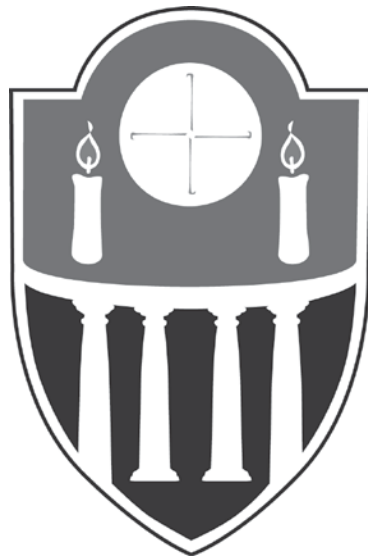


LIVING AND LEADING BY FAITH

A Catholic Faith Formation Program for the Catechetical Leaders
and Catechists of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn

INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR PARISH/SCHOOL/ACADEMY CATECHISTS



WORKBOOK



School of Evangelization
ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN



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INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR PARISH /SCHOOL/ACADEMY CATECHISTS

MODULE ONE: ABOUT THE CATECHIST

Introduction

Congratulations! You have been invited to serve the Church as a Parish/School/Academy catechist.

This introduction is intended for development of the Parish/School/Academy Catechist. In this first unit, we will explore what catechesis is and what makes a good catechist.

First and foremost, Parish/School/Academy catechesis is a ministry of the Church; one that is both challenging and very rewarding. In the coming months, you will be challenged to grow in your faith. You will come to understand and explain the teachings of our Church better. Your prayer life will be stronger. And, most importantly, you will come to know the Lord Jesus in a new and more personal way. When your students express back to you what you have taught them, your sense of reward and accomplishment will be indescribable.

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) the Catholic Church has favored the term “catechesis”, a word that comes from the Greek which means “to echo”. A catechist is called by the Church to “echo” or to “reflect” for others the life-giving truths and saving message of Jesus and the Church. The origin of this calling can be found in the gospel of St. Matthew (28:19-20): ‘Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out all that I have commanded you.’ Because we take this command from the Lord seriously, catechists need to learn and to prepare for this special calling.

So, what does the Church say and teach about catechesis? *The General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) points out the following elements:

1. The Church exists to evangelize and catechesis is an ‘essential step’ or ‘moment’ in the process of evangelization.



2. Catechesis is the process of making one's faith more living, conscious and active. It is supposed to help believers observe, interpret and judge their life experiences in light of the gospels and the teachings of the Church.
3. Catechesis is seen as being an integral part of Parish/School/Academy life and worship. The Parish/School/Academy community that is gathered around the Eucharistic table is the concrete reference point for our journey of faith. Think of it like this: the life and worship of the Parish/School/Academy is the catechism; the role of a catechist is to 'pass on the faith' to others.
4. At the heart of catechesis is the mystery of God's presence in our daily lives. God's presence is revealed in many ways: in the Bible, in the teaching authority of the Church, in nature, in music, in the arts, in the sacraments. But Christ is also present in you and in me. Christ reaches out to young people through witnesses like you and me. Through you, the Church invites the next generation of Catholics to live lives of holiness, integrity and service.

Initial Reflection Questions

What would you say are the greatest challenges for Parish/School/Academy catechesis today?

Take a moment to list what you consider to be the 5 most important qualities of a Parish/School/Academy catechist.



Going Deeper

Consider what some other important Church documents have said about the ministry of catechesis.

“At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father...who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. To catechize is to reveal the person of Christ....” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 426)

“For catechesis to be effective, the catechist must be fully committed to Jesus Christ. Faith must be shared with conviction, joy, enthusiasm, and hope...The summit and center of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message. This is possible only when the catechist believes in the Gospel and its power to transform lives. To give witness to the Gospel, the catechist must establish a living, ever-deepening relationship with the Lord. He or she must be a person of prayer. One who frequently reflects on the scriptures and whose Christ-like living testifies to deep faith. Only men and women of faith can share faith with others, preparing the setting within which people can respond in faith to God’s grace.” (*Sharing the Light of Faith*, 207).

“Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith.” (CCC 2226)

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”
(Paul VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, 41)

“The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith. Catechesis will teach them to do this...”
(John Paul II, *On Catechesis in our Time*, 61)

“Catechesis must be impregnated and penetrated by the thought, the spirit and the outlook of the Bible and the Gospels through assiduous contact with the texts themselves.” (John Paul II, *On Catechesis in our Time*, 27)



“Catechesis seeks to move people to live justly, mercifully, and peacefully as individuals, to act as the leaven of the gospel in family, school, work, social and civic life, and to work for appropriate social change.” (*Sharing the Light of Faith*, 170)

“To invoke (the Holy Spirit) constantly, to be in communion with Him, to endeavor to know his authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every catechist.”

(John Paul II, *On Catechesis in our Time*, 72)

“The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents an organic and systematic exposition of the fundamental content of Catholic faith and morals, in the light of the living tradition of the Church and Vatican Council II; it contributes notably to a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the Faith. Therefore, it is necessary for this instrument to serve as a point of reference for the teaching of religion in parish communities. In addition, it is desirable for *each family* to have a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, because it is a sure guide in religious education and in life according to the Faith.”

(John Paul II, *Morning Address*, July 23, 1997).

Concluding Activity

Here is some advice that will surely add creativity and joy to your teaching ministry. Put a checkmark next to the ones you would like to try first. Then share your ideas with another catechist or your catechetical leader.

1. Carefully plan every lesson; strive for excellence in teaching.
2. Smile a lot.
3. Build time into each session for children to work together in small groups.
4. Use visual aids: videos, photos, art work, maps, posters, statues as much as possible.
5. Read at least one good book a year that will enrich your teaching ministry.
6. Celebrate holy days and holidays.



7. Each week, pray and meditate on the scripture passages in your teacher's manual.
8. When children surprise you with improvement or exceptional behavior, tell them!
9. Do at least one social service project as a class during the school year.
10. Dramatize, act out, and role play whenever possible.
11. Become a storyteller; tell your faith story and the stories of the saints.
12. Give students opportunities to discuss, write and/or draw what they have learned.
13. As you prepare your lesson, ask yourself, what will the students learn, experience or remember about this session?
14. Evaluate your successes and failures on an ongoing basis and learn from them.





INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR PARISH /SCHOOL/ACADEMY CATECHISTS

MODULE TWO: ABOUT THE LEARNER

Introduction

One of the most important things a catechist does is explain the mystery of God's presence in our lives. God's presence is revealed in many ways: in nature, in the Mass and sacraments, in friends and family life and in you! Catechists invite and inspire the next generation of Catholic Christians to live lives of holiness, integrity and service. But to do this successfully, you have to know something about your learners; their social and cultural backgrounds and especially their stage of emotional and intellectual development.

Learners come in all shapes and sizes, cultures and family backgrounds, with different levels of personal and spiritual maturity, and with all kinds of talents, strengths and handicapping conditions. As a result, Faith Formation programs and teaching methods need to be adapted to the diverse needs and circumstances of the learners. For example, as a learner grows and develops, the less concrete and multi-sensory the learning process has to be. Generally speaking, the more the senses are engaged, the greater the chance for learning and retention. Older learners can take more responsibility for their own learning by means of needs assessments, course electives, discussions and program evaluation.

All learners require 'active listeners' especially when religious questions are asked and catechists should be sure what is really being asked. I am reminded of the story of the little girl who comes home from school and says, "Daddy, where did I come from?" Dad stutters for a moment or two and then says, "Why not ask your Mommy?" Her Mommy very slowly begins to explain that "When two people love each other very much, they get married. At times they get so very close to each other that Daddy plants a tiny seed inside of Mommy's tummy. For nine months, it grows into a little baby right here under Mommy's heart until it is ready to be born." "Oh, my friend Jenny says that she came from Ohio."



