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V.F. - Catholic Church, Congregation for Clergy  
General Catechetical Directory  
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# GENERAL CATECHETICAL DIRECTORY

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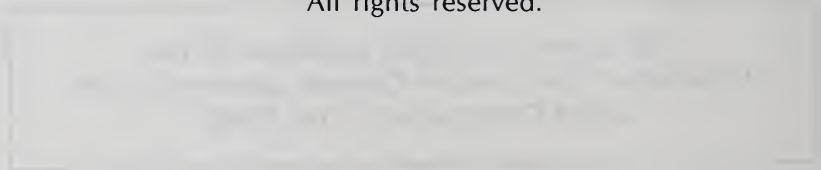
GENERAL CATECHETICAL  
DIRECTORY

This is the only English translation of the  
*Directorium Catechisticum Generale* approved by the  
Sacred Congregation of the Clergy.

1971  
Publications Office  
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

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1971  
United States Catholic Conference  
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## FOREWORD

This *General Catechetical Directory* is published in accord with the directive in the *Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church*, n. 44.

Considerable time was spent in the preparation of this document, not only because of the difficulties involved in a work of this sort, but also because of the method which was used in producing it.

Thus, after a special commission was set up consisting of men truly expert in catechesis—they were of various nationalities and had been selected after consultation with certain episcopates—the first thing done was to seek the advice and opinions of the various episcopates.

With that advice and those opinions in mind, a first draft of the *Directory* was worked up in an outline form showing only the principal features. This was examined at a special plenary session of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy. After that, a longer draft was prepared, and once again the Conferences of Bishops were queried so that they might express their opinion about it. In accord with the advice and observations given by the bishops in this second consultation, a definitive draft of the *Directory* was prepared. Even so, before this was published, it was reviewed by a special theological commission and by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The intent of this *Directory* is to provide the basic principles of pastoral theology—these principles have been taken from the Magisterium of the Church, and in a special way from the Second General Vatican Council—by which pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be more fittingly directed and governed. This explains why the theoretical aspect is given primary emphasis in this *Directory*, although, as will be evident, the practical aspect is by no means neglected. Such a course of action was adopted especially for the following reason: the errors which are not infrequently noted in catechetics today can be avoided only

if one starts with the correct way of understanding the nature and purposes of catechesis and also the truths which are to be taught by it, with due account being taken of those to whom catechesis is directed and of the conditions in which they live. Moreover, the specific task of applying the principles and declarations contained in this *Directory* to concrete situations properly belongs to the various episcopates, and they do this by means of national and regional directories, and by means of catechisms and the other aids which are suitable for effectively promoting the work of the ministry of the word.

It is clear that not all parts of the *Directory* are of the same importance. Those things which are said about divine revelation, the criteria according to which the Christian message is to be expounded, and the more outstanding elements of that same message, are to be held by all. On the other hand, those things which are said about the present situation, methodology, and the form of catechesis for people of differing ages, are to be taken rather as suggestions and guides, for a number of them are of necessity taken from the human sciences, theoretical as well as practical, and these are indeed subject to some evolution.

The *Directory* is chiefly intended for bishops, Conferences of Bishops, and in general all who under their leadership and direction have responsibility in the catechetical field. The immediate purpose of the *Directory* is to provide assistance in the production of catechetical directories and catechisms. Indeed, it is for this reason, that is, to help in the preparation of these tools, that the following have been done. Some basic features of present-day conditions have been set forth, so as to stimulate studies in the various parts of the Church, studies which should be carried out with careful and diligent effort, with regard to local conditions and local pastoral needs. Some general principles of methodology and catechesis for different age groups have been noted, so as to highlight how necessary it is to learn the art and wisdom of education. Special pains have been taken in the composition of Part Three, where the criteria which should govern the presentation of the truths to be taught through catechesis are set forth and where a summary of essential elements of the Christian faith is also given, so as to make fully clear the goal which catechesis must of necessity have, namely, the presentation of the Christian faith in its entirety.

Since the *Directory* is intended for countries which differ greatly in their conditions and pastoral needs, it is obvious that only common or average conditions could be considered in it. Therefore, in judging and evaluating the *Directory*, one will have to give due consideration to this particular feature as well as to the structure. The same thing must be said about the description of pastoral work given in Part Six. It deals with the plan of pastoral action that is to be promoted, and this is described only in general outlines. This will perhaps be inadequate for those areas in which catechesis has already made great strides, while, on the other hand, in those places where catechesis has not yet advanced very far, it will perhaps seem to demand too much.

With the publication of this document the Church gives new evidence of her concern for a ministry which is absolutely necessary for proper fulfillment of her mission in the world. It is prayerfully hoped that this document will be accepted and be carefully studied and weighed, with attention to the pastoral needs of the individual ecclesial communities. It is similarly hoped that this document will be able to stimulate new and more vigorous studies that faithfully respond to the needs of the ministry of the word and to the norms of the Magisterium of the Church.

## ABBREVIATIONS

(Documents of Vatican Council II)

- AA = Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity  
(*Apostolicam actuositatem*)
- AG = Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church  
(*Ad gentes*)
- CD = Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church  
(*Christus Dominus*)
- DH = Declaration on Religious Freedom  
(*Dignitatis humanae*)
- DV = Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation  
(*Dei Verbum*)
- GE = Declaration on Christian Education  
(*Gravissimum educationis*)
- GS = Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World  
(*Gaudium et spes*)
- IM = Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication  
(*Inter mirifica*)
- LG = Dogmatic Constitution on the Church  
(*Lumen gentium*)
- NA = Declaration on the Relationship of the Church  
to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*)
- OT = Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam totius*)
- PC = Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life  
(*Perfectae caritatis*)
- PO = Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests  
(*Presbyterorum ordinis*)
- SC = Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy  
(*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)
- UR = Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*)



## PART ONE

# THE REALITY OF THE PROBLEM

### NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS PART

**1** Since the essential mission of the Church is to proclaim and promote the faith in contemporary human society, a society disturbed by very great sociocultural changes, it is appropriate here, with the declarations of the Second Vatican Council in mind, to sketch some features and characteristics of the present situation by pointing out the spiritual repercussions they have and the new obligations the Church has as a result. The discussion here is not meant to be exhaustive, because the subject covers points which are unique and often very much different in the various parts of the Church. National directories will have the task of filling out this outline and applying it to the circumstances of individual countries and regions.

## The World

### THE MODERN WORLD IN CONTINUAL DEVELOPMENT

**2** "Today, the human race is passing through a new stage of its history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the world. . . . Hence we can already speak of a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well" (GS, 4).

As examples, two repercussions on the life of faith which more directly affect catechesis can be cited:

a) In times past, the cultural tradition favored the transmission of the faith to a greater extent than it does today; in our times, however, the cultural tradition has undergone considerable change, with the result that less and less can one depend on continued transmission by means of it. Because of this, some renewal in evangelization is needed for transmitting the same faith to new generations.

b) It should be noted that the Christian faith requires explanations and new forms of expression so that it may take root in all successive cultures. Though the aspirations and basic needs peculiar to human nature and the human condition remain essentially the same, nevertheless, men of our era are posing new questions about the meaning and importance of life.

Believers of our time are certainly not in all respects like believers of the past. This is why it becomes necessary to affirm the permanence of the faith and to present the message of salvation in renewed ways.

Today one must also keep in mind the very great diffusion of the instruments of social communication, the influence of which extends beyond national boundaries and makes individual persons citizens as it were of human society as a whole (cf. IM, 22).

Such instruments exert very great influence on the lives of Christians, whether because of the things they teach or because of the style of thinking and mode of behavior they introduce among these same Christians. It is necessary to take account of this fact and to give it all due attention.

## PLURALISM TODAY

**3** "By this very circumstance, the traditional local communities such as father-centered families, clans, tribes, villages, various groups and associations stemming from social contacts experience more thorough changes every day" (GS, 6).

In Christianity of old, religion was regarded as the chief principle of unity among peoples. Things are otherwise now. The cohesion of peoples which stems from the phenomenon of democratization promotes harmony among various spiritual families. "Pluralism," as it is called, is no longer viewed as an evil to be eliminated, but rather as a fact which must be taken into account; anyone can make his own decisions known without becoming or being regarded as alien to society.

Therefore, those engaged in the ministry of the word should never forget that faith is a free response to the grace of the revealing God. And to an even greater extent than this was done in the past, they should present the good news of Christ in its remarkable character both as the mysterious key to understanding

of the whole human condition and as a free gift of God which is to be received by means of heavenly grace upon admission of one's own insufficiency (cf. GS, 10).

#### THE DYNAMISM OF OUR AGE

4 The building up of human society, human progress, and the ongoing execution of human plans stimulate the concern of the men of our era (cf. GS, 4). Faith should by no means keep itself as it were outside that human progress. Joined with that progress there are indeed even now serious aberrations. Accordingly, the Gospel message should pass judgment on this state of affairs and tell men what it means.

The ministry of the word, through an ever-deeper study of the divine and human calling of man, must permit the Gospel to spread its own vital seeds of genuine freedom and progress (cf. AG, 8, 12) and to stimulate a desire for promoting the growth of the human person and for contending against that way of acting and thinking which tends toward fatalism.

What has been said above is meant merely to show how today's ministry of the word ought to direct its activity toward this world: ". . . it is demanded from the Church that she inject the perennial, vital, divine power of the Gospel into the human society of today" (John XXIII, Apost. Const. *Humanae salutis*, AAS, 1962, p. 6).

#### THE SITUATION IN REGARD TO RELIGIOUS FEELING

5 That form of civilization which is called scientific, technical, industrial, and urban not infrequently diverts the attention of men from matters divine and makes their inner concerns with regard to religion more difficult. Many feel that God is less present, and less needed, and God seems to them less able to explain things in both personal and social life. Hence a religious crisis can easily arise (cf. GS, 5, 7).

The Christian faith, as are the other religious confessions, is experiencing a crisis of this sort among its followers. It has an urgent duty, therefore, to manifest its true nature, by virtue of which it transcends every advancement of culture, and to show forth its newness in cultures which have been secularized and desacralized.

It is a function of the ministry of the word to uncover, purify, and develop the automatic values which are found in the spiritual heritage of those human cultures wherein a religious sense remains alive and operative and is all-pervasive in human life.

In times past, faulty opinions and errors about the faith and the Christian way of life generally reached a comparatively small number of people, and were to a greater extent than is so today confined within groups of intellectuals. Now, however, human progress and the instruments of social communication are having this effect: faulty opinions are being spread abroad with greater speed and are exerting an ever-wider influence among the faithful, young adults especially, who suffer grave crises and are not infrequently driven to adopt ways of acting and thinking that are hostile to religion. This situation calls for pastoral remedies that are truly adapted to the circumstances.

## The Church

The particular characteristics of the spiritual condition of the world are also found in the life of the Church herself.

### “TRADITIONAL” FAITH

6 The faith of many Christians is strained to a critical point in those places where religion was seeming to favor the prerogatives of certain social classes to an excessive degree, or where it was depending too much on ancestral customs and on regional unanimity in religious profession.

Great numbers are drifting little by little into religious indifference, or are continuing in danger of keeping the faith without the dynamism that is necessary, a faith without effective influence on their actual lives. The question now is not one of merely preserving traditional religious customs, but rather one of also fostering an appropriate re-evangelization of men, obtaining their reconversion, and giving them a deeper and more mature education in the faith.

By no means, however, is the above to be interpreted in such a way that it results in neglect of the genuine faith which is preserved within groups in a culture that is traditionally Christian, or

in a low estimation of the popular religious sense. Despite the growth of secularization, a religious sense continues to flourish in the various parts of the Church. No one can fail to note it, for it is expressed in ordinary life by a very large number of people, and for the most part in a sincere and authentic way. In fact, the popular religious sense provides an opportunity or starting point for proclaiming the faith. The question is, as is clear, only one of purifying it and of correctly appraising its valid elements, so that no one will be content with forms of pastoral action which today have become unequal to the task, altogether unsuitable, and perhaps even irrelevant.

## RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENTISM AND ATHEISM

7 Many baptized persons have withdrawn so far from their religion that they profess a form of indifferentism or something close to atheism. "Still, many of our contemporaries recognize in no way this intimate and vital link with God, or else they explicitly reject it. Thus atheism must be accounted among the most serious problems of this age, and must be subjected to closer examination" (GS, 19).

The Second Vatican Council gave the matter careful consideration (cf. GS, 19-20) and dealt expressly with remedies to be applied: "The remedy which must be applied to atheism, however, is to be sought in a proper presentation of the Church's teaching as well as in the integral life of the Church and her members. For it is a function of the Church to make God the Father and his incarnate Son present and in a sense visible by ceaselessly renewing and purifying herself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This result is achieved chiefly by the witness of a living and mature faith, namely, one trained to see difficulties clearly and to master them" (GS, 21).

