire Christian community is responsible for providing catechesis. Catechesis is a distinct service which is carried out by priests, deacons, consecrated persons and lay persons in communion with the Bishop. The difference of vocation of those who catechize gives a special richness to catechesis.

Catechesis is fundamental for the growth of the Church. It is carried out in the name of the whole Church, not as private or purely personal activity.

Catechesis has a proper character which derives from the task of the catechist as teacher of the faith. The catechist's responsibilities differ from those who are involved in the liturgical, charitable or social activities of the Church. At the same, catechesis relates to all of these other activities.

Diocesan catechesis needs the support of others who provide formation for catechists, and produce catechetical materials. The whole Christian community is to follow attentively the work of catechesis so that it may fulfill its responsibility to witness to the faith. It is the Christian community which welcomes the person who has come to the faith for the first time or is developing in the faith. Through the service of catechesis not only the catechized comes to spiritual maturity but also the Christian community is brought to a fuller spiritual maturity. (Nos. 219-221)

## **The Bishop, First Catechist in the Diocese**

Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Bishop receives the charism of truth in order to carry out one of his most solemn responsibilities, the teaching of faith. The Bishop must, therefore, assume the direction of catechesis in his diocese. Among his responsibilities are the following.

The Bishop must take care that catechesis has primacy of place among the apostolates in the particular Church.

The Bishop is to intervene directly in expressing his solicitude for catechesis, especially in seeing to the authenticity of the teaching of the faith and the fittingness of textbooks and other instruments of catechesis.

The Bishop is to organize actively the apostolate of catechesis in the Diocese because of its fundamental importance to the whole life of the Diocese.

The Bishop is to see to the proper formation of catechists, especially in the doctrine of the faith and in catechetical pedagogy.

The Bishop is to establish a diocesan program of catechesis to meet all the needs of all the parishes. (Nos. 222-223)

## **Priests**

Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest is configured to Christ the Head of His Body, the Church. The ministry of the priest forms the community, and coordinates and strengthens various ministries in the Church. Therefore, the active involvement of the priest is critical to the apostolate of catechesis. Among the priests' responsibilities for catechesis, the following should be noted.

The priest is to foster the common responsibility of the whole Christian community for catechesis.

The priest is to provide the basic plan for catechesis by obtaining the service of prepared catechists and by seeing to it that the catechesis is well structured.

The priest is to look for those who are called to serve as catechists and to encourage them to take up the work of catechesis.

The priest is to integrate the ministry of catechesis with the reception of Sacraments and the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.

The priest is to foster the bonds of unity by encouraging catechists to follow the diocesan pastoral program. (Nos. 224-225)

## **Parents, primary educators of their children**

The first experience of the Church for children is in the relationship of their parents. The first formation in the faith, which parents provide in the home, is irreplaceable. The knowledge and life of faith begun at home is deepened through a systematic and complete catechesis provided in the parish. The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony endows parents with the grace which they need for the Christian education of their children. Parents should be assisted in their responsibility for forming their children in the faith by personal contact with the priest and catechists, meetings, courses and adult catechesis. (Nos. 226-227)

## **Consecrated persons**

Consecrated persons bring a particular enrichment to the service of catechesis because of their profession of the Gospel counsels or vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in order to follow Christ more closely. Their contribution to the catechetical work of the Church cannot be substituted by priests or lay persons. Many religious congregations were founded precisely for the service of catechesis or have distinguished themselves in the work of catechesis. The various charisms of the different institutes of the consecrated life easily find expression in the catechetical activity of consecrated persons for the spiritual enrichment of the catechized. (Nos. 228-229)

## **Lay persons**

The lay person also brings a distinct contribution to catechesis because of his or her call to live the Gospel in the world and to transform the world in and for our Lord Jesus Christ. Lay persons have a special gift for helping the catechized to apply the faith to daily living. Lay people are endowed with the grace to catechize through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation which give them a share in the prophetic mission of Christ. In addition to the general responsibility which all lay persons have for catechesis, some lay persons receive an interior call from God to become a catechist. The degree of commitment of each lay person may differ. Some are only able to serve from time to time or for a certain period of time. However, because of the fundamental importance of catechesis, there should be some lay persons and consecrated persons who are “publicly recognized and permanently dedicated to catechesis.” (Nos. 230-231)

## **Various types of catechesis**

The work of catechesis has different forms according to the needs of the catechized.