Initial Reflection Questions

Regardless of your knowledge or training in the area of child development, a good place to review the developmental needs and learning styles of your learners is the Teacher's Manual that has been selected for your class or age group. Take some time now to review this section in your Teachers Manual and discuss your answers to the following questions with an experienced catechist or catechetical leader.

What are the typical developmental needs and tasks of this age group?

How do they best learn and retain information?

What activities and learning techniques tend to work best with this age group?

How long is their attention span?

What strategies does your text recommend for handling discipline problems?



Going Deeper

Another important consideration is the learning environment.

- Can all the learners see and hear you?
- Can you see and hear all the learners?
- Is the learning environment ‘interesting’? Does it have or permit the placement of pictures, posters, maps and religious artifacts?
Can the projects and art work of the students be displayed?
- Is the learning environment comfortable and free of external noise and distractions?
- Do the learners have adequate supplies and resources?
Students need time to reflect, write or draw about what you are teaching.
- And very importantly, can the cultural and ethnic customs and traditions of the learners be explained and celebrated in this learning environment?

There are other important dynamics that belong in a religious class as well.

1. Get to know each child by name as soon as possible
2. Put emphasis on Scripture readings and prayer
3. Teach religion in the context of the sacredness of God’s creation
4. Catechists need to stress the dignity of each person and our interdependence on one another
5. Catechists must build trust and a sense of community in the group. Learning to trust ourselves and others is one of the first steps to believing in God
6. Consider the languages and cultural identities of your learners. Choose resources and projects that are appropriate for them and their families
7. Stress the need for conversion and commitment. Young Christians need to change, to grow up, and to be formed and transformed in Christ



8. Catechists and their learners should plan and carry out at least one service project during the year
9. An evaluation of your successes and failures should happen after every class session

Finally, what about catechesis in cyberspace?

That's right, the Internet. Studies show that that is where your learners are spending much of their time. For young people today, technology isn't just a handy way to keep in touch or to organize your calendar; it has become as natural as eating and breathing. Being wired is a way of life. It is estimated that the average teen sends more than 50 text messages a day; younger children spend over 10 hours a week playing video games; and the amount of time all kids spend online has almost tripled in the past 10 years. There is some research that suggests that being connected 24/7 is not only changing how our kids live, it may even be altering the way their brains work, the way they think. Faced with this reality, many are asking what is the impact of this rapidly changing digital culture on Parish/School/Academy catechesis? What, if anything, can we do about it or with it?



Concluding Activity

Invite one or more Catechists in the field of computer technology to discuss with you and your catechetical leader the following questions:

1. While the primary focus of our catechetical ministries is not technology, it is about communication...communicating the faith of the Church in a digital age. Can the Internet be an effective resource/ technique in catechesis?
2. Some parents may say, “Keep technology out of catechesis! We have enough trouble trying to supervise and control smart phones, iPods and video games at home!” What do you think?
3. Religion can be described as a life-long search for meaning and truth. When learners start searching for meaning, they begin to discover the importance of a life of faith. Can Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter offer reliable opportunities to inspire more in-depth study of our Catholic faith?
4. Can these same technologies be used to enhance digital discipleship?
5. How can an e-mentoring program support catechists in their lesson planning?
6. If you wanted to create secure catechetical learning experiences and resources to complement the educational interests and abilities of your students, what kind of digital infrastructure would you have to put in place?



Resources

The General Directory for Catechesis (USCCB, 1998) # 148

Catechism of the Catholic Church Libreria Editrice Vaticana, USCCB (second edition, 2000)
2493-2496

Preserving the Vision, Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, 2011

Media Mindfulness: Educating Teens about Faith and Media, Gretchen Hailer and Rose Pacatte, 2007

The Art of Change: Faith, Vision and the Art of Planning, Reid, J and Gallagher, M 2009

Any works or research done by Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS. She is the director of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives and professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Dayton. (angela.zukowski@notes.udayton.edu)

For a variety of grade level themes, resources and activities check out the free, In-Service Webinar from William H. Sadlier at WeBelieveWeb.com



INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR PARISH /SCHOOL/ACADEMY CATECHISTS

MODULE THREE: THE BIBLE AND THE CATECHIST

*This word came to Jeremiah from the Lord:
Take a scroll and write on it
All the words I have spoken to you...
So Jeremiah called Baruch...
Who wrote down on a scroll as Jeremiah dictated.*

JEREMIAH 36: 1-2, 4

Introduction

What is the Bible? Most people would say “the inspired Word of God.” And, in the words of St Paul, “all scripture is inspired by God.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

But perhaps a broader definition of the Bible is this: a record of God’s revelation and saving action in the history of His people. That history is told in a variety of ways, by a variety of human authors over a long period of time (perhaps as early as 1100 years before the birth of Jesus). The Bible is a virtual library of inspired works including the history of kings and judges, stories of creation, exile and promise, love songs and letters, poetry, proverbs, prophesy, parables and rituals. But the primary purpose of all these various literary forms was the same...to interpret and communicate the religious truth or message that God intended. The papal encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus*, which has been called the Magna Carta of Biblical Studies, puts it this way, “God so moved the human authors to write and so assisted them in that writing that they faithfully committed to apt words (the) things that He ordered.” (Pope Leo XIII, November 18, 1893)

Initial Reflection Questions

Take a moment to write and share a brief, historical account of your family tree. Where are they from? What are the virtues, aspirations and failings of some of the key members? Are there truths about individual family members that their lives reveal? How might God be speaking in and through your family history?



Going Deeper

A. SCRIPTURE

Did you know that the Bible is the oldest and most inspirational book ever written?

Whether you think of it as a book of faith or a book of culture, its influence is all around us...in religion certainly, in law, politics, philosophy and art.

The Bible is divided into two large sections: the Old Testament, often referred to as the Hebrew Scriptures, was written between the 12th and 2nd centuries B.C. The New Testament, sometimes referred to as the Christian Scriptures, was written and edited between 50 and 100 A.D by leaders of the early Christian communities after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Over the passage of time, the books of the Bible were written and transcribed in different languages. The original languages of the Bible were Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. But in the late 4th century in a world essentially ruled by the Roman Empire and in which the Church was flourishing, the Bible was translated into Latin by biblical scholar, St. Jerome. Born in 342 and raised a Christian in Italy, Jerome was recognized as a Doctor of the Church. He studied in Rome and was baptized around the age of 18. Choosing to live in the deserts of Syria to do penance, he became a hermit for 5 years and learned the Hebrew language. In 382, Jerome was back in Rome where he served as secretary to Pope Damasus. It was the Pope who suggested that Jerome translate the entire Bible because Latin was the language of the people. This project took some fifteen years.

The 46 books in the Hebrew Scriptures are divided into four sections: The Pentateuch, Historical Books, Wisdom Books and the Prophets. The 27 books of the New Testament



are the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline Letters, the Letters of Peter, James John and Jude, and the Book of Revelation.

There is some disagreement between Catholics and Protestants regarding the exact number of books in the Old Testament. Catholic Bibles have seven books that Protestants do not: 1 and 2 Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, Sirach and the Book of Wisdom. Today however, many Protestant Bibles include these seven disputed books, but in a separate section of their Bible.

B. TRADITION

You may be surprised to learn that large sections of the Bible began as oral traditions. In other words, these sections were handed down by word of mouth for years, even centuries, before they were written down. The word ‘tradition’ comes from the Latin word meaning “to hand on”.

Tradition can be thought of in two ways. First, it can be used to refer to the *process* of handing on the faith from one generation to another. Thus, we can speak of both oral and written tradition.

Or, tradition can also be used to refer to the *content* of what is being handed on. For example, we can speak of tradition with a ‘small t’ like abstaining from meat on Fridays. Those nonessential traditions can and do change. Or, we can speak of tradition with a ‘capitol T’, meaning the Church’s self –conscious interpretation of scripture, meaning that the whole Christian Church in its teachings, in its witness and in its prayers have always understood as something to be an authentic part of its living Tradition. The belief that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist is an example of an essential Tradition. This is how the Church has always understood and celebrated the meaning of Eucharist.