There are also cases in which the Christian faith is found contaminated with a new form of paganism, even though some religious sense and some faith in a Supreme Being persist. A religious disposition can exist far from the influence of the word of God and from the practice of the sacraments, but be nourished by the practice of superstition and magic; moral life can fall back into pre-Christian ethics. Sometimes elements of nature worship, animism, and divination are introduced into the Christian religion,

and thus in some places a lapse into syncretism can occur. Moreover, religious sects are being propagated which mingle together the Christian mysteries and elements of fables from antiquity.

In these cases, there is the greatest possible need for the ministry of the word, especially evangelization and catechesis, to be renewed in accord with the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*, nn. 13, 14, 21, 22.

## FAITH AND VARIOUS CULTURES

**8** There are some members of the faithful who have had an excellent Christian education who are having difficulty with regard to the way of expressing the faith. They think it is bound up too much with ancient and obsolete formulations and too much tied to Western culture. They are, therefore, seeking a new way of expressing the truths of religion, one which conforms to the present human condition, allows the faith to illumine the realities pressing upon men today, and makes it possible for the Gospel to be brought over to other cultures. The Church certainly has a duty to give all possible consideration to this aspiration of men.

What is declared in the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* for recently established churches is also valid for all who labor in the ministry of the word: "From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these churches borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Savior's grace, and the proper arrangement of Christian life" (AG, 22; cf. AG, 21; Paul VI, Alloc., August 6, 1969).

Consequently, "by presenting the Gospel message to men in a renewed way, the ministry of the word should show clearly the unity of the divine plan of salvation. Avoiding confusions and simplistic identifications, the message should always show clearly the deep and intimate harmony that exists between God's salvific plan, fulfilled in Christ the Lord, and human aspirations, between the history of salvation and human history, between the Church, the People of God, and human communities, between God's revelatory action and man's experience, between supernatural gifts and charisms and human values" (Comm. 5-s/comm. 2 General Conference of Bishops of Latin America, 1968).

## THE WORK OF RENEWAL

9 In this new state of affairs, it is possible for one to suppose that the apostolic fervor which the Church is now striving to promote is being impeded. Certainly neither the shepherds nor the faithful should be faulted on zeal, which they in fact have in large measure. The impediments seem rather to result either from a widespread failure to prepare suitably for the new and difficult tasks, or from a kind of thinking, as yet not fully developed, which is at times expressed in theories that hinder rather than help evangelization.

Having duly considered these things, the Sacred Synod of Vatican II time and again urged renewal of the ministry of the word in the Church. This renewal seems today to be entering a period of crisis, being led there especially by:

—*those who are unable to understand the depth of the proposed renewal*, as though the issue here were merely one of eliminating ignorance of the doctrine which must be taught. According to the thinking of those people, the remedy would be more frequent catechetical instruction. Once the matter has been considered that way, that remedy is immediately seen to be altogether unequal to the needs. In fact, the catechetical plan is to be thoroughly renewed, and this renewal has to do with a continuing education in the faith, not only for children but also for adults.

—*those who are inclined to reduce the Gospel message to the consequences it has in men's temporal existence.*

The Gospel and its law of love do, of course, demand that Christians, each according to his strength, work together—fulfilling their secular duties and responsibilities—to restore justice and brotherhood among men more and more. That, however, does not in any way satisfy the need to give due witness to Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Savior, whose mystery, which revealed God's ineffable love (cf. 1 John 4, 9), must be proclaimed openly and in its entirety to those being evangelized, and must be examined by them.

The teaching of the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* and the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* countenance no "minimalism" in explaining the service of the

faith directed through the ministry of the word. Both these documents show concern for providing a remedy for the state of affairs described above. Renewal in the ministry of the word, especially in catechesis, can in no way be separated from general pastoral renewal.

Steps which are effective and indeed of the greatest importance for good results must be taken: promoting the growth of the customary forms of the ministry of the word and stimulating new ones; evangelizing and catechizing men of lower cultural levels; reaching the educated classes and taking care of their needs; improving the traditional forms of the Christian presence and finding new ways; gathering together all the practical aids of the Church and at the same time avoiding forms which are not in accord with the Gospel.

In carrying out this task, the Church places her hope in all members of the People of God. Everyone—bishops, priests, men and women religious, lay people—should by all means fulfill his mission, each according to his responsibilities. And indeed each should fulfill his mission with attention to the state of the world which profoundly affects the life of faith.

So that effective help may be given these workers in the service of the Gospel, the catechetical renewal ought to use the help which can be given by the sacred sciences, theology, bible studies, pastoral thought, and the human sciences, and also the instruments by which ideas and opinions are spread, especially the social communications media.



## PART TWO

# THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

### Chapter I

## The Ministry of The Word and Revelation

#### REVELATION: GOD'S GIFT

**10** In the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, the General Council looked at revelation as the act by which God communicates himself in a personal way: "In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known the hidden purpose of his will . . . so that he may invite and take men into fellowship with himself" (DV, 2). God appears there as one who wishes to communicate himself, carrying out a plan which proceeds from love.

Catechesis, then, ought to take its beginning from this gift of divine love. Faith is the acceptance and coming to fruit of the divine gift in us. This characteristic, by which faith is to be considered as a gift, has a direct bearing on the whole subject-matter of the ministry of the word.

#### REVELATION: DEEDS AND WORDS

**11** So that men may come to a knowledge of his plan, God works in this way, namely, through events in the history of salvation and through the divinely inspired words which accompany these events and clarify them: "This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them" (DV, 2).

Revelation, therefore, consists of deeds and words, the ones illuminating, and being illuminated by, the others. The ministry of the word should proclaim these deeds and words in such a way that the loftiest mysteries contained in them are further explained and communicated by it. In this way the ministry of the word not only recalls the revelation of God's wonders which was made in time and brought to perfection in Christ, but at the same time, in the light of this revelation, interprets human life in our age, the signs of the times, and the things of this world, for the plan of God works in these for the salvation of men.

#### JESUS CHRIST: MEDIATOR AND FULLNESS OF ALL REVELATION

**12** "By this revelation, then, the deepest truth . . . is made clear to us in Christ, who is the Mediator and at the same time the fullness of all revelation" (DV, 2).

Christ is not only the greatest of prophets, who by his teaching fulfilled those things which had been said and done by God in earlier times. He himself is the eternal Son of God, made man, and thus the last event to which all events in the history of salvation look and which fulfills and manifests the final plans of God. "For this reason he . . . perfected revelation by fulfilling it . . ." (DV, 4; cf. LG, 9).

The ministry of the word ought to direct attention to this wonderful characteristic peculiar to the economy of revelation. The Son of God inserts himself into the history of men, takes to himself the life and death of a man, and in this history fulfills his plan of the Covenant.

In the same way as does the Evangelist Luke, the ministry of the word ought first to recall the event of Jesus for believers, by manifesting its meaning and by searching more and more into this unique and irreversible fact: "Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events which have been fulfilled in our midst. . . . I too have carefully traced the whole sequence of events from the beginning, and have decided to set it in writing for you" (Luke 1, 1-3).

Therefore, the ministry of the word should be based on the divinely inspired exposition regarding the redemptive incarnation,

the exposition which has been given us by Jesus himself and by the first disciples and especially the apostles, who were witnesses of the events. "It is common knowledge that among all [the Scriptures] . . . the Gospels have a special pre-eminence, and rightly so, for they are the principal witness of the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our Savior" (DV, 18).

Moreover, it is to be recalled that Jesus, the Messiah and Lord, is through his Spirit always present to his Church (cf. John 14, 26; 15, 26; 16, 13; Apoc. 2, 7). Accordingly, the ministry of the word presents Christ not only as its object but also as the one who opens the hearts of hearers to receive and understand the divine proclamation (cf. Acts 16, 14).

#### MINISTRY OF THE WORD OR PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD: ACT OF LIVING TRADITION

**13** "Now what was handed on by the apostles includes everything which contributes to the holiness of life and the increase in faith of the People of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes" (DV, 8).

This tradition is bound up with things that have been said. In scope and depth, however, it is more than these sayings. It is a living tradition, since through it God continues his conversation. "And thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the Bride of his beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church, and through her, in the world . . ." (DV, 8).

This is why the ministry of the word can be considered as that which gives voice to this living tradition, within the totality of tradition. "This tradition which comes from the apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts, through the intimate understanding of spiritual things they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth" (DV, 8).

On the one hand, the divine revelation which constitutes the

object of the Catholic faith and which was completed at the time of the apostles, must be clearly distinguished from the grace of the Holy Spirit, without whose inspiration and illumination no one can believe. On the other hand, God, who formerly spoke to the human race by revealing himself through divine deeds together with the message of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles, even now still secretly directs, through the Holy Spirit, in sacred tradition, by the light and sense of the faith, the Church, his bride, and he speaks with her, so that the People of God, under the leadership of the Magisterium, may attain a fuller understanding of revelation.

The Church's shepherds not only proclaim and explain directly to the People of God the deposit of faith which has been committed to them, but moreover they make authentic judgments regarding expressions of that deposit and the explanations which the faithful seek and offer. They do this in such a way that "in holding to, practicing, and professing the heritage of the faith, there results on the part of the bishops and faithful a remarkable common effort" (DV, 10).

From this it follows that it is necessary for the ministry of the word to set forth the divine revelation such as it is taught by the Magisterium and such as it expresses itself, under the watchfulness of the Magisterium, in the living awareness and faith of the People of God. In this way the ministry of the word is not a mere repetition of ancient doctrine, but rather it is a faithful reproduction of it, with adaptation to new problems and with a growing understanding of it.

#### SACRED SCRIPTURE

**14** Under special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, divine revelation has also been expressed in writings, that is, in the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments, books which contain and present divinely revealed truth (cf. DV, 11).

The Church, guardian and interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures, learns from them, by constantly meditating on and penetrating more and more into their teaching. Remaining faithful in tradition, the ministry of the word finds its nourishment and its norm in Sacred Scripture (cf. DV, 21, 24, 25). For in the sacred

books the Father, who is in heaven, very lovingly meets with his children and speaks with them (cf. DV, 21).

But if it takes its norm for thinking from Sacred Scripture, the Church, inspired by the Spirit, interprets that same Scripture: "and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her" (DV, 8).

The ministry of the word, therefore, takes its beginning from Holy Writ and from the preaching of the apostles, as these are understood, explained, and applied in concrete situations by the Church.

#### FAITH: RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD

**15** By faith man accepts revelation, and through it he consciously becomes a sharer in the gift of God.

The obedience of faith must be offered to the God who reveals. By this, man, with full homage of his mind and will, freely assents to the Gospel of the grace of God (cf. Acts, 20, 24). Instructed by faith, man, through the gift of the Spirit, comes to contemplate and savor the God of love, the God who has made known the riches of his glory in Christ (cf. Col. 1, 26). Indeed, a living faith is the beginning in us of eternal life in which the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2, 10) will at last be seen unveiled. Informed of God's plan of salvation, faith leads man to full discernment of the divine will towards us in this world, and to cooperation with his grace. "For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human" (GS, 11).

#### FUNCTION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

**16** To put the whole matter in a few words, the minister of the word should be honestly aware of the mission assigned to him. It is to stir up a lively faith which turns the mind to God, impels conformance with his action, leads to a living knowledge of the expressions of tradition, and speaks and manifests the true significance of the world and human existence.

The ministry of the word is the communication of the message of salvation: it brings the Gospel to men. The mystery which

has been announced and handed down deeply influences that will to have life, that innermost desire for attaining fulfillment, and that expectation of future happiness which God has implanted in the heart of every man and which by his grace he raises to the supernatural order.

The truths to be believed include God's love. He created all things for the sake of Christ and restored us to life in Christ Jesus. The various aspects of the mystery are to be explained in such a way that the central fact, Jesus, as he is God's greatest gift to men, holds first place, and that from him the other truths of Catholic teaching derive their order and hierarchy from the educational point of view (cf. nn. 43, 49).

## Chapter II

# Catechesis in the Pastoral Mission of the Church (Nature, Purpose, Efficacy)

### MINISTRY OF THE WORD IN THE CHURCH

**17** The ministry of the word takes many forms, including catechesis, according to the different conditions under which it is practiced and the ends which it strives to achieve.

There is the form called evangelization, or missionary preaching. This has as its purpose the arousing of the beginnings of faith (cf. CD, 11, 13; AG, 6, 13, 14), so that men will adhere to the word of God.

Then there is the catechetical form, "which is intended to make men's faith become living, conscious, and active, through the light of instruction" (CD, 14).

And then there is the liturgical form, within the setting of a liturgical celebration, especially that of the Eucharist (e.g., the homily) (cf. SC, 33, 52); *Inter Oecum.* 54).

