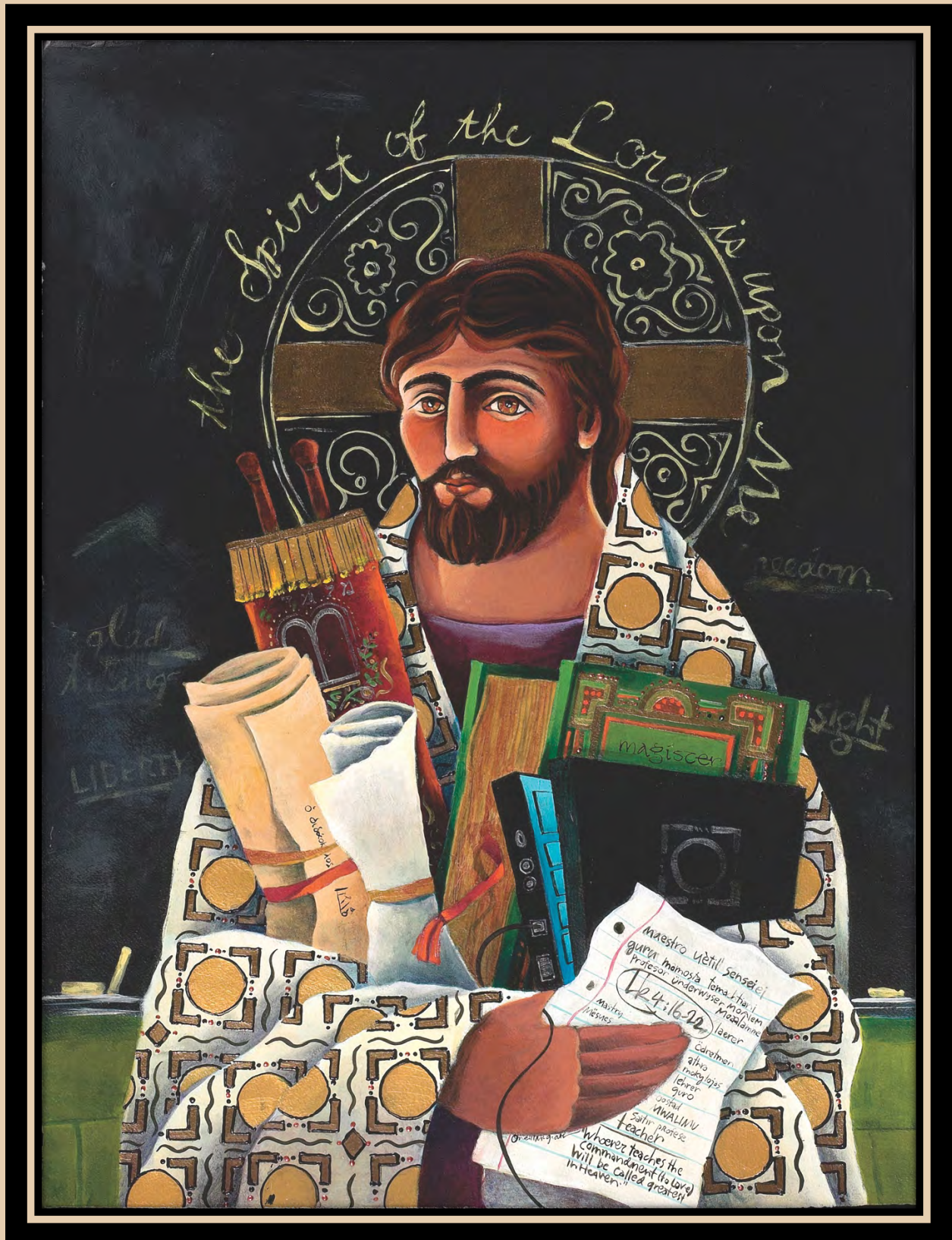


Journey toward the Future of Catechesis

NCCL Convocation



The Convocation Manual

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Storytelling Experience

The Calling and Vocation of Catechists

A catechist is a person of faith who lives the baptismal call by sharing the faith with others. They help bring others to Christ through the traditions and teachings of the Catholic faith. A catechist realizes God's voice in this call to serve and recognizes the ongoing need to grow in a relationship with Christ and deepen an understanding of the Catholic faith. (Pope Francis, 2021)

The specific vocation of the catechist therefore has its roots in the common vocation of the people of God, called to serve God's plan for salvation on behalf of humanity. (110)

The catechist is a Christian who receives a particular calling from God that, when accepted in faith, empowers him(her) for the service of transmission of faith and for the task of initiating others into the Christian life. (112)

*By virtue of faith and baptismal anointing, in collaboration with the Magisterium of Christ and as a servant of the action of the Holy Spirit, the catechist is: **a witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God, a teacher and a mystagogue, and an accompanier and educator.***

Reflection

Image your life as a catechetical leader like the chapters of a book that is still being written.

Use Chapter 1 to describe your call to catechetical ministry:

- ◆ How did you experience God calling you to catechetical ministry?
- ◆ Who was involved?
- ◆ What were the circumstances?
- ◆ What was it like for you?

Use the following Chapters to describe your calling over time:

- ◆ How has your calling and ministry evolved and changed over time.
- ◆ What are the major chapters of your life as a catechetical leader.
- ◆ Develop titles for each chapter, reflecting your journey in catechetical ministry.
- ◆ Describe your experiences and roles in each chapter of your life in catechetical ministry.

Part One

The Catechetical Vision & Practice of the *Directory for Catechesis: 14 Characteristics*

1. Catechesis is accompaniment, education, and formation in the faith and for the faith.
2. Communion with Jesus Christ is the center of catechetical action. Catechesis promotes a living encounter with Christ – mind, heart, and body – forming people in getting to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel of liberating salvation, choosing Jesus’ way of life, and living the mission of Christ in the world today.
3. The kerygma – the life, message, death, and resurrection of Jesus – is the heart of catechesis with all ages and generations. They hear the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus and his saving death and resurrection so their lives may be transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ.
4. The baptismal catechumenate is an inspiration for all catechesis. It is a holistic models of formation that incorporates: a first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma); a comprehensive introduction to the Christian life; liturgies, rituals, and symbols; a community of faith and support; engagement in the mission of the Church; and ever deeper formation in faith and the life of the community.
5. The five tasks of catechesis promote an integral Christian life. Catechesis, providing a holistic formation that includes: knowledge of the faith, understanding and experience of liturgical celebrations, Christian formation of the moral conscience, educating for prayer and in prayer, and developing belonging to the Church and living its mission.
6. Catechesis draws upon seven sources for formation in faith: the Word of God in Sacred Scripture and sacred tradition, the Magisterium, the liturgy, the testimony of saints and martyrs, theology, Christian culture, and beauty.
7. Catechesis is pedagogical action at the service of the dialogue of salvation between God and humanity; and inspired by the features of the divine pedagogy: God’s gratuitous love, salvation, conversion, the Word of God, centrality of Jesus Christ, community experience of faith, and pedagogy of signs.
8. Catechesis is carried out in fidelity to the word of God and in attention to and interaction with the educational practices of the culture.
9. Catechesis utilizes a variety of processes and methods for educating and forming people in the faith and for the faith in ways that are appropriate to the age and intellectual development of people.
10. Human experience is integral to catechesis in its identity and process and in contents and method. Catechesis seeks to illuminate and interpret people’s experiences of life in the light of the Gospel. In order to make the Christian message intelligible to people of all ages, catechesis must value human experience.
11. The Christian community is a primary agent of catechesis.
12. Catechesis brings the power of the Gospel into the heart of culture(s). Catechesis engages each distinct culture in our parish community by getting to know deeply the culture of persons, understanding how the Gospel and the faith is already present, recognizing the significance of popular piety, and, together with people of each culture, developing catechesis that speaks to the needs and spirituality of each culture.
13. Catechesis seeks to be an evangelizing presence on the digital continent, engaging people through digital culture.
14. Catechesis utilizes the new digital tools and approaches for communication and teaching.

1. Catechesis is accompaniment, education, and formation.

Catechesis makes the proclamation of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ continually resound in the heart of every person, so that life may be transformed.

A dynamic and complex reality at the service of the Word of God, catechesis is accompaniment, education and formation in the faith and for the faith, an introduction to the celebration of the Mystery, illumination and interpretation of human life and history. By harmoniously integrating these characteristics, catechesis expresses the richness of its essence and offers its specific contribution to the pastoral mission of the Church. (55)

Catechesis, a privileged stage in the process of evangelization, is generally directed toward persons who have already received the first proclamation, within whom it promotes the processes of initiation, growth, and maturation in faith. (56)

2. Communion with Jesus Christ is the center of catechetical action.

The Christian faith is, first of all, the welcoming of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ, sincere adherences to his person, and the free decision to follow him. This yes to Jesus Christ contains two dimensions: trustful abandonment to God (fides qua) and loving assent to all that God has revealed to us (fides quae). . . St. John speaks of 'believing' Jesus and 'believing in' Jesus. We 'believe' Jesus when we accept his word, his testimony, because he is truthful. We 'believe in' Jesus when we personally welcome him into our lives and journey toward him, clinging to him in love and following his footsteps on a dynamic journey that lasts a whole lifetime. . . (18)

At the center of every process of catechesis is the living encounter with Christ. "Accordingly the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with

Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity (CT5)." Communion with Christ is the center of the Christian life, and as a result the center of catechetical action. Catechesis is oriented toward forming persons who get to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel of liberating salvation ever better; who live a profound encounter with him and who choose his own way of life and his very sentiments (cf. Phil. 2:5), striving to realize, in the historical situations in which they live, the mission of Christ, which is the proclamation of the kingdom of God. (75)

The encounter with Christ involves the person in his(her) totality: heart, mind, senses. It does not concern only the mind, but also the body and above all the heart. In this sense catechesis, which helps in the internationalization of the faith and thereby makes an irreplaceable contribution to the encounter with Christ, is not alone in fostering the pursuit of this goal. It is joined in this by the other dimensions of the life of faith: in liturgical-sacramental experience, in affective relationships, in community life and the service of one's brothers(sisters) . . . (76)

*Catechesis makes the initial conversion ripen and helps Christians to give a complete meaning to their existence, educating them in the **mentality of faith** in keeping with the Gospel, to the point of gradually coming to feel, think, and act like Christ. (77)*

3. The kerygma – the life, message, death, and resurrection of Jesus – is the heart of catechesis with all ages and generations.

***Kerygmatic catechesis**, which goes to the very heart of the faith and grasps the essence of the Christian message, is a catechesis which manifests the action of the Holy Spirit, who communicates God's saving love in Jesus Christ and continues to give himself so that every human being may have the fullness of life (2).*

Kerygmatic catechesis responds to the needs of the present time as an essential dimension of every moment of catechesis. At the center of the kerygma is the Lord Jesus, who manifests God's loving mercy and reconciles us to the God by his saving death and resurrection, enabling communion with the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Kerygma is both the act of proclamation and the content of the proclamation itself, with a personal and social content (see 57-60).

4. The baptismal catechumenate is an inspiration for all catechesis.

The baptismal catechumenate is a source of inspiration for catechesis in three aspects:

- ◆ **a catechumenate in the strict sense** for the unbaptized child, young adult, or adult
- ◆ **a catechumenate in an analogous sense** for the baptized who have not completed the sacraments of Christian initiation
- ◆ **a catechesis of catechumenal inspiration** for those who have received the sacraments of initiation but are not yet sufficiently evangelized or catechized, or for those who desire to resume the journey of faith. (62)

The catechetical inspiration of catechesis . . . means taking on its style and its formative dynamism. Such catechesis is characterized as Paschal, initiatory, liturgical, ritual, symbolic, communal, and marked by ongoing conversion and witness and the progress of a formative experience of faith:

- ◆ The *Paschal character*: Catechesis communicates the heart of the faith in an essential and existentially understandable way.
- ◆ The *initiatory character*: Catechesis provides an introduction to all the dimensions of the Christian life, helping people initiate, with the community, their own personal journey to God.
- ◆ The *liturgical, ritual, and symbolic character*: Catechesis, through symbols, rites, and

celebrations, can respond to contemporary people, who typically see as significant only those experiences which touch their physical and emotional being.

- ◆ The *community character*: Catechesis inspired by the catechumenate integrates the contribution of charisms and ministries of the whole community.
- ◆ The *character of ongoing conversion and of witness*: Catechesis is imagined as a journey of conversion that lasts a whole lifetime.
- ◆ The *progressive character of the formative experience*: Catechesis is a dynamic process of people growing and maturing over time at their own pace. (Summarized from paragraph 64.)

5. The five tasks of catechesis promote an integral Christian life.

*In order to achieve its goals, catechesis pursues several interconnected tasks that are inspired by the way in which Jesus formed his disciples: he got them to **know** the mysteries of the Kingdom, taught them to **pray**, proposed to them **gospel values**, initiated them in the life of **communion** with him and among themselves, and into **mission**. The pedagogy of Jesus then molded the life of the Christian community: "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The faith, in fact, demands to be known, celebrated, lived, and turned into prayer. In order to form believers for an integral Christian life catechesis therefore pursues the following tasks: leading to the knowledge of the faith, initiating into the celebration of the mystery, forming for life in Christ, teaching to pray, and introducing to community life. (79)*

Leading to the Knowledge of the Faith

Catechesis has the task of fostering the knowledge and exploration of the Christian message. In this way it helps the believer to know the truths of the Christian faith, introduces him(her) to the knowledge of Sacred Scripture and of the Church's living Tradition, fosters knowledge of the Creed and the creation of a

coherent doctrinal vision that can be used as a reference in life. (80)

Initiating into the Celebration of the Mystery

Catechesis . . . has the task of assisting in the comprehension and experience of liturgical celebrations. Through this task, catechesis helps the believer to understand the importance of liturgy in the Church's life, initiates him(her) into the knowledge of the sacraments and into the sacramental life, especially the sacraments of Eucharist, source and summit of the life and mission of the Church. (81)

Forming for Life in Christ

Catechesis has the task of making the heart of every Christian resound with the call to live a new life in keeping with the dignity of children of God received in Baptism and with the life of the Risen One that is communicated through the sacraments. . . . catechesis instructs the believer in following the Lord according to the dispositions described in the Beatitudes . . . (83)

. . . the catechetical task of educating the believer to the good life of the Gospel involves the Christian formation of the moral conscience . . . This is why it is important to teach the believer to draw from the commandment of charity developed from the Decalogue, and from the virtues, both human and Christian, guidelines for acting as Christians in the different arenas of life. (84)

. . . It is up to catechetical action to demonstrate that the faith lived in a commitment to loving as Christ did, is the way to foster the coming of the kingdom of God in the world and to hope in the promise of eternal beatitude. (85)

Teaching Prayer

Catechesis has the task of educating the believer for prayer and in prayer, developing the contemplative dimensions of Christian experience. It is necessary to teach him(her) to pray **with** Jesus Christ and **like** him . . . (86)

The task implies the teaching of both personal prayer and liturgical and community prayer,

initiating the believer into the **permanent forms of prayer**: blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise... (87)

Introduction to Community Life

The faith is professed, celebrated, expressed, and lived above all in community . . . (88)

Catechesis, in reference to preparation for community life, therefore, has the task of developing the sense of belonging to the Church; teaching the sense of ecclesial **communion**, promoting the acceptance of the Magisterium, communion with pastors, fraternal dialogue; forming believers in the sense of ecclesial **co-responsibility**, contributing as active participants to building up the community and as missional disciples to its growth. (89)

6. Catechesis draws upon seven sources for formation in faith.

The sources which catechesis draws upon are to be considered as being interrelated: one points to the other, while all can be traced back to the word of God, of which they are an expression . . . (90)

The Word of God in Sacred Scripture and in Sacred Tradition

Catechesis draws its message from the Word of God, which is its main source. Therefore, "it is essential that the revealed word enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith." (91)

The Magisterium

Christ has given the Apostles and their successors the enduring mandate of proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the earth . . . The Magisterium preserves, interprets, and transmits the deposit of faith, which is the content of Revelation. (93)

The Liturgy

The liturgy is one of the essential and indispensable sources of the Church's catechesis, not only because catechesis is able to draw its contents, vocabulary, actions, and words of faith

the liturgy, but above all because the two belong to one another in the very act of believing. (93)

The liturgy is “the privileged place for catechizing the People of God. . . . catechesis reaches its true fulfillment when the one being catechized takes part in the liturgical life of the community . . . Therefore, liturgy and catechesis are inseparable and nourish one another. (96)

The Testimony of the Saints and Martyrs

From the very first centuries, the example of the Virgin Mary and the lives of the saints and martyrs have been an integral and efficacious part of catechesis: from the acta martyrum to the passions, from frescoes and icons in churches to edifying stories for children and the illiterate . . . (99)

Theology

. . . “Theological work in the Church is first of all at the service of the proclamation of the faith and of catechesis.” It penetrates with critical intelligence the contents of the faith, exploring them and organizing them systematically with the contribution of reason . . . (101)

Christian Culture

Christian culture has played a decisive role in the preservation of cultures that came before it and in the progress of international culture . . . It shaped the perception of the good, the just, the true, and the beautiful, eliciting the creation of works – literary and scholarly texts, musical compositions, masterpieces of architecture and painting – that will remain as a witness to the contribution of the Christian faith and making up its intellectual, moral, and aesthetic heritage. (104)

This heritage, of great historical and artistic value, is a resource that inspires and enhances catechesis, in that it transmits the Christian vision of the world with the creative power of beauty . . . (105)

Beauty

The Church, therefore, bears in mind that in order to reach the human heart the proclamation of the

Risen One must shine forth with goodness, truth, and beauty. In this sense, it is necessary “that every form of catechesis [. . .] attend to the ‘way of beauty’ (via pulchritudinis). All beauty can be a path that helps lead to the encounter with God . . . (108)

7. Catechesis is pedagogical action at the service of the dialogue of salvation between God and humanity.

Catechesis is inspired by the features of the divine pedagogy. In this way, it becomes pedagogical action at the service of the dialogue of salvation between God and humanity. It is therefore important that it express the following characteristics:

- ◆ *making present the initiative of God’s gratuitous love;*
- ◆ *bringing into focus the universal destination of salvation;*
- ◆ *evoking the conversion necessary for the obedience of faith;*
- ◆ *adopting the principle of the progressive nature of Revelation and the transcendence of the Word of God, as also its inculturation in human cultures;*
- ◆ *recognize the centrality of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man, which establishes catechesis as **pedagogy of the incarnation**;*
- ◆ *valuing community experience of the faith, as proper to the people of God;*
- ◆ *putting together a pedagogy of signs, where actions and words are in mutual relationship;*
- ◆ *recalling that God’s inexhaustible love is the ultimate reason for all things. (165)*

*The way of God who reveals himself and saves, together with the Church’s response of faith in history, becomes the source and model for the pedagogy of faith. Catechesis thus presents itself as a process that allows the maturation of the faith through respect for the journey of each individual believer. Catechesis is therefore the **pedagogy of faith in action**, together with **initiation, education, and teaching**, always having*

clear the unity between content and the way it is transmitted . . . (166)

Catechesis draws on the following criteria to ensure the proclamation of the Gospel is inspired by the pedagogy of God: Trinitarian and Christological, centrality of the message, salvation history, the primacy of grace and beauty, ecclesiality, and the unity and integrity of faith. (See 167-178)

8. Catechesis is carried out in fidelity to the word of God and in attention to and interaction with the educational practices of the culture.

*In the face of current challenges, it is ever more important to be aware of the reciprocity between content and method, as much in catechesis as in evangelization . . . In the journey of catechesis, the principle of **evangelizing by educating** and **educating by evangelizing** recalls among other things, that the work of the catechists consists in finding and drawing attention to the signs of God's action already present in the lives of persons and, by using these as an example, present the Gospel as transformation power for the whole of existence, to which it will give full meaning. The accompaniment of a person on a journey of growth and conversion is necessarily marked by gradualness, in that the act of believing implies a progressive discovery of the mystery of God and an openness and entrustment to him that grows over time (179)*

Catechesis is an essentially educational action. It is always carried out in fidelity to the word of God and in attention to and interaction with the educational practices of the culture. Thanks to the research and reflections of the human sciences there have arisen theories, approaches, and models that profoundly renew educational practices and make a significant contribution to an in-depth understanding of people, human relationships, society and history. Their contribution is indispensable. Pedagogy and didactics in particular enrich the educational process of catechesis. Together with them,

psychology also has an important value, above all because it helps one to grasp the motivation dynamics, the structure of the personality, the elements relating to problems and pathologies, the different stages of development and developmental tasks, the dynamism of religious maturation, and the experiences that open human beings to the mystery of the sacred. (180)

9. Catechesis utilizes a variety of processes and methods.

Catechesis does not have a single method but is open to evaluating different methods, engaging in pedagogy and didactics and allowing itself to be guided by the Gospel necessary for recognizing the truth of human nature. "The age and the intellectual development of Christians, their degree of ecclesial and spiritual maturity and many other circumstances demand that catechesis should adopt widely differing methods." The communication of the faith in catechesis, which also passes through human mediation, nonetheless remains an event of grace, brought about by the encounter of the word of God with the experience of the person. (195)

*Since the Church does not have a method of her own for proclaiming the Gospel, an effort of discernment is needed so as to test everything and keep what is good (cf. 1 Thes 5:21). Catechesis can evaluate, as it has done throughout history, methodological approaches centered more on the realities of life or based more on the message of faith. This depends on the concrete situations of the subjects of catechesis. In both cases it is important to employ a **principle of inter-relationship** that connects both aspects. The personal and social events of life and history find a light of interpretation in the content of faith; this [content], on the other hand, must always be presented by showing the implications it has for life. This procedure presupposes a hermeneutical capacity: existence, if interpreted in relation to the Christian proclamation, is manifested in its truth; the **kerygma**, on the other hand, always has a value of salvation and fullness of life. (196)*

10. Human experience is integral to catechesis in its identity and process and in contents and method.

Human experience is integral to catechesis, in its identity and process, and but also in contents and method, because it is not the only the place in which the word of God is proclaimed but also the space in which God speaks. (197)

*In his proclamation of the Kingdom, Jesus **seeks, encounters, and welcomes** people in their concrete life situations. In his teaching as well he begins from the observation of events in life and history, which he reinterprets for a sapiential perspective. There is something spontaneous about how Jesus assumes lived experience which shines through in the parables especially. (198)*

*Catechesis, following the example of Jesus, helps to **illuminate and interpret** the experiences of life in the light of Gospel. Contemporary people struggle to make sense of the fragmented situations they encounter. This can lead to living out a separation between the faith professed and human experience. The reinterpretation of existence with eyes of faith fosters a sapiential and integral view of it. If catechesis neglects to correlate human experiences with the revealed message, it falls into the danger of artificial juxtapositions or misunderstandings of the truth. (199)*

*Jesus uses human experiences and situations **to stand for transcendent realities** and at the same time to indicate the attitude to be taken. In explaining the mysteries of the Kingdom, he in face resorts to ordinary situations of nature and human activity . . . In order to make the Christian message intelligible, catechesis must value human experience, which persists as a primary form of mediation for getting to the truth of Revelation. (200)*

11. The Christian community is a primary agent of catechesis.

“The Christian community is the origin, locus, and goal of catechesis. Proclamation of the Gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites people to conversion and the following of Christ. It is the same community that welcomes those who wish to know the Lord better and permeate themselves with a new life.” (133)

Catechetical pedagogy must make every effort to convey the importance of the community as a fundamental space for personal growth. The communitarian model is also visible in the dynamic of the group, the concrete place in which to live out new relationships brought about by Jesus Christ that can “become a genuine experience of fraternity.” Paying attention to group relationships has a pedagogical significance: it develops the sense of belonging to the Church and assists growth in faith. (218)

The group is important in personal formation processes. This applies to all age brackets: children, who receive help in becoming properly socialized; young people, who feel very keenly the need for authentic relationships; adults, who want to experience sharing and co-responsibility in the Church and society. (219)

12. Catechesis brings the power of the Gospel into the heart of culture(s).

*Catechesis “is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures,” and has a great responsibility in the process of the inculturation of the faith. Understanding culture as a hermeneutic setting for the faith offers catechesis greater possibilities for significantly reaching its goals of being an education **for** the faith and **in** the faith. The specific contribution of catechesis to evangelization is the attempt to enter into relationship with the experience of persons, with their ways of living and the processes of personal and community growth. Inculturation, is at its*

heart, aimed at the process of internalization of the experience of faith. (396)

With respect to the inculturation of faith, catechesis takes into consideration the following guidelines:

- ◆ getting to know deeply the culture of persons, activating relational dynamics marked by reciprocity that fosters a new understanding of the Gospel;
- ◆ recognizing that the Gospel possesses its own cultural dimension through which over the course of the centuries it has inserted itself into the different cultures;
- ◆ communicating true conversion that the Gospel, as a force for transformation and regeneration, effects within cultures;
- ◆ making it understand that seeds of Gospel are already present in cultures, although it is not exhausted in them;
- ◆ making sure that the new expression of the Gospel according to the culture being evangelized does not neglect the integrity of the contents of the faith, an important factor in ecclesial communion. (397)

13. Catechesis seeks to be an evangelizing presence on the digital continent, engaging people through digital culture.

In the process of proclaiming the Gospel, the real question is not how to use the new technologies to evangelize, but how to become **an evangelizing presence on the digital continent**. Catechesis which cannot simply become digitalized, certainly needs to understand the power of this medium and to use all its potentiality and positive aspects, while still realizing that catechesis cannot be carried out solely by using digital tools, but by offering spaces for experiences of faith. This is the only way to avoid a virtualization of catechesis that threatens to make catechetical action weak and ineffectual. (371)

Only a catechesis that proceeds from religious information to accompaniment and to the experience of God will be capable of offering meaning. The transmission of the faith is based on authentic experiences, which must not be confused with experiments: experience transforms life and provides keys for its interpretation, while the experiment is reproduced only in an identical manner. (371)

14. Catechesis utilizes the new digital tools and approaches for communication and teaching.

... New technologies have created a new cultural infrastructure that influences the communication and lives of persons. In virtual space, which many consider no less important than the real world, people get news and information, develop and express opinions, engage in debate, dialogue and seek answers to their questions. Failing adequately to consider these phenomena leads to the risk of appearing insignificant to many people. (213)

Within the Church, there is often a habit of one-directional communication: preaching, teaching, and the presentation of dogmatic summaries. Moreover, the written word alone struggles to speak to the young, who are used to a language consisting of a combination of written word sound and images. Digital forms of communication instead offer possibilities, in that they are open to interaction. This is why, along with technological knowledge, it is necessary to learn effective approaches to communication and to guarantee a **presence on the internet** that bear witness to the evangelical vision. (214)

It is good for communities... to respond to the new generation with the tools that are already in common use in teaching. It is also a priority for catechesis to educate believers in the good use of these tools and a deeper understanding of digital culture, helping them discern the positive aspects from the ambiguous ones ... (216)

Applying the *Directory for Catechesis* to Parish Life

This assessment tool explores how the *Directory of Catechesis* informs the vision and practice of catechesis with all ages and generations in your parish community. For each characteristic from the *Directory* indicate how true that characteristic is in the actual practice of catechetical ministry in your parish community.