Concluding Activity

Finally, here are a few suggestions for presenting the Bible to students of different ages.

- Enthroned a Bible in a special place in your classroom. Your reverence in handling the Bible will be apparent to your students.



- Children love stories. Prayerfully read a bible story or event and then try telling it in your own words. Enrich the telling with the use of magazine pictures, a flannel graph or even paper bag puppets.
- Invite students to dramatize or to pantomime a familiar Bible story (for example, cure of the blind man or Peter denying Jesus in the courtyard). After assigning roles, the catechist can read and the children can act the parts.
- Ask older students to look up and read passages in the New Testament.
- Using one of the readings from next Sunday's liturgy, prepare a Scriptural prayer service with your students. The important elements are:
 - A parable or Bible passage is read.
 - The passage is discussed and explained. You may want to ask questions such as, "If you were there, who would you be?" "What struck you most about this passage?" "What question would you ask Jesus or the main character?"
 - Students respond to the Word of God in song and/or gestures.
 - Students could write and share their own 'prayer of the faithful'.
 - With young children, simple songs and gestures should be used and practiced before the celebration
 - If possible, invite parents to participate.



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MODULE FOUR: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CATECHIST

Introduction

An important part of the spiritual life is prayer. And prayer is an important part of being a catechist. Parents and catechists teach children how to pray by being good pray-ers.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ‘Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God...” #2559. Whether it be memorized or spontaneous, individual or communal, expressed in words, gestures or song, all prayer is simply communication with God. If you can talk, you can pray! Better still, if you can just ‘be with God’ and listen, you can pray!

So much of our time and energy are spent on a thousand and one activities each day; some of which are important, some are not. Are we so busy making a living, chauffeuring the kids, planning this or that meal that we fail to see God’s graces within these ordinary activities? Our hearts can become so cluttered by multiple tasks and relationships and by an abundance of possessions that God is gradually pushed farther away from our consciousness. We become cut off from what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God.

Initial Reflection Questions

Before going any further, complete the following two sentences.

If I had to describe the state of my prayer life, I would say..... _____

Reasons for my wanting to pray more often are..... _____



Going Deeper

Are we holier if we pray more? Conventional wisdom says yes. Prayer puts us in a more conscious relationship with God. It makes us more aware of our inner selves and more attentive to the needs of others. But prayer isn't all there is to spirituality. Becoming a holier person includes having an attitude of gratefulness; and of looking out for the good in others; holiness means living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; enduring an illness or physical pain without complaining; giving of our time and talent so that the lives of others may be a little better. All of these actions 'convert us', make our hearts bigger and deepen our spirituality.

In his book *Life and Holiness*, Thomas Merton described the process of conversion in terms of sainthood. "The saint simply wants to be a window through which God's mercy shines on the world. This is why he strives to be holy...so that the goodness of God may never be obscured by any of his/her selfish acts."

So, a saint is simply a person, like yourself, who takes seriously Jesus' invitation to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). A saint is a living reminder that God's grace can work miracles if we but open our hearts to it. Every journey of faith is the work of God's grace. It begins with 'a call' from God or for someone who speaks in God's name. God walks with us all along the way. He lights our path when things get dark. He lifts us up, when our hearts grow weary. And yet, we do not make our journey of faith to God alone. We travel in a community of faith. Every faith journey involves the help and support of others.

*God, who began this good work in you,
will carry it on until it is finished.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

So, what is spirituality and how might you measure your progress in the spiritual life?

From the very beginning, Christian spirituality was shaped by the expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of God. It cultivated the belief that the Holy Spirit resides within the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and within each of us.

Spirituality is also about our most important relationships. In the Judeo-Christian-Muslim traditions, though we may differ on the precise terms, spirituality means living in union, in harmony with God, self, others and with all of creation. One of the ways that the Old Testament expresses this relationship is in the admonition of the



prophet Micah: (To) act justly, (to) love tenderly and (to) walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8) The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us of the different schools of Christian spirituality (CCC 2693). These will be covered in detail later in the *Living and Leading by Faith* program.