Finally, there is the theological form, that is, the systematic treatment and the scientific investigation of the truths of faith.

For our purpose it is important to keep these forms distinct, since they are governed by their own laws. Nevertheless, in the concrete reality of the pastoral ministry, they are closely bound together.

Accordingly, all that has so far been said about the ministry of the word in general is to be applied also to catechesis.

### CATECHESIS AND EVANGELIZATION

**18** Catechesis proper presupposes a global adherence to Christ's Gospel as presented by the Church. Often, however, it is directed

to men who, though they belong to the Church, have in fact never given a true personal adherence to the message of revelation.

This shows that, according to circumstances, evangelization can precede or accompany the work of catechesis proper. In every case, however, one must keep in mind that the element of conversion is always present in the dynamism of faith, and for that reason any form of catechesis must also perform the role of evangelization.

## FORMS OF CATECHESIS

**19** Because of varied circumstances and multiple needs, catechetical activity necessarily takes various forms.

In regions which have been Christian from of old, catechesis often takes the form of religious instruction given to children and adolescents in schools or outside a school atmosphere. Also found in those regions are various catechetical programs for adults. There are also various catechumenate programs for those who are preparing themselves for the reception of baptism, or for those who have been baptized but lack a proper Christian initiation. Very often the actual condition of large numbers of the faithful necessarily demands that some form of evangelization of the baptized precede catechesis.

In churches that have been established recently, special importance is placed on the work of evangelizing in the strict sense. Accordingly, they have the well-known form of the catechumenate for those who are being initiated in the faith so that they may prepare themselves for receiving baptism (cf. AG, 4).

In a word, catechetical activity can take on forms and structures that are quite varied, that is to say, it can be systematic or occasional, for individuals or for communities, organized or spontaneous, and so on.

**20** Shepherds of souls should always keep in mind the obligation they have of safeguarding and promoting the enlightenment of Christian existence through the word of God for people of all ages and in all historical circumstances (cf. CD, 14), so that it may be possible to have contact with every individual and community in the spiritual state in which each one is.



They should also remember that catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it. In obedience to the norms of the Second Vatican Council, shepherds of souls should also strive "to reestablish or better adapt the instruction of adult catechumens" (CD, 14; cf. AG, 14).

## FUNCTIONS OF CATECHESIS

**21** Within the scope of pastoral activity, catechesis is the term to be used for that form of ecclesial action which leads both communities and individual members of the faithful to maturity of faith.

With the aid of catechesis, communities of Christians acquire for themselves a more profound living knowledge of God and of his plan of salvation, which has its center in Christ, the incarnate Word of God. They build themselves up by striving to make their faith mature and enlightened, and to share this mature faith with men who desire to possess it.

For every man whose mind is open to the message of the Gospel, catechesis is a particularly apt means for him to understand God's plan in his own life and to examine the highest meaning of existence and history so that the life of individual men and of society may be illumined by the light of the kingdom of God and be conformed to its demands, and the mystery of the Church as the community of those who believe in the Gospel may be able to be recognized.

All these things determine the functions proper to catechesis.

## CATECHESIS AND THE GRACE OF FAITH

**22** Faith is a gift of God which calls men to conversion. "For this faith to be given, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it" (DV, 5).

The Christian community, listening to the word of God re-

ligiously, lives in a mature faith, constantly strives for conversion and renewal, and gives diligent ear to what the Spirit says to the Church.

Catechesis performs the function of disposing men to receive the action of the Holy Spirit and to deepen their conversion. It does this through the word, to which are joined the witness of life and prayer.

#### CATECHESIS AND PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTIES OF THE FAITH

**23** A person mature in the faith fully accepts the Gospel invitation by which he is impelled to communion with God and with his brothers; he takes on in his life the duties that are connected with this invitation (cf. AG, 12).

Catechesis performs the functions of helping men make this communion with God a reality, and of presenting the Christian message in such a way that it is clear that the highest value of human life is safeguarded by it. All this requires that catechesis keep in mind the legitimate aspirations of men, as also the progress and success of the values contained in these aspirations.

Communion with God and adherence to him entail the carrying out of human responsibilities and the duty of solidarity, since all these things are in keeping with the will of God the Savior (cf. GS, 4).

Catechesis, therefore, must foster and illumine the increase of theological charity in individual members of the faithful as well as in ecclesial communities, and also the manifestations of that same virtue in connection with the duties that pertain to individuals and to the community.

#### CATECHESIS AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE FAITH

**24** A person mature in the faith knows the mystery of salvation revealed in Christ, and the divine signs and works which are witnesses to the fact that this mystery is being carried out in human history. It is, therefore, not sufficient for catechesis merely to stimulate a religious experience, even if it is a true one; rather, catechesis should contribute to the gradual grasping of the whole

truth about the divine plan by preparing the faithful for the reading of Sacred Scripture and the learning of tradition.

## CATECHESIS AND THE LIFE OF LITURGICAL AND PRIVATE PRAYER

**25** “Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can match its claim to efficacy, nor equal the degree of it” (SC, 7). And the more mature a Christian community becomes in faith, the more it lives its worship in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4, 23) in its liturgical celebrations, especially at the Eucharist.

Therefore, catechesis must promote an active, conscious, genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds. All these things are necessary for a true liturgical life.

“The spiritual life, however, is not confined to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is assuredly called to pray with his brethren, but he must also enter into his chamber to pray to the Father in secret (cf. Matt. 6, 6), indeed, according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul (cf. 1 Thess. 5, 17), he should pray without ceasing” (SC, 12).

Therefore, catechesis must also train the faithful to meditate on the word of God and to engage in private prayer.

## CATECHESIS AND CHRISTIAN LIGHT ON HUMAN EXISTENCE

**26** A person mature in the faith is able to recognize in various circumstances and encounters with his fellowman the invitation of God whereby he is called to work toward the fulfillment of the divine plan of salvation.

Catechesis has the task, then, of emphasizing this function by teaching the faithful to give a Christian interpretation to human events, especially to the signs of the times, so that all “will

be able to test and interpret all things in a wholly Christian spirit" (GS, 62).

## CATECHESIS AND UNITY OF CHRISTIANS

**27** Communities of the faithful should, according to the circumstances in which they live, take part in ecumenical dialogue and the other undertakings for the restoring of Christian unity (cf. UR, 5).

Catechesis should, therefore, assist in this cause (cf. UR, 6) by clearly explaining the Church's doctrine in its entirety (cf. UR, 11) and by fostering a suitable knowledge of other confessions, both in matters where they agree with the Catholic faith, and also in matters where they differ. In doing this, it should avoid words and methods of explaining doctrine that could "lead separated brethren or anyone else into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church" (LG, 67). The order or hierarchy of the truths of Catholic teaching should be kept (cf. UR, 11; AG, 15; *Ad Ecclesiam totam*, May 14, 1967, AAS, 1967, pp. 574-592). However, the case for Catholic doctrine should be presented with charity as well as with due firmness.

## CATECHESIS AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

**28** The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or sign and an instrument of the salvation and of the unity of the whole human race (cf. LG, 1). It will be more noted as such, however, the more mature in faith the individual communities of the faithful become.

Catechesis should help these communities to spread the light of the Gospel and to establish a fruitful dialogue with men and cultures that are not Christian, preserving here religious freedom correctly understood (cf. DH; AG, 22).

## CATECHESIS AND ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE

**29** A person mature in the faith directs his thoughts and desires to the full consummation of the kingdom in eternal life.

Catechesis, therefore, performs the function of directing the hope of men in the first place to the future goods which are in the heavenly Jerusalem. At the same time, it calls men to be will-

ing to cooperate in the undertakings of their neighbors and of the human race for the improvement of human society (cf. GS, 39, 40-43).

#### CATECHESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIFE OF FAITH

**30** Among the faithful the one faith is found to be more or less intense according to the grace that is given to each one by the Holy Spirit, grace which must constantly be asked for in prayer (cf. Mark, 9, 23), and according to the response that each one gives to this grace. Moreover, the life of faith passes through various stages, just as does man's existence while he is attaining maturity and taking on the duties of his life. Consequently, the life of faith admits of various degrees, both in the global acceptance of the total word of God and in the explanation of that word and the application of it to the different duties of human life, according to the maturity of each and the differences of individuals (cf. n. 38). Certainly, the acceptance of this faith and its explanation and application to the life of man are different according to whether there is question of the very young, children, adolescents, young adults, or adults. Catechesis has the function of lending aid for the beginning and the progress of this life of faith throughout the entire course of a man's existence, all the way to the full explanation of revealed truth and the application of it to man's life.

#### RICHNESS OF CATECHETICAL WORK

**31** Catechesis is concerned with the community, but it does not neglect the individual believer. It is linked with the other pastoral functions of the Church, but it does not lose its own specific character. At one and the same time it performs the functions of initiation, education, and formation.

It is very important that catechesis retain the richness of these various aspects in such a way that one aspect is not separated from the rest to the detriment of the others.

#### EFFICACY OF THE WORD OF GOD IN CATECHESIS

**32** This sentence from Sacred Scripture is pertinent also to catechesis: "Indeed, God's word is living and effective" (Heb. 4, 12).

The divine word becomes present in catechesis through the human word. So that it may bear fruit in man and generate inner movements which expel indifference or uncertainty and lead him to embrace the faith, catechesis ought to express the word of God faithfully and present it suitably. Furthermore, the witness given by the life of both the catechist and the ecclesial community contributes very much to the efficacy of catechesis (cf. n. 35).

Catechesis, therefore, should convey the word of God, as it is presented by the Church, in the language of the men to whom it is directed (cf. DV, 13; OT, 16). When God revealed himself to the human race, he made the human word the sign of his word, expressing his word in a language that belonged to a particular culture (cf. DV, 12). The Church, to whom Christ entrusted the deposit of revelation, strives until the consummation of the world to transmit, explain, and interpret this word in a lively manner for the peoples of every culture and for men of every condition.

#### PEDAGOGY OF GOD IN REVEALING AND OF THE CHURCH IN CATECHIZING

**33** In the history of revelation God used pedagogy in such a way that he announced his plan of salvation in the Old Covenant prophetically and by means of figures, and thus prepared the coming of his Son, the author of the New Covenant and the perfecter of the faith (cf. Heb. 12, 2).

Now, however, after the consummation of revelation, the Church has the obligation of sharing the entire mystery of our salvation in Christ with the people to be instructed. Mindful of the pedagogy used by God, she too uses a pedagogy, a new one, however, one that corresponds to the new demands of his message. The Church sees to it, of course, that this message, when it has been presented without adulteration or mutilation, is accommodated to the ability of the people to be taught.

On the one hand, in order to take account of the limited ability of some, the Church explains matters rather simply and briefly, using even suitable summary formulas, which may be explained further later. On the other hand, she tries to satisfy the requirements of the more lively and capable minds by using more profound explanations.

## PRESERVING FIDELITY TO GOD AND HAVING CONCERN FOR MEN

**34** The Church performs this kind of function chiefly by means of catechesis (cf. DV, 24). By drawing the truth from the word of God and faithfully adhering to the secure expression of this word, catechesis strives to teach this word of God with complete fidelity. The function of catechesis, however, cannot be restricted to repetition of traditional formulas; in fact, it demands that these formulas be understood, and be faithfully expressed in language adapted to the intelligence of the hearers, using even new methods when necessary. The language will be different for different age levels, social conditions of men, human cultures, and forms of civil life (cf. DV, 8; CD, 14).

## THE NECESSITY OF ECCLESIAL WITNESS

**35** Catechesis, finally, demands the witness of faith, both from the catechists and from the ecclesial community, a witness that is joined to an authentic example of Christian life and to a readiness for sacrifice (cf. LG, 12, 17; NA, 2).

Man encounters Christ not only through the sacred ministry, but also through individual members of the faithful and their communities (cf. LG, 35), and these accordingly have a duty to give witness. If such witness is lacking, there arises in the listeners an obstacle to the acceptance of God's word.

Catechesis must be supported by the witness of the ecclesial community. It speaks more effectively about those things which in fact exist in the community's external life as well. The catechist is in a certain way the interpreter of the Church among those who are to be instructed. He reads the signs of faith and he teaches others how to read them. The chief of these signs is the Church herself (cf. First Vatican Council, Dogm. Const. *Dei Filius*, Dz.-Sch. 3014).

Hence it is clear how necessary it is that the ecclesial community, according to the mind of the Church and under the guidance of her bishops, remove or correct things that mar the appearance of the Church and constitute an obstacle for men to embrace the faith (cf. GS, 19).

Catechists, therefore, have the duty not only to impart catechesis directly, but also to offer their help in making the ecclesial community come alive, so that it will be able to give a witness that is authentically Christian.