Rating: How well does this characteristic describe catechesis in your church: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

| Characteristics from the <i>Directory for Catechesis</i> | Rating |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Our parish has a shared vision for catechesis that embraces the <i>Directory's</i> vision of catechesis as a living encounter and communion with Christ – forming families and people of all ages in getting to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel of liberating salvation, and choosing Jesus' way of life, and living the mission of Christ. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Through our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) families and people of all ages experience an encounter with Jesus Christ that involves their whole life – mind, heart, and body. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Through our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) families and people of all ages hear the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus and his saving death and resurrection so their lives may be transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Our catechetical ministry for families and all ages is guided by an understanding of catechesis as <i>accompaniment, education, and formation</i> in the faith and for the faith. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) provides a holistic formation each year for families and people of all ages that includes five interrelated elements: 1) knowledge of the faith, 2) understanding and experience of liturgical celebrations, 3) Christian formation of the moral conscience, 4) educating for prayer and in prayer, and 5) developing belonging to the Church and living its mission. | |
| Children | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Youth | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Young Adults | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Adults (40+) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Families | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Our catechetical ministry embraces the baptismal catechumenate as an inspiration for catechesis by utilizing the journey of the faith in the baptismal catechumenate to develop holistic models of formation that incorporate: 1) a first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma); 2) a comprehensive introduction to the Christian life; 3) liturgies, rituals, and symbols that engage the heart and the senses; 4) a community of faith and support; 5) engagement in the mission of the Church; 6) formation that fosters conversion of heart and mind in a new way of life; and 7) ever deeper formation in faith and the life of the community. | |
| Children | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Youth | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Young Adults | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Adults (40+) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Families | 1 2 3 4 5 |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>7. Our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) sees human experience as integral to catechesis – in content and methods – and we seek to help illuminate and interpret people’s experiences of life in the light of the Gospel. We recognize that in order to make the Christian message intelligible to people of all ages, catechesis must value human experience.</p> | <p>Children 1 2 3 4 5 Youth 1 2 3 4 5 Young Adults 1 2 3 4 5 Adults (40+) 1 2 3 4 5 Families 1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>8. Our catechetical ministry employs a variety of methods and tools for educating and forming people in the faith and for the faith in ways that are appropriate to the age and intellectual development of people. (This includes a variety of ways to learn; a variety of media – print, audio, video, digital; a variety of formats - on your own, mentored, small group, at home, large group; a blend of settings – gathered, online, and hybrid; and variety of timing - synchronous and asynchronous.)</p> | <p>Children 1 2 3 4 5 Youth 1 2 3 4 5 Young Adults 1 2 3 4 5 Adults (40+) 1 2 3 4 5 Families 1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>9. Our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) engages each distinct culture in our parish community by getting to know deeply the culture of persons, understanding how the Gospel and the faith is already present in each culture, recognizing the significance of popular piety as it celebrates the faith, and, together with people of each culture, developing catechesis that speaks to the needs and spirituality of each culture.</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>10. Our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) utilizes a variety of digital tools and approaches, including online-only learning and hybrid models of learning that integrate online and face-to-face learning, such as the flipped classroom approach.</p> | <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |

Reflection

Using the results from your assessment, reflect on the following questions. *(If you are doing this activity with a group, develop a composite score of the group’s ratings.)*

- ◆ How well does our catechetical ministry embrace and apply the vision of catechesis in these ten characteristics from the *Directory for Catechesis*?
- ◆ What are the areas of strength in your community?
- ◆ What are the areas for improvement or enhancement in your community?
- ◆ What did you learn about the *Directory for Catechesis* from this assessment?

Part Two

The New Context for Catechesis: 11 Challenges

The new religious-social-cultural context presents significant challenges for catechesis in parish communities. Even though they may feel overwhelming, the 11 trends and challenges presented below provide an opportunity for parishes to respond creatively and innovatively through current and new initiatives in catechesis with families and all ages and generations.

Trends and Challenges

1. Diversity in the religious and spiritual lives of people
2. Declining levels of Catholic participation
3. Religious socialization today
4. Ten-decade, six-generation society
5. Generational connection
6. Contemporary family life
7. Cultural diversity
8. Spiritual and religious life of Generation Z
9. Faith unbundled among young people
10. Mental health
11. Digital culture

1. The Challenge of Diversity in the Religious & Spiritual Lives of People

We know from research and experience that there is a great diversity in people's religious and spiritual life. One way to name this diversity is through four profiles, which reflect a continuum of religiosity.

◆ ***People who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community.***

For these people religious faith is central to their lives. These are people of all ages who are spiritually committed and growing in their faith within a church community. These are people who have found their spiritual home within an established Christian tradition and a local faith community that provides ways for them to grow in faith, worship God, and live their faith in the world. They are living their faith in daily life, at home, and in the world.

◆ ***People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives.***

These are people who participate occasionally in church life—Sunday Mass, seasonal celebrations, community events, and age-group programs. They may participate in significant seasonal celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and celebrate sacraments and milestone events, such as marriage and baptism. Some may even attend Mass regularly and send their children to church programs. For parents, transmitting a religious faith often means bringing their children to educational programs at church and participating because of their children. For “Occasionals” their spiritual commitment is not central to the way they live their lives and their connection to the church is more social and utilitarian than spiritual. While receptive to an established church, they do not have a faith commitment that would make their relationship with God and participation in a faith community a priority in their lives. their occasional

engagement in church life does not lead them toward spiritual commitment.

- ◆ ***People who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion.***
People who are uninvolved in a church but live spiritual lives. This group is often called “spiritual but not religious.” Many of these people are “Dones” who have left church after decades of participation and often leadership roles within the church. Many believe in God, have a relationship God, and are growing spiritually. Many practice their Christian faith unattached to a faith community or tradition. Many are spiritually hungry and searching for God and a life of meaning and purpose. Some may join a nondenominational Christian church focused on their spiritual needs, while others may find an outlet for their spiritual hunger in small communities of like-minded spiritual seekers, in local or global acts of service, or in online spiritual resources and communities. Parents, though not involved in a church, may send their children to church programs; and the parents may participate at times with their children.

- ◆ ***People who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God or religion in their lives.***
People in this profile are often called the “Nones”—for no religious affiliation. They no longer believe religion is important or necessary. They experience little need for God and the spiritual life and are not affiliated with organized religion and established Christian churches. The unaffiliated reflect a steadily increasing percentage of the American population, especially young adults in their twenties and thirties. Many parents today are “first generation Nones” and are raising their children in religiously uninvolved and unaffiliated homes creating a “second generation of Nones.” Many leave organized religion because they stopped

believing in the religion’s teachings or because their family was never that religious when they were growing up or because they had an experience of exclusion from a church, such as the experience of LGBTQ people or divorced and remarried couples.

We can see three and even four of these religious profiles reflected in people’s participation in parish life and catechetical programming. Parents who bring their children for baptism can reflect the whole spectrum, from parents with a vibrant faith to parents who are unaffiliated but whose parents and grandparents are active in a faith community. Children participating in Vacation Bible School may come from families who can reflect all four of these profiles, as do families preparing for First Eucharist and adolescents participating for Confirmation.

2. The Challenge of Declining Levels of Catholic Participation

The church statistics compiled by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) document the dramatic demographic changes in participation in parish life and Sunday Mass.

- ◆ In 1970 almost 54.9% of Catholics attended Mass weekly. By 2021 that number had dropped to 17.3% - a decline of over 66%. In 1970, 71.3% of Catholics attended Mass at least once a month. By 2021 that number had dropped to 36.6%, a 50% decline.

- ◆ Since 1990 the Catholic church has seen the number of marriages drop by 66%, baptisms and first communions drop by 50%, and confirmations by 20%, even as the Catholic population in the U.S. grew by 20 million people from 1970 to the present.

- ◆ The number of children in parish religious education programs dropped from 4.2 million in 1970 to 1.8 million in 2021. The

number of high school age teens in parish religious education and youth ministry dropped from 1.3 million in 1970 to 550,000 in 2021.

3. The Challenge of Religious Socialization Today

The parents of children and teens today reflect a greater diversity of religiosities: *active and engaged believers, involved believers, spiritual not religious, inactive believers, and inactive nonbelievers*. The increasing diversity in religiosities and practice and the trend toward disaffiliation from the Catholic Church is leading to the dramatic rise in the number of children growing up in religiously unaffiliated homes where parents are not transmitting a religious faith and practicing it at home. They are raising their children to become the second generation of not religiously affiliated. If these trends continue, we can forecast declining levels of the importance of religion and the Catholic faith, faith practice at home, and participation of families in Catholic parish life.

More children and teens are growing up in homes where their parents, who may have been baptized and celebrated First Eucharist and even Confirmation, no longer practice their Catholic faith or no longer participate in a parish (or any other religious congregation) or no longer believe that religion and God are important in their lives. Even active and engaged believers often lack fluency with the Catholic faith tradition and the confidence and ability to share it with their children. The religious participation decline and the rise of the unaffiliated is well documented, but one of the consequences of this trend is the decline in passing on faith from generation to generation. Who is socializing the next generation into the Christian faith? Who is enriching the faith life of parents and grandparents and equipping them to transmit the Christian faith to the young?

The prevailing model of catechesis for children and adolescents today was created in the

1970s. To this day, in a majority of Catholic parishes, it remains an age-graded, classroom-based (with textbooks), parish-centric model that begins in grade one and concludes with Confirmation in the teen years. This 20-30 hour per year education model relies upon faith practice at home and participation of the family in Catholic parish life, especially Sunday Mass. It is a one-size-fits-all approach to learning and formation that does not address the dramatic changes in the lives of parents and young people today or the changes in society, culture, and technology over the last ten-fifteen years. It is a model that makes parents/caregivers and the family secondary to what is happening in the parish program. The context for catechesis is dramatically different today than it was in the 1970s. The conditions necessary to maintain the older model no longer hold true.

4. The Challenge of a Ten-Decade, Six-Generation Society

We are a ten-decade society. People are living into their nineties and even over one hundred. This expansion of the life cycle is changing society as a greater share of the population are sixty and over. Over 40% of all Catholics are 60 years old and older. Many parishes have a majority of their members in this age group.

We have become a society of lifelong learners. A recent Pew Research Center study showed the extent to which America is a nation of ongoing learners: 73 percent of adults consider themselves lifelong learners, 74 percent of adults are what we call personal learners—that is, they have participated in at least one activity in the past twelve months to advance their knowledge about something that personally interests them. These activities include reading, taking courses or attending meetings, or events tied to learning more about their personal interests. The study also found that 63 percent of those who are working (or 36 percent of all adults) are what we call professional learners—that is, they have taken a course or gotten additional training in

the past twelve months to improve their job skills or expertise connected to career advancement (Horrigan 2016).

We are a six-generation society. Each generation has its own unique historical, cultural, and social characteristics, shaped by the era in which they grew up. Each generation also has distinctive styles of learning and patterns of religious practice. The six living generations that make-up the U.S. include:

- ◆ The Greatest Generation – born before 1928 (less than 2%)
- ◆ The Silent Generation (The Builders) – born 1928-1945 (23%)
- ◆ Baby Boomers – born 1946-1964 (19%)
- ◆ Generation X – born 1965-1980 (17%)
- ◆ Millennials – born 1981-1996 (16%)
- ◆ Generation Z – born 1997 – 2012 (15%)
- ◆ Generation Alpha – born 2012 - (Ryan Burge, “Cooperative Election Study,” 60,000 respondents, 2022; Pew Research on Generations)

The generation gap in formal religious activities is especially pronounced among those raised in Catholic households. Among baby boomers who were raised Catholic, 71 percent say they attended church at least once a week with their families. Only about half (51 percent) of millennials raised in Catholic households report attending weekly church services as a family.

Attending parish religious education was also a fairly typical experience for Catholic baby boomers, but far less so for their children’s generation. About seven in 10 (71%) baby boomers brought up in Catholic households report attending a religious education program at least weekly while growing up. Less than half (44%) of millennials raised Catholic report attending a religious education program as a child.

5. The Challenge of Generational Connection

There is a decades-long trend toward greater generational isolation in our society. A study by Springtide Research, *The State of Religion & Young People 2020: Relational Authority* (2021) found that nearly 70 percent of young people ages thirteen to twenty-five report having three or fewer meaningful interactions per day. Nearly 40 percent say they feel they have no one to talk to and that no one really knows them well, at least some- times. More than one in four young people say they have one or fewer adults in their lives they can turn to if they need to talk. As the number of trusted adults in a young person’s life increases, their reported feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and stress decrease. The coronavirus pandemic heightened the experience of isolation and loneliness across generations. Individuals and families shifted so many social things to home—work, school, shopping, food, fitness, and even church—that they lost social connection. Older adults dramatically reduced their outside interactions. Families with children and teens worked hard to limit outside exposure, and often selected particular family members or a few local families to create a safe “pod.”

The societal challenge today is creating generational connection and collaboration that benefit all ages, solve critical problems, and mend the fraying social fabric. Despite all the positive contributions of technology to keep people connected, people have a tremendous hunger for in-person relationships and shared experiences, like celebrating holidays, birthdays, and milestones with other generations. The challenge is to increase the number of opportunities for intergenerational relationships, experiences, and activities in every sector of the community. Connecting the generations—(re)building intergenerational community, relationships, and experiences—is a tremendous challenge and opportunity.

6. The Challenge of Contemporary Family Life

Family Life

There is increasing diversity in family life today. There is a *diversity of family structures* in the United States including households with two parents (original and blended families), single parents, adoptive families, foster parents, grandparents raising grandchild, two moms, two dads, and caregivers fulfilling parenting roles. There is *social and cultural diversity* with families of diverse nationalities, ethnic traditions, language groups, and economic status. There is *gender diversity* with LGBTQ parents and children. There is *generational diversity* with children, parents, and grandparents from different generational experiences.

The parents of children and teens today reflect a greater diversity of religiosities: *active and engaged believers, involved believers, spiritual not religious, inactive believers, and inactive nonbelievers*. More children and teens are growing up in homes where their parents, who may have been baptized and celebrated First Eucharist and even Confirmation, no longer practice their Catholic faith or no longer participate in a parish (or any other religious congregation) or no longer believe that religion and God are important in their lives. Even active and engaged believers often lack fluency with the Catholic faith tradition and the confidence and ability to share it with their children.

The increasing diversity in religiosities and practice, and the trend toward disaffiliation from the Catholic Church, is leading to the dramatic rise in the number of children growing up in religiously unaffiliated homes where parents are not transmitting a religious faith and practicing it at home. They are raising their children to become the second generation of not religiously affiliated. If these trends continue, we can forecast declining levels of the importance of religion and the

Catholic faith, faith practice at home, and participation of families in Catholic parish life.

Parents

The Pew Report, "Parenting in America" (2023) provides a snapshot of how parents see themselves today:

- ◆ **Concerns:** Mental health tops the list of parental concerns: 40% were very or extremely worried about their children/teens struggling with anxiety or depression at some point.
- ◆ **Aspirations for the Child:** Roughly nine-in-ten parents say it's extremely or very important to them that their children be financially independent when they are adults, and the same share say it's equally important that their children have jobs or careers they enjoy. About four-in-ten (41%) say it's extremely or very important to them that their children earn a college degree, while smaller shares place a lot of importance on their children eventually becoming parents (20%) and getting married (21%).
- ◆ **Experience of Being a Parent:** The vast majority of parents say being a parent is enjoyable and rewarding all or most of the time, but substantial shares also find it tiring and stressful. About four-in-ten parents (41%) say being a parent is tiring and 29% say it is stressful all or most of the time. Mothers and fathers are about equally likely to say being a parent is enjoyable and rewarding, but larger shares of mothers than fathers say parenting is tiring (47% vs. 34%) and stressful (33% vs. 24%) at least most of the time.
- ◆ **Hopes for their Child:** In thinking about the kind of people they hope their children will be as adults, parents place the most emphasis on their children being honest and ethical. About two-thirds say it's extremely important to them that their

children grow up to be honest and ethical adults. About half (48%) say the same about their children being hardworking, while about four-in-ten say it's extremely important to them that their children become the kind of people who are accepting of people who are different from them (42%) and who help others in need (40%).

- ◆ **Religion:** About a third (35%) say it is extremely or very important to them that their children share their religious beliefs. About four in ten Black (40%) and Hispanic (39%) parents say it is extremely or very important to them that children share their religious beliefs; 32% each among White and Asian parents say the same. About a third (35%) of Catholic parents say it is extremely or very important to them.

7. The Challenge of Cultural Diversity

There are currently 66.5 million parish-connected Catholics in the U.S. [73.5 million in a self-identified survey estimate). As of 2022 the cultural make-up of the Catholic Church looks like this:

- ◆ 52.2% are White.
- ◆ 43% are Hispanic/Latinx.
 - 18% are 1st generation Hispanic.
 - 12.8% are 2nd generation Hispanic.
 - 9.4% are 3rd generation or higher Hispanic.
- ◆ 4.6% are Asian/Native American.
- ◆ 3% are Black/African American.

We live at a time when the encounter of languages, races, and cultures is more intense than ever. Mass media, especially the Internet, travel, immigration, and an increasingly globalized economy are bringing people together more and more. The experience of diversity is therefore more characteristic of our times and brings with it serious challenges and great opportunities. Diversity is a fact, a

growing reality, in the United States and in virtually all areas of the globe.

Springtide Research in “Navigating Injustice: A Closer Look at Race, Faith, and Mental Health” (2022), found six key findings that emerged from their research on 13-25 year olds that can be generalized to all ages:

1. For most young Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), ethnic-racial identity is a more salient identity than religious identity.
2. For children of immigrants, ethnic-racial and religious identity are closely tied.
3. Young BIPOC are deeply and negatively impacted by racial injustice, both spiritually and emotionally.
4. Positive ethnic-racial and religious identities are associated with good mental health.
5. Young BIPOC wish their faith leaders and communities would acknowledge and celebrate their ethnic-racial identity.
6. Young BIPOC wish their faith leaders would address racial injustice from a pastoral perspective.

The “Navigating Injustice” report notes, “ERI (ethnic-racial identity) is such a salient identity for young people in the US for many reasons. Part of the answer lies in the United States’ long history of racism, including slavery, wage theft, Jim Crow laws, and other policies that have deliberately prevented BIPOC from living full and meaningful lives. Research shows that despite progress made in this area, the legacy of racist policies and prejudices continues to affect BIPOC communities today. Indeed, social scientists can often predict many of a person’s most important life outcomes, such as emotional and physical health, education, housing, and income, among others, simply by knowing their race. It is no wonder, then, that ERI is significant in the lives of young BIPOC.” (9-10)

Hispanic/Latinx are the fastest growing ethnoracial group in the United States. They are also among the youngest ethnoracial groups in the United States. With a median age of 30, they are about nine years younger than the total American population. 81% of Hispanic/Latinx under the age of 35 are U.S. born. Less than 4% of ages 13 to 25 are Spanish dominant, and almost half of speak mostly or only English. Furthermore, Hispanic/Latinx increasingly understand their panethnicity in racial terms, with many identifying as multiracial. This tells us that much like the rest of their Gen Z counterparts (the “most diverse” generation in history), Hispanic/Latinx young people are greatly diverse.

8. The Challenge of Gen Z Spiritual and Religious Life

Generation Z (born 1996-2012) is the least religious generation in American history. And, they are becoming less religiously identified as each year passes. Every day in the United States, thousands of members of the Silent and Boomer generation are dying off. Every day in the United States, thousands of members of Generation Z are celebrating their 18th birthday and becoming official adults. That simple fact is changing American religion and society in ways that we can only begin to understand now.

Currently, 40% of 13-25 year olds claim no religious affiliation or institutional trust in religion, continuing a decades long trend of erosion (Springtide Research). Just 35% of Gen Z say they are Protestant (20%) or Catholic (15%) (Ryan Burge). There is little evidence to suggest that Americans who have disaffiliated will ever return. The age at which Americans choose to give up their families’ religion—most well before they turn 18—suggests that they have not established a deeply rooted commitment to a set of religious beliefs and practices.

Yet, Gen Z says they are religious (68%) or spiritual (77%). Gen Z engage in the following activities as a spiritual or religious practice (weekly or more often):

1. Art – singing, painting, listening to music (53%)
2. Prayer (45%)
3. Read (45%)
4. Being in nature (45%)
5. Yoga, martial arts, or physical activity (40%)
6. Write (39%)
7. Meditate (29%)
8. Study a religious text (28%)
9. Do acts of service (29%)
10. Attend spiritual or religious groups (not services) (25%)

(The State of Religion and Young People 2021 – Catholic Edition, Springtide Research)

Young adults today have had entirely different religious and social experiences than previous generations did. The parents of millennials and Generation Z did less to encourage regular participation in formal worship services and model religious behaviors in their children than had previous generations. Many childhood religious activities that were once common, such as saying grace, have become more of the exception than the norm.

We have long known the importance of formative religious experiences in setting the trajectory of faith commitments throughout life. For as long as we have been able to measure religious commitments, childhood religious experiences have strongly predicted adult religiosity. They still do. If someone had robust religious experiences growing up, they are likely to maintain those beliefs and practices into adulthood. Without robust religious experiences to draw on, Americans feel less connected to the traditions and beliefs of their parents’ faith.

(“Gen Z and Religion in 2022,” Ryan Burge and “Generation Z and the Future of Faith in America,” Daniel A. Cox, Survey Center on American Life of the American Enterprise Institute, March 24, 2022.)

9. The Challenge of Faith Unbundled among Young People

Young people are not turning to religious leaders, communities, practices, or beliefs in times of uncertainty or difficulty, though the majority of young people nonetheless identify as religious or spiritual. Young people who identify as “religious” don’t necessarily participate in religion in the traditional sense. The majority are not accepting the whole “bundle” of rituals, practices, and beliefs that religious institutions offer.

Faith Unbundled is a term that describes the way young people increasingly construct their faith by combining elements such as beliefs, identity, practices, and community from a variety of religious and non-religious sources, rather than receiving all these things from a single, intact system, or tradition. Young people with unbundled faith will partake in religion, including practices, beliefs, and communities to the degree that suits them, with no formal or permanent commitment. Springtide Research sees the phenomena of faith unbundled in their research:

- ◆ Young people who identify with a particular religion but adopt few or none of its practices.
- ◆ Young people who attend religious services regularly but consider themselves agnostic, atheist, or nothing in particular.
- ◆ Young people who are more than twice as likely to practice the arts as a “religious or spiritual practice” than attend weekly faith groups.

Young people are turning to a wide range of traditions, practices, and belief when asking and answering important questions about their faith: What do I believe? Who am I? What is my purpose in the world? What practices have value?

- ◆ They turn to many or various sources when making meaning and discerning what to believe about right and wrong, purpose

and calling, salvation and suffering, and more. It looks like **curiosity**.

- ◆ They are unwilling to shed parts of themselves to fit into a prescribed narrative about who and how to be in the world. It looks like a commitment to **wholeness**.
- ◆ They show up where trusted personal relationships exist or new ones seem possible, young people who are willing to forgo participation in communities lacking these qualities, even if they have had long associations with these communities. It looks like **connection**.
- ◆ They blend and adapt various rituals and behaviors to suit and make sense of the current questions they’re facing. It looks like **flexibility**.

Springtide Research sees hallmarks of curiosity, wholeness, connection, and flexibility in their data and conversations with young people, practitioners, and experts.