Concluding Activity

On a scale of 1 – 10, (one meaning, ‘no way, I do not agree with that’ and ten meaning, ‘yes, I certainly believe that’) score yourself on each of the following signs of spiritual wellness. Discuss your scores with a mentor or spiritual director.

1. I recognize that everyone is called to holiness; that everyone is called to enter the Kingdom of God. _____
2. My spirituality helps me to accept the circumstances of my daily life. _____
3. I can “let go” of anxieties and create my own inner peace. _____
4. I can express my spirituality in both words and deeds. _____
5. Compassion begins by trying to see Christ in others. _____
6. I am comfortable with silence. _____
7. I see a connection between spiritual and physical health. _____
8. My prayers often give God honor and praise. _____
9. Our lives are fashioned by the choices we make. I try to consciously discern the will of God when making important choices. _____





INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR PARISH /SCHOOL/ACADEMY CATECHISTS

MODULE FIVE: THE MINISTRY OF CATECHESIS

Introduction

LEADERSHIP

- Who is a leader?
- Who are you leading and why?
- Under whose authority do you lead?
- To whom are you accountable?

Whether you are being asked to be a catechist of children, youth or adults you will certainly be viewed as a ‘leader’ in your faith community.

Are you a natural born leader or do you need to improve on your leadership skills?

Regardless, when you catechize others, you may also be considered as a learner; as one who prays openly, as a companion in faith, even as a prophet (one who speaks for God).

In catechesis, it is God who initiates the gift of grace and it is through this gift that we are able to learn and respond to God. Catechesis is a learned remembering that “vividly maintains the presence of the Lord among us” (*GDC*, no.154)

“Catechesis is the process of transmitting the Gospel teachings of Jesus, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in so many ways” (*GDC*, no. 105).

The Holy Spirit will come and we shall know Him; He will be with us forever; He will remain with us. The Spirit will teach us everything, remind us of all Christ said to us and will bear witness to Him (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 29).



Initial Reflection Questions

Ask yourself, which category do you fall into and list the strengths you bring into your role as a catechist?

In whose name do you catechize; your's, your pastor's, your bishop's, the Church's?

How will you give account of your role as catechist/teacher to the Lord when you meet Him face to face?

The call to minister as a catechist is a vocation, a calling of the Holy Spirit that is heard and nourished by prayer. Prayer gives us peace, confidence and the strength to cope with the difficulties of daily life. Hence, it is assumed that each catechist or teacher does have an active prayer life.

If this is so, how can we make it even better?

Consider these four basic steps for making your private prayer life better.

1. Choose a good place to pray. Some people can pray while riding a bus or train to work. But if we want to pray without interruption, we need privacy and quiet.



2. Choose the best time of day for your prayer.
3. Choose a posture that is right for you. Some people pray best by kneeling, some sitting in a comfortable chair.
4. Create the proper climate for your prayer time. Consciously relax; set up a pattern of rhythmic breathing. When you feel in touch with your inner self, try to listen to God who dwells in your soul as in a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). One way to do this is to begin by saying: “Lord God, you are closer to me than my own breath. May each breath I take deepen my awareness of your holy presence.” If God makes His presence felt to you, stay with it. Don’t move on too quickly. Forget about your planned agenda. Simply rest and remain open and present to God. A good way to conclude your prayer is by speaking words of gratitude and thanksgiving.

What is Ministry?

- Service
- Minister – person commissioned to perform work on behalf of the Church.
- Lay or ordained
 - Lay – Youth, Religion, ministers of hospitality, music, lectors,
 - Ordained – clergy

Ministry is entirely different than profession. The two must be clearly distinguished from each other. Ministry is a vocation to which you are called. A profession is a job for which you assiduously train. The two are not interchangeable simply because ministry deals with grace... the grace of God which endows us with the courage to take this bold step of evangelization.