Catechetical action, therefore, fits into that general pastoral action in which all elements of ecclesial life are properly ordered and bound together (cf. GS, 4, 7, 43).



## PART THREE

# THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

### SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE OF THIS PART

**36** Faith, the maturing of which is to be promoted by catechesis (cf. n. 21), can be considered in two ways, either as the total adherence given by man under the influence of grace to God revealing himself (the faith *by which* one believes), or as the content of revelation and of the Christian message (the faith *which* one believes). These two aspects are by their very nature inseparable, and a normal maturing of the faith assumes progress of both together. The two can, however, be distinguished for reasons of methodology.

The subject of this third part is the content of the faith, and it is treated in the way indicated here. The first chapter points out the norms or criteria which catechesis must observe in the discovery and exposition of its content. The second chapter will deal with that content itself. This second chapter is by no means intended to set forth each and every one of the Christian truths which constitute the object of faith and of catechesis. Nor is it desired here to present an enumeration of the chief errors of our age, or of the truths of the faith which today are being more sharply denied or neglected. The ordinary or extraordinary Magisterium of the Church provides for this point authoritatively by its public pronouncements.

Much less is there an attempt in that second chapter to show a suitable way for ordering the truths of faith according to an organic plan in a kind of synthesis which would take just account of their objective hierarchy, or of the needs more intensely felt by the men of our age, whether men are considered in the context of their age or in the perspective of their social and cultural formation. This is the task of sacred theology and of the various other kinds of exposition of Christian doctrine.

Rather, it has seemed opportune to expound in that chapter —by means of those broad formulations which encompass fuller explanations—some of the more outstanding elements contained in the saving message, elements which certainly are organically interrelated, especially in those particular features which must be brought out more clearly in a new, adapted catechesis which pursues its goal faithfully.

# Chapter I

## Norms or Criteria

### THE CONTENT OF CATECHESIS IN RELATION TO THE VARIOUS FORMS OF ECCLESIAL LIFE, IN RELATION TO DIFFERING CULTURES, AND IN RELATION TO DIFFERENT LANGUAGES OF MEN

**37** Revelation is the manifestation of the mystery of God and of his saving action in history. It takes place through a personal communication from God to man. The content of this communication constitutes the message of salvation which is to be preached to all men.

It is, consequently, the supreme and absolutely necessary function of the Church's prophetic ministry to make the content of this message intelligible to men of all times, in order that they may be converted to God through Christ, that they may interpret their whole life in the light of faith, having considered the special conditions of events and times in which that life develops, and that they may lead a life in keeping with the dignity which the message of salvation has brought them and that faith has revealed to them.

To achieve this end, catechesis, as a most excellent opportunity for the prophetic ministry of the Church, must not only foster a strong and continuous contact with the various forms of life in the ecclesial community, but it must strive to promote a greater accord between the possible formulations of the divine message and the various cultures and diverse languages of peoples.

### THE GOAL OF CATECHESIS IS TO PRESENT THE ENTIRE CONTENT

**38** The content of the message of salvation is made up of parts that are closely interrelated, even though its revelation was given by God gradually, in times past through the prophets, last of all

in his Son (cf. Heb. 1, 1). Since the purpose of catechesis, as was said, consists in leading individual Christians and communities to a mature faith, it must take diligent care faithfully to present the entire treasure of the Christian message. This must surely be done according to the example of the divine pedagogy (cf. n. 33), but with the full store of revelation that has been divinely communicated being taken into account, so that the People of God may be nourished by it and live from it.

Catechesis begins, therefore, with a rather simple presentation of the entire structure of the Christian message (using also summary or global formulas), and it presents this in a way appropriate to the various cultural and spiritual conditions of those to be taught. By no means, however, can it stop with this first presentation, but it must be interested in presenting the content in an always more detailed and developed manner, so that individuals among the faithful and the Christian community may arrive at an always more profound and vital acceptance of the Christian message, and may judge the concrete conditions and practices of Christian life by the light of revelation.

This task of catechesis, not an easy one, must be carried out under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, whose duty it is to safeguard the truth of the divine message, and to watch that the ministry of the word uses appropriate forms of speaking, and prudently considers the help which theological research and the human sciences can give.

#### THE CONTENT OF CATECHESIS FORMS A CERTAIN ORGANIC AND LIVING BODY

**39** The object of faith embraces a content which of its very nature is complex, namely, God in his own mystery and in his saving intervention in history. All these things are known through what God himself has revealed about himself and about his works. Christ has central importance both in the salvific intervention of God and in the manifestation of him to men. Catechesis, therefore, has as object God's mystery and works, namely, the works that God has done, is doing, and will do for us men and for our salvation.

A catechesis that neglects this interrelation and harmony of

its content can become entirely useless for achieving its proper end.

### CHRISTOCENTRISM OF CATECHESIS

**40** Christ Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, since he is the supreme reason why God intervenes in the world and manifests himself to men, is the center of the Gospel message within salvation history.

He is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. In him everything . . . was created" (Col. 1, 15). For he stands out as the one mighty mediator through whom God draws near to man and man is led to God (cf. 1 Tim. 2, 5). In him the Church has its foundation. In him all things are brought together (cf. Eph. 1, 10). For this reason, created things and the conscience of men and the genuine values which are found in other religions and the diverse signs of the times are all to be thought of, though not univocally, as paths and steps by which it is possible to draw near to God, under the influence of grace and with an ordering to the Church of Christ (cf. LG, 16).

Hence catechesis must necessarily be Christocentric.

### TRINITARIAN THEOCENTRISM OF CATECHESIS

**41** Just as Christ is the center of the history of salvation, so the mystery of God is the center from which this history takes its origin and to which it is ordered as to its last end. The crucified and risen Christ leads men to the Father by sending the Holy Spirit upon the People of God. For this reason the structure of the whole content of catechesis must be theocentric and trinitarian: through Christ, to the Father, in the Spirit.

*Through Christ:* The entire economy of salvation receives its meaning from the incarnate Word. It prepared his coming; it manifests and extends his kingdom on earth from the time of his death and resurrection up to his second glorious coming, which will complete the work of God. So it is that the mystery of Christ illumines the whole content of catechesis. The diverse elements—biblical, evangelical, ecclesial, human, and even cosmic—which catechetical education must take up and expound are all to be referred to the incarnate Son of God.

*To the Father:* The supreme purpose of the incarnation of the Word and of the whole economy of salvation consists in this: that all men be led to the Father. Catechesis, therefore, since it must help to an ever-deeper understanding of this plan of love of the heavenly Father, must take care to show that the supreme meaning of human life is this: to acknowledge God and to glorify him by doing his will, as Christ taught us by his words and the example of his life, and thus to come to eternal life.

*In the Spirit:* The knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the way to the Father are realized in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, catechesis, when expounding the content of the Christian message, must always put in clear light this presence of the Holy Spirit, by which men are continually moved to have communion with God and men and to fulfill their duties.

If catechesis lacks these three elements or neglects their close relationship, the Christian message can certainly lose its proper character.

#### FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION

**42** The theocentric-trinitarian purpose of the economy of salvation cannot be separated from its objective, which is this: that men, set free from sin and its consequences, should be made as much like Christ as possible (cf. LG, 39). As the incarnation of the Word, so every revealed truth is for us men and for our salvation. To view the diverse Christian truths in their relation to the ultimate end of man is one of the conditions needed for a most fruitful understanding of them (cf. First Vatican Council, Dogm. Const. *Dei Filius*, Dz.-Sch., 3016).

Catechesis must, then, show clearly the very close connection of the mystery of God and Christ with man's existence and his ultimate end. This method in no way implies any contempt for the earthly goals which men are divinely called to pursue by individual or common efforts; it does, however, clearly teach that man's ultimate end is not confined to these temporal goals, but rather surpasses them beyond all expectation, to a degree that only God's love for men could make possible.

#### HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS TO BE OBSERVED IN CATECHESIS

**43** In the message of salvation there is a certain hierarchy of

truths (cf. UR, 11), which the Church has always recognized when it composed creeds or summaries of the truths of faith. This hierarchy does not mean that some truths pertain to faith itself less than others, but rather that some truths are based on others as of a higher priority, and are illumined by them.

On all levels catechesis should take account of this hierarchy of the truths of faith.

These truths may be grouped under four basic heads: the mystery of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Creator of all things; the mystery of Christ the incarnate Word, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation; the mystery of the Holy Spirit, who is present in the Church, sanctifying it and guiding it until the glorious coming of Christ, our Savior and Judge; and the mystery of the Church, which is Christ's Mystical Body, in which the Virgin Mary holds the preeminent place.

#### HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION

**44** The economy of salvation is being worked out in time: in time past it began, made progress, and in Christ reached its highest point; in the present time it displays its force and awaits its consummation in the future. Hence in the exposition of the content of catechesis, memory of the past, awareness of the present, and hope of the future life ought to be evident by all means.

Therefore, catechesis recalls the supreme event of the whole history of salvation, the event with which Christians are united by faith, namely, the incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Moreover, catechesis enables the faithful to recognize how the saving mystery of Christ works today and throughout the ages through the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Church, and leads them to understand their duties toward God, themselves, and their neighbors.

Finally, catechesis rightly disposes hearts to hope in the future life that is the consummation of the whole history of salvation. Towards this goal Christians ought to tend with filial confidence, but not without a holy fear of divine judgment.

Through this hope the Christian community is deeply filled with an inner eschatological expectation which enables it to think correctly about human and earthly goods by keeping them in proper perspective, while not despising them as worthless.

These three main viewpoints are to be kept in mind continuously and practically in the exposition of the content of catechesis.

## SOURCES OF CATECHESIS

**45** The content of catechesis is found in God's word, written or handed down; it is more deeply understood and developed by the people exercising their faith under the guidance of the Magisterium, which alone teaches authentically; it is celebrated in the liturgy; it shines forth in the life of the Church, especially in the just and in the saints; and in some way it is known too from those genuine moral values which, by divine providence, are found in human society.

Catechesis has all these as its sources. These sources are either principal or subsidiary, and so they are by no means all to be taken as sources in exactly the same sense. In using them, the catechist must first and always look to the unquestionable pre-eminence of revelation, written or handed down, and to the authority of the Magisterium of the Church in matters connected with faith.

Moreover, in regard to any particular part of the content of faith that is to be explained, the catechist should carefully note how the mystery of Christ is the center of that part; how the Church interprets and defines that part, and how she celebrates it and puts it into practice, sharing it in her liturgy and in the practice of the Christian life. Finally, the catechist must consider how, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the plan of God can be fulfilled in the present era.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CATECHETICAL METHODOLOGY

**46** The norms pointed out above, about the exposition of the content of catechesis, must be applied in the various forms of catechesis, that is to say, in biblical and liturgical catechesis, in



doctrinal summaries, in the interpretation of the conditions of human existence, and so on.

It is not possible, however, to deduce from those norms an order which must be followed in the exposition of the content. It is right to begin with God and proceed to Christ, or to do the reverse; similarly, it is permissible to begin with man and proceed to God, or to do the reverse; and so on. In selecting a pedagogical method, one ought to take into account the circumstances in which the ecclesial community or the individuals among the faithful to whom the catechesis is directed live. From this there arises the need to use great diligence in looking into and finding ways and methods which better respond to the various circumstances.

The Conferences of Bishops have the task of giving more specific norms in this matter and of applying them by means of catechetical directories, of catechisms for various age levels and cultural conditions, and of the other helps that seem appropriate for the task (cf. below, Part Six).

## Chapter II

### The More Outstanding Elements of The Christian Message

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE ONE GOD: FATHER, SON, HOLY SPIRIT

**47** The history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the plan by which God, true and one, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men, and reconciles and unites with himself those turned away from sin.

The Old Testament, while clearly affirming the unity of God in a polytheistic world, already gives some foreshadowings of the mystery of the Trinity. These are completely explicited, however, in the person, the works, and the words of Jesus Christ. Indeed, when he reveals himself as the Son of God, he at the same time reveals the Father and the Holy Spirit. An intimate knowledge of the true God imbues the whole mind of the Divine Teacher, and he shares it with his disciples, calling them to become sons of God, through the Gift of his filial Spirit, which he bestows on them (cf. John 1, 12; Rom. 8, 15).

In catechesis, therefore, the meeting with the Triune God occurs first and foremost when the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are acknowledged as the authors of the plan of salvation that has its culmination in the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, n. 6, *Sources chretiennes*, 62, pp. 39 ff.). In this way the growing awareness of the faithful responds to the revelation of the mystery transmitted by the Church; for the faithful understand through faith that their life, beginning at baptism, consists in acquiring a more intimate familiarity with the three divine Persons, inasmuch as the faithful are called to share in their divine nature. Finally, Christians, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, can already now contemplate with eyes of faith and cherish with filial love the Most Holy Trinity of Persons, as it is from eternity in God's intimate life.