- ◆ More than half of young people (55%) say “I agree with some, but not all, of the things my religion teaches.” And “I don’t feel like I need to be connected to a specific religion (55%).”
- ◆ Nearly half of young people (47%) say, “I feel like I could fit in with many religions.”
- ◆ 58% of young people report: “I do not like to be told answers about faith and religions. I’d rather discover my own answers.”
- ◆ 82% of young people say they love learning new things. 85% of young people believe in personal growth.
- ◆ 84% say being authentic is an all-important value.
- ◆ More than half (55%) of young people don’t attend religious or spiritual services because they don’t feel free to be who they are at those kinds of gatherings.

(The State of Religion and Young People 2021, Springtide Research Institute)

10. The Challenge of Mental Health

Mental health has become the biggest challenge for young people (and for parents) in the post-pandemic world. In their 2022 report Springtide Research found:

- ◆ A third of young people say they are not flourishing in their mental and emotional health. This includes: 35% of young people ages 13-17, and 31% of ages 18-25.
- ◆ 47% of young people say they are moderately or extremely depressed.
- ◆ 55% of young people say they are moderately or extremely anxious.
- ◆ 57% of young people say they are moderately or extremely stressed.
- ◆ 45% of young people say they are moderately or extremely lonely.
- ◆ 46% of those who say they're not flourishing in their family relationships (or at home in general) also are not flourishing in their mental health.

Religious and spiritual beliefs and practices bolster mental wellness for Gen Z. Springtide data show that having a religious or spiritual identity and engaging in religious or spiritual practices correlates with greater mental and emotional flourishing. The more religious or spiritual a young person is, the more likely they are to say they are “flourishing a lot.” (“I am flourishing in my emotional or mental well-being.”)

Sociological research shows that organizations can embody **three qualities** to support mental health: they can enable social connections, they can align tools with expectations, and they can help young people develop a sense of purpose. In many ways, families also function like an organization, and embedding those same dynamics in your family structure helps ensure that each member of your family feels valued and supported.

(*The State of Religion and Young people 2022 – Mental Health*, Springtide Research Institute)

Connections with family are a chief component of health and wellness for young people. Family connections encourage positive feelings and behaviors. They also help reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes like emotional distress, depression, and suicidality. Parental acceptance, in particular, is key to how a young person experiences emotion. If a young person feels like their parents don't accept them for who they are or outright reject them, they are more likely to develop problems with anger and regulating emotions or to become unresponsive to emotions. Strong family connections enhance mental health in many ways, including when family members serve as informal supports and when they act as guides when the support of professionals is needed.

Fifty-seven percent of young people surveyed agree that their parents have helped them discover their purpose in life. Social scientists have shown that discovering purpose as a teen or young adult is associated with improved mental and physical health, altruism, and self-esteem, which has been tied to success in a number of other developmental areas.

(*Nurturing Mental Health for Gen Z: A Handbook for Parents*, Springtide Research, 2023)

11. The Challenge of Digital Culture

(Excerpts from the *Directory for Catechesis*, paragraphs 359-372)

*The introduction of digital tools and their use on a massive scale has caused profound and complex changes on many levels with cultural, social, and psychological consequences that not yet entirely evident. . . One lives “in a highly digitalized culture that has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter in relationship with others.” The **digital**, therefore, is not only a part of the existing cultures, but is asserting itself as a new culture: changing language, shaping mentalities, and restructuring value hierarchies. And all of this on a worldwide scale because, with geographic*

distance eliminated by the pervasive presence of online devices, it involves persons in every part of the planet. (359)

*The effect of the exponential digitalization of community and society is leading to a genuine anthropological transformation. “Digital natives,” meaning persons born and raised with digital technologies in a **multi-screen society**, consider technologies as a natural element, feeling no discomfort in manipulating and interacting with them. By contrast, the current situation also includes the presence, especially as educators, teachers, and catechists, of digital non-natives, the “digital immigrants” who were not born into a digital world but entered it later. The fundamental difference between these participants is the different mental approach that they have toward the new technologies and their use. There is also a difference in the style of discourse, which in the former is more spontaneous, interactive, and participatory. (362)*

Anthropological Transformation

*A **digital native** seems to privilege the image over listening. . . This consumption of digital content, therefore, is not only a quantitative process but also qualitative, producing another language and a new way of organizing thought. Multi-tasking, hypertextuality, and interactivity are only some of the characteristics of what appears as a new and unprecedented way of understanding and communicating that characterizes the digital generations. There emerges a capacity that is more intuitive and emotional than analytic. The art of **storytelling**, which uses the principles of rhetoric and language of its own adopted from **marketing**, is considered by the young as more convincing and compelling than the traditional forms of discourse. The language that has the greatest hold on the digital generation is that of the story, rather than of argumentation. (363)*

. . . These horizons show how the digital and its tools are potent means for finding new and unprecedented forms of transmission of the faith, but it also true that ecclesial action must make

know the possible ambiguities of a language that is evocative but hardly communicative of the truth. (363)

Digital Culture and Educational Questions

*Technological development in the field of digital media offers the possibility of immediate access to all kinds of content divorced from any sort of immediate access to all kinds of content divorced from any sort of hierarchy of importance, creating a culture that is often marked by immediacy, by the “right now,” and by the weakness of memory, and bring about a lack of perspective and grasp of the whole. The **media**, by its very nature, provide selective versions of the world rather than direct access to it, combining different languages in a message that is diffused globally and instantaneously. The new generations are not always formed and equipped cultural to face the challenges that digital society presents. It is urgent, therefore, to provide an **education on the media**, because what is at stake is a form of digital illiteracy. Amid unending digital production today’s illiterates will be those who are unable to perceive the differences in quality and reliability of the various digital content they find before them. (368)*

*It is becoming every clearer how social media, especially those of a digital nature, are in fact the principal agents of socialization, almost coming to the point of replacing traditional ones like family, Church, school. Intersubjectivity seems to be every more developed in the **social networks** and ever less so in traditional social spaces. On a practical level, one must evaluate and understand the limitations of the implicit learning experiences that the digital era provides on a daily basis. Many personal forms of interaction have become virtual, entirely replacing the needs, especially in the younger generations, for traditional forms of relationships, blocking them “from direct contact with the pain, the fears, and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences.” (369)*

U.S. Catholics by the Numbers

Catholic Demographic Make-up (2022)

- ◆ 66.5million (parish-connected Catholics); 73.5 million (self-identified, survey estimate)
- ◆ 52.2% are White.
- ◆ 43% are Hispanic/Latinx.
 - 18% are 1st generation Hispanic.
 - 12.8% are 2nd generation Hispanic.
 - 9.4% are 3rd generation or higher Hispanic.
- ◆ 4.6% are Asian/Native American.
- ◆ 3% are Black/African American.

Declining Number of Adults who Identify as Catholic

- ◆ 24% in 2007
- ◆ 21% in 2021

Declining Mass Attendance

- ◆ Catholics who attend every week: 17.30%
 - 22% of Hispanic Catholics
- ◆ Catholics who attend at least once a month (includes weekly): 36.60%
- ◆ Catholics who attend at least a few times a year:
 - White Catholics:
 - 68% in 2013
 - 73% in 2019
 - 45% in 2022
 - Hispanic Catholics:
 - 72% in 2013
 - 65% in 2019
 - 47% in 2022

Declining Number of Catholic Marriages

- ◆ 426,309 in 1970
- ◆ 98,354 in 2022

Declining Number of Infant Baptisms

- ◆ 1,089,000 in 1970
- ◆ 437,942 in 2022

Rising number of Catholic unaffiliated

- ◆ 37% of all unaffiliated are former Catholics.
- ◆ The Catholic Church lost 39% of its members to the religiously unaffiliated.
- ◆ 29% of all US adults are religiously unaffiliated

- 36% of 18-29
- 25% of 30-49
- 18% of 50-64
- 14% of 65+

- ◆ 20% of all US adults describe their religion as “nothing in particular”

Catholic Retention Rate

- ◆ 2007: 68% of respondents who were raised Catholic continued to identify as such as adults.
- ◆ 2022: 59% of those raised Catholic still identify with Catholicism as adults, while 41% do not.
- ◆ One-in-five people who were raised Catholic now say they have no religious affiliation, while 10% identify with evangelical denominations, 5% with mainline denominations and smaller numbers with other faiths.

Reasons for Leaving the Catholic Church

(% who say yes to any of the following reasons as why they chose to change religious affiliation)

1. Family was never that religious growing up: 30%
2. Stopped believing in the religion’s teachings: 19%
3. Scandals involving leaders in former religion: 13%
4. Negative religious teachings about or treatment of LGBTQ+ people: 9%
5. A traumatic personal event: 9%
6. Church or congregation became too political: 8%

Sources

“2020 Census of American Religion” – Public Religion Research Institute, 2020

“About Three in Ten US Adults are Now Religiously Unaffiliated” – Pew Research Center, 2021.

“Among U.S. Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline but Is Still the Largest Faith” – Pew Research Center, 2023.

“Catholic Statistics 2022” – Center for the Applied Apostolate (CARA)

“Religion and Congregations in a Time of Social and Political Upheaval” - Public Religion Research Institute, 2022.

Part Three

Catechesis for All Ages in the New Context

... The Gospel is not intended for humanity in the abstract, but for each human being, real, concrete, historical, rooted in a particular situation and marked by psychological, social, cultural, and religious dynamics, because "each one is included in the mystery for the Redemption." For one thing, faith is not a linear process and it participates in the development of the person, and this in turn influences the journey of faith. It cannot be forgotten that every phase of life is exposed to specific challenges and must confront the ever-new dynamics of the Christian vocation. (224)

It is therefore reasonable to offer pathways of catechesis that vary based on the participants' different needs, ages, and stages of life. So it is indispensable to respect anthropological-developmental and theological-pastoral realities, taking into account the educational sciences. This is why it is pedagogically important, in the process of catechesis, to attribute to each stage its own importance and specificity. . . (223)

* * * * *

A> Twelve Principles & Practices of Catechesis for All Ages

Informed by the vision and practices of the Directory for Catechesis, insights on forming faith from religious research, principles of effective learning from the learning sciences, and contemporary theory and practice in faith formation, we can identify important principles and practices that can serve as the basis for envisioning and designing catechesis with families and every stage of life.

1. Catechesis is a living encounter with Jesus Christ that transforms a person's whole life – mind, heart, and body.
2. Catechesis provides a holistic formation each year for families and people of all ages that includes five interrelated elements (or tasks).
3. Catechesis embraces the baptismal catechumenate by utilizing the journey of faith in the catechumenal process to develop holistic models of formation for all ages with special attention to preparation for the sacraments of Marriage, Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.
4. Catechesis incorporates intergenerational relationships and faith forming experiences into catechesis for all ages within the parish community.
5. Catechesis promotes family faith and practice at home and engagement in the parish community.
6. Catechesis is lifelong and lifewide – addressing the unique life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual-religious needs and faith journeys of each stage of life from childhood through older adulthood.
7. Catechesis is responsive to the diversity in the religious-spiritual lives of people today – personalizing catechesis to address their spiritual-religious needs and journeys.
8. Catechesis engages each distinct culture in the parish by getting to know deeply the culture of persons, understanding how the Gospel and the faith is already present in each culture, recognizing the significance of popular piety as it celebrates the faith, and, together with people of each culture, developing catechesis that speaks to the needs and spirituality of each culture.

9. Catechesis views human experience as integral to catechesis – in its identity and process, in its content and methods – as it seeks to help illuminate and interpret people’s experiences of life in the light of the Gospel.
10. Catechesis recognizes that the motivation for faith growth and learning are intrinsic to the person with the initiative for growth and learning residing within the individual person
11. Catechesis is informed by the latest research and practice on learning today; and employs the most effective learning strategies and methods for educating and forming people in the faith and for the faith in ways that are appropriate to the age and intellectual development of people.
12. Catechesis in a digital culture utilizes a variety of digital tools and approaches, including using online-only learning and hybrid models of learning that integrate online and face-to-face learning, such as the flipped classroom approach.

* * * * *

#1. Catechesis is a living encounter with Jesus Christ that transforms a person’s whole life – mind, heart, and body.

◆ See Part One: Characteristic #1 and 2.

Catechesis proclaims the Good News of Jesus and his saving death and resurrection so people’s lives may be transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ. Catechesis forms families and people of all ages in getting to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel of liberating salvation, choosing Jesus’ way of life, and living the mission of Christ in the world today.

A robust and vital Christian faith is a way of the head, the heart, and the hands – informing, forming, and transforming people in Christian faith and identity. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matt 22:37–39).

#2. Catechesis provides a holistic formation each year for families and people of all ages that includes five interrelated elements (or tasks).

◆ See Part One: Characteristic #5.

Catechetical curriculum and programming for families and for all ages and stages of life incorporate and integrate five elements (tasks) to provide a holistic formation in faith and the Christian life.

1. *Knowledge of the Faith*: Fostering knowledge of and exploration of the Christian message in Scripture and the Church’s tradition.
2. *Initiating into the Celebration of the Mystery*: Assisting in the comprehension and experience of liturgical celebrations: the sacraments, especially Eucharist, and the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year.
3. *Forming for Life in Christ*: Educating the believer to the good life of the Gospel through the Christian formation of the moral conscience.
4. *Teaching Prayer*: Educating the believer for prayer and in prayer, developing the contemplative dimensions of Christian experience; teaching personal prayer and liturgical and community prayer.
5. *Introduction to Community Life*: Developing the sense of belonging to the Church and contributing as active participants to building up the community and as missional disciples to its growth.

#3. Catechesis embraces the baptismal catechumenate by utilizing the journey of faith in the catechumenal process to develop holistic models of formation for all ages with special attention to preparation for the sacraments of Marriage, Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.

◆ See Part One: Characteristic #4.

The catechumenal model of formation embodies all five interrelated elements (tasks) of catechesis in a holistic formation process that includes:

- ◆ A first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma)
- ◆ A comprehensive introduction to the Christian life
- ◆ Liturgies, rituals, and symbols that engage the heart and the senses
- ◆ A community of faith and support
- ◆ Apprenticeship and mentoring in faith
- ◆ Engagement in the mission of the Church and service to the world
- ◆ Formation that fosters conversion of heart and mind in a new way of life
- ◆ Ever deeper formation in faith and the life of the community (mystagogy)

The catechumenal model is formation rooted in paschal mystery of Christ, in the liturgical year and the Sunday liturgy, in Scripture and the Catholic tradition, in the life of the community, and in Christian mission and service. It is an evangelizing catechesis, integrating information, formation, and transformation. It is an apprenticeship in the Christian life. The catechumenal model respects and supports the faith journeys of each individual in a gradual process of formation and transformation.

The catechumenal model of formation can be applied to catechesis at every stage of life, especially sacrament preparation which is a process of preparation, celebration, and mystagogy.

As one example, *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life* (Vatican Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life, 2022) proposes a catechumenal model for marriage preparation:

The actual catechumenal phase consists of three distinct stages: proximate preparation, final preparation, and accompaniment during the first years of married life. In between the pre-catechumenal phase and the actual catechumenal phase, an intermediate phase may be envisaged in which the reception of candidates takes place, which could conclude with a ritual of entry into the marriage catechumenate. . . what follows is a bullet-point list of the various phases and stages, with some rituals and retreats delineating them:

- A. *Pre-catechumenal phase: remote preparation*
 - Youth ministry
 - Young adult ministry
- B. *Intermediate phase (lasting a few weeks): period of reception of candidates*
 - Ritual of entry into the catechumenate (concluding the reception phase)
- C. *Catechumenal phase:*
 - First stage: proximate preparation (about a year)
Rite of Betrothal (concluding the proximate preparation)
Brief entrance retreat into final preparation
 - Second stage: final preparation (a few months)
Short retreat in preparation for wedding (a few days before the celebration)
 - Third stage: first years of married life (2-3 years)

#4. Catechesis incorporates intergenerational relationships and faith forming experiences into catechesis for all ages within the parish community.

◆ See Part One: Characteristic #11 and DC 232.

- ◆ See Challenge #5.
- ◆ See Resource: Intergenerational Catechesis Strategies in this section.

“The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action, and of hope. They are where the gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. Parishes are the place where God’s people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church’s life.” (*Communities of Salt and Light*, USCCB, 1993)

Integral to catechesis is the primacy of intergenerational community, relationships, and faith-forming experiences for developing and sustaining faith and discipleship in people of all ages and generations. When a church commits itself to building a culture of intergenerationality, it becomes a sign of and instrument for the full experience of the body of Christ by all ages and generations. An intergenerational culture can be seen and experienced when a parish:

- ◆ creates a welcoming environment of hospitality, trust, acceptance, emotional safety, and care that is conducive to promoting faith growth and mutual support across generations
- ◆ builds caring relationships among the generations in the church through worship, learning, service, and community events and activities
- ◆ creates intentional opportunities for bringing the generations together to build relationships and engage in shared activities
- ◆ involves all generations together in Sunday Mass; give special attention to being inclusive of children and teens at Sunday Mass; and engages all generations in leadership roles in the Mass (music, reading, praying)
- ◆ engages all generations together in learning experiences that teach the Bible and the Catholic tradition, and form disciples of all ages in Christian identity

- ◆ brings together the generations to learn from each other, share their faith stories, and support for practicing their faith in daily life
- ◆ nurtures the spiritual life of all generations together through the community’s prayer life, rituals, and blessings; brings together all generations to nurture their spiritual life through prayer and spiritual practices and disciplines
- ◆ engages all generations together in service to the poor and vulnerable, the works of justice and advocacy, and in care for creation

An intergenerational church culture forms and deepens Christian identity and commitment as people develop relationships and actively participate in faith communities that teach, model, and live the Christian tradition and way of life. It strengthens relationships, connections, and community across generations; enhances their sense of belonging in the faith community; and provides valuable adult role models for children and adolescents. It supports families by surrounding them with a community of faith and engaging the whole family in a variety of faith-forming experiences together (caring relationships, celebrating, learning, praying, serving) and providing parents with opportunities to learn from Christians who are practicing their faith and raising faithful children.

Every parish can *connect the generations* by creating small actions to build relationships, trust, and respect by praying for other generations; mixing generations in leadership and ministry teams; developing mentoring relationships between generations (old to young, young to old); and encouraging generations sharing and contributing at worship.

Several strategies can guide parish efforts to create and strengthen an intergenerational church culture. (See the Resource: Intergenerational Catechesis Strategies for descriptions and ideas.)

1. Transforming multigenerational settings into intergenerational experiences

2. Redesigning age-specific programs into intergenerational experiences
3. Creating new intergenerational initiatives
4. Making intergenerational learning central to catechesis

#5. Catechesis promotes family faith and practice at home and engagement in the parish community.

- ◆ See *Directory for Catechesis* 224-235.
- ◆ See Challenges #1, 3, and 6.
- ◆ See Catechesis with Families in this section.

A family is the first community and the most basic way in which God gathers us, forms us, and acts in the world. The family is the primary mechanism by which a Catholic identity becomes rooted in the lives of young people through the day-to-day religious practices and the ways parents model their faith and share it in conversation, collaboration, and exposure to outside religious opportunities.

Through the processes of religious socialization, young people with seriously religious parents come to think, feel, believe, and act as serious religious believers, and that that training “sticks” with them even when they leave home and enter emerging adulthood.

Churches that make families a priority equip parents and grandparents with practices for forming faith at home (celebrating rituals and milestones, observing the seasons of the church year, praying, serving, learning the Christian faith, reading the Bible). They provide the knowledge and skills for parenting and grandparenting today. They provide experiences for the whole family that promote growth in faith and discipleship, and resources to strengthen the connection between what happens at church and Christian practice at home. Churches also involve families in community activities.

Churches create a plan for family faith formation designed around the specific life stage needs of families with young children (0–5) elementary

school children (6–10), young adolescents (11–14), and older adolescents (15–19).

#6. Catechesis is lifelong and lifewide – addressing the unique life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual-religious needs and faith journeys of each stage of life from childhood through older adulthood.

- ◆ See *Directory for Catechesis* 224 and 225.
- ◆ See Catechesis with Children, Youth, and Adults in this section.

Catechesis is fashioned around the stages (or seasons) of life with content, methods, formats, and approaches that address the diverse life tasks and situations, needs and interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of people across the life cycle:

- ◆ Children (0-10) and their family
- ◆ Adolescents (11-19) or young people (11-early 20s) and their family
- ◆ Young Adults (20s -30s)
- ◆ Midlife Adults (40s-50s)
- ◆ Mature Adult (60s-70s)
- ◆ Older Adults (80+)

At each stage of life catechesis is responsive to:

- ◆ *Life Stage.* What’s happening in the lives and world of people and how the Bible and Catholic tradition connect to these issues: developmental life tasks, family life, work life, leisure, relationships, sexuality, suffering and grief, social and political issues, community issues, and more.
- ◆ *Milestones and Transitions:* What are the significant milestones/transitions at each stage of life: marriages, births, starting school, graduations, geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, launching children and empty nests, retirement, unanticipated illness, and the loss of loved ones, and more? How can catechesis help people find meaning in

their lives during these transitions and bring a faith perspective to the transitions they are experiencing?

- ◆ *Ethnic and Cultural Communities.* What are the unique lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of people within the ethnic/cultural communities represented in the parish and wider community? What are the unique faith traditions and practices in these ethnic/cultural communities? How can catechesis be responsive to the traditions, heritages, and unique gifts of each ethnic/cultural community?
- ◆ *Spiritual and Religious.* What are the significant spiritual and religious needs, interests, and concerns at each stage of life? How can catechesis address these unique the spiritual and religious needs at each stage of life?

#7. Catechesis is responsive to the diversity in the religious-spiritual lives of people today – personalizing catechesis to address their spiritual-religious needs and journeys.

- ◆ See *Directory for Catechesis* 258.
- ◆ See Challenge #1.

We know from research and experience that there is a great diversity in people's religious and spiritual life. The *Directory for Catechesis* describes the diversity in the faith life of adults, a typology that can be applied to ages (see DC 258). One way to envision the diverse religious-spiritual life today is through continuum of faith and practice—from actively engaged to unaffiliated:

- ◆ People who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community.
- ◆ People who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives.

- ◆ People who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion.
- ◆ People who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God or religion.

We can see these differences in people's participation in parish life and catechetical programming: preparation for sacraments (marriage, baptism, first communion, confirmation), participation in children and youth catechetical programming, vacation Bible school, and more.

Personalizing catechesis is a way to differentiate catechetical content and methods to address the needs of people in the four types of faith and practice. It moves from a one-size-fits-all style of catechesis to one that is differentiated and targeted to where people are in their faith journeys. Personalizing faith formation gives people an active role in shaping their own learning and moving along their own personal trajectories of faith growth.

The baptismal catechumenal – with its stages of growth accommodated to people's journey in faith – provides a model for personalizing catechesis to the faith journeys of people from initial proclamation through mystagogy.

8. Catechesis engages each distinct culture in the parish by getting to know deeply the culture of persons, understanding how the Gospel and the faith is already present in each culture, recognizing the significance of popular piety as it celebrates the faith, and, together with people of each culture, developing catechesis that speaks to the needs and spirituality of each culture.

- ◆ See Part One: Characteristic #12.
- ◆ See Challenge #7.
- ◆ See Resource: Cultural Catechesis Strategies

The heart of catechesis with cultural communities is inculturation of the Christian message, a process that brings the transforming power of the Gospel to touch persons in their hearts and cultures at their deepest levels. It involves listening to the culture of the people for the echo of the word of God.

Catechesis communicates the Christian message through patterns of thought, history, culture, and experience so that various cultures perceive the good news as addressed to them, in their own uniqueness and concrete situations. This includes inspiring identity and pride in the riches of the cultures in order to bring them forth as an offering of gifts to the larger community, as well as developing and using culturally appropriate catechetical methods, tools, texts, and resources

Catechesis is responsive to the uniqueness of communities by incorporating cultural festivals and holidays, traditions, values, customs, history, language, and practices, *and* integrating the unique culture with the Catholic faith and teachings.

Catechesis incorporates culturally relevant stories, lives of the saints and holy people, and creative expression – art, music, dance, and other forms to communicate the Gospel and Catholic tradition. Storytelling and narrative approaches are powerful tools for transmitting the Good News and Catholic faith in cultural communities.

Catechesis recognizes that cultural communities may have distinct learning styles and preferences, and utilizes educational methods best suited to the learning styles and preferences of cultural groups.

#9. Catechesis views human experience as integral to catechesis – in its identity and process, in its content and methods – as it seeks to help illuminate and interpret people’s experiences of life in the light of the Gospel.

- ◆ See Part One: Characteristic #10.

Human experience “is not only the place in which the word of God is proclaimed but also the space in which God speaks” (DC 19). Catechesis recognizes that in order to make the Christian message intelligible to people of all ages, “catechesis must value human experience, which persists as a primary form of mediation for getting to the truth of Revelation” (DC 200).