There is **missionary catechesis** on behalf of those who have not yet had the Gospel taught to them. In some Churches of long Christian tradition there is a need of **catechesis analogous to missionary catechesis** because of a shortage of priests or other reasons. In other countries of Christian tradition, there is the need of a **new evangelization**: there is need of **catechesis for young people** and **catechesis for adults**, and there is need of **catechesis for children and adolescents**. Catechists must also be prepared for **pre-sacramental catechesis** of adults on the occasion of their children receiving the Sacraments. Also, catechists must be formed for the **catechesis of the aged**, **catechesis of persons with special needs**, and **catechesis of migrants or marginalized persons**.

Finally, special situations in the particular church may necessitate the development of other special forms of catechesis. (No. 232)

Questions on Catechesis in the Particular Church: Those Who Carry Out Catechesis (215-232)

## **Formation of Catechists (233-252)**

### **Pastoral care of catechists**

Because of the fundamental and irreplaceable service which catechists give to the Church, the Church must provide them with appropriate pastoral care. First of all, the Church must encourage the faithful in giving the service of catechesis. A variety of catechists must be recruited to provide for the various kinds of catechesis.

The Church needs a certain number of full-time catechists in addition to the many part-time catechists. The full-time catechists devote themselves in depth to the service of catechesis, and, therefore, are a necessary resource to part-time catechists. It is also necessary to balance the workload of the catechists according to the variety of catechesis needed.

A program of basic formation and a program of continuing formation must be provided for the catechists. It is also essential for the Church to attend to the personal and spiritual needs of catechists. Especially in a culture which is so thoroughly secular, the service of catechesis is most challenging and demands a deep spiritual strength in the catechist. Only the catechist who has access to the means of spiritual renewal and growth will be able to meet the challenge of teaching the faith today.

Lastly, the service of catechists must be coordinated with the whole pastoral program of the parish, for example marriage preparation and marriage enrichment, the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, works of justice and peace, etc. (cf. No. 233)



# **The importance of formation of catechists**

It is clear that the tools of catechesis can only be effectively employed by “truly competent and trained personnel.” (No. 234) In the whole work of renewal of catechesis, the formation of catechists must be given primacy of place. Only then will the work of producing new textbooks and redesigning curriculum bear fruit.

The adequate formation of lay catechists must also be accompanied by a strong catechetical formation of priests in the seminary program prior to ordination and through programs of continuing education after ordination. (cf. No. 234)

**Nature and purpose of formation of catechists**The clear goal of the formation of catechists is “to make the catechist capable of communicating” the truth of the faith. (No. 235a) If the catechist is to be able to communicate the Gospel, then he or she must know and love our Lord Jesus Christ deeply. He or she will then be able to propose the essential catechetical journey to the catechized: Jesus Christ; His life within the whole history of salvation; the mystery of the Son of God, made man for us; and communion of the catechized with Christ through the reception of the Sacraments.

The catechist communicates the Gospel in the name of the whole Church and, therefore, must always think and act with the Church. There is no place for dissent in catechesis. (cf. No. 235b)

## **Criteria for the formation of catechists**

The following are the criteria for the formation of catechists.

formation in the need to evangelize in the actual cultural and historical setting, which requires “a deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity; as well as a great social sensitivity” (No. 237);

formation in the concept itself of catechesis and personal Christian formation, which enable the catechist to transmit not only the teaching but also the living of the faith;

formation in avoiding “unilateral divergent tendencies” by providing a complete catechesis;

formation apt for the lay state of life, that is which draws upon the secular nature of the lay state and its peculiar spirituality;

formation in pedagogy so that the catechist reflects the sound catechetical experience which he or she has had in preparation for catechizing.

## **The dimensions of the formation of catechists**

The first dimension of formation touches the profound inner being of the catechist. The service of catechesis should help the catechist to grow inwardly, “to mature as a person, a believer and as an apostle.” (cf. No. 238) The catechist transmits the faith which first of all he or she has received and embraced. In other words, the catechist must be catechized by the same message with which he or she catechizes others. Hand in hand with the spiritual formation of the catechist is his or her formation in communication, in knowledge of how to communicate the truth of the faith most effectively.

Growth in the other virtues needed to be an effective catechist is a second dimension of formation. It includes growth in love for the catechized, in “a balanced and in a critical outlook,” in integrity, and in the ability to speak and work constructively with others. (cf. No. 239) The catechist will grow especially in “apostolic consciousness,” that is in the consciousness that he or she is carrying out the mission of evangelization. Here, it is important that the catechist know and be involved in the efforts of evangelization on the Diocesan, deanery and pastoral levels.