## GENUINE WORSHIP OF GOD IN A SECULARIZED WORLD

**48** "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1, 3) is "the living God" (Matt. 16, 16). He is a holy, just, and merciful God; He is God the author of the covenant with men; God who sees, frees, and saves; God who loves as a father, as a spouse. Catechesis joyfully proclaims this God who is the source of our every hope (cf. 1 Pet. 1, 3-4).

Catechesis, however, cannot ignore the fact that not a few men of our era strongly sense a remoteness and even absence of God. This fact, which is part of the process of secularization, surely constitutes a danger for the faith; but it also impels us to have a purer faith and to become more humble in the presence of the mystery of God, as we ought: "Truly you are a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Savior" (Isa. 45, 15). With this perspective, it is possible also to understand more easily the true nature of the worship which God demands and which glorifies him, a worship, that is, which includes a resolve to fulfill his will in every field of activity, and faithfully to increase in charity the talents given by the Lord (cf. Matt. 25, 14 ff.). In the sacred liturgy the faithful bring the fruits of every kind of act of charity, of justice, of peace, in order to make a humble offering of them to God, and to receive in return the words of life and the graces they need to enable them in the world to profess the truth in love (cf. Eph. 4, 15) in communion with Christ, who offers his Body and Blood for men.

## KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND THE WITNESS OF CHARITY

**49** The greatest way the faithful can help the atheistic world for coming to God is by the witness of a life which agrees with the message of Christ's love and of a living and mature faith that is manifested by works of justice and charity (cf. GS, 21).

However, the right use of human reason may not be neglected; for, as the Church holds and teaches, from created things this reason can come to a knowledge of God as the beginning and the end of all things (cf. First Vatican Council, Dogm. Const. *Dei Filius*, Dz.-Sch., 3004-3005, 3026). This knowledge of God not only does no harm to human dignity, but rather gives it a basis and strength.

Though the eternal salvation of men is the objective of the Church, nevertheless faith in the living God carries with it the urgent duty of collaborating in the solution of human questions (cf. 1 John 4, 20-21). In this area the faithful must give witness by their works to the value of the Lord's message.

#### JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION AND SAVIOR

**50** The greatest of God's works is the incarnation of his Son, Jesus Christ. Being the Firstborn of all creation, he is before all and all things hold together in him (cf. Col. 1, 15-17). All things have been created in him, through him, and for him (cf. Col. 1, 15 ff.).

Having become obedient unto death, he was exalted as Lord of all things, and was manifested to us through his resurrection as God's Son in power (cf. Rom. 1, 4). Being the Firstborn of the dead, he gives life to all (cf. 1, Cor. 15, 22): in him we were created new men (cf. Eph. 2, 10); through him all creatures will be liberated from the slavery of corruption (cf. Rom. 8, 19-21). "There is no salvation in anyone else" (Acts 4, 12).

#### CREATION, THE BEGINNING OF THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

**51** The entire world created out of nothing is the world in which salvation and redemption are in fact accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Already in the Old Testament the truth of God's creative action is not presented as an abstract philosophical principle; rather, it enters the minds of the Israelites, with the help of a notion of the oneness of God, as a message declaring the power and victory of Yahweh, as the basis for showing that the Lord remains always with his people (cf. Isa. 40, 27-28; 51, 9-13). The omnipotence of God the Creator is also manifested in a splendid way in Christ's resurrection, wherein is revealed "the immeasurable scope of his power" (Eph. 1, 19).

For this reason the truth of creation is not to be presented simply as a truth standing by itself, torn from the rest, but as something which is in fact ordered to the salvation wrought by

Jesus Christ. The creation of visible and invisible things, of the world and of angels, is the beginning of the mystery of salvation (cf. DV, 3); the creation of man (cf. Pius XII, *Encycl. Humani generis*, AAS, 1950, p. 575; GS, 12, 14) is to be regarded as the first gift and the first call that leads to glorification in Christ (cf. Rom. 8, 29-30). When a Christian hears the explanation of the doctrine about creation, besides thinking about the first act whereby God "created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1, 1), he should turn his mind to all the salvific undertakings of God. These things are always present in the history of man and of the world; they also shine forth especially in the history of Israel; they lead to the supreme event of Christ's resurrection; and, finally, they will be brought to completion at the end of the world, when there will be "new heavens and a new earth" (cf. 2 Pet. 3, 13).

#### JESUS CHRIST, THE CENTER OF THE ENTIRE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

**52** A Christian recognizes that in Jesus Christ he is linked with all of history and is in communion with all men. The history of salvation is being accomplished in the midst of the history of the world. By this history of salvation God fulfills his plan, and thus the People of God, that is, "the whole Christ," is being perfected in time. The Christian acknowledges with simplicity and sincerity that he has a role in such work, which through the power of Jesus the Savior is aimed at having creation give the greatest possible glory to God (cf. 1 Cor. 15, 28).

#### JESUS CHRIST, TRUE MAN AND TRUE GOD IN THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE PERSON

**53** This great mystery, namely, Christ as Head and Lord of the universe, "has been manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3, 16) to men. The man, Jesus Christ, who dwelt among men—the one who as man worked with his hands, thought with a human mind, acted with a human will, loved with a human heart—he is truly the Word and the Son of God, who through the incarnation in a certain way joined himself with every single man (GS, 22).

Catechesis must proclaim Jesus in his concrete existence and in his message, that is, it must open the way for men to the wonderful perfection of his humanity in such a way that they will be

able to acknowledge the mystery of his divinity. Christ Jesus, for a fact, who was united with the Father in a constant and unique practice of prayer, always lived in close communion with men. By his goodness he embraced all men, the just and the sinners, the poor and the rich, fellow-citizens and foreigners. If he loved some more particularly than others, this predilection was showered on the sick, the poor, the lowly. For the human person he had a reverence and a solicitude such as no one before him had ever manifested.

Catechesis ought daily to defend and strengthen belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, in order that he may be accepted not merely for his admirable human life, but that men might recognize him through his words and signs as God's only-begotten Son (cf. John 1, 18), "God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father" (Dz.-Sch. 150). The correct explanation of the mystery of the Incarnation developed in Christian tradition: through a diligent understanding of the faith, the Fathers and the Councils made efforts to determine more precisely the concepts, to explain more profoundly the peculiar nature of Christ's mystery, to investigate the hidden connections that bind him to his heavenly Father and to men. Besides, there was the witness of the Christian life about this truth—a witness that the Church presented throughout the centuries: that God's communion with men, which is had in Christ, is the source of joy and inexhaustible hope. In Christ there is all fullness of divinity; through him God's love for men is shown forth.

St. Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians: "There is only one physician, both in body and in spirit, born and unborn, God become man, true life in death; sprung both from Mary and from God, first incapable of suffering and then capable of it, Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Enchiridion patristicum*, 39).

## JESUS CHRIST, SAVIOR AND REDEEMER OF THE WORLD

**54** The mystery of Christ appears in the history of men and of the world—a history subject to sin—not only as the mystery of the incarnation but also as the mystery of salvation and redemption.

God so loved sinners that he gave his Son, reconciling the world to himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5, 19). Jesus therefore as the Firstborn among many brethren (cf. Rom. 8, 29), holy, innocent, undefiled (cf. Heb. 7, 26), being obedient to his Father freely and out of filial love (cf. Phil. 2, 8), on behalf of his brethren, sinners that they were, and as their Mediator, accepted the death which is for them the wages of sin (cf. Rom. 6, 23; GS, 18). By this his most holy death he redeemed mankind from the slavery of sin and of the devil, and he poured out on it the spirit of adoption, thus creating in himself a new humanity.

#### THE SACRAMENTS, ACTIONS OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH, THE PRIMORDIAL SACRAMENT

**55** The mystery of Christ is continued in the Church, which always enjoys his presence and ministers to him. This is done in a specific way through the signs that Christ instituted, which signify the gift of grace and produce it, and are properly called sacraments (cf. Council of Trent, *Decree on the Sacraments*, Dz.-Sch., 1601).

The Church herself, however, is in some way to be considered the primordial sacrament, since she is not only the People of God but also in Christ a kind of "sign and instrument of the intimate union with God, and of the unity of the entire human race" (LG, 1).

Sacraments are the principal and fundamental actions whereby Jesus Christ unceasingly bestows his Spirit on the faithful, thus making them the holy people which offers itself, in him and with him, as an oblation acceptable to the Father. The sacraments are surely to be considered inestimable blessings of the Church. To her, then, belongs the power of administering them; and yet they are always to be referred to Christ, from whom they receive their efficacy. In reality, it is Christ who baptizes. It is not so much a man who celebrates the Eucharist as Christ himself; for he it is who offers himself in the sacrifice of the Mass by the ministry of the priests (cf. Council of Trent, *Decree on the Sacrifice of the Mass*, Dz.-Sch., 1743). The sacramental action is, in the first place, the action of Christ, and the ministers of the Church are as his instruments.

## FULL MEANING OF THE SACRAMENTS

**56** Catechesis will have the duty of presenting the seven sacraments according to their full meaning.

First, they must be presented as sacraments of faith. Of themselves they certainly express the efficacious will of Christ the Savior; but men, on their part, must show a sincere will to respond to God's love and mercy. Hence, catechesis must concern itself with the acquisition of the proper dispositions, with the stimulation of sincerity and generosity for a worthy reception of the sacraments.

Second, the sacraments must be presented, each according to its own nature and end, not only as remedies for sin and its consequences, but especially as sources of grace in individuals and in communities, so that the entire dispensation of grace in the life of the faithful may be related in some way to the sacramental economy.

## CATECHESIS ON THE SACRAMENTS

**57** Baptism cleanses man from original sin and from all personal sins, gives him rebirth as a child of God, incorporates him into the Church, sanctifies him with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and, impressing on his soul an indelible character, initiates him in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles (cf. 1 Pet. 2, 9; LG, 31).

Confirmation binds the Christian more perfectly to the Church and enriches him with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, that he may live in the world as a witness of Christ.

Since the life of Christians, which on earth is a warfare, is liable to temptations and sins, the way of the sacrament of Penance is open for them, so that they may obtain pardon from the merciful God and reconcile themselves with the Church.

Holy Orders in a special way conforms certain members of the People of God to Christ the Mediator by conferring on them a sacred power, that they may shepherd the Church, nourish the faithful with the word of God, and make them holy, and, in the first place, that they, representing Christ's person, may offer the Sacrifice of the Mass and preside at the Eucharistic banquet.



“By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of her priests, the whole Church commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that He may lighten their sufferings and save them” (LG, 11; cf. James 5, 14-16).

In catechesis on the sacraments, much importance should be placed on the explanation of the signs. Catechesis should lead the faithful through the visible signs to ponder God’s invisible mysteries of salvation.

## THE EUCHARIST, CENTER OF THE ENTIRE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

**58** The primacy of the Eucharist over all the other sacraments is unquestionable, as is also its supreme efficacy in building up the Church (cf. LG 11, 17; Instruction, *Eucharisticum mysterium*, nn. 5-15).

For in the Eucharist, when the words of consecration have been pronounced, the profound (not the phenomenal) reality of bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ, and this wonderful change has in the Church come to be called “transubstantiation.” Accordingly, under the appearances (that is, the phenomenal reality) of the bread and wine, the humanity of Christ, not only by its power but by itself (that is, substantially), united with his divine Person, lies hidden in an altogether mysterious way (cf. Paul VI, Encycl. *Mysterium fidei*, AAS, 1965, p. 766).

This sacrifice is not merely a rite commemorating a past sacrifice. For in it Christ by the ministry of the priests perpetuates the sacrifice of the Cross in an unbloody manner through the course of the centuries (cf. SC, 47). In it too he nourishes the faithful with himself, the Bread of Life, in order that, filled with love of God and neighbor, they may become more and more a people acceptable to God.

Having been nourished with the Victim of the sacrifice of the Cross, the faithful should by a genuine and active love remove the prejudices because of which they are at times accused of a sterile worship that keeps them from being brotherly and from cooperating with other people. By its nature the Eucharistic banquet is meant to help the faithful to unite their hearts with God more

each day in frequent prayer, and thence to acknowledge and love other men as brothers of Christ and sons of God the Father.

## THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

**59** In our days, with the pre-eminence that the Christian message ascribes to consecrated virginity being preserved (cf. 1 Cor. 7, 38; Council of Trent, *Canons on the Sacrament of Matrimony*, Dz.-Sch. 1810), a special importance must be assigned to religious education on matrimony, which the Creator himself instituted and endowed with various blessings, purposes, and laws (cf. GS, 48).

