

Thursday March 24th, 2022 9:00AM

Nuts and Bolts IV

1. Opening Lenten Prayer
2. Topics:
 - a. Safe Environment: Updated Lesson Plans
 - b. Now is Time to Recruit Next Year's Catechists – what are somethings that have worked?
 - c. End of the Year Activities.
 - d. Length of Time to Keep Files.
 - e. Personal Spiritual Growth – If you are not growing, you're shrinking. We need to make sure that we are being refilled faster than we are being poured out.
 - f. Goal of Catechesis: "Aim: to lead believers to a **deeper knowledge and love of Christ and the church; firm commitment to follow Jesus; in communion with Jesus believers share in the mystery of the Trinity.**" National Directory of Catechesis (National Directory for Catechesis- aka NDC)

"... The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ..." (*The 2020 Directory for Catechesis paragraph 75*)

8 Implications of the new Directory for Catechesis that should shape your ministry:

Summary of 8 Implications of the 2020 Directory for Catechesis on RE

1. Catechesis **must** be kerygmatic - Kerygmatic Catechesis
2. Accompaniment **must** be a priority
3. **Make Jesus the center of all that you do**
4. **Rely on the Holy Spirit like your life and ministry depends on Him – they do**
5. **Invest in your catechists**
6. **Engage clergy, parents, grandparents, and Godparents**
7. **The classroom model and academic approach for RE is not enough**
8. **RE needs to partner with YM to be successful**

g. Documents: Summaries

i. Renewing the Vision: A Framework of Catholic Youth Ministry (USCCB 1997, 2002)

3. What have been your biggest challenges this year?
4. Mentor Program – it is never too late to get a mentor
5. Evaluation - What topics or resources could we add to improve Nuts and Bolts?
6. Closing Prayer

Opening:

[Leader]:

We invoke your mercy in humble prayer, O Lord,
that you may cause us, your servants,
corrected by penance and schooled by good works,
to persevere sincerely in your commands
and come safely to the paschal festivities.



Reading:

[Reader]:

From Ephesians, Chapter 5

Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;
rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret;
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light.
Therefore, it says: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

The Word of the Lord . . . **ALL:** *Thanks be to God!*

Petitions:

[Leader]: God has revealed himself in Christ. Let us praise his goodness, and ask him from our hearts:

ALL: *Remember us, Lord, for we are your children.*

1. Teach us to enter more deeply into the mystery of the Church, that it may be more effective for ourselves and for the world as the sacrament of salvation.

ALL: *Remember us, Lord, for we are your children.*

2. Inspire us to work for human progress, seeking to spread your kingdom in all we do.

ALL: *Remember us, Lord, for we are your children.*

3. Forgive us our sins, and direct our steps into the ways of justice and sincerity.

ALL: *Remember us, Lord, for we are your children.*

Closing:

ALL:

*Merciful Father,
We know that the tiny sacrifices we make this Lent
can never serve as a real penance.
But help us to make each of our lives
one of following your Son.
We are filled with your love.*

*Let your love shine out from within us
and guide our lives in this sacred
journey
toward the Easter joy you offer all of us.
May the Lord bless us,
protect us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.*

Children's Safe Environment Training – VIRTUS

We are excited to share with you the updates we have made to the Children's Safe Environment lesson plans and videos that can be found on the diocese website under the Protecting God's Children tab, Lesson Plans and Resources for Children.

"In 2016 the Diocese of Green Bay, through a grant from the Catholic Foundation, purchased the VIRTUS lesson plans for children to provide a consistent safe environment foundation for our children. It is the shared responsibility of parents, teachers, and catechists to give our children the awareness and tools they need to overcome anyone who intends harm to them.

It is an expectation that all Catholic Schools and Religious Education programs use the VIRTUS Lesson Plans as the basis for the children's safe environment training. Additional resources may be used to supplement the VIRTUS lesson plans."

Throughout the pandemic VIRTUS has been very engaged in updating and creating additional material to support safe environment training for children. On the diocese website you will find in English and Spanish an explanation and overview of the safe environment training:

Teaching Safety – Empowering God's Children Program Overview

Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide

In English and Spanish you will find Pre-K lesson plans:

Lesson 1 – Basic Rules for Safety

Lesson 2 – Safe Friends and Safe Adults

We have added in English only at this time (Spanish is still in development):

Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0 Expansion with Safe Environment

All six children's lesson plans are now available in English and Spanish. The lesson plans have been developed using six consistent themes that are age appropriate by grade level.

The themes are:

Lesson 1 – Physical Boundaries: Safe and Unsafe Touching Rules

Lesson 2 – Safe Adults: Safe Touches and Special Safe Adults

Lesson 3 – Boundaries: You Have Rights!

Lesson 4 – Secrets, Surprises and Promises

Lesson 5 – Being a Safe Friend

Lesson 6 – Boundaries: Feelings and Facts

Lastly the videos have been updated to:

Empowering God's Children 1 Grades K-5

Empowering God's Children 2 Grades 6-8

Empowering God's Children 3 Grades 9-12

We ask that you please insure that all people entrusted with providing safe environment training to our children are aware of these updates.

Thank you for all you do keeping our children informed and safe!



Now is time to recruit next year's catechists

In order to have a well-prepared community of catechists for the fall, follow these five fail-safe steps by Dan Pierson

One of the three most important responsibilities of a parish director of religious education or catechetical leader is the recruitment, orientation, preparation and the continuing education and formation of catechists.

As a parish director of religious education, I found March to be the best time to recruit catechists for the coming catechetical year beginning in September. In order to have a well-prepared community of catechists for the fall, follow these five fail-safe steps.

1. Gather together a recruitment team made up of the pastor, members of the parish staff and a few catechists. Create a list of parishioners whom you feel may have an interest in exploring the possibility of being a catechist. The focus is on “exploring”. At this point, you are not recruiting catechists.

2. Schedule a time for an invitational meeting. Mail an invitation to all those whose names you have identified. Follow up with a telephone call, encouraging them to attend. Divide up the list so each team member will call just a few.

In the letter, explain that the parish is in the process of identifying people who may be interested in considering being a catechist, one of the most esteemed ministries in the Catholic Church. Tell them that at the invitational meeting you will present an overview of the parish faith formation program; the qualities, skills and responsibilities of a catechist; and the many ways that the parish provides for the preparation and education of catechists. Reassure them that they will not be asked to make a commitment at the meeting.

3. At the meeting, in addition to the above agenda, have three or four catechists share their stories of

“why they said yes” and the benefits that they have personally received from being a catechist.

Toward the end of the meeting, offer a prayer experience reflecting on Scripture and call, prayers for discernment, and song, etc.

Do not ask for a commitment at this time. Tell them to go home, pray and think about it. You will call them in a few days to see what questions they may have and to discuss with them the possibility of being a catechist.

4. For those who express interest during the follow-up telephone call, invite them to a one-on-one meeting with the director of religious education, where you can decide together the grade assignment, present them with the appropriate catechist manual and a copy of “What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist”.* Ask them to choose three to five entries from that book that they find most helpful and to read the introductory material in the catechist manual.

For those who decide not to volunteer as a catechist, thank them for taking the time to attend the meeting and consider the invitation. Assure them that there are other ways to be involved and that they may want to volunteer at another time.

Send each person who came to the meeting a written thank you note.

5. Have all apprentice catechists attend two introductory preparation sessions: one in May/June and a second one in August/September. Schedule at different times so all will be able to attend.

Congratulations! You are now ready to begin in September with a well-prepared community of catechists.