Catechesis utilizes methodologies that are inspired by the pedagogy of Jesus. “In his proclamation of the Kingdom, Jesus *seeks, encounters, and welcomes* people in their concrete life situations. In his teaching as well he begins from the observation of events in life and history, which he reinterprets for a sapiential perspective. There is something spontaneous about how Jesus assumes lived experience which shines through in the parables especially.” (DC 198)

Catechetical methodologies seek to draw upon people’s own lived experiences as a space in which God speaks; mediate into their lives the word of God through Scripture and Tradition; and encourage them to integrate their lives and faith into a living Christian faith. In this way catechesis is both a kerygmatic and experiential catechesis. Catechesis is most effective as it presents every aspect of the faith tradition to refer clearly to the fundamental experiences of people’s lives. Catechesis constantly integrates life and faith toward lived faith.

The methodology of *life experience to faith tradition to life application* promotes an integrated approach to education, where faith is woven into all aspects of learning and living.

- ◆ *Life Experience*: Acknowledging and understanding the real-world contexts in which people live; and recognizing that catechesis should be relevant to people’s lives and experiences.
- ◆ *Faith Tradition*: Integrating the Bible and Catholic tradition and teachings in the catechetical process; and helping people develop a deeper understanding of their faith

and how it can inform their thoughts, actions, and decisions.

- ◆ *Life Application*: Encouraging people to apply their faith and learning to their real-life situations; seeing how faith can be lived in various aspects of life, including relationships, family, work, community and the world.

#10. Catechesis recognizes that the motivation for faith growth and learning are intrinsic to the person with the initiative for growth and learning residing within the individual person.

The motivation for learning is intrinsic to the person and is driven by a need for autonomy (self-directedness), mastery, and purpose and meaning. Many approaches to education and to catechesis see the role of learners as being dependent on teachers to make decisions for them as to what should be learned, how it should be learned, when it should be learned, and if it has been learned.

Today people are accustomed to searching out what they want to know, when they want and need to know it. People are becoming more and more self-directed in their learning, and they have almost unlimited access to information through the internet and the wide variety of print and media learning resources.

People of all ages are motivated by the desire to direct their own lives with *autonomy* over what they do, when they do it, who they do it with and how they do it. They have the urge to get better and better at something that matters – to be engaged in deliberate practice to develop *mastery*. They have a yearning to do what they do in the service of something larger than themselves, to seek *purpose*—a cause greater and more enduring than themselves.

Intrinsic motivation is a key factor in determining whether people will engage in catechesis and open themselves to learning and faith growth. To build on intrinsic motivation catechesis provides

programs and experiences that people value, supporting their drive for *autonomy, mastery, and purpose*. Catechesis creates an emotionally supportive and nonthreatening learning environment where people feel safe and valued.

There are a variety of motivations for engaging in learning and faith formation experiences. Here are a few motivations that emerge from research on religious learning.

- ◆ *Seeking meaning and purpose*: finding answers to questions about the meaning of life, purpose, and human existence; finding a sense of purpose in life.
- ◆ *Desiring mastery*: learning how to become competent in a religious practice, such as prayer or reading and interpreting the Bible.
- ◆ *Facing life transitions*: learning and support to cope with changes in a new stage or situation in life, such as graduating high school or college, getting married, becoming a parent and raising children, caring for aging parents, and much more.
- ◆ *Coping with challenges*: during challenging times people may turn to religious learning for comfort, solace, and guidance in navigating difficult situations
- ◆ *Community*: becoming part of a religious community or small group that builds relationships and involves shared experiences of learning, prayer, rituals, service, and more.
- ◆ *Service*: being engaged in making a difference through actions for justice and service to people in need.
- ◆ *Doubts and questions*: finding a safe space and community to discuss doubts, questions, and uncertainties about faith and beliefs.
- ◆ *Curiosity*: having new religious experiences and learning new knowledge about the texts, history, practices, and leaders of a religious tradition.

- ◆ *Legacy*: wanting to pass on religious knowledge and traditions to the next generation; becoming a mentor to others.
- ◆ *Leadership*: assuming a leadership role in a religious community and learning the knowledge and skills for their role.

#11. Catechesis is informed by the latest research and practice on learning today; and employs the most effective learning strategies and methods for educating and forming people in the faith and for the faith in ways that are appropriate to the age and intellectual development of people.

- ◆ See Part One: Characteristics #8 and #9.

There has been extensive research on how people learn best. Learning sciences research has identified many of the most effective practices for learning – some targeted to specific age groups, but many that apply to learning with all ages. These practices, methods, and tools can be utilized to design catechetical programming and learning experiences that respond to the ways people learn best today.

All of the research points to a central principle: **learners are at the center of the learning experience.** Everything is design around the learner. All learning components are designed for the educational experience to be adaptable to the needs and potential of each learner and supports the highest possible outcomes for each and every learner. Learning programs and environments recognize the learners as the core participants, encourages their active engagement, and develops in them an understanding of their own activity as learners. Learning activities allow learners to construct their learning through engagement and active exploration.

Learner-centered education focuses on three key aspects about the learner. First, each learner is

seen as being unique in meaningful ways. They have unique backgrounds, circumstances, and starting points with unique strengths, challenges, interests, and aspirations. These unique attributes call for unique responses from the settings where they learn.

Second, each learner is seen as having unbounded potential – potential that will unfold at its own pace and in its own way.

Finally, each learner is seen as having an innate desire to learn. Therefore, when learning is not happening, the conclusion is not that the child doesn't want to learn; it is that the model or approach is not creating the conditions for learning.

A second key principle is **learner variability**. No two people learn in exactly the same way. Each person has different experiences to draw from to master content, create meaning, work in groups, share, and achieve potential. Learner variability is the recognition that all learners differ, and learning sciences research shows that these differences matter for learning.

Methods

1. **Personalized Learning**, one response to learner variability, tailors the learning environment – what, when, how, and where people learn – to address the individual needs, skills, and interests of each person. Personalization asks, “What is best for you?” Personalization engages learners in creating personal learner plans – customized learning paths – to work at their own pace, alone or with a group.
2. **Differentiated instruction** is a strategy that takes into account that learners in a single group may be at different starting points in their learning process. Differentiated instruction does not just mean different content to suit individual needs. It can mean a combination of different content and methods to encourage active engagement and develop in learners an understanding of their own activity as learners

3. **Active Learning and Engagement** involves learners with the material through discussions, problem-solving, hands-on activities, simulations, teaching others or other active methods. Active engagement promotes deeper understanding and retention compared to passive learning where learners are simply listening or reading.
 4. **Practice-Oriented Learning** recognizes that people learn by doing. Practice is a part of the learning process, not the result of it. Research is demonstrating that people learn more deeply when they apply knowledge to real-world problems and when they take part in projects that require sustained engagement and collaboration. Learning programs provide opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills by practicing in as realistic a setting as possible. Activities that involve thoughtful responses, decision-making and solving problems encourage active learning and promote higher order thinking.
 5. **Collaborative Learning** activities and group discussions enhance understanding through peer interaction and varied perspectives. Learners can discuss and process together what they are learning, work together on projects and activities, and practice and present what they are learning. Learning spaces are organized for learners' participation in a "learning community"— recognizing that learning takes place in a social context and relies on communication and interaction with others. All ages, especially the younger generations, learn best in an environment where they can share with and cocreate their education with their peers. Collaborative learning requires creating an environment that is safe, caring, accepting, and trustworthy so that people feel free to share, discuss, question, and apply.
 6. **Project-Based Learning** helps learners gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge.
- Learners are actively engaged in real-world and personally meaningful projects. They demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a public product or presentation for a real audience. As a result, they develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills.
7. **Multiple Intelligences** brings the eight multiple intelligences into learning experiences, providing a greater variety of ways for people to learn: verbal-linguistic (word smart, book smart), logical-mathematical (number smart, logic smart), visual-spatial (art smart, picture smart), bodily-kinesthetic (body smart, movement smart), musical-rhythmic (music smart, sound smart), naturalist (nature smart, environment smart), interpersonal (people smart, group smart), and intrapersonal (self-smart, introspection smart). While not every program can incorporate activities for all eight intelligences, a greater variety of ways to learn promotes more effective learning and engages people more fully in the learning experience.
 8. **Multisensory, Multimodal Learning** engages all the senses in a learning experience so that people can taste, smell, touch, and hear things related to the topic of the session. Multisensory learning sees the world as a canvas to paint with words, sights, sounds, video, music, web pages, and more. Multisensory means using multiple modalities to engage people in the learning experience, including various forms of media and presentation styles to accommodate different learning preferences improves information retention.
 9. **Microlearning** is short-form – five, ten, fifteen minutes – learning experiences designed for anywhere, anytime learning that be combined into multipart learning programs. Micro-learning experiences are one response to short attention spans and mobile learning. Breaking content into small learning units enhances comprehension and retention of knowledge, skills, and practices.

10. **Storytelling** enlivens learning by creating and telling stories, presenting case studies, and showing examples. Digital storytelling provides new ways to engage in storytelling through images, audio, video, and in digital spaces such as Instagram. People remember stories.
11. **Elaboration** refers to explaining and expanding on the material being learned. When learners connect new information with what they already know, it helps in better comprehension and retention. Encourage learners to elaborate on the material by explaining it in their own words, making connections to prior knowledge, or applying it to real-world situations.
12. **Dual Coding** involves combining visual and verbal information, such as using diagrams or images alongside written or spoken explanations. This approach aids in better understanding and memory retention.
13. **Feedback**, timely and constructive, plays a vital role in learning. It helps learners identify areas of improvement and build on their strengths.

#12. Catechesis in a digital culture utilizes a variety of digital tools and approaches, including using online-only learning and hybrid models of learning that integrate online and face-to-face learning, such as the flipped classroom approach.

- ◆ See Part One: Characteristic #14.
- ◆ See Resource: Catechetical Methods.

We are witnessing a transformation in the way we think about learning, reflecting the convergence of new technologies, digital media and tools, and network thinking. We are shifting from education to learning—digital media and technologies enable learning anywhere, anytime; from consumption of information to participatory learning—organized

around learners' interests, enabling them to create as well as consume information; and from institutions to networks—where people can learn from a variety of sources in a variety of settings.

These key transformations include putting learners at the center of our thinking: enabling and trusting them to be cocreators of their learning experiences, connecting learning authentically to life concerns and real-world issues, making room for new modes of learning and new methods of teaching, and fostering collaboration

The digital transformation has created more options for catechetical programming including *online learning* through websites, social media, online communities, online classrooms, and more; and *hybrid learning* that combines physical gathering with online content and experiences.

With the abundance of digital tools and media, churches can now design online models of faith formation by producing digital content, offering online courses and webinars, creating playlists of curated resources, streaming live programs and presentations, providing access to online courses on a variety of topics developed by colleges and seminaries, curating resources for the church year season and special events, and much more.

B> Envisioning Catechesis with All Ages

Resource: Intergenerational Catechesis Strategies

1. Transform Multigenerational Settings into Intergenerational Experiences

Every church has multigenerational environments in which at least two generations are participating in an event or activity—Sunday Mass, church events, social gatherings, educational classes. Churches can utilize these environments to connect generations through relationship building and shared experiences.

How can your church transform multigenerational environments into experiences of intergenerational connection and community?

- ◆ *Consider relationships:* How will the generations interact with each other, get to know each other, share stories with each other? How will the experience incorporate intentional relationship building activities? How will everyone feel welcomed and safe?
- ◆ *Consider the content:* How will the experience engage generations in shared activities and in generationally appropriate activities?
- ◆ *Consider leadership:* How will each generation be involved in leadership roles, appropriate to their gifts, abilities, and age? How will the leadership team engage multiple generations?
- ◆ *Consider inclusion:* How will each generation feel valued and recognized in the experience?
- ◆ *Consider communication:* How will communication and social media channels be inclusive of all generations and provide connection among the generations?

2. Redesign Age-Specific Programs into Intergenerational Experiences

Age-specific programs and activities can provide opportunities for intergenerational connection, relationship building, and shared experiences. Opportunities abound, in children and youth programming, Vacation Bible School, service and mission trips, retreats, Bible studies, and more.

How can you transform age-specific programs by adding intergenerational activities or by redesigning the program into an intergenerational experience?

- ◆ *Consider adding intergenerational activities:* How can your church incorporate another generation in sharing their faith, wisdom, and interests in the program (interviews, storytelling, presentations, demonstrations)? How can you add mentors or spiritual guides to a program (grandparent mentors for young parents or spiritual guides for young people in confirmation)?
- ◆ *Consider replacing age-specific for intergenerational throughout the year:* How can your church incorporate regular intergenerational gatherings into your age group programs throughout the year?
- ◆ *Consider redesigning the program:* How can your church redesign an age specific program into an intergenerational program involving at least one additional generation, such as transforming camp or Vacation Bible School into a grandparent-grandchild program or transforming a youth service program or mission trip into an intergenerational service activity for all ages? Here are several ideas that illustrate how to transform age-specific programming into intergenerational opportunities:
 - Include all generations in Sunday Mass and involve all generations in

leadership roles—music, art, hospitality, reading scripture, and more. While there may be time during the scripture readings and homily when children have a separate experience, it's important to have children involved with the whole worship community for most of the service.

- Add other generations into current age-group programs, such as mission trips, service projects, retreat experiences, and Vacation Bible School. Consider adding intergenerational experiences into VBS such as a grandparent component or redesigning the youth mission trip into an all ages mission trip.
- Incorporate intergenerational dialogues, interviews, and presentations into programming—providing opportunities for children and youth to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of (older) adults; and then reverse the process and provide opportunities for the (older) adults to experience the wisdom, faith, and interests of children or teens through presentations, performances, and discussions.
- Add a mentoring component into programming for children, adolescents, and parents: parent mentors for baptismal parents, confirmation mentors, learning-to-pray mentors, justice and service mentors—to name a few possibilities.
- Connect people of different generations who have insights and life experiences that may be helpful to other generations, for example midlife and mature adults helping new parents with financial management and household management, or young people helping older adults navigate the digital and online world.
- Add intergenerational relationship building and activities into social and

recreational activities in the church community, such as the church picnic and after worship gatherings.

3. Design New Intergenerational Initiatives

Designing for intergenerationality through new initiatives is an opportunity to create new programs, activities, or experiences that bring together all the generations for learning, celebrating, praying, reading the Bible, serving and working for justice, worshipping, and more. Consider designing new intergenerational Vacation Bible School, summer camp, service projects and mission trips, retreat experiences, field trips, as well as grandparent and children programming. This is also an opportunity to eliminate those activities that work against intergenerationality and replace them with new initiatives.

Where are the greatest needs and/or opportunities for creating new initiatives that will contribute toward building an intergenerational culture in your church?

- ◆ *Consider celebrating and worshipping:* How can your church involve all generations more fully in Sunday worship and utilize their gifts throughout the service? How can you celebrate life milestones throughout life as intergenerational experiences at church and home?
- ◆ *Consider learning:* How can your church create intergenerational models of learning—weekly, biweekly, monthly, or seasonally—for the whole faith community? How can you create intergenerational models of Vacation Bible School or camp programs or Bible study programs?
- ◆ *Consider praying:* How can your church create prayer experiences, retreat experiences, spiritual formation programs, spiritual direction, and prayer groups that engage multiple generations?
- ◆ *Consider serving:* How can your church offer local and global service projects and mission experiences that engage all the generations

together? How will you provide opportunities for reflection after the service and mission projects?

- ◆ *Consider mentoring:* How can your church offer intergenerational mentoring to accompany people of all ages, especially younger generations and new Christians, in their walk with Jesus as they develop a Christian way of life?

4. Make Intergenerational Learning Central

Intergenerational learning provides a way to educate the whole community, bringing all ages and generations together to learn with and from each other, build community, share faith, pray, celebrate, and practice the Christian faith. The key is that everyone is learning together—young and old, single and married, families with children and empty-nest families, and it involves the whole family—children, parents, grandparents, in a shared experience of the Christian faith. Churches can make intergenerational learning central to lifelong faith formation in at least two ways: as their core faith formation program for all ages, supplemented by age-specific and affinity group faith formation models, or as one element in a lifelong approach with age-specific and affinity group learning.

In the **first approach**, churches make intergenerational learning their core catechetical experience for all ages conducting monthly, biweekly, or weekly intergenerational programs, and then offering a variety of age-group or affinity group programs throughout the month or year to address specific age-appropriate needs. These churches replace or modify their age group programming to place the emphasis on all ages learning together. They often develop a multiyear curriculum for the whole community that can be built around themes from the Bible, the cycle of Sunday lectionary readings, church year feasts and seasons, Christian practices, service and social justice, prayer and spiritual disciplines, core Christian beliefs, and moral teachings.

In the **second approach**, churches implement intergenerational learning in targeted ways, such as, adding an all ages activity after Sunday worship, integrating an intergenerational component into Vacation Bible School, preparing for a sacrament or milestone celebration, learning about an upcoming church year feast or season (Advent-Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost), replacing an age group program with intergenerational learning on the same theme, to name a few examples.

One model of intergenerational learning incorporates three essential elements: all ages learning, in-depth learning in one of three formats, and sharing learning and applying the learning to life. Many intergenerational learning programs are extended-time programs from 1.5 to 3 hours in length, and incorporate the following program elements.

1. A shared meal
2. Shared prayer experience
3. An *All Ages Learning* experience on the topic of the program with content and methods appropriate to an all-ages audience
4. *In-depth Learning* on the topic exploring the content of the program in age appropriate ways. In-depth learning can be conducted in three different ways:
 - a) *Whole group format* provides a series of facilitated learning activities for all ages together with activities appropriate to all ages in intergenerational groupings
 - b) *Age group format* provides parallel, age-appropriate learning for groups at the same time with content and learning activities for age groups and family or parent groups
 - c) *Activity center learning* provides structured all ages and age-specific activity centers to explore and experience the content of the program
5. An *Integration Activity* for all ages to discover how to apply their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or digital formats.

Resource: Cultural Catechesis Strategies

Catechesis engages each distinct culture in the parish by getting to know deeply the culture of persons, understanding how the Gospel and the faith is already present in each culture, recognizing the significance of popular piety as it celebrates the faith, and developing catechesis that speaks to the needs and spirituality of each culture.

Catechesis communicates the Christian message through patterns of thought, history, culture, and experience so that various cultures perceive the good news as addressed to them, in their own uniqueness and concrete situations. This includes inspiring identity and pride in the riches of the cultures in order to bring them forth as an offering of gifts to the larger community, as well as developing and using culturally appropriate catechetical methods, tools, texts, and resources

Catechesis is responsive to the uniqueness of communities by incorporating cultural festivals and holidays, traditions, values, customs, history, language, and practices, *and* integrating the unique culture with the Catholic faith and teachings. Specifically catechesis,

- ◆ Demonstrates respect for cultural identity by understanding and appreciating the cultural identity and heritage – traditions and languages – of ethnic communities.
- ◆ Incorporates cultural elements, traditions, and symbols and makes connections between the cultural background and the teachings of the Catholic faith.
- ◆ Incorporates culturally relevant stories, lives of the saints and holy people, and creative expression – art, music, dance, and other forms – to communicate the Gospel and Catholic tradition. Storytelling and narrative approaches are powerful tools for transmitting faith.
- ◆ Incorporates symbols, art, music, rituals, and popular devotions of ethnic communities in formation. Celebrates feast days and Catholic traditions that are significant to each ethnic community.

Catechesis recognizes that cultural communities may have distinct learning styles and preferences, and utilizes educational methods best suited to the learning styles and preferences of cultural groups.

- ◆ Design learning experiences that reflect the cultural backgrounds and identities of the learners. Incorporate culturally relevant examples, materials, and activities that resonate with the learners.
- ◆ Ensure that the catechetical materials, methods, and settings are inclusive of different cultures.
- ◆ Provide a safe and welcoming environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected.
- ◆ Use language and communication styles that are respectful of different cultures. Be aware of potential language barriers and adapt your communication to promote understanding and engagement.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for people to share their cultural knowledge and experiences. This empowers them to contribute to the learning process and helps build a sense of ownership in their learning.
- ◆ Acknowledge the cultural contexts of learners and strive to avoid cultural biases or assumptions. Respect the cultural nuances and practices that influence how individuals perceive and engage with religious teachings.
- ◆ Relate religious teachings and concepts to the cultural experiences and familiar to learners. This makes the learning more relatable and applicable to their lives.
- ◆ Encourage dialogue and sharing of spiritual insights across cultural boundaries. This fosters mutual understanding and appreciation among participants from various backgrounds.
- ◆ Create opportunities for learners to engage in open and respectful discussions about how their cultural backgrounds intersect with their faith.

Resource: Learning Methods for Catechesis

Learning Formats

Catechetical programming can utilize a variety of formats for learning—on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the church, in the community—delivered in physical gathered settings and online settings. This approach provides a way to offer a diversity of programs in different formats and to offer one program or experience in multiple formats, expanding the scope of faith formation offerings and providing people with more options to participate.

- ◆ **On Your Own** formats provide maximum flexibility for the learner—when to learn, how to learn, where to learn, and what to learn. With the increasing number and variety of books and printed resources, audio podcasts, video presentations, video programs, online courses, and online resource centers, independent learning offers a 24/7 approach to faith growth and learning.
- ◆ **Mentoring** provides a one-to-one relationship that can be utilized as an individual program option, such as a spiritual director/guide with an individual, or as a component in a larger program, such as having mentors for each person in the Christian initiation process or for those who want to explore Jesus and Catholicism after leaving church earlier in life. Mentoring works older to younger, but also younger to older as in the case of young people mentoring adults.
- ◆ **At Home** formats provide individuals and whole families with experiences, programs, activities, and resources designed for use at home or in daily life. This can include a wide variety of print, audio, video, digital media, and online programs and resources.
- ◆ **Small Group** formats provide lots of flexibility in content, schedule, and location (online, home, coffee shops, at church, and more).

Groups can meet at times and places that best fit members' lives. Small groups create an accepting environment in which new relationships can be formed. Small group programming can take many different forms: discipleship or faith sharing groups, Bible study groups, practice-focused groups (prayer, service), support groups, study-action groups, and more.

- ◆ **Large Group** formats provide a way to engage a wider audience with programming and experiences that can be utilized for a variety of theological, biblical, and life-centered themes and topics. Large group programming can take many different forms: one-session and multi-session programs, speaker series, workshops, conferences, retreats, intergenerational programs and events, and more.

Learning Methods

Catechetical programming can utilize the latest research on effective learning to utilize methods that are most effective in promoting learning. Several of the methods may be more effective with younger generations, but to some extent each method is effective for all ages. (See Principle #11 in Part A for complete descriptions.)

- ◆ Personalized Learning
- ◆ Active Learning and Engagement
- ◆ Practice-Oriented Learning
- ◆ Collaborative Learning
- ◆ Project-Based Learning
- ◆ Multiple Intelligences
- ◆ Multisensory, Multimodal Learning
- ◆ Microlearning
- ◆ Storytelling
- ◆ Elaboration
- ◆ Dual Coding
- ◆ Feedback

Digitally Enhanced Learning Approaches

Hybrid Learning

The digital transformation has created more options for catechetical programming which can now be designed in three modes: ***gathered physical settings*** (churches, homes, camps, retreat centers, community places, colleges or seminaries), ***online settings*** (websites, social media, online communities, online classrooms, and more), and ***hybrid settings*** that combine physical gathering with online content and experiences. One program can now be designed and delivered in three modes – gathered in-person, online, and hybrid – dramatically increasing the number of opportunities for faith formation for people but not increasing the number of unique programs that a church creates.

With the abundance of digital tools and media, churches can now design online models of faith formation by producing digital content, offering online courses and webinars, creating playlists of curated resources (courses, videos, readings, podcasts, and more), streaming live programs and presentations, providing access to online courses on a variety of topics developed by colleges and seminaries, and curating resources for the church year season and special events.

Hybrid models of catechesis hold together two important values: 1) the importance of in-person relationships and faith-forming experiences and 2) the importance of being responsive to the complexity of people's lives and their religious-spiritual needs. Hybrid models expand opportunities for everyone. Churches can become much more intentional about when, where, how, and why they gather because they can now integrate online with in-person faith forming. The key to hybrid catechesis is the integration of in-person faith forming with online faith forming into one holistic integrated experience. A program design can begin online and then move to in-person and back to online or it can begin in-person and continue online.

Hybrid programming can be synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (on your own time) – thereby expanding the opportunities for people to engage in faith forming experiences that are responsive to their time, commitments, and availability. Churches can deliver synchronous faith formation using physical gatherings, live streaming, video conferencing, online courses, and online small groups. They can deliver asynchronous faith formation using online playlists, video and audio programs, online discussion groups, online learning platforms, websites, and more.

One way to develop a hybrid model is by beginning with in-person faith formation and then deepen it with online faith formation. We can extend the theme of an in-person event or program by curating a variety of faith forming experience that provide more depth and application of the theme through images, video, audio, readings, etc. We can deliver the content using a multi-media newsletter, social media posts, and/or a playlist on a website. Here are several examples you can adapt. In addition, consider designing programs like mission trips, vacation Bible school, and summer camps into hybrid models.

Family or Intergenerational Program

- Week #1. Learning program at church
- Week #2. At-home learning with online playlist
- Week #3. Age groups learning session at church on the theme of the month
- Week #4. At-home learning with online playlist

In-Person & Online Formation

- Meet in-person once per month (or every other week).
- Engage in online faith formation for the other weeks using a playlist on the theme.

In-Person & Online & Video Meetings

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program.
- Week #2: Engage in online faith forming experiences using a playlist on the theme.
- Week #3: Continue with the playlist learning on the theme.