Supported by the words of faith and by the natural law, under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, which is responsible for authoritative interpretation of both the moral and the natural law (cf. Paul VI, Encycl. *Humanae vitae*, n. 14, AAS, 1968, p. 483), and at the same time taking due account of contemporary advances in the anthropological sciences, catechesis must make matrimony the foundation of family life, with regard to its values and its divine law of unity and indissolubility, and with regard to its duties of love, which by its natural character has been ordered towards the procreation and education of offspring. In regulating procreation, conjugal chastity must be preserved in accord with the teaching of the Church (cf. Encycl. *Humanae vitae*, n. 4, AAS, 1968, p. 490).

Since Christ elevated matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament for the baptized, the spouses, who are the ministers of the sacrament when they give personal and irrevocable consent, living in Christ's grace imitate and in a certain way represent the love of Christ himself for his Church (cf. Eph. 5, 25). Christian spouses are strengthened and as it were consecrated by this special sacrament for fulfilling the duties of their state and for upholding its dignity (cf. GS, 48).

Finally, it is part of the family's vocation to become a community, one which is also open to the Church and to the world.

## THE NEW MAN

**60** When man accepts the Spirit of Christ, he establishes a way of life that is totally new and gratuitous.

The Holy Spirit, present in the soul of the Christian, makes him a partaker of the divine nature and intimately unites him to

the Father and Christ in a communion of life which not even death can break (cf. John 14, 23). The Holy Spirit heals man of his spiritual weaknesses and infirmities, frees him from the slavery of his passions and of immoderate self-love, by giving him power to keep the divine law, strengthens him with hope and fortitude, enlightens him in the pursuit of the good, and infuses in him the fruits of charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, longanimity, humility, fidelity, modesty, continence, and chastity (cf. Gal. 5, 22-23). This is why the Holy Spirit is invoked as the guest of the soul.

Justification from sin and God's indwelling in the soul are a grace. When we say a sinner is justified by God, is given life by the Holy Spirit, possesses in himself Christ's life, or has grace, we are using expressions which in different words mean one and the same thing, namely, dying to sin, becoming partakers of the divinity of the Son through the Spirit of adoption, and entering into an intimate communion with the Most Holy Trinity.

The man belonging to the history of salvation is the man ordered to the grace of filial adoption and to eternal life. Christian anthropology finds its own proper character in the grace of Christ the Savior.

## HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

**61** The divine call of man requires him to give a free response in Jesus Christ.

It is not possible for man to be unfree. It is also very much part of his dignity and duty, since he has dominion over his actions, to keep the moral law in the order of nature and in the order of grace, and thus to adhere closely to God who revealed himself in Christ. The freedom of fallen man has been so weakened that he would be unable for long to observe even the duties of the natural law without the help of God's grace; but, when he has received grace, his freedom is so elevated and strengthened that the life he lives in the flesh, he is able to live holily in the faith of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal. 2, 20).

The Church has a duty to defend and promote a true sense of freedom and its right use against every kind of unjust force. She also protects freedom against those who deny it, who think

man's activity is wholly dependent on psychological determinism and on economic, social, cultural, and such other conditions.

The Church is by no means unaware that freedom, even when assisted by divine grace, is liable to grave psychological difficulties and to the influence of external conditions in which each one lives, with the result that human responsibility is not rarely diminished, and indeed in some cases is barely preserved, and in some cases it is not preserved at all. The Church likewise takes note of the researches and modern progress in the anthropological sciences concerning the use and limits of human freedom. For this reason she is solicitous both to educate for and to foster genuine freedom, and also to bring about suitable conditions in the psychological, social, economic, political, and religious fields, so that freedom will be able to be truly and justly exercised. Christians, therefore, must work sedulously and sincerely in the temporal sphere, so that as far as possible the best conditions may be established for the right exercise of freedom. They have this duty, of course, in common with all men of good will; yet Christians know they are bound to the same duty because of a more important and more urgent reason. For here it is question not only of promoting a good that belongs to this life on earth, but also of a duty which ultimately serves the acquisition of the inestimable good of grace and of eternal salvation.

## SIN OF MAN

**62** Nevertheless, the conditions of history and of life are not to be considered the main impediment to human freedom. When man freely applies himself to the work of salvation, he finds sin the greatest obstacle.

“Although he was made by God in a state of holiness, from the very dawn of history man abused his liberty, at the urging of the Evil One. Man set himself against God and sought to find fulfillment apart from God” (GS, 13). “Through one man sin entered the world, and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned” (Rom. 5, 12). “It is human nature so fallen, stripped of the grace that clothed it, injured in its own natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death, that is transmitted to all men, and it is in this sense that every man is born in sin” (Paul VI, *Professio fidei*, n. 16, AAS, 1968, p. 439).

The multitude of sins, then, has become a sorrowful experience for mankind, and it is also the cause of manifold sorrows and ruin. One must not neglect the teaching on the nature and effects of personal sins, whereby man, acting knowingly and deliberately, by his act violates the moral law, and in a serious matter also seriously offends God.

The history of salvation is also the history of liberation from sin. Every intervention of God both in the Old and in the New Testament was to give guidance to men in the struggle against the forces of sin. The role entrusted to Christ in the history of salvation relates to the destruction of sin, and is fulfilled through the mystery of the cross. The profound reflections found in St. Paul (cf. Rom. 5) concerning the reality of sin and Christ's consequent "work of justice" must be numbered among the principal points of the Christian faith, and it is not right to pass over them in silence in catechesis.

But the salvation brought by Jesus Christ involves much more than redemption from sin. For it fulfills the plan begun by God that he would communicate himself in Jesus with such fullness that it utterly transcends human understanding. The plan in question does not come to an end because of men's transgressions, but it confers a grace that is superabundant compared to the death which sin brought (cf. Rom. 5, 15-17). This plan, which has proceeded from love, by virtue of which men are called by the Holy Spirit to share in divine life itself, is always in force and belongs to all times. Even though man is a sinner, he always remains in the one order which God willed, namely, in the order in which God mercifully shares himself with us in Jesus Christ, and man can, therefore, under the impulse of grace, attain salvation through repentance.

## MORAL LIFE OF CHRISTIANS

**63** Christ commissioned his apostles to teach the observance of everything that he had commanded (cf. Matt. 28, 20). Catechesis, therefore, must include not only those things which are to be believed, but also those things which are to be done.

The moral life of Christians, which is a way of acting that is worthy of a man and an adopted son of God, is a response to the

duty of living and growing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the new life communicated through Jesus Christ.

The moral life of Christians is guided by the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit. "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5, 5).

The docility with which the Holy Spirit must be obeyed entails a faithful observance of the commandments of God, the laws of the Church, and just civil laws.

Christian freedom still needs to be ruled and directed in the concrete circumstances of human life. Accordingly, the conscience of the faithful, even when informed by the virtue of prudence, must be subject to the Magisterium of the Church, whose duty it is to explain the whole moral law authoritatively, in order that it may rightly and correctly express the objective moral order.

Further, the conscience itself of Christians must be taught that there are norms which are absolute, that is, which bind in every case and on all people. That is why the saints confessed Christ through the practice of heroic virtues; indeed, the martyrs suffered even torture and death rather than deny Christ.

## THE PERFECTION OF CHARITY

**64** The action of the Spirit of Christ is made clear when the peculiar characteristic of Christian moral teaching is brought to light; all precepts and counsels of this moral teaching are summarized in faith working through charity (cf. Gal. 5, 6), and this is as it were its soul.

Man is called to adhere freely to the will of God in all things; this is "the obedience of faith by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God" (DV, 5). However, since God is love, and his plan calls for communicating his love in Jesus Christ and for uniting men in mutual love, it follows that adhering freely and perfectly to God and to his will is the same as following a way of life in which love reigns in the keeping of the commandments; in other words, it is identical with embracing and putting into practice the precept of charity as a new precept.

Man, therefore, is called to embrace, in faith, a life of charity toward God and other men; in this lies his greatest responsibility and his exalted moral dignity. The holiness of a man, whatever his vocation or state of life may be, is nothing other than the perfection of charity (cf. LG, 39-42).

## THE CHURCH, PEOPLE OF GOD AND SAVING INSTITUTION

**65** The Church, instituted by Christ, had its origin in his death and resurrection. She is the new People of God, prepared for in the course of the history of Israel; a people to which Christ gives life and growth through the outpouring of the Spirit, and which he perpetually renews and directs by his hierarchical and charismatic gifts; "a people made one with the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (LG, 4).

The Church, therefore, inasmuch as she is the People of God, the society of the faithful, and the communion of men in Christ, is the work of God's saving love in Christ.

And the principles which give birth to Christians, form them, and establish them as a community (namely, the deposit of faith, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministries) are found in the Catholic Church. To her they have been entrusted, and from them spring the ecclesial activities. In other words, in the Church there are all the means necessary for assembling herself and guiding herself to maturity as the communion of men in Christ. This work is the fruit not only of the action of a transcendent God, and of the invisible working of Christ and of his Spirit, but also of the institutions, offices, and saving actions of the Church. The Church, therefore, besides being a society of the faithful, is also mother of the faithful because of her ministerial and salutary work.

The Church is the holy People of God which shares in the prophetic office of Christ (cf. LG, 12). Assembled by the word of God, it accepts it and gives witness to it throughout the world. She is a priestly people: "Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men, 'made a kingdom and priests to God his Father' (Apoc. 1, 6) out of this new people. The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated into a

spiritual house and a holy priesthood. Thus through all those works befitting Christian men they can offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light" (LG, 10). The Church, however, is essentially a hierarchical society; it is a people guided by its Shepherds, who are in union with the Supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ, and who are under his direction (cf. LG, 22). To them the faithful look with filial love and obedient homage. The Church is a people on pilgrimage toward fullness of the mystery of Christ.

The Holy Spirit's presence in the Church, on the one hand, safeguards in her, in an indefectible manner, the objective conditions required for her sanctifying meeting with Christ; on the other hand, the Holy Spirit's presence brings it about that the Church strives for continual purification and renewal in her members, and for the sake of her members, and in her changeable structures.

## THE CHURCH AS COMMUNION

**66** The Church is a communion. She herself acquired a fuller awareness of that truth in the Second Vatican Council.

The Church is a people assembled by God and united by close spiritual bonds. Her structure needs a diversity of gifts and offices; and yet the distinctions within her, though they can be not only of degree but also of essence, as is the case between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the people, by no means takes away the basic and essential equality of persons. "The chosen People of God is one: 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Eph. 4, 5). As members, they share a common dignity from their rebirth in Christ. They have the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection. They possess in common one salvation, one hope, and one undivided charity. . . . And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, dispensers of mysteries, and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ" (LG, 32).

In the Church, therefore, every vocation is worthy of honor and is a call to the fullness of love, that is, to holiness; every



person is endowed with his own supernatural excellence, and must be given respect. All gifts and charisms, even though some are objectively more excellent than others (cf. 1 Cor. 12, 31; 7, 38), work together for the good of all members by means of the provident multiplicity of forms, which the apostolic office must discover and coordinate (cf. LG, 12). This holds also for all particular churches individually; for in each one, though it be small and poor or living in dispersion, "Christ is present, and by his power the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is gathered together" (LG, 26).

The Catholic faithful ought to be solicitous for the separated Christians who do not live in full communion with the Catholic Church, by praying for them, communicating with them about Church matters, and taking the first steps toward them. First of all, however, each one according to his condition, should weigh sincerely and attentively the things in the Catholic family itself which ought to be renewed and achieved, in order that its life might bear a more faithful and clear witness to the doctrine and institutions handed down by Christ through the apostles (cf. UR, 4, 5).

#### THE CHURCH AS SAVING INSTITUTION

**67** The Church is not only a communion among brothers, whose head is Christ, but she manifests herself also as an institution to whom the universal saving mission has been entrusted. The People of God, established by Christ "as a communion of life, of charity, and of truth, is also used by him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (LG, 9).

For this reason the Church is shown by the Second Vatican Council as a reality that embraces all history, accepts all its different cultures and directs them to God; and by virtue of the action of Christ's Spirit is constituted "the universal sacrament of salvation." Likewise, she is shown as the Church that is engaged in dialogue with the world. Taking note of the signs of the times, she discovers what men are considering important and on what things she is in agreement with them. Moreover, she takes pains to be understood and recognized by the world, striving to divest herself of those external forms which seem less Gospel-like, and in which traces of eras already ended appear all too clearly.

The Church, of course, is not of this world, she is "inspired by no earthly ambition" (GS, 3) and she will be perfect only in heaven, on which she has her eyes fixed and toward which she is journeying. And yet she is connected with the world and its history. However, "the deep solicitude of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, for the needs of men, for their joys and hopes, their griefs and efforts, is nothing other than her great desire to be present to them, in order to illuminate them with the light of Christ and to gather them all in him, their only Savior. This solicitude can never mean that the Church conform herself to the things of this world, or that she lessen the ardor of her expectation of her Lord and of the eternal Kingdom" (Paul VI, *Professio fidei*, n. 27, AAS, 1968, p. 444).

#### MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, MOTHER AND MODEL OF THE CHURCH

**68** Mary is united in an ineffable manner with the Lord, being his Ever-Virgin Mother, who "occupies in the Holy Church the place which is highest after Christ and yet very close to us" (LG, 54).

The gift of Christ's Spirit is manifested in her in an altogether singular manner, because Mary is "full of grace" (Luke 1, 28), and is "a model of the Church" (LG, 63). In her, who was preserved from all stain of original sin, who was freely and fully faithful to the Lord, and who was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory, the Holy Spirit has fully manifested his gift. For she was completely conformed "to her Son, the Lord of lords, and the Conqueror of sin and death" (LG, 59). Because she is the Mother of God and "mother to us in the order of grace" (LG, 61), the type of the virginity and motherhood of the total Church (cf. LG, 63-65), and the sign of a secure hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God (cf. LG, 69), Mary "in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith," and she "summons the believers to her Son and to his sacrifice, and to love for the Father" (LG, 65). Therefore, the Church who honors the faithful and the saints who are already with the Lord and are interceding for us (LG, 49, 50), venerates in a most special way Christ's Mother, who is also her mother.

## FINAL COMMUNION WITH GOD

**69** In Christ Jesus and through his mystery, the faithful already in this earthly life hopefully await "our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body" (Phil. 3, 21; cf. 1 Cor. 15). The very last realities, however, will become manifest and perfect when and only when Christ comes with power, as Judge of the living and the dead, to bring history to its end and to hand over his people to the Father, so that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15, 24-28). Until "the Lord comes in his majesty, and all the angels with him, and until death is destroyed and all things are subject to him, some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth, some have finished this life and are being purified, and others are in glory, beholding clearly God himself three and one, as he is" (LG, 49).

On the day of the Lord's coming, the entire Church will reach her perfection and enter into the fullness of God. This is the very foundation of the hope and prayer of Christians ("Thy kingdom come"). Catechesis on the subject of the last things should, on the one hand, be taught under the aspect of consolation, of hope, and of salutary fear (cf. 1 Thess. 4, 18), of which modern men have such great need; on the other hand, it should be imparted in such a way that the whole truth can be seen. It is not right to minimize the grave responsibility which every one has regarding his future destiny. Catechesis can not pass over in silence the judgment after death of each man, or the expiatory punishments of Purgatory, or the sad and lamentable reality of eternal death, or the final judgment. On that day each man will fully arrive at his destiny, because all of us will be revealed "before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive the recompense, good or bad, according to his life in the body" (2 Cor. 5, 10), and "those who have done right shall rise to live; the evildoers shall rise to be damned" (John 5, 29; cf. LG, 48).

## PART FOUR

# ELEMENTS OF METHODOLOGY

### NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS PART

**70** Within our present century, catechists have thoroughly investigated questions raised by the psychological, educational, and pedagogical sciences. Indeed, studies have been undertaken with regard to the method to be used in the catechism lesson; the role of activity methods in the teaching of catechesis has been pointed out; the act of catechesis has been investigated in all its parts according to the principles which govern the art of teaching (experience, imagination, memory, intelligence); and finally, a differential methodology has been worked out, that is, a methodology which varies according to the age, social conditions, and degree of psychological maturity of those who are to be taught.

Not all problems of this sort are considered here; rather, here are set forth only certain points to which great importance is being attributed today. Attacking these problems in an appropriate and specific way in individual countries will be the task of the various directories and the other tools.

### FUNCTION OF THE CATECHIST

**71** No method, not even one much proved in use, frees the catechist from the personal task of assimilating and passing judgment on the concrete circumstances, and from some adjustment to them. For outstanding human and Christian qualities in the catechists will be able to do more to produce successes than will the methods selected.

The work of the catechist must be considered of greater importance than the selection of texts and other tools (cf. AG, 17).

The importance and magnitude of the work to be done by catechists does not prevent the necessary establishing of boundaries around the role of catechists. They are responsible for

choosing and creating suitable conditions which are necessary for the Christian message to be sought, accepted, and more profoundly investigated. This is the point to which the action of catechists extends—and there it stops. For adherence on the part of those to be taught is a fruit of grace and freedom, and does not ultimately depend on the catechist; and catechetical action, therefore, should be accompanied by prayer. That remark is self-evident, but it is nevertheless useful to recall it in present-day conditions, because today much is being demanded of the talent and of the genuine Christian spirit of the catechist, while at the same time he is being urged to have the greatest possible regard for the freedom and “creativity” of those to be taught.

## INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE METHODS

**72** The method called inductive offers great advantages.

It serves in the presentation of facts (such as biblical events, liturgical actions, the life of the Church, and daily life) and in the consideration and examination of those facts in order that in them may be recognized the meaning they have in the Christian mystery. This method is in harmony with the economy of revelation and with one of the fundamental processes of the human spirit, one that comes to grasp intelligible realities through visible things, and also with the particular characteristic of knowledge of the faith, that is, a knowing through signs.

The inductive method does not exclude the deductive, but rather even requires it. The deductive method is used in interpreting and explaining the facts by proceeding from their causes. The deductive synthesis usually manifests its full force, however, when the inductive process has already been carried out.

## FORMULATIONS

**73** The advantages of the inductive method, chief among which are the active exercise of the spiritual faculties and the constant reference to concrete things in the explanation of intellectual concepts, must in no way lead to a forgetting of the need for and the usefulness of formulas.

Formulas permit the thoughts of the mind to be expressed accurately, are appropriate for a correct exposition of the faith,

and, when committed to memory, help toward the firm possession of truth. Finally, they make it possible for a uniform way of speaking to be used among the faithful.

Formulas are generally presented and explained when the lesson or inquiry has reached the point of synthesis.

To be selected in preference to the others are those formulas which, while expressing faithfully the truth of the faith, are adapted to the capacity of the listeners. It must not be forgotten that dogmatic formulas are a true profession of Catholic doctrine, and are accordingly to be accepted as such by the faithful in the sense in which the Church has understood and does understand them (cf. First Vatican Council, Dogm. Const. *Dei Filius*, Dz.-Sch., n. 3020, 3043). The traditional formulas for professing the faith and for praying, such as the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the like, are to be taught with special care.

## EXPERIENCE

**74** a) Experience begets concerns and questionings, hopes and anxieties, reflections and judgments; these merge and there results a certain desire to steer the human way of life.

Therefore, catechesis should be concerned with making men attentive to their more significant experiences, both personal and social; it also has the duty of placing under the light of the Gospel the questions which arise from those experiences, so that there may be stimulated within men a right desire to transform their ways of life.

In this fashion, experience also makes men respond in an active way to the gift of God.

b) Experience can also help make the Christian message more intelligible.

Christ himself preached the kingdom of God by illustrating its nature with parables drawn from the experience of human life. He recalled to mind certain human situations (the merchant who carries on a good business, the servants who to a greater or lesser extent increase the talents given to them, and so forth) in order to explain eschatological and transcendent realities, and then to teach the way of life which these realities demand of us.

Thus it is that experience serves in the examination and acceptance of the truths which are contained in the deposit of revelation.

c) Experience, considered in itself, must be illumined by the light of revelation. By recalling to mind the action of God who works our salvation, catechesis should help men to explore, interpret, and judge their own experiences, and also to ascribe a Christian meaning to their own existence.

In this aspect, experience is as it were an object to be interpreted and illumined by the catechist. This task, even though it is not without its difficulties, must not be overlooked.

#### STIMULATING THE ACTIVITY OR CREATIVITY OF THOSE CATECHIZED

**75** All human education and all real communication require first of all that interior activity be made possible and be stimulated in the one to whom they are directed. In catechesis, therefore, one must stir up the activity of faith (of hope, too, and of charity); for correctness and vigor of judgment, which are to be stimulated by an active style of instruction, here help to bring about acceptance of the word of God. But the confidence which inspires active education should never lead one to forget that the act of faith necessarily involves a conversion of the one making it.

From what has been said it is evident that this active way of catechizing is in complete harmony with the economy of revelation and salvation. The pedagogical art which promotes an active response on the part of those to be catechized is in harmony with the general condition of the Christian life in which the faithful actively respond to God's gifts through prayers, through participation in the sacraments and the sacred liturgy, through acceptance of responsibilities in the Church and in social life, and through the practice of charity.

Those to be taught, especially if they are adults, can contribute in an active way to the progress of the catechesis. Thus, they should be asked how they understand the Christian message and how they can explain it in their own words. Then a comparison should be made between the results of that questioning and what is taught by the Magisterium of the Church, and only

those things which are in agreement with the faith should be approved. In this way powerful aids can be found to hand on effectively the one true Christian message.

## GROUPS

**76** In catechesis, the importance of the group is becoming greater and greater.

In the catechesis of children, the group helps to further their education for social life, both in the case of children who attend catechism classes together, and in the case of those brought together in a small number to engage in some activities.

For adolescents and young adults, the group must be considered a vital necessity. In a group, the adolescent or the young adult comes to know himself and finds support and stimulation.

In the case of adults, the group can today be considered a requisite for catechesis which aims at fostering a sense of Christian co-responsibility.

In groups which include adolescents or adults, catechesis takes on the character of a joint study.

Such joint study aims at exploring the mutual relationships and ties between the content of the Christian message, which is always the norm for believing and acting, and the experiences of the group.

The catechist should take part in the joint study, but in such a way as to maintain his particular place in the group. For in the name of the Church he acts as a witness of the Christian message, one who ministers to others, shares with them the fruits of his own mature faith, and wisely orders the joint study toward the accomplishment of its purpose.

This function of the witness of the message does not necessarily mean that the catechist must be set over the group as its director.

A group which has achieved a high degree of perfection in carrying out its task will be able to give its members not only an



occasion for religious education, but also an excellent experience of ecclesial life.

Catechesis performed in this way will be able to show the young that the Church is not at all something unrelated to their own existence, but is rather a great reality for which all, each in keeping with his own calling and service, have some responsibility.

# PART FIVE

## CATECHESIS ACCORDING TO AGE LEVELS

### NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS PART

**77** There are many methods and plans by which the Christian message is made to meet the various needs of men.

If missionary activity is considered, there is the method of evangelization, and of the initiation of catechumens and neophytes.

If the physical and spiritual development of those who are to be taught is considered, there is catechesis according to age levels.

If the sociological and cultural conditions in which men live are considered, there is catechesis suited to various mental outlooks (catechesis for workers, for technicians, and so on).

Finally, if the various stances which those who have been baptized can take towards the faith are considered, there is catechesis for believers who desire to obtain a fuller and more profound knowledge of the faith, and there is a catechesis for those who still lack the very basics of the faith.

Each of these methods, which are interconnected and interdependent, obviously has its own value and importance.

National or regional catechetical directories will have the task of providing specific and definite norms in this whole area, in accord with concrete local conditions and needs.

Here, for the sake of an example, are presented only some general principles of a catechesis adapted to various age levels, to show the force and importance of such a catechesis.

## INFANCY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

**78** The first roots of religious and moral life appear at the very beginning of human life. In the families of believers the first months and years of life, which are of the greatest importance for a man's balance in the years to come, can already provide the right conditions for developing a Christian personality. The baptism of infants takes on its full meaning when the Christian life of the parents, of the mother especially but not exclusively, makes it possible for the baptismal grace to produce its fruits. For the infant absorbs into himself, as though through an "osmosis" process, the manner of acting and the attitudes of the members of his family. And so it is that the immense number of his experiences will be, as it were, pressed together within him to form a foundation of that life of faith which will then gradually develop and manifest itself.

The right orientation of a trusting spirit depends at first on a good relationship between the infant and his mother, and then also on one between him and his father; it is nourished by sharing their joyfulness and by experiencing their loving authority. The theological virtues depend in part upon the growth of that healthy orientation for their own unimpeded development, and at the same time they tend to strengthen that orientation. At this time, too, there arises the affirmation of personality, or autonomy; this is needed for the acquisition of the moral virtues and for leading a life in community. It itself demands a balance between firmness and acceptance. Next, the capacity for spontaneous action can gradually develop; this will be most necessary for beginning social life as well as for promoting and strengthening the service of God and of the Church.

An education in prayer must accompany all these acquisitions, so that the little child may learn to call upon the God who loves us and protects us, and upon Jesus, the Son of God and our brother, who leads us to the Father, and upon the Holy Spirit, who dwells within our hearts; and so that this child may also direct confident prayers to Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our mother.