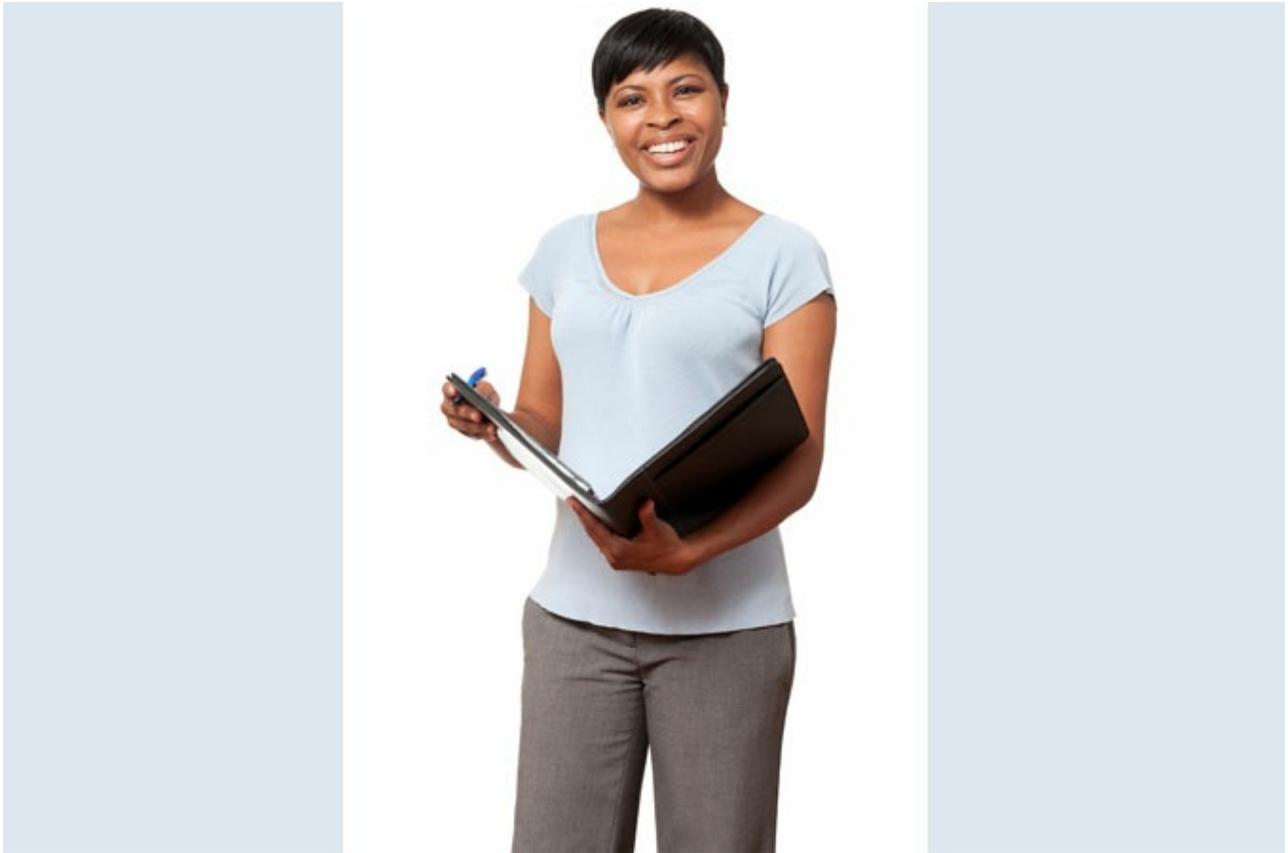
Dan Pierson is a former director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids, MI. This article is reprinted from the March 29, 2013 *Compass*.

**What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist* by Dan Pierson, Susan Stark, 2005, Pfluum. Available on amazon.com.

Four Tips to Recruit and Train New Catechists

 catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2017/08/four-tips-to-recruit-and-train-catechists/

August 2, 2017



Just when I think I have a fantastic team of catechists in place someone moves out of town, schedules change, or some other issues arise, and I find myself searching for new catechists, often at the last minute. Recruiting and training catechists is an annual endeavor for every catechetical program. Here are some simple strategies I have used to recruit and train catechists.

1. Find people in your parish with teaching experience.

Teachers can make excellent catechists, because they will already be comfortable creating lesson plans and managing a classroom. Does your parish database record the occupation of parishioners? If so, you can search for parishioners who are current or retired teachers. Send an e-mail asking them to discern if God is calling them to use their specific gifts and skills to serve the Church. If your parish does not record occupations, send a parish-wide e-mail with “Calling all teachers!” in the subject line.

2. Identify the parents of children who are engaged and knowledgeable in class, and personally invite them to think about being a catechist.

Parents can make excellent catechists, because they are witnesses to a lived faith. Send them

an e-mail praising the work that they have done as their child's primary catechist. Invite both parents to team-teach, which allows for some flexibility in their schedules if one of them cannot be available consistently. Some of my husband-wife teams end up teaching their own classes once they are comfortable; some have discovered that preparing lessons together at home has strengthened their marriage.

3. Invite some of your more seasoned catechists to mentor new catechists.

Have the mentors make themselves available at your training sessions, and ask them to share their "tricks of the trade." Mentors can then meet one-on-one with new catechists and discuss effective ways to engage children and overcome challenges in the classroom. Ideally, new catechists would serve as assistants to their mentors for a year before they teach their own class, but the reality is that we rarely have enough volunteers to make this possible. However, having a mentor provides a resource for new catechists throughout the year.

4. Before your first training session, ask new catechists what they feel confident about and what they are worried about going into this ministry.

Every new catechist comes with different gifts, abilities, and anxieties; therefore, they will each need different degrees of training. Some new catechists may be confident working with children, but nervous about mastering the faith content of the lessons. Some catechists may have never been in charge of a large group of children before and will be worried about managing their behavior. This feedback will help you plan and tweak your training to meet their needs, making your sessions more effective. After each training session, ask catechists to share how they will implement what was learned during the training and where they might need more guidance. This will help you prepare any follow-up formation the catechists need.

What strategies do you use to recruit and train new catechists?

Along with planning tools and resources, the *Christ Our Life* program provides step-by-step teaching directions, lesson scripting, additional activities, resources, and much more. The rich knowledge of the Sisters of Notre Dame and the step-by-step instructions empower catechists and teachers as they pass on the truths of the Catholic faith and the love we find in Jesus to the children.

Nothing Beats the Personal Touch When Recruiting Catechists

 catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2017/01/nothing-beats-personal-touch-when-recruiting-catechists/

January 20, 2017



This Sunday's Gospel ([Matthew 4:12–23](#)) is a reminder to us that nothing beats the personal touch when it comes to inviting people into ministry. And this time of the year—late winter—is a good time to start your catechist recruitment efforts for next year.

Jesus did not put up posters or distribute literature inviting people to follow him; he used the personal approach. He asked people what they were looking for and then he invited them to follow him and to discover what they were looking for. For catechetical leaders, recruiting (calling forth) catechists is one of the highest and most challenging priorities. While it is important to have literature to support your recruitment efforts, the most effective way to invite people to discern whether they have a vocation as a catechist is through the personal touch. Be sure to:

- Identify people's gifts.
- Identify a pool of potential candidates.
- Tap into the reasons people are motivated to volunteer.
- Create an inviting environment.
- Recruit proactively and continually.
- Treat your current volunteers well.

Experts in recruitment, community engagement, and evangelization techniques continually tell us that there is no more effective recruitment strategy than the personal invitation. Jesus transformed the world, and he began the process by personally inviting a few people to follow him!

How Do We Recruit New Catechists? INVITE Them!

catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2015/07/how-do-we-recruit-new-catechists-invite-them/

July 1, 2015



What is it that all DREs know about the majority of Catholic families today? They are overwhelmed by an overbooked schedule of events and work, and growing our faith is often deferred to those once-in-a-while moments when things are quiet; that is not necessarily weekend Mass.

So how do we find future catechists? I propose we **INVITE** people to consider the call to be a catechist.

I = INITIATE a conversation.

- Regular parent gatherings or intergenerational events bring together parents or families who are willing to answer an invitation.
- The parents who drop off their children give us an opportunity to have conversations about the faith formation program and the faith formation of their family.
- Begin by sharing about the child's response to faith formation sessions.
- Share how other parents became involved.

N = NOTICE who lingers and seems curious about the happenings at faith formation sessions.

Thinking of Becoming a Catechist? is a great page to share with prospective volunteers. It includes reasons to become a catechist, the Catechists in Action video series, and Joe Paprocki's popular webinars.

V = VALUE the time and the conversation shared. Listen for anything that sounds like:

- I wish I knew more about my faith.
- The children's book is quite interesting.
- Do you have anything that I could use with my other, smaller children?

I = INVITE these parents to help, even if it is just one time.

- Helping in the child's group gives a taste of how catechesis is done and allows the parent to see that it is not scary but enjoyable when the tools are provided.
- If parents offer to assist in the office, have them come in to help some day to stuff envelopes or collate papers. This offers an opportunity to talk with them about becoming a catechist.

T = THANK everyone involved with the program:

- The parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or whomever drops off the children; that adult is ensuring the children come to sessions.
- Children for coming and sharing about Jesus. Children will share these kindnesses with their families.
- Catechists—in front of children and parents. Constant support for these volunteers makes the role inviting to others.

E = ENCOURAGE everyone who enters into the catechetical space to:

- Be a part of their child's faith life.
- Participate in weekend Mass so children understand better what they are learning about their faith.
- Learn so much more about their own faith by joining the catechetical journey with the children of the parish.

May your efforts at catechist recruitment be fruitful!

What methods do you use to invite parishioners to consider becoming a catechist?

Calling Forth Catechists: Your Pool of Candidates

catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2019/07/calling-forth-catechists-your-pool-of-candidates

Joe Paprocki

July 25, 2019



If your efforts to call forth catechists boil down to an “all call” approach (a bulletin announcement inviting anyone to respond to a need), you will not have much success. The most effective way to call people to the vocation of serving as a catechist is through personal invitation!