- Week #4: Conduct a video meeting (Zoom) for small groups or age groups or families to discuss and apply the online learning.

In-Person & Live Streamed or Video & Online

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program.
- Week #2: Engage in online faith forming experiences using a playlist on the theme.
- Week #3: Conduct a livestream presentation or demonstration or prerecorded video (using Zoom, Facebook Live, or YouTube Live) on the theme of the month's program.
- Week #4: Continue with the playlist learning on the theme.

A second way to develop a hybrid model is to begin with online faith formation, leading to in-person experiences. This approach is known as *flipped learning* in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space online, and the group space is transformed into a dynamic interactive learning environment where the leader/teacher guides participants as they creatively discuss, practice, and apply the content. Here is an outline of a four-week model that can be applied to children and youth programs, as well as adult Bible studies and short courses.

- Week #1: Engage in online learning using Playlist #1 on the theme.
- Week #2: Participate in a small group gathering to discuss and apply the learning (in-person or through video conferencing)
- Week #3: Engage in online learning using Playlist #2 on the theme.
- Week #4: Participate in a small group gathering to discuss and apply the learning (in-person or through video conferencing)

The Flipped Learning Model is very helpful when it is difficult to gather people, such as preparation for a sacrament or milestone. We can *prepare* people online with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources); then *engage* them in-person for the event or program; and *sustain and apply* the experience through online faith formation.

Online-Only Learning

Churches can develop fully online programming (asynchronous) by offering independent (on your own) faith formation using the abundance of online programs and resources for all ages, especially adults. Leaders can curate courses and resources to organize playlists or webpages with self-directed learning topics like Scripture, prayer and spiritual formation, social justice issues, theological themes, morality and ethics, and much more.

Churches can develop a complete online faith formation experience with content and experiences, such as an online Advent or Lent curriculum that connects the seasonal events at church with online content for experiencing the season in daily and home life. The online experiences can include prayer activities, daily Bible readings, daily devotions, study resources, videos, and service activities.

Churches can use video conferencing to create webinars, such as a monthly theology presentation for adults or a monthly one-hour parent formation. A parent webinar series can be designed around the knowledge, skills, and practices for faith forming and effective parenting, and use guest presenters to conduct the webinars. A church could blend the monthly webinars with one or two parent dinners (childcare or parallel children's programming provided) during the year for parents to gather in-person to meet each other and discuss what they are learning through webinars. Here are two examples of programming that are primarily online with interactive features:

Online Only

- Week 1: Livestream (or video recording) of the class, program, or presentation. (Synchronous)
- Weeks#2 – 3: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the content/activities (Asynchronous)
- Week 4: Facebook Group (or online learning platform) for engaging people in discussion and presenting projects. (Synchronous or asynchronous)

Online with Interaction

- Week 1: Livestream of the class, program, or presentation (Synchronous)
- Week 2: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the content/activities (Asynchronous)
- Week 3: Zoom meetings for small groups or family groupings (Synchronous)
- Week 4: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the activities/content (Asynchronous)

Add an interactive feature by using a Facebook group (or online learning platform) to engage people in discussion, sharing learning, and presenting projects.

One Program, Multiple Programming Models

With multiple ways to program in physical, online, and hybrid spaces, one program or experience can be designed in all three spaces, increasing the availability to a wider audience of people. The choice is no longer whether to participate or not, but which option best suits a person's time, schedule, and learning preferences. Here is an example of a program that is conducted in multiple formats – same program, multiple ways to experience it.

1. *Large group physical gathering:* People gather at church and a leader facilitates the program—making a presentation (or having a guest presenter) or showing a video, providing time for people to read and reflect, and guiding small groups in discussing the content.
2. *Small group physical gathering:* People gather in small groups in homes or coffee shops or other conducive setting, watch the video, read and reflect on the content, and discuss the content.
3. *Small group hybrid:* People watch the video on their own, then gather online in a small group (Zoom or other video conferencing platform) to reflect and discuss the content.

4. *Online with interaction:* People complete the sessions on their own and share reflections in a Facebook group (asynchronous) or meet on Zoom to discuss the program (synchronous).
5. *Online independent:* People complete the learning program on their own.

The “one program, multiple models” approach can be used in designing programming for families and all ages. It dramatically increases catechetical offerings and people can choose what, when, how, and where they will learn.

Envisioning Catechesis with Families

Family Catechesis in the Directory for Catechesis (224-235)

Catechesis in the Family

The family is a proclamation of faith in that it is the natural place in which faith can be lived in a simple and spontaneous manner. It “has a unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values. On this human base, Christian initiation is more profound:

- ◆ the awakening of the sense of God
- ◆ the first steps in prayer
- ◆ education of the moral conscience
- ◆ formation in Christian sense of human love, understood as a reflection of the love of God

It is a Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more ongoing and daily than structured into periods. (227)

Catechesis with the Family

The Church proclaims the Gospel to the family. . . . At the present time, catechesis with families is permeated by the kerygma because “In and among families the Gospel message should always resound . . .” . . . Moreover, in the dynamic of missionary conversion **catechesis with families** is characterized by a style of humble understanding and by a proclamation that is concrete, not theoretical and detached from personal problems. (230)

The Catechesis of the Family

The family proclaims the Gospel. As a domestic church . . . the Christian family takes part in the Church’s mission and is therefore an agent of catechesis. “The work of handing on the faith to children, in the sense of facilitating its expression and growth, helps the whole family in its evangelizing mission. It naturally begins to spread the faith to all around them, even outside the family circle.” **The catechesis of the family** is therefore every specific contribution that Christian families make, with the

sensibility proper to them, to the various journeys of faith that the community proposes. (231)

Pastoral Guidelines (232)

- a. **The catechesis of young people and adults who are preparing for marriage.** On these journeys of faith, gradual and continuous, following the inspiration of the catechumenate, “priority should be given—along with a renewed proclamation of the **kerygma**—to an attractive and helpful presentation information that can help couples to live the rest of their lives together . . . a kind of ‘initiation’ to the sacrament of matrimony, providing couples with the help they need to receive the sacrament worthily and to make a solid beginning of life as a family.” It is a good idea to stop using the name of marriage preparation courses, in order to restore to this journey its authentic meaning of formation and catechesis.
- b. **The catechesis of young married couples** is the catechesis offered in mystagogic form to new spouses after marriage, in order to lead them to the discovery of what they have become thanks to the sacrament that has been celebrated.
- c. **The catechesis of parents who are asking to have their children baptized:** the community, in the person of the catechists, should take care to welcome, listen to, and understand the reasons for the parents’ request, and provide an appropriate pathway for them to reawaken the grace of the gift of faith that they have received.
- d. **The catechesis of parents whose children are making the journey of Christian initiation:** the community fosters the involvement of parents in the children’s journey of initiation, which for some of them is a moment to deepen their faith and for others is authentic space for its first proclamation.

e. **Intergenerational catechesis** envisions the journey of faith as a formative experience not aimed at a particular age group but shared among different generations within a family or a community, on the pathway marked out by the liturgical year. This initiative makes the most of the exchange of the experience of faith among the generations, taking inspiration from the first Christian communities.

f. **Catechesis in groups of spouses and in groups of families** is carried out by the married couples themselves. These journeys of catechesis are intended to develop a conjugal and family spirituality capable of restoring strength and vitality to married life, rediscovering the spousal dimension of the covenant between God and humanity and the role of the family in building the kingdom of God.

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Envisioning & Designing Catechesis with Families

How would you envision and design catechesis with families around the specific life stage needs of families with young children grade school children, young adolescents, and older adolescents that is informed by the vision and practices of the *Directory for Catechesis*, insights on forming faith from religious research, principles of effective learning from the learning sciences, and contemporary theory and practice in faith formation?

Preparation

1. **Review** the challenges described in **Part 2. The New Context for Catechesis Today** that apply directly to families. Pay special attention to: #1-diversity in religious and spiritual lives of people, #2-holistic, #3-religious socialization, #6-contemporary family life, #7-cultural diversity, and #10-mental health.
2. **Review** the **12 Principles and Practices of Catechesis** in Part 1 as a guide to developing new approaches for catechesis with families. Pay special attention to #2-holistic, #3 baptismal catechumenate, #4-intergenerational, #7-diverse religious-spiritual lives, #8-culture, #11-effective learning, and #12-digital approaches.

Envisioning Adaptive Innovations for Catechesis with Families

The vision and practices in the *Directory for Catechesis* and the new context (challenges) for catechesis today call for **adaptive responses** – new ways of thinking and acting – that envision new catechetical models and approaches. Technical solutions in catechesis– using existing practices and approaches – are not well suited to the new context of catechesis today. Adaptive responses are flexible and dynamic responses to changing circumstances, involving the ability to learn, innovate, and adjust behaviors or strategies to effectively address new challenges or situations.

The following **What If** ideas flow from the vision and practices in the *Directory* and are a response to the challenges of the new context. They are offered to stimulate your imagination and begin the process of envisioning adaptive responses for catechesis with families.

- **Review** the four strategies in the **Intergenerational Catechesis** section.
- **Review** the **Methods and Approaches** for design ideas to assist you in developing new approaches.

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What would it be like if catechesis with families . . .

Parents

1. **Focuses on parents as the most significant influence on the religious and spiritual outcomes of young people** by:

- ◆ Nurturing and encouraging parents' personal faith and practice
- ◆ Developing skills and practices for building close and warm parent-child relationships
- ◆ Encouraging and supporting parent involvement in church life and Sunday Mass
- ◆ Strengthening their role in modeling and teaching a religious faith
- ◆ Equipping parents (and grandparents) with faith forming skills and practices

2. **Addresses the diverse motivations of parents** for support, education, and formation by providing meaningful and relevant opportunities that speak to their motivations, for example:

- ◆ *Transmission of values:* Many parents are motivated by the desire to pass on their religious values, beliefs, and traditions to their children. They see religious learning as a way to ensure that their children share their faith.
- ◆ *Sense of identity:* Parents often view religious learning as a means of helping their children develop a strong sense of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage.
- ◆ *Moral and ethical development:* Religious teachings often emphasize moral and ethical values. Parents are motivated by the belief that these teachings can help instill positive values and guide their children's behavior.
- ◆ *Connection to community:* Parents are motivated to involve their children in religious learning to connect them with a supportive and like-minded community of faith.

- ◆ *Future well-being:* Some parents are motivated by the belief that religious learning will contribute to their children's overall well-being and happiness in life.
- ◆ *Respect for cultural heritage:* Parents who value their cultural heritage may be motivated to provide their children with a connection to their ancestral roots through religious learning.
- ◆ *Character development:* Parents often see religious teachings as a way to help shape their children's character, fostering qualities like empathy, compassion, and humility.
- ◆ *Guidance for challenges:* Some parents are motivated by the belief that religious teachings can provide guidance and comfort for their children as they face life's challenges.
- ◆ *Community and Social Engagement:* Parents may see religious learning as a way for their children to become active participants in their religious community and engage in communal activities.
- ◆ *Parent-child bond:* Engaging in religious learning together can create meaningful opportunities for parents to bond with their children and share experiences.

3. **Equips parents with the knowledge and skills for passing on religious faith and practice** so they can incorporate faith practices into the day-to-day religious practices of the family. Raising religious children is primarily a practice-centered process, not chiefly a didactic teaching program. Certain faith practices make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of children and adolescents at home, especially:

- ◆ Reading the Bible as a family and encouraging young people to read the Bible regularly
- ◆ Praying together as a family and encouraging young people to pray personally

- ◆ Serving people in need as a family and supporting service activities by young people
- ◆ Eating together as a family
- ◆ Having family conversations about faith
- ◆ Talking about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts
- ◆ Ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences
- ◆ Celebrating holidays and church year seasons at home
- ◆ Celebrating milestones and sacraments in the lives of individuals and the whole family
- ◆ Providing moral instruction
- ◆ Being involved in a faith community and participating regularly in Sunday Mass as a family

4. **Equips parents with the knowledge and skills for developing quality relationships** with their young people and applying styles of parenting that make a difference in faith transmission.

- ◆ Cultivating relationships of warmth and love which makes everything else possible
- ◆ Balancing religious firmness with religious flexibility in their parenting so as to maintain more positive relationships with their children
- ◆ Transmitting their faith to their children while honoring their agency by teaching principles and values, providing expectations of religious participation and responsibility, not forcing faith, allowing exploration and mistakes, and showing respect for children's views
- ◆ Talking about religious matters during the week – when parents talk about their religion in personal terms that sends a strong message to their kids that it's really important to them
- ◆ Practicing an "authoritative" parenting style (as opposed to authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved style) by maintaining and enforcing high standards and expectations for their children while simultaneously expressing a lot of open warmth and connection to their children, and

confidently giving them enough space to work out their own views and values

- ◆ Listening more and preaching less. It is a more satisfying and successful religious and relational experience when the conversations are more child/youth-centered than parent-centered

5. **Equips parents with the most important knowledge and skills for effective parenting,** including:

- ◆ Expressing care to young people by listening to them, being dependable, encouraging them, and make them feel known and valued
- ◆ Challenging young people by expecting them to do their best and live up to their potential
- ◆ Providing support for young people by encouraging their efforts and achievements and guiding them to learn and grow
- ◆ Treating young people with respect, hearing their voices, and including them in decisions that affect them
- ◆ Inspiring young people to see possibilities for their future, expose them to new experiences and places, and connect them to people who can help them grow
- ◆ Demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach
- ◆ Creating a warm, caring supportive family environment
- ◆ Practicing effective communication skills
- ◆ Managing screen time and social media use
- ◆ Learning effective discipline practices
- ◆ Creating a warm, caring supportive family

6. **Implements a parent plan with a life-stage progression** of workshops, webinars, classes, activities, support groups, and resources from infancy through the end of the adolescent years that provides parent faith formation, equips parents to be faith formers of their young people, and develops the knowledge and skills for effective parenting. With new digital tools and media, churches can reach

today's parents and families anywhere and anytime with engaging and interactive content. Each new stage of a parent plan could be introduced through a variety of educational opportunities and then sustained through support groups, continuing education, and online resources and activities.

Life Stage Plan

- ◆ Birth: parenting young children
- ◆ Start of school: parenting grade school children
- ◆ Middle school: parenting young adolescents
- ◆ High school: parenting older adolescents
- ◆ Graduation from high school: parenting emerging adults

7. **Provides parent mentors (or coaches)** who can offer guidance and support for parents and the whole family at each stage of life from birth/baptism through the end of adolescence. Mentors can accompany parents and families in their spiritual lives, guiding them in growing in their relationship with God and learning more about the faith. Mentoring can be life-cycle specific with mentors who focus on children or adolescents. Parents mentors can be drawn from the grandparent generation who are actively engaged in church and bring decades of parenting and family life experiences. Churches can provide training for mentors (mentoring skills, understanding today's family, learning how to access online resources and activities).

8. **Offer affinity groups for parents** (in online and in physical settings) to provide opportunities for parents with children in the same age group to talk about parenting, get information and encouragement, and discuss family life issues and challenges. Churches can offer groups for mothers, fathers, divorced parents, parents in blended families, parents of children with disabilities, and more.

Families

9. **Employs the process of the catechumenal model in sacramental preparation** for Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation using a three movement process of preparation, celebration, and mystagogy. Using the catechumenal process, catechesis with parents and families can be *personalized* around their religious faith and practices today by catechesis designed for people: 1) who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community, 2) who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives, 3) who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion, and 4) who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God or religion in their lives .

- ◆ Preparation
 - A first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) and introduction to the Christian life – especially for parents who have been minimally involved in their faith life and practice
 - Catechesis on the sacrament to be celebrated
 - Celebration of liturgies, rituals, and symbols for the sacrament
 - Engagement with a community of faith and support – other parents or families, the intergenerational faith community
 - Mentoring by members of the faith community
- ◆ Celebration of the Sacrament
- ◆ Continued Growth and Accompaniment (Mystagogy)
 - Parent formation and family catechesis
 - Continued mentoring
 - Continued engagement with a community of faith and support

10. **Engages the whole family in faith formation experiences** (parents, young people, and even grandparents) as a primary model for catechesis (monthly or twice-a-month); as

seasonal programming, such as Advent and Lent; as sacramental preparation for Reconciliation and First Eucharist, and more. Family catechesis models usually incorporate the following elements:

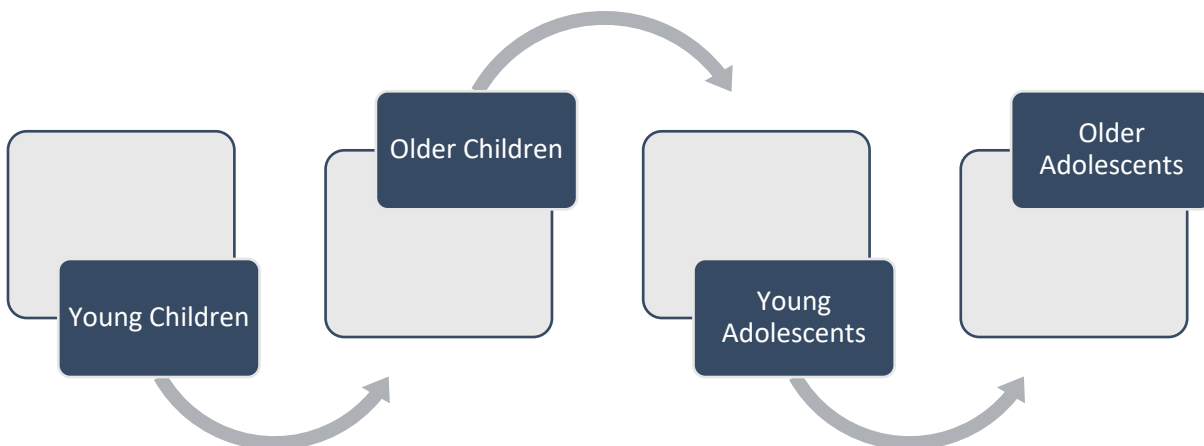
1. A shared meal
2. Shared prayer experience
3. A whole family learning experience on the topic of the program with content and methods appropriate to an all-ages audience
4. In-depth learning on the topic which can be conducted in three different ways: a) the whole family learning together with activities appropriate to all ages; b) parallel groups learning at the same time with content and learning activities for age groups and a parent group; and c) learning activity centers with whole family and age-specific learning activities at a variety of stations or centers
5. A closing whole family activity to discover how to apply their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or digital formats.

11. **Develops family life skills** by focusing on the types of skill-building that will strengthen family life, and parent-child/teen relationships, such as communicating effectively, discussing tough topics, making decisions and solving

problems as a family, learning how to build strong relationships and express care for each other, supporting each other (encouraging and praising, giving feedback, standing up for each other), and treating each with respect and dignity.

12. **Implements an intentional, continuous plan for forming the faith of families** for young children, grade school children, young adolescents, and older adolescents with age-appropriate programs, activities, and resource.

- ◆ *Family faith practices at home*: reading the Bible, praying, serving, working for justice, caring for creation, eating together, having family faith conversations, providing moral instruction, and more
- ◆ *Celebrating milestones*: ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences
- ◆ *Celebrating church year seasons at home and church*—at church and home: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and more
- ◆ *Parenting practices and skills* appropriate to the stage of life
- ◆ *Parenting for faith* programs, videos, and activities
- ◆ *Family-centered gatherings and programs at church*
- ◆ *Intergenerational faith forming experiences*



Envisioning Catechesis with Children

Catechesis with Children in the Directory for Catechesis (236-243)

It is from the tenderest age that the child that the child must be helped to perceive and to develop the sense of God and the natural intuition of his(her) existence. Anthropology and pedagogy confirm, in fact, that the child is capable of relating to God and that his(her) questions about the meaning of life arise even where the parents are hardly attentive to religious education. Children have the capacity to pose meaningful questions relative to creation, to God's identity, to the reason for good and evil, and are capable of rejoicing before the mystery of life and love. (236)

Early childhood, or pre-school age, is a definitive time for the discovery of religious reality, during which children learn from their parents and from the environment of life an attitude of openness and acceptance or of aversion and exclusion toward God When from an early age the child is in contact, in the family or other surroundings in which he(she) grow, with different aspects of the Christian life, the child learns and internalizes an initial form of **religious socialization** in preparation for the forms that come later for the development of Christian moral conscience. . . . Catechesis at this age is a matter of first evangelization and proclamation of the faith in an eminently educational form, attentive to developing a sense of trust, of gratuitousness, of self-giving, of invocation and participation, as a human condition onto which is grafted the salvific power of faith. (239)

Middle childhood (ages 6-10), according to a long-standing tradition in many countries, is the period in which Christian initiation begun with baptism is completed in the parish. The overall itinerary of Christian initiation is meant to convey the main events of salvation history that will be the object of more in-depth reflection as the child gets older, and to gradually make him(her) aware of his(her) identity as the one who has been baptized. The catechesis of

Christian initiation is aimed at the initial understanding of the faith (first proclamation) and with the initiatory process introduces the child into the life of the Church and the celebration of the sacraments. Catechesis, not fragmentary but organized along an itinerary that presents in their essential form all the mysteries of the Christian life and their bearing on the moral conscience, is also attentive to the existential conditions of children and to their questions of meaning. The journey of initiation provides, in fact, for a teaching of the truths of faith that is reinforced with the witness of the community participation in the liturgy, the encounter with the word of Jesus in Sacred Scripture, the beginning of the exercise of charity. (240)

*The need to make the process of Christian initiation an authentic experiential introduction to the entirety of the life of faith leads to looking at the catechumenate as an indispensable source of inspiration. It is entirely appropriate to **configure Christian initiation according to the formative model of the catechumenate** but with criteria, contents, and methodologies adapted for children. The gradation of the process of Christian initiation for the young inspired by the catechumenate provides for times, rites of passage, and active participation at the Eucharistic table that constitutes the culmination of the initiatory process. In carrying it out, catechists are committed to overturning the traditional vision that predominantly sees that child as the object of the pastoral care and attention of the community to adopting the perspective that educates him(her) gradually, according to his(her) capacities, to be an active participation inside and outside the community. Catechumenal inspiration also makes it possible to reconsider the primary role of the family and of the entire community with regard to children, activating processes of reciprocal evangelization among the different ecclesial subjects involved. (242)*

Envisioning & Designing Catechesis with Children

How would you envision and design catechesis with young children (0-5) and their parents and grade school children (6-10) and their parents, informed by the vision and practices of the *Directory for Catechesis*, insights on forming faith from religious research, principles of effective learning from the learning sciences, and contemporary theory and practice in faith formation?

Preparation

1. **Review** the challenges described in **Part 2. The New Context for Catechesis Today** that apply directly to children. Pay special attention to: #1-diversity in religious and spiritual lives of people, #3-religious socialization, #6-contemporary family life, #7-cultural diversity, and #10-mental health.
2. **Review** the **12 Principles and Practices of Catechesis** as a guide to developing new approaches for catechesis with children. Pay special attention to #2-holistic, #3-baptismal catechumenate, #4- intergenerational, #7-diverse religious-spiritual lives, #8-culture, #10-motivation, #11-effective learning, and #12-digital approaches.

Envisioning Adaptive Innovations for Catechesis with Children

The vision and practices in the *Directory for Catechesis* and the new context (challenges) for catechesis today call for **adaptive responses** – new ways of thinking and acting –that envision new catechetical models and approaches. Technical solutions in catechesis– using existing practices and approaches – are not well suited to the new context of catechesis today. Adaptive responses are flexible and dynamic responses to changing circumstances, involving the ability to learn, innovate, and adjust behaviors or strategies to effectively address new challenges or situations.

The following **What If** ideas flow from the vision and practices in the *Directory* and are a response to the challenges of the new context. They are offered to stimulate your imagination and begin the process of envisioning adaptive responses for catechesis with children.

- **Review** the following strategies in the **Catechesis with Families** section (before the children’s section):
 - **Parent Formation:** Ideas #3, #4, and #5
 - **Sacramental Formation:** Idea #6
 - **Whole Family Experiences:** #10 and #11
- **Review** the four strategies in the **Intergenerational Catechesis** section to bring an intergenerational focus to children’s catechesis.
- **Review** the **Methods and Approaches** for design ideas to assist you in developing new approaches.

What would it be like if catechesis with children . . .

1. **Incorporates the ways that Generation Alpha (2012 -) children learn into all catechetical programming and experiences.** While the Alpha generation is still relatively young, their learning preferences are still emerging and evolving. Based on research in the learning sciences and current trends and observations, there are characteristics that can guide effective learning approaches for the Alpha generation.

What would it look like if catechesis with children is designed and conducted based on these learning strategies?

- ◆ *Personalization and adaptability:* Alpha children benefit from personalized learning pathways tailored to their individual needs and interests.
- ◆ *Incorporate technology thoughtfully:* Leverage technology to connect with them, but be mindful of its potential pitfalls. Use interactive apps and educational games to provide information, foster discussions, and create virtual communities.
- ◆ *Short attention spans:* The abundance of information and stimuli in the digital age has contributed to shorter attention spans among Alpha children. Learning experiences that are concise, visually appealing, and interactive can help maintain their focus.
- ◆ *Multimodal learning:* Alpha learners respond well to diverse forms of media and content. Utilize a mix of text, images, videos, and audio to cater to their different learning preferences.
- ◆ *Hands-on and experiential learning:* Alpha learners benefit from hands-on and experiential learning opportunities. Incorporate practical activities, experiments, and real-world experiences to deepen their understanding.
- ◆ *Visual and spatial learning:* Visual content, such as infographics, diagrams, and animations, can be particularly effective in

conveying information to Alpha children, as they are drawn to visually stimulating materials.