Of all the ministries and services which the Church performs in order to carry out its mission of evangelization, the ministry of catechesis occupies a position of prime importance. It is a fundamental ecclesial service that is critical for the growth and vitality of the Church. Hence, the Bishop, priests, deacons, parents, religious, the laity, and the entire Christian community have a shared but differentiated responsibility for this ministry. Through them, the Word of God and the teachings of the Church are witnessed and handed on from generation to generation.



What is Catechesis?

- Is an ecclesial act – (*GDC*, par.78) because the Church continues the mission of Christ.
- Is a systematic method of sharing/teaching the faith according to the Magisterium.
- Is “intrinsically bound to every liturgical and sacramental action” (*GDC*, par. 30).
- Is getting to know Christ through His teachings entrusted to the Church.
- Is a young mother, tucking her child into bed at night with a kiss and sign of the cross.
- Is the pastor giving yet another hour of spiritual direction.
- Is the group of catechumens reflecting on the meaning of the Sunday readings.
- Is Catholic school families gathered in the church basement to make Advent wreaths.
- Is the Thursday morning bible study group.
- Is the adult choir in silent prayer before the 10 a.m. Sunday Mass.
- Is the parish social action committee.
- Is teenagers collecting food items the weekend before Thanksgiving.
- Is children making their first Holy Communion.
- Is that young couple on a date saying grace together in a restaurant.
- Is the annual March for Life.

Catechesis is all these things. It is everything we do as individuals, families, and parish communities that help nurture each other in faith.



Participants may share their ideas/knowledge of who and what a catechist is and does.

Biblical Reflection

READ MATTHEW 28:18-20

Jesus commands us to be disciples

He tells us why, what, and how to teach

He assures us we are not alone

If we trust, then we must obey

Make sure to break this passage down line by line – it is key to the catechetical ministry. This mandate by Christ must be taken seriously. This is not a suggestion; it is a mandate to every baptized Christian!

Write about what this means to you. Be specific and give your answers a great deal of thought.

Who is a Catechist?

READ LUKE 5:1-11

AND

READ MATTHEW 28:18-20

Every baptized Christian is called to spread the Good News of Christ and therefore a catechist. As to whether we answer that call or not is up to us; and the degree of our commitment is also up to us.



The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few... sound familiar?

Read Matthew 9:37-38

You are the **laborers** singled out by the Holy Spirit to work in the fields and bring in the harvest.

Are you ready?

Why Catechesis?

At the heart of catechesis is how the Christian community empowers its members to know, love and serve God. This means that the catechist and the learners must take the time to reflect on how we are called to know, love and serve God in our particular time and place. Recall that in Luke’s longest meditation on mission (Luke 10:1-24) Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs. There were three reasons for this: mutual support; bearing witness to the truth of one’s testimony; being a loving embodiment of God’s love and peace in one another. You may not engage in ministry ‘two by two’ but you can engage your students in a reflection of how we know, love and serve God in our daily lives.

<p>TO KNOW GOD</p> <p><i>“Our heart is restless until it rests in you”</i></p> <p>ST. AUGUSTINE</p>	<p>TO LOVE GOD</p> <p>Every fiber of our being can be emptied for others</p>	<p>TO SERVE GOD</p> <p>We turn ourselves around in service to others</p> <p>Mt 25:31-40</p> <p>How are we to serve the Lord?</p>
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Take some time to reflect on the above.



Going Deeper

SOME QUOTATIONS TO CONSIDER

Please read the following information carefully and reflect on each quote.

TO TEACH AS JESUS DID, #7

Catholic education is an expression of the mission entrusted by Jesus to the Church He founded. Through education the Church seeks to prepare its members to proclaim the Good News and to translate this proclamation into action.

How are you helping to achieve this goal?

TO TEACH AS JESUS DID, # 14

The educational mission of the Church is an integrated ministry embracing three interlocking dimensions; the message revealed by God (*didache*) which the Church proclaims; fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*); service to the Christian community and the entire human community (*diakonia*). While these three essential elements can be separated for the sake of analysis, they are joined in the one educational ministry.