One catechetical leader recently told me that, last year, she made 43 individual contacts (either in person or by phone) and ended up with the best crop of catechists she ever had! The personal touch is simply the most appropriate way to call people to a vocation. With that in mind, let’s take a look at the pool of potential catechists in your parish:

- Catechist aides
- Parents of participants in religious education
- Retired parishioners
- RCIA neophytes *
- Actively engaged parishioners
- Lay ministry participants
- PPC (education commission) members

- Professional teachers (public school and Catholic school)
- Former catechists
- Referrals from staff
- Recommendations from current catechists

* Don't be too quick to pounce on neophytes; they may need some time.

Are there other potentials that I've missed?

For great ideas on recruiting and retaining catechists, see Jayne Ragasa-Mondoy's book on *Cultivating Your Catechists* (part of the *Effective Catechetical Leader* series).

[Read other posts in the Calling Forth Catechists series here.](#)

Last-Minute Catechist Recruitment: Don't Compromise!

catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2016/09/last-minute-catechist-recruitment-dont-compromise

Joe Paprocki

September 9, 2016



In an ideal world, all of our recruitment for catechists would have wrapped up early in the summer, so that now we could just move forward with training, formation, and the start of the catechetical year. In reality, however, we know that last-minute openings pop up, and catechetical leaders find themselves scrambling to do some last-minute recruitment of catechists. It's important to remember that, while time is short, we must not compromise on our standards and settle for any "warm body" to fill these last-minute vacancies.

To assist catechetical leaders in filling these vacancies, my friend Tom Quinlan, the Director of the Religious Education Office in the Diocese of Joliet, one of the best in the business (and brand new daddy!), shares the following tips:

This is the time of the year when many parishes are still looking to fill some remaining slots for the new year. Here are some important things to consider, whether you are still in need of catechists or not:

- Use current catechists to provide witness sharing at Masses (and elsewhere) to inspire other parishioners to prayerfully consider whether they are called to explore being a catechist.
- Be careful to not send a message in your catechist recruitment efforts that you'll take anyone who steps forward. Some people have gifts for effective ministry as a catechist... and some do not. A process of discernment is necessary. (There might be other roles for some...other than being a catechist.)
- Be sure to properly vet new catechists. They should be a parishioner for six months or longer. If they have been a catechist previously, contact their prior parish(s). Conduct a check of references. Have a conversational interview, where you and the catechist get to know each other. And trust your instincts. Remember, being a catechist is a ministry of the Church and a privilege.
- Engage in year-round recruitment for catechists. Don't just think of this as a May-through-September effort. Even if you finally have all your slots filled, you can never have too many substitute catechists and aides. Perhaps the person who comes in over the winter can observe sessions and assist a catechist, which would help to prepare them for next year. Year-round recruitment...will lessen the crunch next fall.
- Take special care of your new catechists. Give them the formation and training they need. Match them up with an excellent mentor catechist. Observe them during session after a few weeks and give them all the support and direction needed for them to be comfortable and grow into their potential. Lead with affirmations but also include discussion of growth areas.

Of course, any new catechist can benefit greatly from my [free archived webinar: Getting Started as a Catechist](#).

Thanks, Tom, for sharing your wisdom! What advice do you have for last-minute recruitment? Where can/should a catechetical leader look for prospective catechists?

Joe Paprocki, DMin, is a major contributor to *Finding God*, the faith formation program for grades 1-8 based in Ignatian spirituality.

Interviewing Your Catechists

 catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2017/08/interviewing-your-catechists

Joe Paprocki

August 25, 2017



Recently, I received the following message from Martha:

Hello,

I am searching for a catechist interview. I am a new DRE and I am wondering if that is a wise idea. I will appreciate your feedback.

The quick response is “Yes,” it is a good idea to interview your catechists, not just when you are recruiting them, but also at the beginning and end of each year. I recognize that this may be impossible for some parishes that have huge numbers of catechists, in which case, I recommend group interviews if the schedule permits.

I have talked previously about conducting end-of-the-year interviews so that catechists can evaluate themselves together with you and have provided [a PDF to guide the interview](#). Likewise, in her book, *Cultivating Your Catechists: How to Recruit, Encourage, and Retain Successful Catechists* (*The Effective Catechetical Leader* series), author and diocesan catechetical leader Jayne Ragasa-Mondoy offers criteria for conducting such interviews.

As for conducting interviews with discerning/potential/returning catechists, I suggest using one of the [free downloadable worksheets](#) from Jayne's book: "A Catechist's Vocation-Discernment Checklist," which includes the following criteria for discussion:

I possess or am capable of developing . . .

- a desire to grow in and share faith
- a commitment to the church's liturgical and sacramental life and moral teachings
- a strength of character built on patience, responsibility, confidence, and creativity
- a basic understanding of Catholic teaching, Scripture, and Catholic Tradition
- honest and caring relationships with young people (and their families)
- effective teaching techniques and strategies
- a love of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and of Christ's Church, our Holy Father, and God's holy people
- a coherence and authenticity of life that are characterized by consistent practice of the faith in a spirit of faith, charity, hope, courage, and joy
- a dedication to personal prayer and to the evangelizing mission of the Church
- a missionary zeal by which I am fully convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and desire to enthusiastically proclaim it
- an active participation in my local parish community, especially by attendance at Sunday Eucharist
- a devotion to Mary, the first disciple and the model of catechists, and to the Most Holy Eucharist, the source of nourishment for catechists

Interviewing your catechists is an effective way to create and/or deepen your relationship with this important group of ministers.

If you have a list of questions that you use to interview catechists, please do share!

Calling Forth Catechists: A Catechist Role Description

catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2019/07/calling-forth-catechists-a-catechist-role-description

Joe Paprocki

July 11, 2019



As you set forth to call people to the vocation of serving as a catechist, it's a good idea to have a **role description** in place to describe what you are calling them *to*. Be careful not to make your role description so demanding and lofty that not even Jesus would qualify! Keep it simple and basic so as not to scare anyone away but specific enough to narrow the field so that you're not just looking for "a warm body."

I recommend that your role description consist of three simple parts. First, include a few basic qualities that show you are looking for a well-rounded person with a healthy faith. Second, list a few basic skills, showing you are looking for people capable of handling or growing into the task. Third, include some specifics about what will be required at your local level: how many sessions, how many catechist meetings, required formation, safe-environment training, etc. Again, don't overwhelm, but by the same token, show that there *are* expectations. Here's a sample role description you can feel free to use or adapt.

Qualities

- a desire to grow in and share the Catholic faith

- an awareness of God’s grace and the desire to respond to that grace
- a commitment to the Church’s liturgical and sacramental life and moral teachings
- a strength of character built on patience, responsibility, confidence, and creativity
- a generosity of spirit, respect for diversity, and a habit of hospitality and inclusion

Knowledge and Skills

- a basic understanding of Catholic teaching, Scripture, and Catholic Tradition
- honest and caring relationships with the age group being served
- effective teaching techniques and strategies

Responsibilities

- Complete initial training or formation.
- Complete Virtus training.
- Commit to teaching 24 sessions.
- Attend quarterly catechist meetings.
- Commit to ongoing formation.

Most of all, catechists need to make a commitment to grow. They don’t have to be flawless in all of these areas; however, they need to recognize where they might be deficient and strive to enrich themselves, with your help as the catechetical leader. For more ideas, see Jayne Ragasa-Mondoy’s book on *Cultivating Your Catechists* (part of the *Effective Catechetical Leader series*).