- ◆ *Collaborative learning:* The Alpha generation is growing up in a highly connected world. Encourage collaborative learning experiences, both in-person and through digital platforms, to promote teamwork and communication skills.
- ◆ *Interactive:* Interactive experiences can foster better understanding and engagement. Encourage discussions, questions, and activities that allow them to apply their faith to real-life situations.
- ◆ *Encourage curiosity and exploration:* Alpha children are naturally curious and eager to explore. Create a learning environment that fosters curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- ◆ *Encourage critical thinking:* Foster their ability to think critically about their faith, beliefs, and the world around them. Encourage them to ask questions and explore different perspectives.
- ◆ *Emphasize emotional intelligence:* Foster emotional intelligence and social skills through activities that promote empathy, understanding, and emotional expression.
- ◆ *Play-based learning:* For the youngest Alpha learners, play-based learning can be an effective approach to engage their imagination and cognitive development.
- ◆ *Storytelling:* Stories are a powerful tool for teaching moral and spiritual lessons. Share age-appropriate stories from the Bible that resonate with their experiences.
- ◆ *Address difficult questions:* Alpha Generation children are exposed to diverse perspectives and challenging questions early on. Address their doubts and questions in an open, respectful, and age-appropriate manner.

2. **Implements a comprehensive plan for forming the faith of families with young children** (after Baptism) with age-appropriate programs, activities, and resource to guide the family from birth through the start of school (0-5 years old). Every six months, from birth to five years old, parents can receive age-appropriate faith forming resources to use with their children (print, audio, video, digital) and parenting tips for the new phase of their child's growth, published on the family website and communicated via email or text.

- ◆ *Faith practices* - Bible stories, prayers, meal rituals, values
- ◆ *Seasons of the year* activities
- ◆ *Milestones* - birthdays, baptism anniversaries, "first" milestones, entry to preschool and kindergarten
- ◆ *Parenting knowledge* - understanding young child development and practices for effective parenting of young children
- ◆ *Parenting for faith skills* - reading a Bible story, praying with a young child, having faith conversations
- ◆ *Online group* for parents of young children
- ◆ *Mentors* from the church community (e.g., grandparents) to accompany parents on the journey from Baptism to start of school
- ◆ *Gatherings for parents and for families* at church

3. **Employs the process of the catechumenal model in sacramental preparation for First Eucharist** using a three movement process of preparation, celebration, and mystagogy. Using the catechumenal process, catechesis with parents and families can be *personalized* around their religious faith and practices today by catechesis designed for people: 1) who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community, 2) who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives, 3) who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion, and 4) who are unaffiliated and have left involvement

in organized religion, and have little need for God or religion in their lives .

- ◆ Preparation
 - A first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) and introduction to the Christian life – especially for parents who have been minimally involved in their faith life and practice
 - Catechesis on the sacrament of Eucharist
 - Celebration of liturgies, rituals, and symbols for the sacrament
 - Engagement with a community of faith and support – other parents or families, the intergenerational faith community
 - Mentoring by members of the faith community
- ◆ Celebration of the Sacrament
- ◆ Continued Growth and Accompaniment (Mystagogy)
 - Parent formation and family catechesis
 - Continued mentoring
 - Continued engagement with a community of faith and support

4. **Provides a holistic curriculum for grade school children that provides a rich menu of faith forming experiences each year** that includes *intergenerational, family, and children programs and activities* and incorporates all *five elements (tasks) of catechesis*: knowledge of the faith, celebration of the mystery (liturgies and seasons of the liturgical year), forming for life in Christ (moral life), prayer, and active engagement in community life.

A menu approach has 1) a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources; 2) a variety of formats—on your own, mentored, small groups, and large groups; 3) a variety of times to participate and scheduling options (synchronous and asynchronous); and 4) hybrid, online, and gathered modes of programming.

A menu of faith forming experiences can be tailored to the faith and practice of the children and their parents: 1) who have a

vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community, 2) who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives, 3) who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion, and 4) who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God in their lives.

A menu approach provides a way to structure learning with experiences, programs, and activities designed to promote growth in faith for people who want to grow deeper in the faith, for those who are inquiring or aren't sure the Christian faith is for them, and for those who don't need God or religion in their lives.

Families with children could select from a menu of faith formation experiences to create their plan for the year or for a season of the year. The menu would include:

- ◆ *Intergenerational* faith-forming experiences: Sunday Mass, seasonal celebrations, intergenerational learning, mentoring relationship with older members, ministry opportunities in the church, and more
- ◆ *Family* faith-forming experiences: whole family programs at church, grandparent–grandchild activities, activities for faith practices at home, and more
- ◆ *Age group* faith forming experiences: classes, courses, retreats, Vacation Bible School, Christmas play, service activities, and more

Churches could establish participation guidelines for families and children, so that each year or season they would select a certain number of intergenerational experiences, family at-home activities, and children's programs at church.

The menu approach puts the learner (families and children) at the center of faith formation

and gives them choice over what and when and where they will learn. It moves away from one-size-fits-all catechesis for children. A menu approach provides the opportunity for variety, choice, and personalization.

5. **Engages grade school children and their parents (and grandparents) in a family catechesis program** as a primary model for children's catechesis (monthly or twice-a-month), addressing all of the foundational themes and topics of children's catechesis. Family catechesis models usually incorporate the following elements:
 1. A shared meal
 2. Shared prayer experience
 3. A whole family learning experience on the topic of the program with content and methods appropriate to an all-ages audience
 4. In-depth learning on the topic can be conducted in three different ways: a) the whole family learning together with activities appropriate to all ages; b) parallel groups learning at the same time with content and learning activities for age groups and a parent group; and c) learning activity centers with whole family and age-specific learning activities at a variety of stations or centers
 5. A closing whole family activity to discover how to apply their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or digital formats.
6. **Provides environments that allow children to encounter the living God directly.** Children's relationship with God is shaped and formed by the way they experience God through goodness, beauty, wonder, and awe; through relationships with other people, nature, art, wonder, and mystery; through the woundedness of human experience that opens them to God's healing presence; through Jesus' life and how he modeled the way God intends us to live. Parishes can provide safe and trusting environments for children to

experience prayer in a variety of forms and settings, participate actively in Sunday Mass, to experience the liturgical seasons, to celebrate rituals and sacraments, to participate in retreat experiences, to serve people in need, care for creation, and more. Children can experience God through hands-on participation in the life, ministries, and activities of the parish community according to their abilities. Catechesis guides children's participation by providing them with resources—language, practices, rituals, habits—that enable them to participate with all their senses in the life of the community. This restores the connection between learning and practice—precisely what is missing in the traditional model of classroom learning, where the material presented stands divorced from the practice of faith. It also overcomes the age segregation so prevalent in churches today.

7. **Creates safe spaces for children to wonder, discover, and make meaning.** Catechesis seeks to create a space in which children can share their stories, practice wondering, use their imaginations, and learn from the entire community. Rather than attempting to give children the faith, creating spaces for wonder, discovery, and meaning making nurtures the spiritual presence that is already in the lives of children. Nurturing spiritual growth in children includes recognizing the Divine presence in their lives. It involves nurturing the spiritual growth process and guiding all children as they make meaning from their experiences and relationships. Spiritual growth honors the individual child and affirms their particular developmental process.

Catechesis helps children to know, interpret, and incarnate the faith. It provides an intentional space that teachers and children share their faith stories with each other, engage in intentional theological reflection, and use developmentally appropriate methods that help every child learn, make meaning, and respond to their experience with the Holy. We do this by creating a safe space where children are valued and respected, and by inviting them

into the process of learning through claiming and responding to God's presence in their lives.

Through intentional and authentic conversations, children and adults find space to listen to God and to discern how they might respond to all they are hearing and experiencing. Through this process we encourage and model for children how to do the work of meaning making, not by giving them information, but by inviting them and guiding them, by sharing stories and asking questions, by inviting them to share stories and ask questions, and by listening to what they say.

As children **engage** in the Word and traditions of the faith, **recognize** the presence of God and others, **claim** their own experiences, and **respond** to these experiences, they make meaning that informs and affects their individual faith narrative. In doing the important work of engaging, recognizing, and claiming God's presence in their lives, children begin to hear God's call to respond and they know what to do next. In responding to God's grace and love, they enter into another experience, another possibility, continuing their meaning making in response to this new information and wisdom.

Using these four elements, doing the holy work of meaning making, and participating in this process, children build their faith narrative and develop religious language to articulate and celebrate how God is working in their lives. Adults support children in this process by modeling language and creating space for them to discover and practice their faith. They encourage children in the work of engaging, recognizing, claiming, and responding to God's presence in their lives.

8. **Implements parent formation and education** through programs, activities, resources, webinars, and more for parents of children.

- ◆ See **#1. Catechesis with Families** – Parents: Ideas #1-8

Envisioning Catechesis with Young People

Catechesis with Young People in the Directory for Catechesis (244-256)

... *The togetherness of the Lord Jesus with the two disciples of Emmaus, his walking with them, dialoguing, accompanying, helping to open their eyes, is a source of inspiration for walking with young people. Within these dynamics, the Gospel must be proclaimed to the world of young people with courage and creativity, the sacramental life and spiritual accompaniment must be presented. Thanks to the Church's mediation, young people will be able to discover the personal love of the Father and the companionship of Jesus Christ, and to live out this season of life particular "suited to the demands to the great ideals, to generous forms of heroism, to the coherent demands of thought and action. (244)*

... *One consideration of a general character regards the question of the language of young people. The new generations are, in general, strongly marked by **social media** and by what is referred to as the virtual world. This offers opportunities that the previous generations did not have, but at the same time it presents dangers. It is of great importance to consider how the experience of relationships mediated by technology may structure the conception of the world, of reality, and of interpersonal relationships. Hence the pressing need for pastoral activity to adapt catechesis for young people, translating the message of Jesus into their language. (245)*

Catechesis with Pre-Adolescents (10-14)

*Preadolescence is the time in which the image of God received in childhood is refashioned: for this reason, it is important that catechesis should accompany this delicate passage and its possible future developments with care seeking help from the research and tools of the human sciences as well. Unafraid of focusing on the essential, the presentation of the faith to pre-adolescents is to take pains to sow within their hearts the seeds of a vision of God that can ripen over time: the illustration of the **kerygma** is to pay special attention to the Lord Jesus as a brother who loves, as*

a friend who helps one to be ones best in relationships, does not judge, is faithful, values skills and dreams, bringing one's desire for beauty and goodness to fulfillment. Moreover, catechesis is urged to recognize the self-assertion of pre-adolescents, to create a context in which questions are welcomed and brought into contact with the presentation of the Gospel. The pre-adolescent can enter more easily into the world of Christian experience by discovering that the Gospel touches precisely on the relational and affective dynamics to which he(she) is particularly sensitive. (247)

Catechesis with Adolescents/Young People (14-21)

In their journey of faith, adolescents need to have convinced and compelling witnesses by their side. ... the drop in church attendance that often happens during the adolescent years depends not so much on the quality of what was present to them during their childhood – as important as all this is – as having something joyful and meaningful to offer for the younger ages. ... Adolescents need priests, adults, and older peers in whom they can see a faith lived out with joy and consistency. (249)

... *The pastoral care of youth by the Church is therefore to be first of all a **humanizing and missionary outreach**, which means being capable of seeing the signs of God's love and call in human experience. It is in the light of faith that the search for truth and freedom, the desire to love and be loved, personal aspirations and the impassioned commitment to others and to their world find their authentic meaning. In helping young people to discover, develop, and live their life plan according to God, pastoral care of youth is to adopt new styles and strategies. It is necessary "to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories, and experiencing a shared encounter with the*

living God.” Catechesis with young people as well, therefore, is to be defined by the features of this pastoral style. (252)

Every project of formation which combines liturgical, spiritual, doctrinal, and moral formation is to “have two main goals. One is the development of the **kerygma**, the foundational experience of encounter with God through Christ’s death and resurrection. The other is growth in fraternal love, community life and service.” Catechesis is therefore to present the proclamation of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the true source of youthfulness for the world, as a core of meaning around which to build the

vocation response. The **vocational dimension** of youth catechesis requires that the pathways of formation to be developed in reference to life experience. (253) In addition to organize and structured catechetical programs, catechesis should also be valued when it is carried out in a casual manner in the life environments of young people: school, university, cultural and recreational associations. (254)

Recognition must be given to the value of the creative and co-responsible contribution that young people themselves make to catechesis. The catechetical service of young people is a stimulus for their very growth in the faith. (255)

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Envisioning Catechesis with Young People

How would you envision and design catechesis with young people (young adolescents, 11-14) and adolescents 14-21, informed by the vision and practices of the *Directory for Catechesis*, insights on forming faith from religious research, principles of effective learning, and contemporary theory and practice in faith formation?

Preparation

1. **Review** the challenges described in **Part 2. The New Context for Catechesis Today** that apply directly to young people. Pay special attention to: #1-diversity in religious and spiritual lives of people, #7-cultural diversity, #8-Gen Z, #9-faith unbundled, and #10-mental health.
2. **Review** the **12 Principles and Practices of Catechesis** as a guide to developing new approaches for catechesis with young people. Pay special attention to #2-holistic, #3-baptismal catechumenate, #4-intergenerational, #7-diverse religious-spiritual lives, #8-culture, #11-effective learning, and #12-digital approaches.

Envisioning Adaptive Innovations for Catechesis with Young People

The vision and practices in the *Directory for Catechesis* and the new context (challenges) for

catechesis today call for **adaptive responses** – new ways of thinking and acting – that envision new catechetical models and approaches. Technical solutions in catechesis– using existing practices and approaches – are not suited to the new context of catechesis today. Adaptive responses are flexible and dynamic responses to changing circumstances, involving the ability to learn, innovate, and adjust behaviors or strategies to effectively address new challenges or situations.

The following **What If** ideas flow from the vision and practices in the *Directory* and are a response to the challenges of the new context. They are offered to stimulate your imagination and begin the process of envisioning adaptive responses for catechesis with young people.

- **Review** the following strategies in the **Catechesis with Families** section (before the children’s section):
 - Parent Formation: Ideas #3, #4, and #5
 - Whole Family Experiences: #10, #11
- **Review** the strategies in the **Intergenerational Catechesis** section to bring an inter-generational focus to catechesis with young people.
- **Review** the **Methods and Approaches** for design ideas to assist you in developing new approaches .

What would it be like if catechesis with young people . . .

1. **Incorporates the ways that Generation Z (1997-2012) young people learn into all catechetical programming and experiences.** By incorporating these strategies into learning experiences, catechists can create engaging and effective learning opportunities that align with Gen Z's preferences and learning styles, fostering a positive and productive learning environment.

What would it look like if catechesis with young people is designed and conducted based on these learning strategies?

- ◆ *Personalized learning:* Tailor learning experiences to individual interests and abilities. This could involve allowing them to choose topics for projects, giving them autonomy over their learning path, and using personalized learning tools.
- ◆ *Flexibility and autonomy:* Offer flexibility in learning schedules and pathways. Gen Z appreciates the ability to learn at their own pace and on their own terms.
- ◆ *Digital and interactive learning:* Gen Z is highly comfortable with technology and often prefers digital learning environments. Utilize online platforms, educational apps, interactive online modules, and virtual simulations to engage them effectively.
- ◆ *Microlearning (short and engaging content):* Gen Z has a shorter attention span due to the rapid information consumption they're accustomed to. Break down content into bite-sized, easily digestible, shorter, and engaging segments using videos, quizzes, and interactive elements. Provide concise and visually appealing content, such as videos, infographics, and animations, to maintain their engagement.
- ◆ *Visual and multimedia learning:* Incorporate visual aids, infographics, videos, and other multimedia content. Visuals can help convey complex information quickly and effectively.
- ◆ *Mobile-friendly learning:* Ensure that learning materials are accessible on mobile devices, as Gen Z is accustomed to learning on their smartphones and tablets.
- ◆ *Collaborative and social learning:* Gen Z values social interactions and learning from their peers. Encourage group activities, online forums, and virtual collaboration to foster a sense of community and knowledge sharing. Encourage group projects, online discussions, and peer-to-peer learning to foster interaction and teamwork.
- ◆ *Hands-on experiential learning:* Gen Z tends to learn better through practical and experiential learning opportunities. Provide practical, real-world applications of concepts through projects, simulations, and hands-on experiences. Gen Z learns best when they can apply knowledge in real-world scenarios.
- ◆ *Feedback and recognition:* Provide regular feedback and recognition for their efforts. Gen Z responds well to immediate feedback and appreciates acknowledgment of their achievements.
- ◆ *Purpose-driven learning:* Highlight the real-world significance and impact of the learning material. Gen Z is motivated when they understand how their learning can contribute to a better future.
- ◆ *Creativity and self-expression:* Provide opportunities for Gen Z to express themselves creatively, whether through multimedia projects, storytelling, or other forms of self-expression.
- ◆ *Critical thinking and problem-solving:* Gen Z values the ability to think critically and solve problems. Include activities that challenge them to analyze information and develop problem-solving skills. Encourage critical thinking by presenting open-ended questions and real-world problems.
- ◆ *Sustainability and social responsibility:* Gen Z is particularly concerned about environmental and social issues. Integrate

themes of sustainability and social responsibility into the learning content.

2. **Provides a holistic curriculum for young people that provides a rich menu of faith forming experiences each year** that includes *intergenerational, family, and youth programs and activities* and incorporates all *five elements (tasks) of catechesis*: knowledge of the faith, celebration of the mystery (liturgies and seasons of the liturgical year), forming for life in Christ (moral life), prayer, and active engagement in community life.

A menu approach has 1) a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources; 2) a variety of formats—on your own, mentored, small groups, and large groups; 3) a variety of times to participate and scheduling options (synchronous and asynchronous); and 4) hybrid, online, and gathered modes of programming.

A menu of faith forming experiences can be tailored to the faith and practice of young people: 1) who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community, 2) who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives, 3) who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion, and 4) who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God or religion in their lives.

A menu approach provides a way to structure learning with experiences, programs, and activities designed to promote growth in faith for young people who want to grow deeper in the faith, for those who are inquiring or aren't sure the Christian faith is for them, and for those who don't need God or religion in their lives.

Young people could select from a menu of faith formation experiences to create their plan for the year or for a season of the year. The menu would include: 1) *intergenerational* faith-

forming experiences, 2) *family* faith-forming experiences: and *age group* faith forming experiences.

Churches could establish participation guidelines for young people, so that each year or season they would select a certain number of intergenerational experiences, family at-home activities, and age-specific programs at church.

The menu approach puts young people at the center of catechesis and gives them choice over what and when and where they will learn. It moves away from one-size-fits-all catechesis for young people. It provides the opportunity for variety, choice, and personalization.

3. **Employs the process of the catechumenal model in sacramental preparation for Confirmation** using a three movement process of preparation, celebration, and mystagogy. Using the catechumenal process, catechesis with parents and families can be *personalized* around their religious faith and practices today by catechesis designed for people: 1) who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community, 2) who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives, 3) who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion, and 4) who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God in their lives.

◆ Preparation

- A first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) and introduction to the Christian life – especially for young people who have been minimally involved in their faith life and practice
- Catechesis on the sacrament of Confirmation
- Celebration of liturgies, rituals, and symbols for the sacrament
- Engagement with a community of faith and support

- Mentoring by members of the faith community
- ◆ Celebration of the Sacrament
- ◆ Continued Growth and Accompaniment (Mystagogy)
 - Continued mentoring
 - Continued engagement with a community of faith and support
 - Involvement in leadership and peer ministry

While it may not be feasible to offer three types of “preparation programs.” Parishes can offer enough variety to address diverse needs and provide pathways for adolescents to grow in faith in ways appropriate to their faith journey. A menu approach to confirmation preparation (see Idea #2) provides a way to offer specific experiences, programs, and activities designed to promote growth in faith for young people who want to grow deeper in the faith, for young people who are inquiring or aren’t sure the Catholic faith is for them, and for those who don’t need God or religion in their lives.

Another approach to confirmation preparation that addresses the busy lives of young people and uses digital approaches to catechesis is the **flipped learning** model of learning. Flipped learning moves direct instruction from the group learning space to the individual learning space online, while transforming the group learning space into a dynamic interactive learning environment where the catechist guides young people as they creatively discuss, practice, and apply the content.

The flipped learning model is very helpful when it is difficult to gather people regularly. Young people can *prepare* online with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources); then *engage* in-person for the event or program; and *sustain and apply* the experience through online faith formation.

One example of a flipped learning model for confirmation is illustrated in this monthly

format that can be developed into a yearlong program.

- ◆ *On Your Own*: Engage young people with a monthly learning playlist—watching videos, reading short articles, praying, writing reflections in a journal—on the theme of the month.
- ◆ *In a Small Group*: Have young people participate in one small group experience (online) with an adult facilitator (and young person who has been confirmed) to discuss the content in the playlist and what they are learning.
- ◆ *In a Large Group*: Involve young people in a monthly meeting with all groups for community sharing, interactive activities, short presentations, and ideas for living faith.

4. **Immerses young people into the practices that constitute a Christian way of life** that address young people’s quest for becoming (identity), belonging (relationships and community) and meaning (how to live with meaning and purpose today). People come to faith and grow in faith and in the life of faith by participating in the practices of the Christian community. They learn the Christian way of life and its practices through experience, and through guidance, mentoring, and teaching of other Christians who live these practices.

Consider what it takes to be an actor, musician, artist, dancer, writer, or athlete. They all require developing skills, performing, thinking, and practicing over and over again. While singers and musicians must learn music theory, that is not enough. They have to actually play the instrument and practice. An artist may know art history and the different forms and styles or painting, but the artist must actually paint and continue to do so to master their craft. Developing a Christian way of life and the practices that constitute that life is a similar process of developing skills, performing, thinking, and practicing over and over again.

At the heart of Christian practice is Jesus—in his presence and example, a way to live comes into focus. We experience this model of living whenever we celebrate the blessings of life, serve the poor and vulnerable, offer our lives in prayer, forgive others, keep the Sabbath holy, discern God’s will for us, or try to transform the world. Christian practices, like the ones suggested below, emerge repeatedly in the Bible and Christian tradition and have demonstrated their importance in forming a distinctively Christian way of life.

- ◆ Caring for Creation
- ◆ Discernment
- ◆ Doing Justice
- ◆ Dying Well
- ◆ Eating Well
- ◆ Embracing Diversity
- ◆ Finding God in Everyday Life
- ◆ Forgiveness
- ◆ Healing
- ◆ Honoring the Body
- ◆ Hospitality
- ◆ Keeping Sabbath
- ◆ Praying
- ◆ Peace and Reconciliation
- ◆ Reading the Bible
- ◆ Serving the Poor and Vulnerable
- ◆ Stewardship and Generosity
- ◆ Worship

There are a variety of ways to immerse young people in learning and living Christian practices. Here are two examples:

- ◆ *Christian practice apprenticeships:* Identify “practice mentors” in your church, who are living embodiments of a Christian practice, such as service or hospitality or prayer. Develop formation programs around these mentors in individualized and small group settings where mentors can apprentice young people who want to learn how to live the Christian practice. For example, if people wanted to learn how to serve people in need at the local homeless shelter, they can accompany the “practice mentor” when he or she works at the

shelter and learn about homelessness and the practice of hospitality and serving others. If a young person wants to learn how to pray they can be mentored by an adult who has a vibrant prayer life. Each apprenticeship can include a study component to learn about the teachings and examples from the Bible and Christian tradition.

- ◆ *Christian practice learning programs:* Through courses, workshops, retreats, action projects, field trips, and practice-focused small groups, provide young people with learning experiences that include:

1. Preparing young people with the Scriptural and theological understanding of the practice
2. Engaging young people in hands-on experience of the practice (with peers or intergenerationally)
3. Reflecting on the experience and its meaning for them
4. Integrating the practice into their daily lives

5. **Provides safe spaces, a small community, trusted adults, and faith-building skills to guide young people in the process of constructing their identity and faith.** Focus on the big questions in young people’s lives and equip them with the skills for constructing a meaningful faith life by drawing upon the Scriptures and Catholic tradition. To do this consider offering small groups on the big questions, “life building” workshops with practical skills and tools, retreat experiences for reflection, and more.

Springtide Research studies make it clear that young people are unbundling their faith, i.e., not accepting the whole “bundle” of rituals, practices, and beliefs that religious institutions offer. *Faith Unbundled* is a term that describes the way young people increasingly construct their faith by combining elements such as beliefs, identity, practices, and community from

a variety of religious and non-religious sources, rather than receiving all these things from a single, intact system, or tradition. Young people with unbundled faith will partake in religion, including practices, beliefs, and communities to the degree that suits them, with no formal or permanent commitment. Young people are turning to a wide range of traditions, practices, and belief when asking and answering important questions about their faith: What do I believe? Who am I? What is my purpose in the world? What practices have value?