The third dimension is formation in the knowledge of the faith itself. Doctrinal formation must include the various elements covered in all catechesis: the three great eras in the history of salvation (Old Testament, Life of Christ and Church history); and the heart of the Christian message (the Creed, the Sacred Liturgy, and the moral life and life of prayer). The Holy Bible is at the heart of the catechist’s formation, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* remains “the fundamental doctrinal reference point” for the catechist. (No. 240)

## **Formation and the human sciences**

A deeper understanding of man, acquired through the study of psychology and the other social sciences, will help the catechist to communicate more effectively the faith and its practice. Also a deeper knowledge of education and communications will be most helpful. With regard to the approach of the human sciences, their autonomy is to be respected. At the same time, the philosophical underpinnings of the sciences must be clarified in order to be certain of their coherence with the Gospel message and its transmission. Clearly, the human sciences are not studied for their own sake but for their coherence with the Gospel and for the help which they can give in communicating the Gospel.

## **Pedagogical formation**

The catechist needs also to develop the technique of handing-on the faith. Here the catechist is keenly aware of his or her service which is to cultivate the faith, God’s gift to the catechized. Catechetical pedagogy is attentive to individuals and is organized in

presenting the Gospel message in a manner adapted to the catechized. Each catechist will reflect his or her own personal gifts and qualities.

## **The role of the Christian community**

As has been noted before, the parish priest is key in fostering the call to be a catechist and in forming catechists. The whole Christian community, together with the priest, encourages those called to be catechists and makes the necessary sacrifices to provide for their education. A variety of activities contributing to the formation of catechists may be employed: annual courses to sustain awareness of the service of catechesis; retreats, special presentations, and courses of systematic doctrinal formation, especially through the study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

## **Schools and centers for higher learning for catechists**

Lastly, to provide the appropriate formation of catechists there is need for schools and centers for higher learning that serve both those who carry out the ordinary service of catechesis and those who have responsibility for catechesis, for example, priests, consecrated persons, and directors and coordinators of religious education. These schools and centers should be directed exclusively to the formation of catechists, providing a systematic and complete presentation of the faith and the practice of the faith, while at the same time providing appropriate formation in the human sciences and in pedagogy.

Questions on Formation of Catechists (233-252)

## **The Places of Catechesis (253-264)**

### **The places of catechesis**

Where does catechesis take place? In the Christian community which Christ brought into being by His Passion, Death and Resurrection. The Christian community is realized in the universal Church, in the particular Church or Diocese, and in a variety of more immediate Christian communities: the family, the parish, Catholic schools, associations of the faithful and Church movements, and basic ecclesial communities. In all of these places both initial catechesis and continuing education in the Catholic faith take place. (No. 253)

The Christian community in its universal and particular forms is not only the place in which catechesis occurs, but it is also the origin of catechesis and its goal. In other words, the Gospel is first proclaimed in the Christian community, drawing us to know and follow Christ more fully. At the same time, the deeper knowledge of the faith and its practice leads to a fuller participation in the life of the Christian community. (No. 254)

## **The family**

The Church never tires of saying that parents are “the primary educators in the faith.” It is first in the family that the Gospel is proclaimed, reflected upon and put into practice. The family is the “domestic Church,” for in the home the essential elements of Church life are found: mission, catechesis, prayer and witness. The family is a special place of catechesis because of its profoundly human foundation: “the awakening of the sense of God; the first steps in prayer; education of the moral conscience; formation in the Christian sense of human love, understood as a reflection of the love of God the Father, the Creator.” (No. 255)

## **The baptismal catechumenate**

In the baptismal catechumenate, the unbaptized person who has accepted the Catholic faith is prepared with full heart and mind to make the Profession of Faith. The baptismal catechumenate must therefore provide a full and coherent presentation of the doctrine of the faith and of morals. The Church embraces the catechumens and cares for them as if they were already her members. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults describes some of the important ways in which the Christian community participates in the ongoing process of the catechumenate. (No. 256)

## **The parish**

The parish is the most important place in which the Christian community is realized. In the parish, “all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church.” The parish is the usual place in which our growth in the faith is fostered. In order for the parish to carry out its catechetical responsibility, the *General Directory for Catechesis* indicates some conditions to be fulfilled: 1) priority is given to adult catechesis through the catechumenate and post-baptismal instruction in the faith; 2) the faith is proclaimed to those who have left the practice of the faith or are indifferent, especially in the context of pre-sacramental meetings for Marriage, Baptism and First Confession and First Holy Communion, and Confirmation; 3) certain pastoral concerns related to catechesis are confided to mature Christians; and 4) the indispensable catechesis of children, adolescents and young people, which is fostered by adult catechesis, is carried out. (Nos. 257-258)