Which ministry do you belong to and how does this passage apply to you?

GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS, #8

The work of catechists involves their whole being. Before they preach the word, they must make it their own and live by it.

Write down some ways that you are living this word of God.



NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS, #55

Like all Christians, catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation... In addition to spiritual formation, the catechist is also in need of pedagogical formation, especially as society, teaching methods, and culture change.

Constant and consistent training is a part of the formation. How often do you avail yourself of opportunities to be formed?

Concluding Reflections

WHAT DOES CATECHESIS ENTAIL?

- Faith
- Personal sponsorship
- Formal instruction
- Formation
- Spiritual growth
- Skill development
- Support
- Witness
- Courage
- Sacrifice



Explain these points in your own words as to how these apply to your own life as catechist.

Scripture and Catechesis

St. Jerome is quoted as saying, "... ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ." In order to know Christ you must know Sacred Scripture. How often do you make time to read and study Scripture? How many courses have you taken on the study of Sacred Scripture? It is never too late to learn.

What was I thinking?

Am I qualified to teach?

Do I have the time to prepare well?

What do I teach? Me, a role model?

Why can't I teach what I want?

Policies? Who said? Who is in control?

Do you become nervous when you see a priest, deacon, DRE or principal walking the halls or visiting your class?

Clergy presence especially should reassure us that they care enough to set aside time to visit us. It is also the responsibility of Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education and Principals to ensure the proper teaching of the tenets of faith. All these supervisors are there to help you with your ministry. Not all parishes enjoy this, so make use of these people whenever you have the opportunity. God equips those he calls to spread the Good News.



Fundamental Tasks of Catechesis

- Promoting knowledge of the faith
- Liturgical education
- Moral formation
- Teaching to pray
- Education for Community Life
- Missionary Initiation

GDC, #85

Promoting knowledge of the faith means that the more one knows about God, the more one will want to know Him. Therefore, catechesis must lead to a gradual grasping of who God is and how we are to live out his plan of salvation in the world.

Liturgical education makes us aware of Christ's presence in the sacraments, especially in the celebration of Eucharist.

Moral formation and conversion to Jesus Christ implies learning that He truly is the Way, the Truth and the Life. It implies living not only by the 10 Commandments but by the Beatitudes as well. This moral formation will always explore the social consequences of Gospel values.

The task of teaching prayer is very important. Parents most certainly initiate their children to prayer, both formal and spontaneous. But catechesis helps the learner to pray with the sentiments of adoration, praise and thanksgiving. These sentiments are reflected in the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples, The Lord's Prayer.

Education for community life speaks to the need for learning social values and virtues such as respect the rights of others, the common good of society, for forgiveness and fraternal love. In developing these community values, catechesis will pay special attention to ecumenism and the religious freedom of others. It will encourage respect and fraternal attitudes toward members of other churches and ecclesial communities.

The catechetical task of missionary initiation will encourage the followers of Jesus to be a positive Christian presence in society through the conduct of their personal and professional lives.



How well versed are you in these specific areas? Where do you need help? Speak to your supervisor or colleagues and learn to collaborate; **it works!**

Tips on Classroom Management

ADVICE TO COMMIT TO MEMORY

- Pray!
- Know your strengths
- Know your students
- Use various techniques
- Be appropriately equipped
- Pray!

And in other words...

- Effective maximum use of your strengths is vital to a success story.
- Know your students' capabilities and shortcomings.
- Dwell and draw on their strong points as a tool for affirmation.
- Different learners call for different teaching styles.
- Prepare your lesson and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit after all ... you were called by the Holy Spirit!



Your Written Assignment

Please comment completely on the following:

1. What unique gifts do I bring to the classroom?

2. How can I use my gifts to be a catechist?

3. What does it mean to be a catechist?



Please share your responses with your Catechetical Leader.

*Well done,
good and faithful servant!*

WHEN IN DOUBT READ MATTHEW 25:14-30







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