Springtide Research found that young people:

- ◆ Turn to many or various sources when making meaning and discerning what to believe about right and wrong, purpose and calling, salvation and suffering, and more. This looks like **curiosity**.
- ◆ Are unwilling to shed parts of themselves to fit into a prescribed narrative about who and how to be in the world. This looks like a commitment to **wholeness**.
- ◆ Show up where trusted personal relationships exist or new ones seem possible, young people who are willing to forgo participation in communities lacking these qualities, even if they have had long associations with these communities. This looks like **connection**.
- ◆ Blend and adapt various rituals and behaviors to suit and make sense of the current questions they're facing. This looks like **flexibility**.

(*The State of Religion and Young People 2021*, Springtide Research Institute)

6. **Provides interest-centered small groups on a variety of topics that integrate faith and life around the interests and gifts of young people.**

Small group formats provide lots of flexibility in content, schedule, and location (in physical settings or online settings or in hybrid settings). Groups can meet at times and places that best fit young people's lives. They can have short commitments to make it easier for young people to participate. Interest-centered groups can draw upon a wide range of gifts and talents from the people of all ages – including young people. Small groups can be developed around a variety of topics – each one connecting life and faith. Each small group can include a teaching component, along with practice, and performance components. Here are several examples:

- ◆ *Life-centered*: preparing for life after high school, life skills (communication, decision-making), relationships, dealing with loss, and more
- ◆ *Creative*: art, music, drama, and more
- ◆ *Spiritual*: how to pray, spiritual practices, spiritual direction, and more
- ◆ *Biblical*: what's in the Bible, how to read and interpret the Bible, big questions in the Bible, and more
- ◆ *Action* – serving people in need, responding to justice issues, caring for creation
- ◆ *Leadership* – involvement in leadership roles in the church and the community
- ◆ *Theological* – what does Jesus mean for our life today, how to live morally today, and more

7. **Implements parent formation and education** through programs, activities, resources, webinars, and more for parents of young people.

- ◆ See **#1. Catechesis with Families** – Parents: Ideas #1-8

Envisioning Catechesis with Adults

Catechesis with Adults in the Directory for Catechesis

*The condition of the adult is particularly complex today. In comparison with the past, this stage of life is no longer understood as an already completed state of stability, but as a continual process of restructuring that takes into account the evolution of personal sensibilities, the interweaving of relationships, the responsibilities to which the person is called. In this lively dynamism that incorporates the factors of family, culture, and society, the adult continually reformulates his(her) own identity, reacting creatively to the different moments of transition that he(she) finds himself(herself) living through. The dynamic of **becoming adult** also inevitably concerns the religious dimension, since the act of faith is an inner process intimately connected to the personality. In the stages of adulthood, in fact, the faith itself is called to take different shapes, to evolve and mature, so that it may be an authentic and continual response to the challenges of life. Therefore every possible journey of faith with adults requires that the experiences of life be not only taken into consideration but reinterpreted in the light of faith as opportunities, so integrated into the format trajectory itself. (257)*

Adult Faith Approaches

The relationship of adults with the question of faith is highly varied, and it is right that every person should be welcome and listened to in his(her) uniqueness. Without diminishing the uniqueness of each situation, it is possible to consider a few types of adults who live out the faith with different approaches

- ◆ *believing adults, who live their faith and want to get to know it better*
- ◆ *adults who, although they may have been baptized, have not been adequately formed or have not brought Christian initiation to completion, and can be referred to as **quasi-catechumens***
- ◆ *baptized adults, who although they do not live out their faith on a regular basis, nonetheless*

seek out contact with the ecclesial community or particular times in life

- ◆ *adults who come from other Christian confessions or from other religious experiences*
- ◆ *adults who return to the Catholic faith having had experiences in the new religious movements*
- ◆ *unbaptized adults who are candidates for the catechumenate properly so called (258)*

Tasks for Catechesis with Adults

*The general task of catechesis with adults needs to be configured in reference to the different types of persons and religious experiences in question. In fact, the particular **tasks** that follow, which could also correspond to a chronology arrangement, demonstrate in truth the continual attempt on the part of the ecclesial community to relate to adults, seeking to grasp their concrete existential situation and setting itself to listen to their real demands and needs Particular tasks for catechesis adults there are:*

- ◆ ***to elicit faith**, fostering a new beginning of faith-filled experience and making the most of the human and spiritual resources that are never extinguished in the depths of every person, in view of a free and personal resumption of their initial motivation in terms of attraction, gusto, and determination;*
- ◆ ***to purify the faith** from partial, misguided, or erroneous religious representations, helping the participants above all to recognize the limitations of these and to decide to seek out more authentic distillations of faith in view of the journey toward the fullness of life to which the Gospel calls;*
- ◆ ***to nourish faith** thanks in part to an experience of meaningful ecclesial relationships, promoting the formation of mature Christian consciences capable of giving the reason for their hope and ready for a serene and intelligent dialogue with contemporary culture;*
- ◆ ***to assist the sharing and witness of faith**, preparing spaces of sharing and service to the*

Church and in the world as ways of realizing the task of manifesting the kingdom of God.

Catechesis with adults, in summary, has the task of accompanying them and forming the traits typical of the Christian growth to adulthood in the faith, a disciple of the Lord Jesus, within a Christian community capable of establishing itself in going forth, meaning that it is inserted within the social and cultural realities for the sake of bearing witness to the faith and bringing about the kingdom of God. (261)

Criteria for Adult Catechesis

*In order that catechesis with adults may be meaningful and capable of reaching its goals, it is important to consider a few **criteria**:*

- ◆ *It is fundamental that this catechesis, inspired by the missionary experience of the catechumenate, should be an expression of the ecclesial community in its entirety, as the womb of faith. Since the Christian community is a structure element of the catechetical process for the adult and not only its setting, it is necessary that it be capable of renewal, allowing itself to be challenged by the adults of today and their particular concerns as well as being a place of welcome, presence, and support.*
- ◆ *Since the catechesis of adults is set up as an educational process of Christian life in its entirety, it is important that it propose concrete and characteristic experiences of the life of faith (exploration of Sacred Scripture and doctrine; moments of spirituality, liturgical celebrations, and practices of popular piety; experiences of ecclesial fraternity; missionary exercise of charity and of witness to the world. . .) that may correspond to the different needs of the human person in his(her) wholeness of affections, thoughts, and relationships.*
- ◆ *Adults must not be considered as recipients of catechesis, but as participants together with the catechists themselves. It is therefore necessary to carry out a respectful welcome of the adults as a person who has already developed experiences and convictions on the level of faith as well, and who is capable of exercising this freedom, developing new convictions in dialogue.*

- ◆ *Catechesis with adults should be attentive to recognizing their situation as men and women, considering the uniqueness with which each one lives out the experience of faith . . . (262)*

Forms of Adult Catechesis

*Catechesis with adults presents itself in a great multiplicity of **forms** with very different emphases:*

- ◆ *catechesis as a genuine initiation into the faith, or the accompaniment of candidates for Baptism and the sacraments of initiation through the catechumenal experience;*
- ◆ *catechesis as new initiation into the faith, or the accompaniment of those who, although they have been baptized, have not completed initiation or are not in fact evangelized;*
- ◆ *catechesis as rediscovery of the faith through “listening centers” or other approaches, or a presentation in the vein of evangelization intended for those referred to as fallen away;*
- ◆ *catechesis of the proclamation of the faith in environments of life, of work, of recreation, or on the occasion of demonstrations of popular piety or pilgrimage to shrines;*
- ◆ *catechesis with couples on the occasion of marriage or in the celebrations of sacraments for their children, which often becomes a point of departure for further catechetical experiences;*
- ◆ *catechesis for the exploration of the faith on the basis of Sacred Scripture, a document of the Magisterium, or the lives of the saints and witness to the faith;*
- ◆ *liturgical catechesis, which is aimed at deliberate participation in community celebrations;*
- ◆ *catechesis on moral, cultural, or sociopolitical issues aimed at participation in the life of society, so that this may be active and inspired by the faith;*
- ◆ *catechesis in the area of specific formation of pastoral workers, which constitutes a privileged opportunity for journeys of faith.*

Catechesis with the Elderly

The elderly must be given adequate catechesis, attentive to the unique aspects of their condition of faith. “An aged person may have a rich and solid faith,

in which case catechesis, in a certain sense, brings to fulfillment a journey of faith in an attitude of thanksgiving and hopeful expectation. Others live a faith weakened by poor Christian practice. In this case, catechesis becomes a moment of new light and religious experience. Sometimes people reach old age profoundly wounded in body and soul. In these circumstances, catechesis can help them to live their condition in an attitude of prayer, forgiveness, and inner peace. At any rate, the condition of the old calls for a catechesis of hope which derives from the certainty of finally meeting God.” (267)

*Sacred Scripture presents the elderly believer as a symbol of the person rich in wisdom and the fear of God, and therefore a repository of an intense experience of life, which makes him(her) in a certain way, a **natural catechist**. Old age is a time of grace in which the Lord renews his call to keep and transmit the faith: to prayer, especially in the form of*

intercession; to be close to those who are in need. The elderly, with their witness, transmit to the young the meaning of life, the value of tradition and certain religious and cultural practices; they bring dignity to the memory and sacrifices of the past generations; they look with hope beyond the difficulties of the present. By recognizing the value of elderly persons the Church helps them to place themselves at the service of the community. In particular, they can take on roles as catechists for children, the young, and adults, sharing with simplicity the rich heritage of faith that they bear with them. The community for its part should show its gratitude for this valuable presence and foster intergenerational dialogue between the elderly and the young. This expresses the bond between memory and future, between tradition and renewal, creating a genuine circuit of transmission of faith from generation to generation. (268)

Adults as Lifelong Learners

In March 2022 AARP published “Lifelong Learning among 45+ Adults” that explores the why, what, and how of adult learning today. Among the highlights in the research report were the following findings.

- ◆ More than half (55%) of adults 45 and older are currently lifelong learners. Slightly more men than woman say they are engaging in a lifelong learning activity.
 - ◆ Two-thirds (68%) of the adults 45 and older plan to engage in a lifelong learning activity in the future. Women and men are equally likely (69% and 68%) to plan to engage in lifelong learning in the future.
 - ◆ Current engagement with learning creates momentum to continue learning. Among those engaged (55%) in lifelong learning, the vast majority (97%) intend to engage in the future.
 - ◆ Lifelong learners heavily invest in their pursuits. Regardless of activity, lifelong learners
- dedicate a significant amount of their time and money to learning.
 - Time spent in a typical week (average): 4.2 hours
 - Something I’m passionate about: 5.4 hours per week
 - ◆ Learning is driven by a desire for personal growth, self-betterment, and a sense of control.
 - ◆ Learning is personally important. 64% of adults 45-plus consider lifelong learning to be personally important. 42% identify themselves personally as a lifelong learner.
 - ◆ Cognitive health is a key driver of engaging in lifelong learning.
 - 83% agree that it is vitally important to keep your brain active.
 - 54% are motivated by staying mentally sharp and/or promoting brain health.

- ◆ Self-directed and experiential learning are most desired.
 - 76% learn best by reading on their own.
 - The majority (71%) choose to read or gather information by themselves and then find opportunities to apply what they have learned in real life.
 - The majority go online (particularly YouTube) to acquire new knowledge (72%), learn a new technology (66%), and develop a new skills (63%).
 - The topics of most interest are history, food and drink, mental health, basic technology, and diet and nutrition.

Lifelong Learning is Empowering. For the adults in the study lifelong learning is a continuous pursuit of knowledge and breaking out of one's comfort zone. It is considered both a positive and essential part of life. Lifelong learning evokes excitement, curiosity and accomplishment. Words or phrases associated with lifelong learning include: positive, essential, exciting, engaging, rewarding.

Lifelong learning is personally important: 64% identify lifelong learning as personally important (particularly for younger, Hispanic/Latinx and Black/African Americans).

Lifelong learning is a continuous process. Adults 45-plus agree that it is important for people to learn throughout their lives and keep their minds active. (% who agree and strongly agree)

1. It is vitally important to keep your brain active. (83%)
2. A person can learn new things at any age. (83%)
3. People should continue to learn throughout life. (81%)
4. Lifelong learning requires both interest and dedication. (79%)
5. Lifelong learning is essential for people to keep up with the times. (73%)
6. Lifelong learning helps me remain vibrant. (73%)
7. It is important to learn all different perspectives on a topic. (70%)

8. Without continuous learning, life becomes stagnant. (68%)
9. Lifelong learning keeps me engaged with society. (64%)

Lifelong learning is also seen as growth (50%), self-betterment (45%), meaningful, and stimulating (both 42%).

Cognitive health is a primary driver of lifelong learning for adults 45+. They are focused on gaining new knowledge and keeping mentally sharp (and less focused on social pressure). Gaining new knowledge is a primary driver of lifelong learning for men and women. Both men and women 45+ are focused on gaining new knowledge and keeping mentally sharp.

Lifelong learning is often a self-directed, individual activity. The majority choose to read or gather information by themselves and then find opportunities to apply what they have learned in real life. (% who agree or strongly agree)

1. By reading on my own (76%)
2. By having opportunities to apply what I have learned (71%)
3. By gathering as much information then teach myself (64%)
4. By finding self-study courses with my own objectives and at my pace (60%)
5. By watching videos (60%)
6. When I have an instructor in-person (46%)
7. In a group where I can learn with others in-person (43%)
8. By listening to broadcasts (42%)
9. When I have an instructor online (37%)
10. In a group where I can learn with others online (35%)

Among the **top interests** of adults are mental health, diet and nutrition, social issues, financial skills, stress management, arts and culture, spiritual or personal growth, educational travel, community or social engagement, music and dance.

(For the research report go to: <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2022/lifelong-learning-older-adults.html>.)

Envisioning Catechesis with Adults

*How would you envision and design catechesis with adults: young adults (20s-30s), midlife adults (40s-50s), mature adults (60s-70s), and older adults (80+), informed by the vision and practices of the *Directory for Catechesis*, insights on forming faith from religious research, principles of effective learning from the learning sciences, and contemporary theory and practice in faith formation?*

Preparation

1. **Review** the challenges described in **Part 2. The New Context for Catechesis Today** that apply directly to adults. Pay special attention to: #1-diversity in religious and spiritual lives of people, #4-ten-decade society, #5-generational connection, and #7-cultural diversity.
2. **Review** the **12 Principles and Practices of Catechesis** as a guide to developing new approaches for catechesis with adults. Pay special attention to #2-holistic, #3-baptismal catechumenate, #4-intergenerational, #7-diverse religious-spiritual lives, #8-culture, #10-motivation, #11-effective learning, and #12-digital approaches.

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What would it be like if catechesis with adults . . .

1. **Incorporates the ways that adults learn best into all catechetical programming and experiences.** Adults learn best through a combination of strategies that take into account their unique characteristics, experiences, and preferences. These strategies apply to all adults, but each strategy needs to be adapted for each stage of adulthood: young adults (20s-30s), midlife adults (40s-50s), mature adults (60s-70s), and older adults (80+).

Envisioning Adaptive Innovations for Catechesis with Adults

The vision and practices in the *Directory for Catechesis* and the new context (challenges) for catechesis today call for **adaptive responses** – new ways of thinking and acting – that envision new catechetical models and approaches. Technical solutions in catechesis– using existing practices and approaches – are not suited to the new context of catechesis today. Adaptive responses are flexible and dynamic responses to changing circumstances, involving the ability to learn, innovate, and adjust behaviors or strategies to effectively address new challenges or situations.

The following **What If** ideas flow from the vision and practices in the *Directory* and are a response to the challenges of the new context. They are offered to stimulate your imagination and begin the process of envisioning adaptive responses for catechesis with adults.

- **Review** the four strategies in the **Intergenerational Catechesis** section to bring an intergenerational focus to adult catechesis.
- **Review** the **Methods and Approaches** for design ideas to assist you in developing new approaches .

Some strategies may apply more appropriately to one or two particular seasons of adulthood, such as digital technology with young adults.

What would it look like if catechesis with adults is designed and conducted based on these learning strategies?

- ◆ **Active participation:** Adults learn best when they actively engage with the learning

material rather than passively receiving information. This can include hands-on activities, discussions, problem-solving exercises, and interactive learning experiences.

- ◆ *Relevant and meaningful content:* Adult learners are motivated when they can see the immediate relevance and practical applications of what they are learning. Content that aligns with their personal goals and addresses real-life challenges is more likely to resonate with them.
- ◆ *Prior knowledge integration:* Building on adults' existing knowledge and experiences can enhance learning. Relating new information to what they already know helps them make connections and better understand complex concepts.
- ◆ *Self-directed learning:* Adults value autonomy and prefer to take control of their learning process. Allowing them to set their own learning goals, choose learning activities, and take responsibility for their progress fosters a sense of ownership and motivation.
- ◆ *Collaborative learning:* Group interactions and collaborative activities provide opportunities for adult learners to share ideas, perspectives, and experiences. Learning from peers and engaging in discussions can deepen understanding and critical thinking.
- ◆ *Reflection and feedback:* Providing opportunities for adults to reflect on what they've learned and receive timely feedback on their performance helps reinforce learning and identify areas for improvement.
- ◆ *Practical application:* Adult learners benefit from opportunities to apply their newly acquired knowledge or skills in real-life situations. Practical application enhances retention and transfer of learning to their personal or professional contexts.
- ◆ *Flexibility and personalized learning:* Adults have diverse needs and preferences. Offering flexible learning options and personalized pathways accommodates

different learning styles and individual schedules.

- ◆ *Experiential learning:* Learning through hands-on experiences and real-life situations is particularly effective for adults.
- ◆ *Multimedia and technology:* Utilize multimedia and technology to enhance the learning experience. Incorporate videos, interactive modules, online discussions, and virtual simulations to cater to different learning styles and preferences.
- ◆ *Emotion and memory:* Emotional experiences can significantly impact memory and learning retention. Designing learning experiences that evoke positive emotions and meaningful connections can enhance the learning process.
- ◆ *Positive learning environment:* Creating a positive and supportive learning environment fosters motivation and engagement. Encouragement, positive reinforcement, and recognition of learners' achievements contribute to a conducive learning atmosphere.
- ◆ *Flexibility:* Adult learners have busy lives and diverse responsibilities. Providing flexible learning options, allows them to balance learning with other commitments.
- ◆ *Lifelong learning:* Adults continue to learn throughout their lives. Recognizing the importance of lifelong learning and promoting a growth mindset encourages adults to seek ongoing opportunities for skill development and personal growth.

2. **Guides adults in discerning where they are in their faith journey, charting a path for faith growth, and providing programming and experiences for four spiritual-religious profiles of adults.** Adult catechesis can guide adults in discerning where they are in their faith journey and charting a path for faith growth that helps them get from where they are in their faith journey to a deeper relationship with Jesus and practice of the faith. People should be able to clearly understand where they are in their faith journey and their next steps in faith growth. (See "Adult Faith Approaches," DC 258)

Catechesis can provide programming and experiences for adults specifically designed for:

- a) *Adults who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community:* nourishing their faith through a variety of faith forming experiences to promote their deeper growth, such as engaging in Bible study, study of theology, or spiritual formation; equipping adults to share and witness their faith; and offering a variety of activities that help them grow deeper in their faith.
- b) *Adults who participate occasionally in the faith community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives:* inviting them into a supportive community where they can build relationships with other adults and experience a sense of belonging to the parish community; inviting them into experiences that refresh their faith (study of Jesus, the Gospels, prayer); exploring how to make a relationship with Jesus Christ more central to their daily life; and offering a variety of activities that help them to engage in the community and live their faith.
- c) *Adults who are uninvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion:* seeking out the uninvolved and inviting them into safe spaces and small groups to explore a new relationships with Jesus Christ and what following him could mean for their life; hearing the Good News (again, for the first time) and what it means for life today; inviting them into experiences of faith in action in the parish community– serving those in need, praying, working for justice, worshipping; offering a variety activities to encounter Jesus Christ and his community in new and fresh ways.

- d) *Adults who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God in their lives –* connecting with the unaffiliated in the wider community and inviting into safe spaces to explore how one lives with meaning and purpose today; to discern how religion might provide support for living a meaningful life; to uncover the wisdom in the Christian tradition that could guide their life; to test out a relationship with Jesus Christ; to see how the Good News might be good news for them.

- 3. **Provides a catechetical plan for the four seasons of adulthood with a rich menu of faith forming experiences each year**, incorporating all five elements (tasks) of catechesis: knowledge of the faith, celebration of the mystery (liturgies and seasons of the liturgical year), forming for life in Christ (moral life), prayer, and active engagement in community life.

A menu approach has 1) a variety of content, programs, activities, and resources; 2) a variety of formats—on your own, mentored, small groups, and large groups; 3) a variety of times to participate and scheduling options (synchronous and asynchronous); and 4) hybrid, online, and gathered modes of programming.

A menu of faith forming experiences can be tailored to the four profiles of adult faith and practice (see #2 above). A menu approach provides a way to structure learning with experiences, programs, and activities designed to promote growth in faith for adults who want to grow deeper in the faith, for those who are inquiring or aren't sure the Christian faith is for them, and for those who don't need God or religion in their lives.

Adults could select from a menu of faith forming experiences that would include *intergenerational* relationships and faith forming experiences, and *life stage* appropriate catechesis around the unique life tasks, needs, interests, and spiritual and faith journeys of

young adults (20s-30s), midlife adults (40s-50s), mature adults (60s-70s), and older adults (80+).

The menu approach puts adults at the center of catechesis and gives them choice over what and when and where they will learn. It moves away from one-size-fits-all catechesis for adults. It provides the opportunity for variety, choice, and personalization.

The movement from one-size-fits-all catechesis to a variety of faith formation

offerings for each season of adulthood is made possible by the abundance of religious content and programming—print, audio, video, online, and digital—that is now available. And this abundance can now be made accessible to people by the creation of online platforms (websites and social media) and digital playlists that integrate, deliver, and communicate the content and programming with a variety of ways to learn that is easily available, anytime and anywhere.

Example: A Menu of Programming for Each Season of Adulthood

| Catechetical Themes | 20s-30s | 40s-50s | 60s-70s | 80+ |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ | | | | |
| Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life | | | | |
| Studying and interpreting the Bible and applying its message and meaning to living as a Catholic today | | | | |
| Learning the Catholic tradition and teachings, and integrating its meaning into one’s life. | | | | |
| Worshipping God with the community weekly, in ritual celebrations, and through the seasons of the church year | | | | |
| Praying and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual practices and disciplines | | | | |
| Living with moral integrity guided by Catholic morality and applying Catholic moral values to decision-making | | | | |
| Living the Christian mission in the world by serving those in need, caring for God’s creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace—locally and globally | | | | |
| Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the Catholic community | | | | |
| Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one’s gifts and talents within the Catholic community and in the world | | | | |

- Expand the opportunities to engage more adults in catechesis with “on your own” adult learning activities.** According to the AARP research report, adults 45+ see lifelong learning as often a self-directed, individual activity. The majority choose to read or gather information by themselves and then find opportunities to apply what they have learned in real life. Expanding **On Your Own Formats** provides maximum flexibility for the learner—

when to learn, how to learn, where to learn, and what to learn. With the increasing number and variety of books and printed resources, audio podcasts, video presentations, video programs, online courses, and online resource centers, independent learning offers a 24/7 approach to faith growth and learning. Churches can serve as guide to help people find the best learning format and content to address their learning needs.

Churches can develop fully online programming (asynchronous) by offering independent (on your own) faith formation using the abundance of online programs and resources for adults. Leaders can curate courses and resources to organize playlists or webpages with self-directed learning topics like Scripture, topics in Catholic theology, prayer and spiritual formation, social justice issues, morality and ethics, and much more.

Here are two examples of programming that is primarily online with interactive features.

Online Only

- ◆ Week 1: Livestream (or video recording) of the class, program, or presentation. (Synchronous)
- ◆ Weeks#2–3: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the content/activities on a website. (Asynchronous)
- ◆ Week 4: Facebook Group (or online learning platform) for engaging people in discussion and presenting projects. (Synchronous or asynchronous)

Online with Interaction

- ◆ Week 1: Livestream of the class, program, or presentation. (Synchronous)
- ◆ Week 2: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the content/activities on a website. (Asynchronous)
- ◆ Week 3: Zoom meetings for small groups or family groupings. (Synchronous)
- ◆ Week 4: Online learning experiences using a playlist for the activities/content. (Asynchronous)
- ◆ Add an interactive feature by using a Facebook group (or online learning platform) to engage people in discussion, sharing learning, and presenting projects.

5. **Provides interest-centered small groups on a variety of topics that integrate faith and life around the interests and gifts of adults in each season of adulthood.** Small group formats provide lots of flexibility in content, schedule, and location (in physical settings or online settings or in hybrid settings). Groups can meet

at times and places that best fit young people’s lives. They can have short commitments to make it easier for adults to participate. Interest-centered groups can draw upon a wide range of gifts and talents from adults. Small groups can be developed around a variety of topics – each one connecting life and faith. Each small group can include a teaching component, along with practice, and performance components. Here are several examples:

- ◆ *Life-centered*: times of transition, life issues in each season of adulthood
- ◆ *Creative*: art, music, drama, and more
- ◆ *Spiritual*: how to pray, spiritual practices, spiritual direction, and more
- ◆ *Biblical*: what’s in the Bible, how to read and interpret the Bible, big questions in the Bible, and more
- ◆ *Action* – serving people in need, responding to justice issues, caring for creation
- ◆ *Leadership* – involvement in leadership roles in church and the community
- ◆ *Theological* – what does Jesus mean for our life today, living as a disciple, living morally, and more

6. **Provides multiple ways to experience one program.** With multiple ways to design programming in physical, online, and hybrid spaces, one program or experience can be designed in all three spaces, increasing the availability to a wider audience of people. The choice is no longer whether to participate or not, but which option best suits a person’s time, schedule, and learning preferences. Here is an example of a large group program that is redesigned for multiple formats – same program, multiple ways to experience it.