## **Catholic schools**

The Catholic school is a most important place of catechesis in that the community of the Catholic school — administrators, teachers, staff, volunteers, parish priests, parents and their children — not only strives to teach the faith in its integrity but also celebrates the faith through the Sacraments and prayer, and strives to put the faith into practice. In the

Catholic school, the teaching of the faith takes a variety of forms: first proclamation of the faith, religious instruction, catechesis and the homily. Of greatest importance is religious instruction and catechesis. While the Catholic school makes a fundamental contribution to the whole community by forming its students culturally and intellectually, its essential contribution is to the Church's work of evangelization. (Nos. 259-260)

## **Associations of the faithful and Church movements**

Associations of the faithful and ecclesial movements exist in the Church to help their members develop in the understanding and practice of the Catholic faith in its various aspects. They are typically dedicated to works of charity, the cultivation of Christian presence in secular endeavors, promotion of the devotional life, and the development of the spiritual life in accord with one's vocation. Naturally, their activities demand a certain catechesis or renewal of catechesis among the members. This catechesis, which should be founded on the basic catechesis given to the Church's members, is very fruitful for the individual and the wider Christian community. Three aspects of catechesis in associations of the faithful and Church movements are underlined: 1) the richness of catechesis in general is observed in its three dimensions of doctrine, worship and witness; 2) the catechesis in the association or movement is seen as a natural development of the formation received by all the Church's members; and 3) the association or movement does not replace the parish to which reference must always be made in speaking of catechesis. (Nos. 261-262)

## **Basic ecclesial communities**

Church members form basic ecclesial communities in order to live the Catholic faith more intensely and to experience the life of the Church in a more humanly intimate way than is possible in a very large parish. In the basic ecclesial community the word of God is proclaimed, fraternal bonds are developed, the Christian mysteries are celebrated and responsibility is assumed for transforming society. The basic ecclesial community also fosters other more human traits and virtues: "friendship, personal recognition, a spirit of co-responsibility, creativity, vocational response, concern for the problems of the world and of the Church." (No. 263) To be truly an ecclesial community, the basic community must live in communion with the universal Church and the particular Church or diocese and share fully in the Church's missionary character, that is avoiding "isolationism or ideological exploitation." (Nos. 263-264)

Questions on The Places of Catechesis (253-264)

## **Organizing Catechesis in the Particular Church (265-285)**

## **Diocesan service of catechesis**

The universal Church is manifested in geographical divisions called dioceses and, in a few cases, territories like a diocese. Each manifestation of the universal Church is called the particular Church. The most common manifestation is the diocese. The organization of catechesis in the particular Church is essential if it is to be a true manifestation of the universal Church. In the diocese, the bishop as the head of the community of the faithful which makes up the diocese and as the chief teacher of the faith for them is responsible for the service of catechesis. He fulfills his responsibility chiefly through the diocesan catechetical office. (No. 265)

The principal responsibilities of the diocesan catechetical office are the following:

to analyze the state of catechesis in the diocese, identifying the needs of catechesis;

to develop a plan to meet those needs;

to foster the formation of catechists;

to provide information on the necessary tools of catechesis (catechisms, directories, programs for different ages, guides for catechists, materials for the catechized, audiovisual aids, and so forth) to parishes;

to foster diocesan works which have to do with catechesis specifically, for example the catechumenate, and groups and associations of parish catechists;

to improve the personnel and material resources of the diocese for catechesis;

to work together with the diocesan office of Sacred Worship because of the close connection between the Sacred Liturgy and catechesis (No. 266).

To fulfill the important responsibilities assigned to it, the diocesan catechetical office must have an adequate staff. (No. 267)

## **Interdiocesan cooperation**

When two or more dioceses have neighboring geographical areas and have similar populations, the service of catechesis can be much enhanced through their sharing of personnel and material resources. Much good is also accomplished by the staff of the catechetical office coming together to share their experiences in carrying the mission of catechesis. (No. 268) In Wisconsin, catechists gather regularly for such sharing.