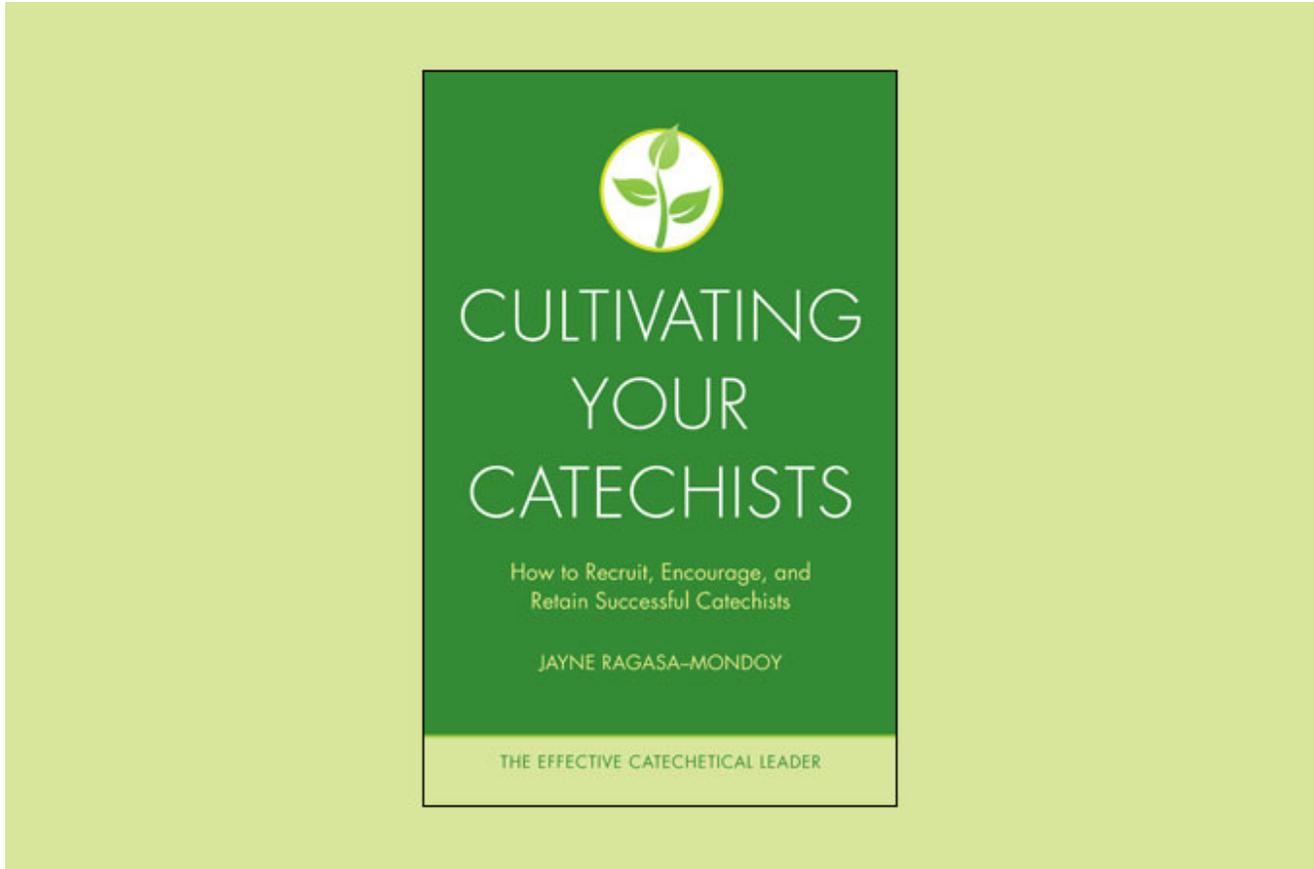
[Read other posts in the Calling Forth Catechists series here.](#)

Four Ways to Retain Catechists

 catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2018/01/four-ways-to-retain-catechists

Joe Paprocki

January 5, 2018



It is estimated that there are about 500,000 volunteer catechists in the United States and that, each year, one-third of them—150,000—“turn over.” I’m sure that sometimes it feels like all 150,000 catechists who leave are from your parish! The truth is, it takes a lot of hard work to retain catechists. In her new book, *Cultivating Your Catechists: How to Recruit, Encourage, and Retain Successful Catechists*, Jayne Ragasa-Mondoy shares four principles for retaining catechists.

Support

- Match people to their abilities, not to your needs, allowing catechists to feel they’re contributing according to their gifts. Some are more comfortable with little ones, some with adults, and others may enjoy adolescents or teens. Provide the resources necessary that “speak” to their learners in age-appropriate ways.
- Ask a parent to form a core prayer group to organize a prayer chain for your catechists and the children. Each week a family or parishioner will commit to pray for the catechists, the children, and their families. Prayer is always essential, particularly for those preparing to receive the sacraments.

- Provide a mentor for your catechists. This is especially important for young adult-catechists or those who have less than a year or two of experience.
- Speak with your pastor to discuss the priority issues of the catechetical program, and request that these issues be reflected in the overall parish pastoral plan. Resource allocation aligns with these very public priorities. These may include
 - Providing adequate teaching resources
 - Providing catechist-retreat resources
 - Financing professional-development opportunities that take place out of state/region.
- Know the needs of your catechists, and provide workshops to help them grow in their ministry. For example, we discovered that several catechists had an interest in holding sacramental preparation sessions for children with special needs. We provided training for this, and we are now able to serve more of God’s children.
- With the pastor, create a family atmosphere by greeting catechists warmly—be happy to see them! Provide regular feedback, and thank them often.
- When classes are in session, make yourself available to deal with major student-behavior issues should they arise. This frees catechists to focus on teaching, which they really appreciate.

Collaborate

- Get to know the catechetical leaders from your neighboring parishes. Plan a combined retreat for young people (perhaps prior to Confirmation or receiving First Holy Communion) or for entire families. Collaborating connects us to the greater Christian community, distributes the workload, and allows catechists to serve and pray side by side.
- Form catechist teams in grade-level clusters (such as pre- and regular kindergarten, grades 1 and 2, grades 3 and 4, etc.). Provide opportunities for them to discuss and plan lessons together. Not only is it more enjoyable, but also there will be greater consistency across the grade levels.
- Invite mature teens to be classroom aides.
- If you share classroom space with the parish Catholic school, arrange for the teacher and catechist who share a classroom to meet and pray with each other. Have students write notes of prayer and thanksgiving to each other. Inspire them to realize that the Holy Spirit is truly alive, moving within the classroom walls and through each of them.
- Encourage catechists to participate in parish events, helping them to connect with parishioners who are not involved in the catechetical program.

Affirm

- Establish a volunteer “hierarchy” in which a catechist has an opportunity to advance over time. Each level allows for more self-direction and responsibility, which makes it feel like a “promotion.” Examples of catechist levels: Assistant, Lead, Mentor, grade-level or grade-cluster Coordinator.
- During the Easter season hold a prayer service for your catechists with a theme of affirmation. Provide a candle to each. Let them walk around the room saying a word/phrase of affirmation to their fellow catechists. This can be a powerful and bonding experience.
- Hold the affirmation prayer service with parents. Catechists and parents will have an opportunity to affirm each other.
- Work with your pastor to schedule his visits to the classrooms or at special events. Catechists know that pastors have busy schedules and appreciate their presence.
- On your catechist’s Baptism anniversary (or birthday), have students write notes of appreciation to their catechist.
- When you hold meetings, provide a light meal or snack and beverage. Thoughtful hospitality shows your catechists that you appreciate them.
- Hold “Coffee with Your Pastor” sessions with parents. During those sessions you will hear about the ways your catechists make a difference in the lives of the children. Sharing those stories with the catechists is a very affirming experience.
- Organize a celebratory gathering once or twice a year.

Give Public Recognition

- Celebrate Catechetical Sunday, traditionally celebrated on the third Sunday in September—a day on which parishes publicly recognize, pray for, and commission catechists before the assembly using the excellent resources provided by the USCCB. Parents are also recognized for their important role in forming their children in faith. While recognizing catechists within the community is important, highlight their spirit of volunteerism to the greater community as well. Catechetical Sunday resources are available at www.usccb.org.
- Regularly include program highlights in the diocesan newspaper or, when appropriate, in the secular newspaper. Share your stories to demonstrate how the students and their families are engaged in the life of the parish through the catechetical program.
- Feature captioned photos on the parish website, Facebook page, or Twitter account—be sure an image-release statement is included in your handbook and signed by anyone who is the subject of a photograph.

For more about how to cultivate catechists, check out Jayne’s book, *Cultivating Your Catechists: How to Recruit, Encourage, and Retain Successful Catechists*. The book, excerpted above, is part of the new and exciting series from Loyola Press and NCCL: *The Effective Catechetical Leader*.



End of [Academic] Year Activities

- Inventory supplies; make notes of anticipated needs for Fall
- Update all catechetical certification records (including your own)
- Order textbooks, manuals, supplemental materials
- Evaluate budget and actual expenditures; participate in budgeting process
- Hold interviews (evaluate catechists, volunteers; potential new catechists)
- Hold spring registration
- Obtain local school calendars and Packer schedule for calendaring next year
- Brainstorm with staff for special programs (retreats, in-services, family events)
- Organize files (paper and digital)
- Sort, shelve, store books, CDs, DVDs, other supplemental materials
- Check maintenance of equipment, facilities, computer (updates)
- Recognize, appreciate, celebrate catechists, volunteers
- Make time for R & R (good time for staff retreat!)
- Vacation Bible School? *"I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me."* Phillipians 4:13

LENGTH OF TIME TO KEEP DATA IN FILES
for
Religious Education Programs
(revised 2015)

STUDENT RECORDS

I. KEEP INDEFINITELY IN INACTIVE FILE

Permanent Cumulative Card **(If computerized, a backup disk is required)**
Incident Report Forms

II. KEEP VARIED TIMES

Student Attendance & Yearly Progress Sheets - 1 yr. after recorded on Cum Folder
Medication Records (if any) - 5 years after departure from the program
Custody Papers - only while student is enrolled
Acceptable Use Agreement (computers) - 3 years from departure of program
Promotions/Media Release Form - 3 years from departure of program

PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS (PCL) / CATECHISTS RECORDS

I. GROUP FILES - Keep Indefinitely

On-going List of Catechists / PCLs and Years of Volunteering at parish
Sexual Misconduct form – signed and dated (each year)