1. *Large group physical gathering*: Adults gather at church for a live presentation or for watching a video presentation with leader(s) to facilitate the program— providing time for people to read and reflect, guiding small groups in discussing

the content, etc. The live presentation is video recorded for use in other settings.

2. *Small group physical gathering:* Adults gather in small groups in homes or coffee shops or other conducive setting, watch the video, read and reflect on the content, and discuss the content.
3. *Small group hybrid:* Adults view the video on their own, and then gather online in a small group (Zoom or other video conferencing platform) to reflect and discuss the content,.
4. *Online with interaction:* Adults complete the sessions on their own and share reflections in a Facebook group (asynchronous) or meet on Zoom to discuss the program (synchronous).
5. *Online independent:* Adults complete the learning program on their own.

The “one program, multiple models” approach can dramatically increase catechetical offerings and give control to adults so they can choose what and when and how and where they will learn.

7. **Fashions formation around the transitions of adulthood.** Adulthood is filled with transitions: geographic relocations, family formation and re-formation, career changes, empty nests, unanticipated illness, and the loss of loved ones. In times of transition, most people experience feelings of disorientation and tend to question personal priorities; they may seek to “finish unfinished business” or develop new dimensions of their lives. Adults seek to acquire new meaning perspectives and frameworks that can help them regain “order and stability” in their lives.

Addressing the needs of people in transition provides important opportunities for adult faith formation by bringing a faith perspective to the transitions adults are experiencing. Recognize that these transitions may prompt a hunger for learning and provide learning opportunities that are responsive to immediate concerns. Their new learning may lead them to

new questioning and unanticipated changes in the views of self and world.

Catechesis can target adults who are experiencing transition and change, and offer to help them chart a course of learning that can help them find meaning in their lives. Fashion catechesis around the times of transitions and change in the lives of adults with learning, ritual, prayer, and community support. Here are just a few examples of transition times: graduating college, going into the military (and return home from military service), starting a new job or losing a job, getting married, becoming a parent, becoming a grandparent, becoming an empty nest family, retiring, surviving a major illness/accident, becoming a caregiver, experiencing loss of a loved one, and much more.

8. **Engages adults in exploring their Christian vocation and how God calls people throughout the seasons of adulthood – as young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults.** Vocation is a central part of the Christian life, encompassing: *who we are called to be, how we are called to live, what we are called to do.* Vocation relates to our whole life and encompasses a multiplicity of callings. Vocation is not limited to one part of life or one kind of work or one lifestyle. It is a dynamic reality that changes throughout our life, not something determined at the outset. Vocation is a lifelong reality. Each season of adulthood brings new challenges and possibilities: How do our callings change as we grow? What does it mean that God calls us in relationship to the whole of our lives (including our work, relationships, and identity) all life long?

We are called by God, who is the source of our callings. We are called to follow the way shown by Jesus and taken up by his disciples; this calling we share with each other. We are called as unique persons with a particular history and circumstance. We are called from the losses and grief we suffer over time, so that we can embrace life again. We are

called to give our lives for others, not simply for our self-improvement or fulfillment. We are even called in our deepest suffering to carry out God's purposes in mysterious ways. We are called through the people in our lives because vocation takes root in community. And, finally, we are called together to live within God's loving embrace, both now and in the life to come.

Develop vocation and calling programs for each stage of life – young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, and older adults or around the major adult life transitions – entering adulthood, getting married, becoming a parent, retiring, etc. Engage adults in discerning their calling at this time in their life and how to live their calling more fully in life. Offer a variety of programming options, such as a small group experience for people at the same stage of life, or as a mentored (1-1), as a course (in-person or hybrid) variety of weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly; as a retreat experience, and more.

9. **Guide adults in developing a life of faith by exploring and experiencing the practices that constitute a Christian way of life, helping adults create their own “rule of life.”**

People come to faith and grow in faith and in the life of faith by participating in the practices of the Christian community. They learn the Christian way of life and its practices through experience, and through guidance, mentoring, and teaching of other Christians who live these practices. Developing a Christian way of life and the practices that constitute that life is a process of developing skills, performing, thinking, and practicing over and over again.

At the heart of Christian practice is Jesus—in his presence and example, a way to live comes into focus. We experience this model of living whenever we celebrate the blessings of life, serve the poor and vulnerable, offer our lives in prayer, forgive others, keep the Sabbath holy, discern God's will for us, or try to transform the world. Christian practices, like the ones suggested below, emerge repeatedly in the

Bible and Christian tradition and have demonstrated their importance in forming a distinctively Christian way of life.

- ◆ Caring for Creation
- ◆ Discernment
- ◆ Doing Justice
- ◆ Dying Well
- ◆ Eating Well
- ◆ Embracing Diversity
- ◆ Finding God in Everyday Life
- ◆ Forgiveness
- ◆ Healing
- ◆ Honoring the Body
- ◆ Hospitality
- ◆ Keeping Sabbath
- ◆ Praying
- ◆ Peace and Reconciliation
- ◆ Reading the Bible
- ◆ Serving the Poor and Vulnerable
- ◆ Stewardship and Generosity
- ◆ Worship

Engage adults in Christian practice learning programs through courses, workshops, retreats, action projects, and practice-focused small groups using a learning process that includes:

1. Preparing adults with the Scriptural and theological understanding of the practice
2. Engaging them in hands-on experience of the practice (with peers or intergenerationally)
3. Reflecting on the experience and its meaning for them
4. Integrating the practice into their daily lives

10. **Expands the locations for adult programming and experiences into community spaces.** What if parishes focused on “bringing the church to people” in new spaces and locations with programs and experiences that expand the scope and reach of the church into the lives of people in the neighborhood and community? What if parishes made a special effort to reach and engage people who are not involved or

have given up on church or were never affiliated with any church or religion?

One approach is to move some of the at-church adult programs and activities into community settings, such as Bible study offered in community spaces like homes, coffee shops, or senior living centers. Changing the location of a program opens up the possibility of inviting people to join in a “neutral” setting.

A second approach is open-up programs currently sponsored by the church to the whole community, such as life-centered adult programs, service projects, or a speaker series.

A third approach is to offer activities directed to the needs and interests of people sponsored by the parish in a variety of community settings and spaces so that everyone feels comfortable participating. There have been examples of this type of outreach in the variety of “theology on tap” or “God on tap” programs. A church can offer a variety of programs and initiatives targeted to adults, in general, at for adults at particular stages in adulthood. Here are a few examples.

- ◆ Workshops, resources, and support groups targeted to different the life tasks, transitions, and needs of each season of adulthood.
- ◆ *Dinner Church* or *Brunch Church* experiences that bring people together over a meal to share stories, build relationships, find mutual support in life’s struggles, and engage with each other spiritually.
- ◆ Art and music workshops and courses, art exhibition, music concerts, and drama performances
- ◆ Programs and activities designed for older adults at the senior center or adult living center or nursing home.
- ◆ Career and life mentoring or coaching, especially for young adults
- ◆ Community-wide service days, service projects, and mission trips

- ◆ Organizing initiatives around social justice issues, local and global
- ◆ Leadership training and engagement in leadership roles in the community

11. **Applies the catechumenal model of formation to marriage preparation with a process of preparation, celebration, and mystagogy.** *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life* (Vatican Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life, 2022) proposes a catechumenal model for marriage preparation. (See page 27 for a description.)

Part Four

Formation of Catechists in the New Context

Catechist Formation in the *Directory for Catechesis*

The specific vocation of the catechist therefore has its roots in the common vocation of the people of God, called to serve God's plan for salvation on behalf of humanity. (110)

The catechist is a Christian who receives a particular calling from God that, when accepted in faith, empowers him(her) for the service of transmission of faith and for the task of initiating others into the Christian life. (112)

By virtue of faith and baptismal anointing, in collaboration with the Magisterium of Christ and as a servant of the action of the Holy Spirit, the catechist is:

- a. **A witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God;** *in experiencing the goodness and truth of the Gospel in his or her encounter with the person of Jesus, the catechist keeps, nourishes, and bears witness to the new life that stems from this, and becomes a sign for others. The faith contains the memory of God's history with humanity. Keeping this memory, reawakening it in others, and placing it at the service of the proclamation is the specific vocation of the catechist. The testimony of life is necessary for the credibility of the mission. Recognize his or her own frailty before the mercy of God, the catechist does not cease to be the sign of hope for his brothers and sisters.*
- b. **A teacher and a mystagogue** *who introduces others to the mystery of God, revealed in the paschal mystery of Christ; as an icon of Jesus the teacher, the catechist has the two-fold task of transmitting the content of the faith and leading others into the mystery of faith itself. The catechist is called to open others to the truth about human beings and their*

ultimate vocation, communicating the knowledge of Christ and at the same time introducing them to the various dimensions of the Christian life, unveiling the mysteries of salvation contained in the deposit of faith and renewed in the Church's liturgy.

- c. **An accompanier and educator** *of those who are entrusted to him or her by the Church; the catechist is an expert in the art of accompaniment, has education expertise, is able to listen and enter in the dynamics of human growth, becomes a traveling companion with patience and a sense of gradualness, in docility to the action of the Spirit and through a process of formation helps his(her) brothers and sisters to mature in the Christian life and journey toward God. The catechist, an expert in humanity, knows the joys and hopes of human beings, their sadness and distress (*Gaudium et Spes* 1) and is able to situate them in relation to the Gospel of Jesus. (113)*

*Formation sets as its goal, in the first place, making catechists aware that as baptized persons they are true **missionary disciples**, meaning active participants in evangelization, and on this basis are enabled by the Church to communicate the Gospel and to **accompany** and **educate** believers in the faith. The formation of catechists therefore helps to develop the skills needed to communicate the faith and to accompany the people in their growth. The Christocentric goal of catechesis shapes the entire formation of catechesis and asks that they be able to conduct the catechetical journey in such a way as to bring out the centrality of Jesus Christ in salvation history. (132)*

Criteria for Formation

In the formation of catechists several criteria must be kept in mind that serve as inspiration for programs of formation . . .

- a. **Spirituality of mission and evangelization:** *it is vital that the whole formative process be permeated by the centrality of spiritual experience in missionary perspective . . .*
- b. **Catechesis as integral formation:** *this is a matter of “forming catechists so as to be able to transmit not only a teaching but also an integral Christian formation, by developing the ‘tasks of initiation, of education, and of teaching.’ Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators, and witnesses of the faith. . .*
- c. **Style of accompaniment:** *the Church feels the duty of forming its catechists in the art of personal accompaniment, both by proposing to them the experience of **being accompanied** in order to grow in discipleship, and by enabling them and sending them to **accompany** their brothers and sisters.*
- d. **Consistency among formative styles:** *“As a general criterion, it is necessary to underline the need for a coherence between the general pedagogy of formation of catechists and the pedagogy proper to the catechetical process. It would be very difficult for the catechist in his(her) activity to improvise a style and sensibility to which he(she) had not been introduced during his(her) own formation.”*
- e. **And attitude of docibilitas and self-formation:** *In the first place, it necessary that the catechist develop docibilitas, meaning the willingness to be touched by grace, by life, by persons in a serene and positive attitude toward reality in order **to learn how to learn**. Moreover, the willingness for self-formation is what enables the catechist to make a method of formation his(her) own and to be able to apply it to himself(herself) and to his(her) ecclesial service. In concrete terms, this is a matter of understanding oneself as a participant who is always in formation . . .*

- f. **The dynamic of the laboratory in the context of the group,** *as a group formative practice in which faith is **learning by doing**, which means valuing the experience, contributions, and reformulations of each one, in view of transformative learning. (135)*

The Dimensions of Formation

Being and “Knowing-How To Be With:” *Human and Christian Maturity*

*In the dimension of **being**, the catechist is formed to become **a witness of faith and a keeper of the memory of God**. Formation helps the catechist to reconsider his(her) own catechetical action as an opportunity for human and Christian growth . . . the catechist is called to grow constantly in affective balance, critical sense, inner unity and freedom, living relationships that support and enrich the faith. “The formation, above all, nourishes the spirituality of the catechist, so that his(her) activity springs in truth from his(her) own witness of life.” Formation therefore sustains the missionary awareness of the catechist, through the internalization of the demands of the Kingdom that Jesus has manifested . . . (139)*

*On the basis of this level of interiority there sprouts the **knowing-how to be with**, as a natural ability necessary to catechesis understood as an educational and communicative act. It is in fact on relationality, which is inherent to the very essence of the person (cf. GN 2:18), that ecclesial communion is grafted. The formation of catechists is careful to reveal and encourage the growth of this relational capacity, which is made concrete in a willingness to live human and ecclesial relationships in a way that is fraternal and serene. (140)*

Knowledge: Biblical-Theological Formation and the Understanding of Human Beings and the Social Context

*The catechist is also a **teacher** who instructs in the faith. In fact, while making witness his(her) main virtue he(she) does not forget that he(she) is also responsible for the transmission of the ecclesial faith. His(her) formation therefore makes room for the exploration and study of the message to be*

transmitted to the cultural, ecclesial, and existential context of the hearer . . . The assimilation of the content of the faith as **wisdom of the faith** takes place above all through familiarity with Sacred Scripture and with the study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church . . . (143)

Because of this it is necessary that the catechist should know:

- ◆ the main divisions of salvation history: Old Testament, New Testament, and Church history, in the light of the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ;
- ◆ the essential core of the Christian message and experience: the Creed, the **liturgy**, and the **sacraments, moral life, and prayer**;
- ◆ the principal elements of the ecclesial Magisterium concerning the proclamation of the Gospel and catechesis. (144)

Savoir-Faire: Pedagogical and Methodological Formation

In the dimension of **savoir-faire**, the catechist is formed to grow as an **educator and communicator**. The catechist, recognizing that his(her) hearer is an active participant in whom the grace of God is dynamically at work, will present himself(herself) as a

respectful facilitator of an experience of faith of which he(she) is not in charge. (148)

The pedagogical formation of the catechist should develop several attitudes in him(her), including:

- a. the **capacity of inner freedom and gratuitousness, of dedication and consistency** in order to be a credible witness to the faith;
- b. expertise in the **communication and narration of the faith** as the ability to present salvation history in a vital way so that persons may feel part of it;
- c. the maturation of an educational mentality that implies the willingness to build mature relationships with persons and the capacity to guide group dynamics, fostering the activation of learning processes for both individuals and the community;
- d. the serene **handling of educational relationships** in their affective capacity, getting in tune with the inner world of the other and disposing oneself to express one's emotions;
- e. the **capacity to prepare an itinerary of faith** that consists in considering socio-cultural circumstances; to utilize languages, techniques, and tools with creativity; to make an assessment. (149)

* * * * *

Envisioning Catechist Formation

#1. What it be like if catechist formation was designed around the three-fold identity of the catechist...

1. The Catechist is a witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God.
2. The Catechist is a teacher and a mystagogue.
3. The Catechist is an accompanier and educator.

The catechist is a missionary disciple, who communicates the Gospel and accompanies and educates believers in the faith.

#2. What it be like if catechist formation was designed around the three dimensions of formation...

1. *Being*: the catechist is formed to become a witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God; and to “knowing-how to be with” relational ability.
2. *Knowledge*: the catechist is a teacher who instructs in the faith and should know: salvation history, the core of the Christian message (Creed, liturgy, sacraments, moral life, and prayer), and Church teaching.

3. *Savior-Faire*: the catechist is an educator and communicator who is formed in pedagogical and methodological attitudes: in inner freedom and gratuitousness and dedication and consistency; in the communication of narrative of the faith; in building relationships and guiding group dynamics; in handling relationships in educational settings; and preparing an itinerary of faith responsive socio-cultural circumstances and utilizing languages, techniques and tools with creativity.

#3. What would it be like if catechist formation was designed using adult learning principles and methods...

1. Adults learn best when they are treated as self-directed persons who are always learning.
2. Adults learn best when they feel the need to learn and have input into what, why, and how they will learn. They perceive the goals of a learning experience to be their goals.
3. Adults learn best when the learning experience is meaningfully related to their past experience, and their experience is effectively utilized as a resource for learning.
4. Adults learn best in a life-centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) orientation to learning. Adults are motivated to devote energy to learn something to the extent that they perceive that it will help them perform tasks or deal with problems that they confront in their life situations.
5. Adults learn best when the learning experience is controlled primarily by them. They can set their own pace and time for learning.
6. Adults learn best when the learning environment is characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences. They learn best in an environment that encourages self-esteem and interdependence; and is safe, relaxed, and comfortable environment.
7. Adults learn best when their learning styles are taken into account and there are a variety of learning activities.
8. Adults learn best when there is attention to the emotional and intuitive as well as

intellectual and rational, to the communal and social as well as the individual and personal.

9. Adults learn best when they have a sense of progress toward their goals and can see the results and rewards of the learning experience. Adults learn best when they can evaluate themselves.
10. Adults learn best when they have an opportunity to apply the new knowledge to practical situations immediately in their own lives. They are motivated to learn when they have the opportunity to do something they could not do before.

#4. What would it be like if catechist formation used a variety of formats for learning...

Parishes and dioceses can design catechist formation in multiple formats to provide ways for catechists to engage in formation that are conducive to effective learning and the busy lives of catechists today. Multiple formats provide choices for adults to learn the same content.

Approach #1. On Your Own, Self-directed Learning

The abundance of online catechist formation courses and online content in the form of video and audio programs make possible independent, self-directed learning.

Approach #2. Mentoring: 1-1- Learning

Experienced (veteran) catechists can serve as mentors or guides to those who are engaged in self-directed learning. Mentor and catechist can meet to discern learning needs and create a plan for learning. The catechist engages in self-directed learning; and mentor and catechist meet to review learning and its application.

Approach #3. Small Group Learning

The small group approach works best when several catechists are engaged in learning on the same topic. The small group is a blend of individual learning and small group experiences. For example, a catechist completes the learning independently; the small group meets to discuss the content and its application; the catechist completes an application project; and the small group meets to

share application projects and assist each other in creating projects to implement in their classes and programs.

Approach #4. Whole Group Learning

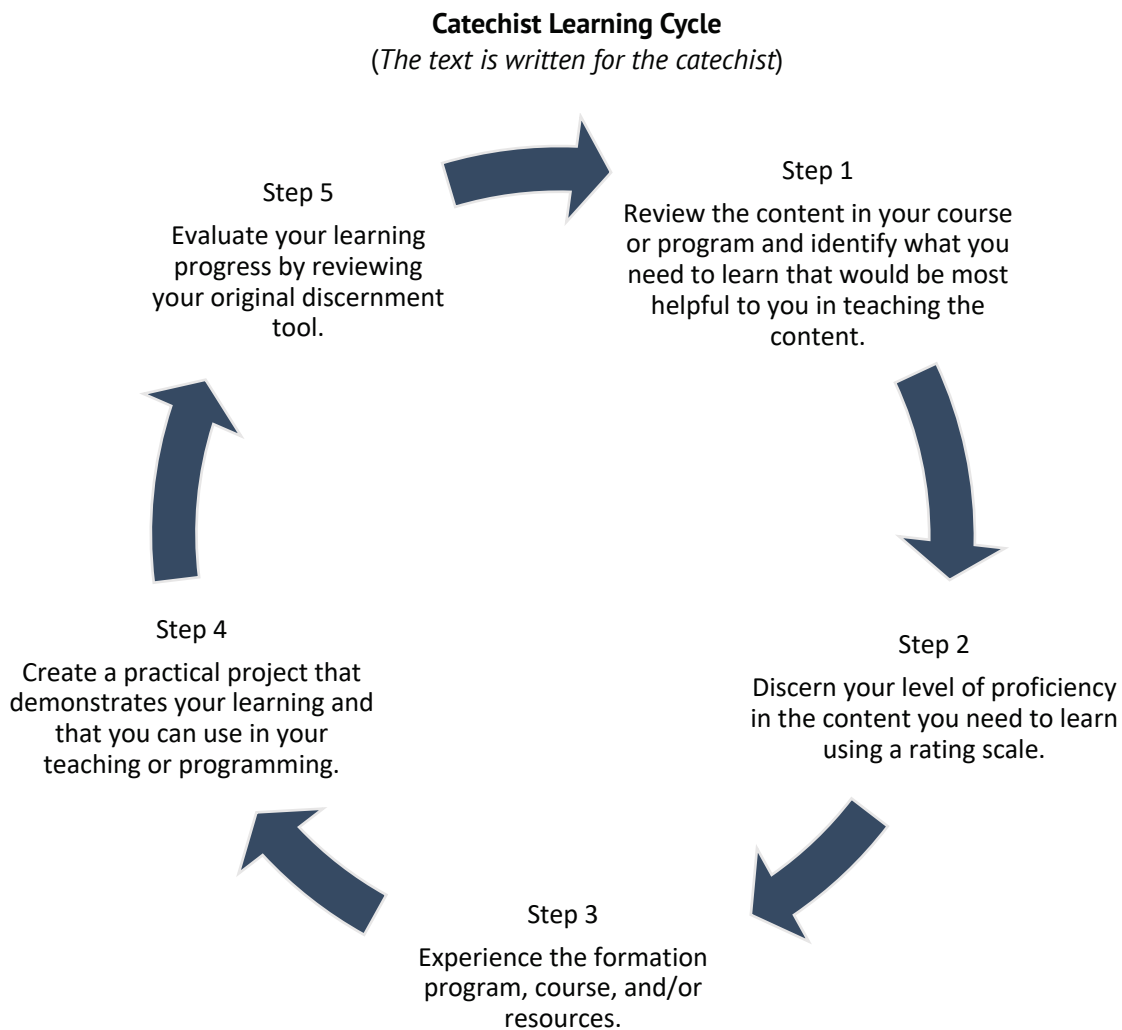
The whole group approach works best when all of the catechists have a similar learning need or

when the parish wants to provide formation for all catechists. Whole Group Learning can be designed in a variety of models, such as a one-time in-service program, a multi-part in-service program, and a one-day enrichment program or one-day retreat program.

An Example of Catechist Formation using Adult Learning Principles

Here is an example of an approach to catechist formation that is designed using adult learning principles and methods. In this example catechists discern their learning needs based on the content in the courses or programs they are teaching and then select the learning programs, courses, and/or resources (print, audio, video) to match with their

learning needs. They select their learning path in order to develop their proficiency in a particular aspect of the Bible, Catholic theology, or educational methods. Catechists move through a five step process of discernment, learning, and application as illustrated in the diagram below.



The Learning Cycle Described

Step 1. Identify the content of what you will be teaching.

Review the content in the classes or programs that you are teaching. For example, most children's catechetical programs include four or five major themes in the curriculum for grades 1 through 6: what we believe (Creed), how we celebrate (sacraments), how we live (morality and social teachings), how we pray, and how we celebrate the Church year seasons and feasts. Grades 7 and 8 often have one theme, such as the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus or Church history or Bible. Identify the content themes in your curriculum that you need to learn more about.

Step 2. Discover your level of proficiency in the content of the module you have selected.

Discern your level of proficiency on the topics you selected by using the learning assessment. Rate your knowledge and ability on a scale from 1-5.

- 1 = I am a beginner and need to develop my understanding of this topic.
- 3 = I am familiar with this topic and need to grow in my understanding so that I can teach and share my knowledge.
- 5 = I am able to teach and share my knowledge of this topic with others.

At the completion of the course or program, and your practical project, return to this initial assessment to identify how you have grown in each area.

Step 3. Engage in your learning.

Select the course, program, and/or resource that would be most helpful to you in teaching the course or program. This can include online formation courses, diocesan courses or workshops, independent learning (books, audio, videos), and much more.

Engage in the learning experience.

Step 4. Design your practical application.

Create a practical project that demonstrates your learning and that you can use in your teaching or programming.

Step 5. Evaluate your learning.

Evaluate your learning progress by reviewing your original discernment tool. Identify new learning needs and begin the process again .

Example of Proficiency Discernment (Topic: Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus)

To determine your current knowledge and practice on this topic, complete the following learning assessment using the scale from 1-5 with 1 = beginning, 3 = familiarity, and 5 = proficiency. At the completion of your learning and your practical project, return to this initial assessment to identify how you have grown in each area.

- 1 = I am a beginner and need to develop my understanding of this topic.
- 3 = I am familiar with this topic and need to grow in my understanding so that I can teach and share my knowledge.
- 5 = I am able to teach and share my knowledge of this topic with others.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Understanding the birth of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Understanding the characteristics of the ministry of Jesus as presented in the Gospels | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Understanding the key teachings of the message Jesus proclaimed as presented in the Gospels | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Understanding the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection as presented in the Gospels | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Ability to integrate the meaning of Jesus' life and message into my life a Christian | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Ability to teach the life of Jesus – message, ministry, death and resurrection. | 1 2 3 4 5 |



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