## Conference of Bishops

The Conference of Bishops may also establish a catechetical office to assist the individual dioceses. Our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for instance, has an office to oversee the use of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It has been very helpful in uncovering weaknesses in catechesis, and in studying various texts and supplementary materials for their conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The office of the Conference of Bishops, in general, has a twofold function:

to be at the service of the catechetical needs of the dioceses by overseeing publications of national importance, catechetical conferences, and relationships with the communications media;

to be at the service of the catechetical needs of the dioceses by providing information and distributing information of catechetical projects for the purpose of coordination and of helping dioceses which have less means. The Conference of Bishops may take on other responsibilities for catechesis but always at the service of the dioceses.

## The Holy See

The Holy Father as bishop of the universal Church has a basic responsibility for catechesis. He fulfills it principally by his teaching. The Holy Father addresses specific questions and concerns regarding catechesis through the Congregation for the Clergy, one of the many offices which assist the Holy Father in his pastoral ministry to the Church throughout the world.

The responsibilities for catechesis which the Holy Father has confided to the Congregation for the Clergy are:

the promotion of the religious education of the faithful of all ages and conditions;

the issuance of norms for catechetical lessons so that they are carried out according to a correct program;

the oversight of catechetical instruction so that it is suitably provided;

the granting, with the assent of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, of the required approbation for catechisms and publications pertaining to catechetical instruction;

availability to catechetical offices and international initiatives on religious education, for which it coordinates activities and, if necessary, gives assistance.

# The importance of coordination of catechesis

If the unity of the faith is to be transmitted through catechesis, coordination of catechesis within the Church is necessary. When catechesis is effectively coordinated, the unity of the particular Church with the universal Church is safeguarded and promoted for all.

On the diocesan level or the level of the particular Church, two services of coordination are essential:

- 1) “a single, coherent, process of Christian initiation for children, adolescents and young people,” and
- 2) “a catechetical program for adults” (No. 274). These two programs must be organized in coordination with each other, so that there is a coherence in the presentation of the faith throughout the diocese. If the program of adult catechesis is well-organized, it will provide the key and direction to the organization of the catechesis of children, adolescents and young adults. (No. 275)

The diocesan organization of catechesis is key to carrying out the work of the new evangelization of those who are already baptized and have received the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and First Holy Communion). It is important that the catechesis of adults, for example at the time of the reception of the Sacraments by their children, be attentive to their possible need for a new first teaching of the faith (the new evangelization). The missionary catechesis of those who are not yet members of the Church and the new evangelization of members of the church should be coordinated with each other through a single program of evangelization (Nos. 276-277).

With regard to catechesis through educational programs of the parish, deanery and diocese, it is important that all catechetical measures find their unity in the unity of the faith and its practice (No. 278).

On the diocesan level, it is essential that the catechetical office have a realistic picture of the needs of catechesis in the diocese which it reviews regularly. The *General Directory for Catechesis* indicates that there must be a “clear awareness” of: 1) how catechesis is situated within the process of evangelization; 2) the balance between the various catechetical sectors (children, adolescents, young adults, adults, the aged); 3) “the coordination of catechesis with Christian education in the family, in schools and elsewhere;” 4) the content and methodology of the catechesis imparted; and 5) “the characteristics of catechists and their formation.” To carry out its responsibility, the diocesan catechetical office must have a sense of the religious situation of the faithful in the diocese and also of their sociocultural situation. (Nos. 279-280)

Following upon the analysis of the situation of catechesis in the diocese, the catechetical office is to develop a “program of action.” Together with the program of action goes the



provision of catechetical materials, and instruments and didactic aids by which the program of action is carried out (Nos. 281-283).

Finally, the *General Directory for Catechesis* underlines the importance of the development of catechisms which are the most important aid for carrying out the work of catechesis. At present, there is discussion about the development of a catechism through the Conference of Bishops. As has been mentioned before, the two points of reference for a local catechism are the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the content and the *General Directory for Catechesis* for the methodology. In order that the unity of the faith be served, local catechisms require the approval of the Apostolic See before publication. (Nos. 284-285)

I conclude my commentary on the *General Directory for Catechesis*. Meeting the challenges of catechesis is fundamental to the soundness of the life of the Church. That challenge is addressed daily in the diocese by the diocesan catechetical office, by deaneries and parishes, and by parish priests and catechists. It will be addressed in a solemn way through the coming Fifth Diocesan Synod. I close with words of prayer from the conclusion of the *General Directory for Catechesis*:

“The Church, which has the responsibility of catechizing those who believe, invokes the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, begging him to give fruitfulness and interior strength to the toil which is everywhere undertaken for the growth of the faith and the fellowship of Our Savior Jesus Christ” (No. 290).

Questions on Organizing Catechesis in the Particular Church (265-285)