II. INDIVIDUAL FILES - Current & Keep 5 Years after Employment Unless Otherwise Indicated

Copy of Diocesan or Parish Application Form
References if written
Official Transcripts
Our Promise to Protect Acknowledgement Form
Religion Certification (may be kept in a group file – easily accessible)
Evaluation of Catechists, Patrol Person, Office Volunteer
Discipline or Reprimands - signed by Catechists
Attendance Record
Contracts or At Will Agreement
Emergency Information Card - during current employment

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM FILES

I. Keep Indefinitely

Copy of Annual Report sent to Religious Education Department Green Bay Diocese
regarding Religious Education Program (form updated 2015)
Accreditation Certificate and copy of the 7-yr. Cumulative report
Crisis Plan – updated as needed
List of Students receiving: First Penance, First Communion, Confirmation
Calendar of the Religious Education Program
Parent/student Handbook - Historical File
Policies – accessible on line - review regularly
Historical File - Newspaper clipping, photographs, etc.
Local Board or Religious Education Committee Minutes
- 1 complete set - Historical File in Office

II. Keep Current Academic Year

Student Admission and Withdrawals

Department of Religious Education Communications - current year unless otherwise noted

III. Keep one/two years

Registration Forms - Destroy after one year

Log Books of Regular Safety Inspections of the Building - Current plus 2 yrs.

Log Books of Minor First Aid and Accidents - Current plus 1 yr.

Log Books of Student's Outside Appointments, etc. - Current plus 1 yr.

IV. Keep three years

Religious Education Staff Meeting Agendas and Minutes

Diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct – 3 years after completion of service

V. Varied times

Permission Slips: If no incident has occurred they may be disposed of at the end of the year; if an incident occurred on the trip, keep 3 years

Lesson Plans - Destroy when superseded or obsolete

Instruction Materials - Destroy when superseded or obsolete

Record of equipment - Destroy when superseded or obsolete

Fire Drill Records - 5 years

Parent/Student Handbook - Updated Yearly

Financial Records - Budgets, Tuition, etc.- 5 years; Checks - 7 years

Class Lists – Destroy after 7 years

- **Please note:** some of these records might be kept by the business manager and/or finance office in the parish.

Such as

Background check

Virtus Training

Bloodborne Pathogens - Entire time of employment + 30 years

Archives Department of the Green Bay Diocese Requirements for Religious Education (2010)

Record Series Number	Description	Disposition Instructions
60	ANNUAL REPORTS FILE: Yearly reports generated for the religious education program to the Diocese.	Retrain permanently in office.
61	CLASS FILE: Class lists for Religious Education Program	Destroy in office after 7 years.
62	FAMILY RECORDS FILE: Records includes names of pearent, name and number of children, parish, sacramental history, etc.	Destroy in office when superseded or obsolete.
63	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – VARIOUS FILE: File may include lesson plans, catalogs, instructional materials, records of equipment, schedules – classes, teachers.	Destroy in office when superseded or obsolete
64	REGISTRATION FILE: Registration forms for program.	Destory in office after 1 year.

Helping Catechists Deepen Their Understanding of Church Tradition

For a journalist, a reliable source can be a person, another publication, or perhaps some document or record. When journalists report, listeners or readers want to know the source of the information and whether or not those sources are reliable.

When it comes to religion, it helps to know the source of the information we are being asked to embrace as the truth. For Protestants, that source is Scripture and Scripture alone. For Catholics, we identify our source as Scripture and Tradition—not two sources, but one single source that comes to us in two ways. Scripture, of course, is the written Word of God’s self-revelation. Tradition refers to the Church’s efforts over the course of 2000+ years to interpret and apply the Word of God to the experience of each generation. The result is a rich heritage of teaching, grounded in Scripture, that comes to us through the lives and writings of the saints and the teachings of the Church as handed down through Church documents and writings.

This resource packet provides materials for leading a catechist meeting about the topic of Church Tradition and some key things to consider when embracing the catechist’s vocation. Catechetical leaders might also choose to send this material home with their catechists to reflect prayerfully at their own pace.

Options for opening prayer (Prayer for Catechists Wanting to Know God Better) and closing prayer (A Prayer for Those Who Have Shared Their Faith) are provided as prayer cards to share with catechists. These are found at the end of this packet.

There is more material here than one gathering can address, so choose what works best for you and the group you are leading.

Beginning to Study Church Documents

Shouldn't we be able to find everything we need to know about God in the Bible? Well, yes and no. Yes, God has revealed everything we need to know for our Salvation through his Son, Jesus. In sacred Scripture, we encounter God's living word. At the same time, the world we live in continues to encounter new challenges, many of which were inconceivable at the time the Bible was written. For example, biblical writings offer no direct comments on issues such as genetic engineering, global warming, and stem-cell research, to name a few. For this reason, God has blessed the Church with a teaching authority: the Magisterium, which comes from the Latin word *magister*, meaning "teacher or master." The Magisterium is made up of the bishops in communion with the pope under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We rely on the Magisterium to teach authentically and interpret the truths of our faith.

For Catholics, Scripture and Tradition are inseparable, forming one "sacred deposit of the Word of God." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 97) Catholics, in addition to reading and studying Scripture, also read and study Church teachings that come to us through ecumenical councils, papal encyclicals, pastoral letters, and other official sources of teaching from the pope and bishops. Quite often, these documents can be rather dense and require a good deal of unpacking. For this reason, it is most common to read and study Church documents within the context of a study group. Here are some examples of the types of documents we might study:

- **Canons and decrees of the Council of Trent.**
Example: *Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*
- **Documents of the Second Vatican Council.**
Example: *Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)*
- **The Catechism of the Catholic Church.**
Related resources: *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults; The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- **Papal encyclicals (formal letters sent by the pope to clergy and laity to address a particular issue).**
Example: *Redemptor Hominis (The Redeemer of Man), Pope John Paul II, 1979*
- **Apostolic exhortations (communications from the pope that do not define doctrine but rather encourage Catholics to undertake a certain activity. Exhortations are often written in response to a synod of bishops).**
Example: *Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World), Pope Paul VI, 1975*
- **Pastoral letters issued by a national conference of bishops such as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).**
Example: *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States (1999)*

Beginning to Study Church Documents

Practical suggestions for studying:

- Visit Catholic Web sites to remain up to date on Church teachings. Begin with your diocesan Web site and search there for reliable links.
- Visit the Vatican Web site (www.vatican.va) to locate documents such as papal encyclicals and the documents of the Second Vatican Council.
- Find Church documents at the Theology Library at Spring Hill College (the Jesuit College of the South): www.shc.edu/theolibrary/index.htm.
- Take advantage of learning opportunities offered by your parish or diocese.
- Acquire a copy of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* or the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* to learn more about the Church's official teachings on all aspects of the faith. Continue on to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* itself for a more in-depth presentation of the Catholic faith.
- Participate in a catechists meeting using this resource packet to discuss Church documents most applicable to your vocation as a catechist.
- Reflect prayerfully on the materials in this resource packet at home to deepen your understanding of your vocation as a catechist.

“Greatest Hits” from Church Catechetical Documents

Whether you are a beginning catechist or a returning catechist, it is good to be familiar with the Church’s documentary tradition when it comes to catechesis. Over the years, the Church has provided us with numerous resources to guide and inspire the ministry of catechesis. Here are just a few of the most inspiring lines from these documents, though this list is not definitive! As you prepare for the upcoming year, use these excerpts and the accompanying questions to reflect on your call to serve the ministry of catechesis.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

“The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.” (#27)

- How is God drawing you to himself?
- In your own search for truth and happiness, what paths brought you closer to God? What paths steer you in the wrong direction?
- What messages from society/our culture are leading those you teach down the wrong path, away from truth and happiness?

The General Directory for Catechesis

“This comprehensive formation includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life....” (#67)

- Who apprenticed you into the Christian life? How did he/she/they do this?
- How can you apprentice those you teach into the Christian life?
- What does it mean to you to think of your teaching as more than instruction but as an apprenticeship?

The National Directory for Catechesis

“Catechesis must make it clear that the person of Jesus Christ offers a realistic alternative to immediate gratification and the satisfaction of personal needs.” (#4C)

- How can/do you invite those you teach to encounter the person of Jesus, not just the idea of or memory of Jesus?
- What factors in society/culture encourage the concepts of immediate gratification and the satisfaction of personal needs?
- How can/do you present Jesus as an alternative to these?

"Greatest Hits" from Church Catechetical Documents

Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time)

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ." (#5)

- What in your life fosters communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ?
- What can you offer to those you teach to put them in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ?
- What factors foster communion and intimacy in human relationships?
How can these be applied to our relationship with Jesus Christ?

Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World)

"Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach..." (#15)

- How do you understand the word *evangelize*? What does it mean to evangelize?
How is catechesis related to evangelization?
- If evangelization (preaching and teaching) is the Church's deepest identity, what does that say about the importance of your role as a catechist?
- As a catechist, how can/do you evangelize those you teach?

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States

"We are entering a period of new vitality for the Church, a period in which adult Catholic laity will play a pivotal leadership role in fulfilling the Christian mission of evangelizing and transforming society. For adults to fulfill their roles in this new era of the Church, their faith formation must be lifelong, just as they must continue to learn to keep up in the changing world." (#29)

- How is your role as a catechist helping/challenging you to keep up with a changing world?
- How is your role as a catechist contributing to your own lifelong formation?
- How can you encourage those you teach to see that faith formation is a lifelong task?

“Greatest Hits” from Church Catechetical Documents

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States

“This is crucial: we must be converted—and we must continue to be converted! We must let the Holy Spirit change our lives! We must respond to Jesus Christ. And we must be open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who will continue to convert us as we follow Christ. If our faith is alive, it will be aroused again and again as we mature as disciples.” (#14)

- How are you experiencing conversion at this time in your life?
- How does serving as a catechist foster your own conversion?
- How do you call those you teach to change their lives?

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions

“Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice.”

- In what ways do you see yourself as being a “leaven for transforming the world”?
- How can you call those you teach to become agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice?
- What does it mean to say that working for justice is central to our identity as Catholics? What implications does this have for your ministry as a catechist?

Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials

“Effective catechesis...requires that the Church’s teaching be presented correctly and in its entirety, and it is equally important to present it in ways that are attractive, appealing, and understandable by the individuals and communities to whom it is directed.” (II—Guidelines for Presenting Sound Doctrine)

- What are you doing to ensure that you are presenting the Church’s teaching correctly?
- How can/do you make the Church’s teaching attractive? Appealing? Understandable?
- Considering the age level you teach, what is needed to make the Church’s teaching attractive, appealing, and understandable?

“Greatest Hits” from Church Catechetical Documents

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry

“Renewing the Vision takes up the Holy Father’s challenge by focusing the Church’s ministry with adolescents on three essential goals: (1) empowering young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; (2) drawing young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the faith community; and (3) fostering the personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”

- How can/do you empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today?
- How can/do you draw young people to responsible participation in the parish community?
- How can/do you foster personal and spiritual growth of those you teach?

Annotated Bibliography of the Church's Catechetical Documents

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

A *catechism* is a written summary of the Church's understanding of God's word as revealed through Scripture and Tradition. In a sense, a catechism is the *what* of our beliefs as Catholics. For many centuries, it was customary for children to "learn their catechism." This was often done using a question-and-answer format such as that in the *Baltimore Catechism*. Today, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) is the official source for Catholic teaching, intended as the principle resource for bishops and catechetical ministers.

It is divided into four "Pillars": Creed, Sacraments, Morality, and Prayer.

For the average adult Catholic, the bishops of the United States have provided the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2005—a synopsis of the Catholic faith in a question-and-answer format reminiscent of the *Baltimore Catechism*, but for adults) and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (2006—an adaptation of the CCC with stories, teachings, and sidebars).

The General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)

Catechesis is the process of transmitting the Gospel. To help us understand this process, the Church has given us the *General Directory for Catechesis*. (1997) This document helps us to understand the *how* of catechesis. The *GDC* provides religious educators, teachers, and catechists with a single point of reference for all aspects of catechetical instruction. The *GDC* "replaced" the 1971 *GCD*.

The National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)

The *NDC* (2005) is an adaptation of the *GDC* for the church in the United States. It "replaced" the 1979 *NCD: Sharing the Light of Faith*.

Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time) — (CT)

Catechesi Tradendae (1979), Pope John Paul II's first apostolic exhortation, was on catechesis or religious instruction. It followed on the fourth general assembly of the Synod of Bishops held in October, 1977, which Pope John Paul II attended before his election. The exhortation emphasizes the "Christocentricity" of all catechesis and the need for lifelong catechesis. This document laid the groundwork for subsequent catechetical documents, especially the *GDC*.

Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World) — (EN)

Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975) is an apostolic exhortation by Pope Paul VI on the 10th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, focusing on making the Church better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people. It is considered by many to be the "Magna Carta" on Catholic Evangelization.

Annotated Bibliography of the Church's Catechetical Documents

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States (OHWB)

OHWB (1999) is the basic plan for evangelization in the United States, centered on three goals:

- Invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in holiness of life.
- Promote and support active membership in the Christian community.
- Call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world.

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States (GMD)

Renewal of the Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) brought intense focus on Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) as a duty of the Church and its members "so that people can believe and be saved," wrote Pope Paul VI in 1975. In 1992, the U.S. bishops responded with a national plan for Catholic evangelization to help Catholics live their faith enthusiastically, share it freely, and bring gospel values to everyday life.

Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials (GDSCM)

In this 1990 document, the U.S. bishops provide guidelines for producing catechetical materials that are consistent with Church teachings.

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry (RV)

Issued by the U.S. bishops in 1998, this document provides all who minister to young people with an effective blueprint for building a truly meaningful ministry. This document builds on a 1976 document (*A Vision of Youth Ministry*) by emphasizing personal discipleship, evangelization, and leadership.

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions

In this 1998 document, the U.S. bishops identify seven key themes or principles of Catholic social teaching: Life and dignity of the human person; Call to family, community, and participation; Rights and responsibilities; Option for the poor and vulnerable; Dignity of work and the rights of workers; Solidarity; and Care for God's creation.

To Teach as Jesus Did

Issued in 1972, this was the first pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops devoted to the concern of Catholic education, using the language emerging out of the Second Vatican Council.

Annotated Bibliography of the Church's Catechetical Documents

Vatican II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents

The Second Vatican Council, which took place from 1962–1965, produced 16 documents which are compiled in this book without commentary or additional documentation. Of those documents, the following are key for the catechetical ministry:

- *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)*, December 4, 1963— Document for understanding liturgy, a blueprint for ongoing liturgical reform in the Church
- *Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum educationis)*, October 28, 1965— Document on Catholic schools
- *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei verbum)*, November 18, 1965— Document on the Catholic interpretation of Scripture
- *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam actuositatem)*, November 18, 1965— Document on the ministry of lay people in the Church
- *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (Ad gentes divinitus)*, December 7, 1965— Document for understanding the scope of the Church's missionary activity

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)

In 1988, the restored initiation process was promulgated in the United States in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. This is a liturgical rite marking the deepening conversion of adults being led to Baptism—a process that includes catechesis over four stages: inquiry (pre-catechumenate); the catechumenate; the period of purification and enlightenment (Lent); and mystagogia.

Family Recipes

My (Joe's) daughter-in-law, Sarah, is collecting original family recipes to make into a collage. It will be a wonderful way of showing how our families have provided delicious nourishment over the years, generation after generation. It will also preserve these wonderful recipes so that future generations may enjoy them as well.

In essence, this is what we do as catechists. We're caretakers of a body of recipes—recipes that are not exclusively ours but that have been entrusted to us by the Church. These "family recipes," passed down from generation to generation, are found in the Scriptures, the sacraments, the rituals, and the traditions—all the "smells and bells"—of our Catholic faith. Our role is to receive these recipes, to protect them, to share their stories, and to pass them on to the next generation. Put another way, as catechists, we are stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In order for us better to embrace our role, we catechists are called to be open to the Church—not to a building or to an institution but to a living community of faith. Like a family relationship, our relationship with the Church may have its ups and downs; however, it is a relationship that defines us. We strive to build up the Church because it sustains, nourishes, and supports us throughout our life's journey. We develop this openness to the Church by loving the Church and its members as we do the members of our own families. We do so by showing the same respect for the leaders of the Church that we are called to show our own parents. We do so by dedicating our time, talent, and treasure to the service of the Church. And we do so by patiently enduring the challenges and trials that come with being associated with Jesus Christ and his message.

Let's face it, loving our Church family—like loving our first family—is not always easy. Sometimes differences of opinion cause tension and unrest. Sometimes it is hard to sit across the table from a family member who has hurt or disappointed you. But no matter what the differences between family members, the bonds that hold a family together are stronger and wider than the rifts that separate us.

One of the most profound ways that we show openness to the Church is through our ongoing efforts to understand and embrace the message the Church has entrusted to us. When we have difficulty understanding a particular Church teaching, we don't substitute our own message in its place. Rather, we dedicate ourselves to learning more about that teaching so as to be able to proclaim it more effectively.

Family Recipes

Questions for Reflection

- Think of a family heirloom you have been entrusted with. What story is connected with this heirloom? How do you guard and protect it? How and to whom do you intend to pass it on?
- Who are the people who have entrusted the Gospel message to you? (They may be family, friends, pastors, teachers, catechists, professors, and so on.) Through whom did you receive your calling to serve as a catechist? How did this calling come about?
- Describe your sense of belonging when it comes to the Church. Is your sense of belonging strong or could it use some strengthening?
- What challenges and frustrations do you experience in family life? What joys do you experience? In your relationship with the Church, what challenges, frustrations, and joys do you experience?
- What Church teaching do you have difficulty understanding? What can you do to deepen your understanding of this and other Church teachings? What is a teaching that you have come to understand better recently?
- What sacrifices do you face as a catechist? How do you feel about these sacrifices and challenges? Why do you endure them?
- What do you or can you do to deepen your commitment to the Church?
- Whom do you know who exhibits a great commitment to the Church? How can you emulate him or her?
- How does your commitment to the Church affect you in your role as a catechist?
- How can you help those you teach to be more open to the Church?
- What's your favorite family recipe? What is the story behind it? How has this recipe been passed through your family? What is your plan for passing it along?
- Why do you love the Church? What moments in your life have confirmed and reconfirmed this love?
- If you had to describe your relationship with the Church in one word, what would it be? Why?
- Do you feel a sense of responsibility to and for the Church? How does this manifest itself in your life?

(Excerpted from *The Catechist's Backpack* by Joe Paprocki and Julianne Stanz)

Prayer for Catechists Wanting to Know God Better

I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your word.
Open my eyes, so that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.

—Psalm 119:15–18

Good and gracious God, I want to know you better. You already know me inside and out. Help me come to know you more deeply by learning, reflecting, praying, and studying about all your magnificent ways. Help me put on the mind of your son Jesus Christ, so that I can learn to love as he loved. *Amen.*

(Prayer from *Practice Makes Catholic* by Joe Paprocki)



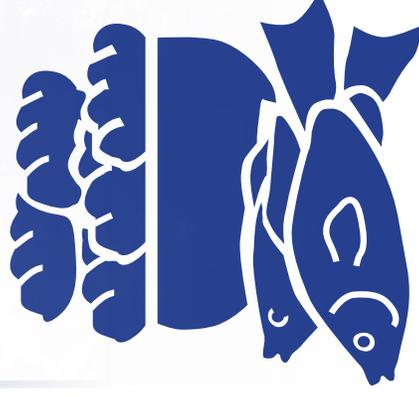
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A Prayer for Those Who Have Shared Their Faith

Heavenly Father, I give thanks for those who share their Catholic faith with me generously and lovingly. Just as Jesus fed the multitudes with five loaves and two fish, may I be able to share most generously the faith that you have given me in love. Help me be a grateful steward of this faith, freely sharing my time, talent, and treasure with others. I ask this through the Holy Name of Jesus. *Amen.*

(Prayer from *The Catechist's Backpack* by Joe Paprocki and Julianne Stanz)



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Top Ten List for Fruitful and Effective Catechesis

By James F. Gontis

There is no one way, no singular method by which to catechize effectively. That said, there are some common threads that we consistently find in catechesis that is done well, catechesis that is outstanding.

This begs the question: What do I mean by catechesis that is done well? I'm glad you asked. I mean catechesis that faithfully and effectively hands on the Faith in such a way as to help those being catechized to *learn* it, to *love* it, to become *holy*, to get to *heaven*. No simple charge that! While the following is most certainly not meant to be an exhaustive list, here is my shot at a Top Ten List for outstanding catechesis:

10) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS have a sense of humor!

We should take God very seriously, but not take ourselves too seriously. Good catechists help their students to be at ease by pointing out the humor in life and especially in themselves. The willingness to laugh at oneself is a sign of humility. And what virtue is more attractive than humility? A sense of humor helps us to know our limitations, to realize that, while what we do in catechesis is important, there is still only one Savior and we're not Him! (I think that should read "and we're not He!" but I'm just too humble to be grammatically correct!)

09) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS prepare, prepare, prepare!

The clichés attached to #9 are many. "Success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." "Proper planning prevents poor performance." And on and on. The point is that outstanding catechists, like outstanding athletes, outstanding musicians, outstanding carpenters, outstanding anything, set themselves apart through a terrific work ethic (always aided by grace, lest we fall prey to a Pelagian way of thinking).

08) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS encourage and teach true devotion to Mary and the

Saints!

We live in an age in which it can easily seem that there is a dearth of heroes. There are not! The saints, of whom there are thousands — and here I'm referencing just the *canonized* saints — provide us hope, in no small part because of their great variety. We can all find a saint for ourselves. The saints come in all shapes, sizes, races, ethnicities, personality types, states of life, ages, etc. But they had certain things in common. They were/are Eucharistic people, devotees of the Sacrament of Penance and faithful to the Magisterium and her teachings. They have a deep devotion to the Mother of God, often manifested in their utilization of what St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) referred to as "the weapon", namely the Rosary.

07) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS teach the beauty, grandeur, and incarnational nature of the Catholic faith.

We are not pure spirits, but body-soul composites. Jesus knows of what we're made. In His goodness He established the Catholic Faith as a religion of spirit and flesh. We receive grace and are drawn to God through truth, beauty, and goodness. So Jesus instituted sacraments as outward signs — see-able, hear-able, taste-able, smell-able, touch-able — that give us grace, which can be neither seen, heard, tasted, smelled nor touched! Following this incarnational principle, catechesis should incorporate those elements that appeal to the senses, among them beautiful (and sacred) art, beautiful (and sacred) music, periods of silence, etc. Truth, beauty, goodness...they resonate with us because they are in accord with what God designs us for, namely Himself.

06) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS take into account the particular needs of their students.

We must be practical when teaching. Is the room too hot, too cold? Is the seating conducive to learning? Do we have students with particular learning difficulties or special needs? If so, are we working together with their parents, the Pastor, etc. to try to address their needs? Is the reading material age- appropriate and pedagogically sound? We are not automata and neither are our students. Taking into account the particular conditions of our students, together with the catechetical environment, helps make learning more possible, effective, and

enjoyable.

05) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS instruct their students in the art of prayer. There is a hierarchy here that begins with liturgical prayer, especially teaching about the greatest of all prayers, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Participation in the Mass should be taught as both the greatest privilege we can partake in this side of the veil, as well as an obligation we owe to God according to the virtue of justice: obligatory on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Our students also need to learn basic Catholic prayers, not just "experience" them, but learn them. Yes, this does require some memorization!

We must not forget about devotional prayer. Devotions such as Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Advent Wreath devotions, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, to name a few, have the power and efficacy to embed themselves deeply within us and to stoke within our souls the desire for encounter with the living God.

04) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS love their students in a Christ-like manner, pray for them, and teach for conversion of life.

A catechetics professor of mine used to tell her students: "Pray to have a heart for your students." We must pray both *with* our students and *for* our students. A practical tip here: Occasionally, take your roll book and pray a litany for your students using their names. For example: *Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on Abigail Adams ! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on Bart Brown! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on Cleona Cleaver!* You get the idea! While an appropriate firmness is necessary if learning is to take place, so is patience and the consistent practice of the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude on the part of the catechist. Outstanding catechists inspire their students to want to be great. We were made for it — to reign with Christ forever in heaven. Let us convey to them their great dignity as sons and daughters of the Father. Let us teach them that they must not live beneath their dignity. To accomplish this, we must teach them very specifically what it means to be made in God's image. We must teach them the dignity and

beauty of human life and that we must always be open to it. We must teach them that we are made for the Beatific Vision. We must teach them the beauty and necessity of being in sanctifying grace, the wages of sin, specific mortal and venial sins, and the limitless depths of God's mercy! And, as St. John Bosco taught, we must provide them with opportunities for grace. The Sacrament of Penance is particularly important here. One of the terms for this sacrament in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* is the Sacrament of Conversion. Every time we make a good confession, we come to deeper conversion. Let us teach for conversion.

03) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS do not pit truth and love against each other. God is truth and God is love.

The main point here is that Love and Truth are inseparable. Far too often it is said, taught, or at least hinted at that all we need is love. In a certain sense, this is true. All we do need is love! But this maxim presupposes a highly advanced and developed understanding of what love is! Love is a mountain that must be climbed. The steps that lead up the mountain are the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. The Scriptures are full of admonitions such as this one: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Guard against the heresy of Antinomianism! This is the heresy that Love is in opposition to Law. The fact is that Love is the fulfillment of the Law. If a Catholic were to say, "I love God, so I don't have to go to Mass" that person would be in serious error and quite possible in mortal sin. We must be aware that, every once in a while, such a person will show up in one of our classrooms. If and when this happens, the outstanding catechist will be prepared to deal with him/her with a combination of logic and good humor.

02) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS are Trinitarian in their catechesis.

There is one God. There is only one God. There is no other God except God! To this absolutely fundamental truth, we add this: The One God is Three Persons. Good catechists not only know that God is Three Persons but are caught up in wonder and awe at the fact that God is Three Persons and hardly ever give a lesson without some reference to it. Good catechists take every opportunity to

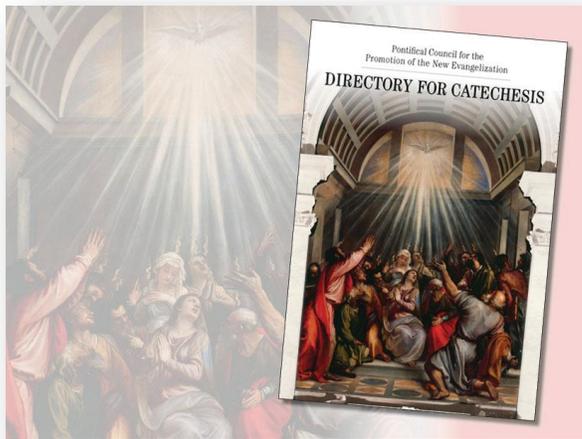
distinguish among the Three Persons whenever the lesson lends itself to the distinction — which it does most of the time. They make it clear that all three of the Divine Persons pre-exist creation, that the Father has always had a Son and that the Father and the Son have always breathed forth their Spirit. They make it clear that Jesus is the Second Person, not the First or the Third. They make it clear that the Second Person did not start to exist when Mary conceived Him in her womb. They make it clear that the Second Person will never cease to be human. At the same time, they make it clear that Jesus is not a human person. Good catechists do not say, "Oh well! The Trinity is a mystery! Let's just leave it at that and move on!"

01) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS know that, to form saints, we ourselves must become saints!

Latin maxim: Nemo dat quod non habet!

Translation: No one gives what he/she doesn't have!

If there is any situation in which it is true that the medium is the message, it is the situation of the catechist in relation to his/her students. Good catechists are, first and foremost, good Catholics. To be a good Catholic, one must first be a good human being. A good human being manifests the natural virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. A good Christian manifests the theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. A good Catholic Christian manifests all of the *above* and brings them to perfection with a love for that which is most distinctively Catholic: participation in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Holy Eucharist; love for the Communion of Saints, especially for the Holy Mother; love for the entire Church, and a special love for the Pope, the diocesan Bishop, the priests and the deacons.



THE EIGHT IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2020 DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS EXPLAINED

Implication #1

Kerygmatic Catechesis – a catechesis imbued and informed with the Kerygma and constantly re-presenting it in various forms and at different times; and building on and elaborating on it.

- Make Jesus the center and do catechesis with the end in mind:
- Leading your students into communion with Christ – a dynamic personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Creating opportunities to facilitate your students having an encounter with Jesus through an experience of the Holy Spirit.
- Theosis- students growing in the likeness of Christ.
- Helping students to discover their spiritual gifts and discern their vocations.
- The eternal salvation of your students.

Implication # 2

Accompaniment must be a priority – Accompaniment is not a program. It is essential to forming disciples. It is a necessary component of community and one of the functions of healthy community.

- How well do we know our students and their families?
- Most accompaniment happens outside the classroom.
- Can we be present at important events for our students and families? –e.g. sports events, plays, concerts, funerals of loved ones.
- Do we make time in our programs for check-ins and to address issues that are weighing on students' minds?
- Are we taking advantage of those teachable moments?
- What are we doing with other parish staff to help to build community in our parishes? It takes a parish to raise up and accompany young disciples.

Implication # 3

Make Jesus the center of all that you do

- Help your students to understand what it means that Jesus is Lord, and what it means that He is savior [unpacking the Kerygma]

- Help your students to understand that Jesus is a real Person, and that prayer works- sharing testimonies can be a powerful way to affirm this.
- Make sure that they understand that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist, but that He also truly lives in them through baptism, and that where 2 or more are gathered in His name He is there.
- Help your students to understand that the Gospels are not fairy tales or fables but are actual history and that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- Create opportunities for students to encounter Jesus through Lectio, Adoration and other forms of prayer and Bible study.

Implication # 4

Rely on the Holy Spirit like your life and ministry depends on Him

- Most Catholics treat the Holy Spirit the way most Protestants treat Our Lady. We need to get over our hang-ups about the Holy Spirit.
- Actively cultivate a devotion to the Holy Spirit and docility to Him.
- Learn to sense His promptings and inspirations.
- Rely on Him for wisdom, insight, discernment, strength, and power.
- Learn about the charisms He gives, seek them, learn to exercise them. Charisms are divine love in action *and* are power tools for advancing the Kingdom. These gifts are essential to our success in leading all people to the Kingdom of God.
- Give your students opportunities to experience the Holy Spirit – especially through retreats and diocesan events.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide your planning and strategizing for ministry. Expect Him to lead you. He will if you are willing to trust and obey Him.

Implication # 5

Invest in your catechists

- Help your parish to recover the sense of the vocation of the catechist.
- More catechist in-services focused on forming them as disciples.
- Catechist formation could include you leading them through the Kerygma and creating space for them to encounter Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit- e.g. including shared prayer experiences where the focus is on praying for more of the Holy Spirit and His gifts or for healing or strength.
- Partnering with other parishes to have joint catechist in-services and or retreats can help.
- Accompaniment for catechists- be a mentor for them. Get to know them outside the program.

- Make sure your catechists are properly equipped, feel valued and appreciated and that they have as much face time with you as they need.
- Find ways to show appreciation for your catechists as individuals and as a group.
- Plan events and Masses where your catechists can be publicly recognized and affirmed.

Implication # 6

Engage clergy, parents, grandparents and Godparents

- Your priest or pastoral leader are the persons primarily responsible for religious education in your parish- they should be involved as much as their schedule allows- in fact faith formation for children, youth and adults should be a priority for them.
- Deacons are charged by the Church to be intimately involved with the catechetical life of the parish - invite them to get involved in RE.
- Parents are the primary catechists and evangelizers of their children – recruit them. Even if they cannot commit to being a catechist invite them to catechist in-services and share resources with them that can help them share their faith with their children.
- Recruit those grandparents and God parents!

Implication # 7

The classroom model and academic approach for RE is not enough

- If possible, experiment with the small group or mid-sized group approach – the catechist here is both instructor *and* group facilitator.
- Religious formation as opposed to religious education- our goal is to not merely convey information but to evangelize and form students as disciples.
- If possible, find places other than classrooms to meet- Vestibule of the Church, the Nave, the Sacristy, outside if the weather is good, in homes (with all safe environment requirements), etc.
- Incorporate Liturgical experiences like special Masses (especially when Holy Days of Obligation coincide with RE), Eucharistic Adoration, etc.
- Incorporate Service in the key of St Teresa of Calcutta as an integral part of your program.
- Try to plan at least a day retreat for your students at least once a year and not just as part of Confirmation prep.
- Have events where parents, grandparents, Godparents and Confirmation sponsors are invited and encouraged to participate.

Implication # 8

RE needs to partner with YM to be successful

- RE and YM should be seen as part of a multi-pronged approach to evangelize, disciple, catechize and equip children, youth and their families.
- Robust youth ministry can reinforce truths learned in RE and can create greater space and opportunities for those truths to sink in.
- Youth ministry done well provides a context for the practical applications of things learned in RE while having more opportunities to build community and provide accompaniment which are so necessary to forming disciples.
- RE and YM absolutely need to be working together strategically.

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry

by USCCB – 1997 sixth edition 2002

1. Introduction
 - a. Three Essential Goals of Youth Ministry
 - i. Empowering young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today
 - ii. Drawing young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community
 - iii. Fostering the personal and spiritual growth of each young person
2. Part 1: The Growth and Development of the Church's Ministry with Adolescents
3. Part 2: Goals for Ministry with Adolescents
 - a. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.
 - b. To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community.
 - i. The Family Community – the Church of the Home
 - ii. The Parish Home
 - iii. The Catholic School Community
 - iv. The Youth-Serving Organizational Community (within and without of the parish)
 - c. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person
 - i. The Goals in Action (knowledge, values, skills and commitments)
 - ii. pp. 26-28 lists suggestions
4. Part 3: Themes and Components for a Comprehensive Ministry with Adolescents
 - a. Comprehensive Ministry with Adolescents – It take a Whole Church
 - b. Themes of a Comprehensive Vision Developmentally Appropriate
 - i. Family Friendly
 - ii. Intergenerational
 - iii. Multicultural
 - iv. Community-wide Collaboration
 - v. Leadership
 - vi. Flexible and Adaptable Programming
 - c. **The Components of a Comprehensive Ministry**
 - i. **Ministry of Advocacy**
 - ii. **Ministry of Catechesis** pp. 29-34 lists topics to be taken with different age groups
 - iii. **Ministry of Community Life**
 - iv. **Ministry of Evangelization**
 - v. **Ministry of Justice and Service**
 - vi. **Ministry of Leadership Development**
 - vii. **Ministry of Pastoral Care** p. 43 gives specifics
 - viii. **Ministry of Prayer and Worship** pp. 44- 47 gives specific areas
5. Part 4: A Guiding Image for Ministry with Adolescents