If these foundations are lacking, catechesis must determine whether there are any insufficiencies as a result, what they may be, and how they may be compensated. Suitable assistance on

the part of Christian parents must be supported by giving the parents an adequate formation. This formation must be given to them by competent educators, even though it is to be simple and adapted to the cultural level of the parents. This task of pastors is not supererogatory; for when parents are helped to perform their duties rightly, the Church is being built up. This also provides a splendid occasion for catechizing adults.

## CHILDHOOD AND ITS IMPORTANCE

**79** When the child goes to school he enters a society wider than that of his family, and he is initiated into the society of adults in an intensive way that absorbs a great part of his resources and concerns. He gets his first experience of working in school (cf. GE, 5).

Before this point, the family served a mediating role between the child and the People of God. But now the child is ready to begin sharing directly in the life of the Church, and can be admitted to the sacraments.

The child's intelligence develops gradually. Catechesis must be adapted to this mental development. The child seeks to understand the religious life of adults. Accordingly, the genuine Christian life of the adult community helps very much toward giving the children a solid formation, and it does this in a truly instructive way when it explains the religious life of adults and the activities of the People of God suitably in the light of salvation history.

The initial experience of working should not be thought unrelated to the aim of catechesis. The joy of doing things and doing them well, cooperation with others, discipline arising out of this as something easy to understand and reasonable—in all this one finds many experiences which are useful not only for sharing in social life but also for active participation in the life of the Church.

With these things in mind, catechetical pedagogy, whatever method it follows, should stimulate activity on the part of the children. If it should fail to do so, catechesis could not satisfy its obligation to teach the believer to give an ever more personal response to the word and the gift of God. This active pedagogy

should not be satisfied with external expressions only, however useful they may be, but it should strive to bring forth a response from the heart and a taste for prayer. This interior education is indeed rendered more difficult, but also more necessary, because of the character of contemporary civilization which tends to disperse spiritual energies.

Cooperation between catechists and parents (sharing with one another their opinions about programs, about methods, and about difficulties which arise) is necessary if the education of the children is to proceed in a suitable and harmonious way. This kind of cooperation is useful for both the catechists and the parents and helps them in carrying out their own specific duties.

#### CHILDREN WHO DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL

**80** There are also regions, even very large and sometimes heavily populated areas, in which there are not enough schools. Where this is so, earnest pastoral action should be directed to the families themselves, and, to the extent that it is possible, various associations should be set up to take care of the children. These associations should be set up in such a way that they can take account of the local circumstances and meet the spiritual needs of the children.

#### CHILDREN WHO GROW UP IN FAMILIES AFFECTED BY RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE

**81** The difficulty of giving catechesis to children living in families who do not practice their religion at all or do so in an entirely inadequate way is becoming more and more marked. Sometimes questions are raised about the very possibility and appropriateness of giving them a catechesis.

Catechesis is certainly not to be omitted for such children; rather, it is to be planned and carried out in a way that fits in with actual circumstances and conditions. In these cases there is need to establish contact with the families and to study their mental attitudes and styles of life, so that some means can be found to open a dialogue with them. It is also necessary that catechesis present its material in a way that really responds to the concrete possibilities of these children.

## ADOLESCENCE AND EARLY ADULTHOOD, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

**82** The period of adolescence and, in a larger sense, the so-called "phenomenon of youth" have very great importance (cf. AA, 12). In pre-industrial societies which have only a smaller number of schools, the transition from childhood to the adult community takes place as it were directly. In our time the custom is spreading more and more of extending the time of education in schools for adolescents. This custom creates in society a generation which is not immediately occupied with gainful labor, and which, though it already enjoys physical and intellectual vitality, is engaged in no activity other than study and preparation for a future profession. This social class has a great impact on adult society; and this creates no small problem.

This problem is also found in the Church, and although it takes different forms here, it is just as serious. Adolescents and young adults are less exposed to the danger of violently opposing the Church than they are to the temptation of leaving it. The fact that it is often difficult for adults to acknowledge that adolescents and young adults can contribute anything worthwhile is a further reason why this is a very serious problem in catechesis.

But the young will be less distrustful, the more the catechists show an ability to understand their roles and to accept them.

## PRE-ADOLESCENCE, ADOLESCENCE, AND EARLY ADULTHOOD, AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

**83** National directories should distinguish pre-adolescence, adolescence, and early adulthood.

Here it can only be pointed out that in sophisticated regions where the point is raised, the special difficulties of pre-adolescence are in practice not sufficiently nor always recognized. The educator can be tempted to treat pre-adolescents in the same way as children, and thus it is to be feared that he will not win their attention; or he can treat them as adolescents, and in that case give them themes and methods of working which presuppose a maturity of personality and of experience that they have not yet attained.

The age of pre-adolescence has as its peculiar note the troublesome beginning of concern with one's self. Hence it is important not to continue at this age the simple and objective kind of instruction which is appropriate for children; at the same time, however, one must be careful not to propose problems and themes that belong properly to adolescence.

A concrete type of instruction which would explain the lives and works of the Saints and of other outstanding persons, together with reflections on the actual life of the Church, could provide catechetical students of this age with wholesome nourishment.

The time of young adulthood, taken strictly, which follows adolescence, is also a period of life which has not yet been sufficiently studied and investigated, and its special characteristics are not yet sufficiently known.

Some think that theological instruction should begin at this age. Others believe that human and social questions should be presented for study, together with simple theological explanations and with certain encouragements to Christian behavior. The method that seems most desirable is that of treating fundamental problems and problems of most concern to this age with the serious, scholarly apparatus of the theological and human sciences, using at the same time a suitable group-discussion method.

## SEARCHING INTO THE MEANING OF LIFE

**84** The adolescent notices profound physical and psychological changes within himself. He is looking for his place in society. Although he is no longer content with the religious forms of his childhood, he has not yet reached the maturity of faith proper to an adult; and therefore he seeks a basic orientation by which he can unify his life anew. But this searching often leads to a religious crisis.

The principal task of catechesis in adolescence will be to further a genuinely Christian understanding of life. It must shed the light of the Christian message on the realities which have greater impact on the adolescent, such as the meaning of bodily existence, love and the family, the standards to be followed in life, work and leisure, justice and peace, and so on.

## FOCUSING ATTENTION ON GENUINE VALUES

**85** The adolescent makes an effort to direct the vision of his life and the course of his existence according to certain principal and primary values. Today, however, the adolescent feels himself immersed in "values" that are opposed to one another. This fact sharpens the conflict within the adolescent among the various values which he is in search of, and he persuades himself to reject those values which he does not find expressed in the way adults live.

Catechesis must help him more and more to discover genuine values and to put them in order.

## PERSONAL AUTONOMY

**86** In order to attain the autonomy which he very much desires, the adolescent often exaggerates his self-expression and at times finds fault with the pattern of life which he has received from adults.

Adults must realize that adolescents hold fast to the faith and strengthen themselves in it, not because of any identification with adults, but because of their own convictions as these are gradually explored.

From this kind of autonomy there arises what can be called a "temptation to naturalism," which makes adolescents tend to perform their actions and to seek their salvation by their own powers. The bolder the personality, the stronger will be an inclination of this sort.

It is, therefore, the task of catechesis to bring the adolescent to that personal maturity which will allow him to overcome subjectivism and to discover a new hope in the strength and the wisdom of God.

## GROUPS OF ADOLESCENTS

**87** In order to maintain their autonomy adolescents seek to form associations among themselves, so that they may be able to follow out more easily their own ideas and talents, and so that by means of groups they may protect their own autonomy from adult groups. Again within the orbit of these groups the adoles-



cent is urged on by various life values and is moved to live in accordance with them. In daily life practice adolescents communicate more easily with young people of their own age than with adults.

Catechesis has the task of working with these youth groups, which can serve to mediate between young people and the whole community of the Church (cf. AA, 12).

Youth groups do not always have positive values. For this reason there is an urgent need to promote relationships between them and Christian communities, so that the human and Christian values of the latter may be duly recognized and appreciated by the adolescents (cf. AA, 12).

## INTELLECTUAL DEMANDS

**88** The adolescent possesses essentially the "formal" use of reason. He is learning how the intellect is to be used rightly, and is discovering that the culture set before him demands reflection and must be actively applied in his own life.

If catechesis is to be able to awaken an experience of the life of faith, it simply cannot neglect the formation of a religious way of thinking which will show the connection of the mysteries with one another and with man's final end (cf. First Vatican Council, Dogm. Const. *Dei Filius*, c. IV, Dz.-Sch., 3015-3020). To make firm the inner coherence of this kind of religious thinking, witnessing is not enough. Today scientific strictness is demanded everywhere; hence catechesis must also provide the rational foundations for faith with the greatest care.

The intellectual building up of the faith of adolescents must by no means be considered as merely a kind of addition, but rather it should be counted as an essential need for the life of faith. The manner of teaching is of special importance. The catechist, in dialogue with the adolescent, must stimulate the mind of the adolescent.

## ACTION

**89** Action is necessary for the development of the adolescent's personality. Freedom from egocentrism and subjectivism de-

mands dealing with reality itself, whether with success or with failure.

Catechesis, which should encourage personal experience of faith and at the same time well-ordered reflection on religious matters, is brought to perfection when it leads to the fulfillment of religious duties. Christian catechesis should educate adolescents to assume the responsibilities of faith and gradually make them capable of upholding their Christian profession before all men.

#### ADOLESCENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL

**90** An immense number of young people who are engaged in the manual or professional skills are drawn into an accelerated development of their personality. This accelerated development of personality may turn out to be favorable or unfavorable, complete or incomplete.

It follows, then, that it is necessary to establish a special catechesis for such adolescents. This will have to consider the immediate problems of everyday life, support the young as they begin working and help them, in accordance with their individual capacities, to carry on their activity by working together with Catholic associations.

Moreover, since the special characteristics and needs of adolescents remain present in the young worker, it will be the task of catechesis not only to shed light on his concrete activity, but also to lead him to embrace the whole of God's plan.

#### CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS NOT ADJUSTED TO THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE

**91** The duty here cannot be considered one that is secondary or one that is taken care of elsewhere. Maladjusted children and adolescents make up no small part of the citizenry. The conditions of society today not infrequently make it difficult for young people to have a harmonious life development and to have a suitable adjustment to society.

Catechesis must provide for these young people the possibility of living a life of faith in accordance with their own state.

This is an eminently evangelical task and a witness of great value, which the Church has carried out in every age.

The education of these young people in the faith has a pastoral value, and indeed one of great importance, also because it offers the possibility of reaching very many families.

Finally, the peculiar difficulty in performing this task and the necessity of imparting to such young people only the essential elements can give catechesis in general the benefit of employing the methods and ways which pedagogical research discovers and makes available for the sake of these young people.

## ADULTHOOD

**92** This *General Directory* earnestly affirms the need of catechesis for adults, for these reasons:

a) The undertaking of tasks in social life, and the responsibilities of family, professional, civic, and political life demand of adults that they complete their Christian formation according to the norm of the word of God in a special and suitable way (cf. AA, 29-32). Cooperation should be promoted between those who catechize adults and those who take part in the various forms of the apostolate of the laity.

b) Aptitudes and capacities which reach their full development in adult life, such as the experience of life, maturity of personality, and so on, must be cultivated and illumined by the word of God.

c) The adult, moreover, must successfully pass through certain periods of life which are full of crises. Although these crises are less obvious than those experienced by adolescents, they are not to be considered less dangerous or less profound; in these times the adult's faith must be constantly illumined, developed, and fortified.

## DYNAMIC NOTES OF ADULTHOOD—FELLOWSHIP AND LONELINESS

**93** When a person arrives at adult age, he ordinarily becomes more capable of having fellowship with others and of establishing mutual relationships with them.

This capacity and the need for fellowship come into play within the framework of family duties and within the relationships of social life; and all these things serve at times to promote this fellowship and at times to hinder it.

As a matter of fact, people, especially in contemporary society, often experience too much loneliness.

Catechesis ought to show that God, who is love, is really the author of the community of faith, which is the Church, and at the same time it should enkindle a desire for entering into fellowship with every man. It reminds married couples that their intimate union is, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, a sign of the mystery of unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church, and that it shares in that mystery (cf. Eph. 5, 32).

Within the frame of small groups of the faithful, catechesis will help adults to live Christian charity to the full. Indeed, this charity, as the sign of a certain common experience, makes them be of assistance to one another in the faith.

## FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONALITY

**94** Adult age is distinguished chiefly by the awareness of having achieved a fully developed personality.

The man who has successfully passed through each stage of his development and who has been able to enter into fellowship with others and to exercise creative ability, tries, when he has reached adult age, to reduce to a unified whole all the experiences of his personal, social, and spiritual life. A danger lies in the fact that the adult, especially if he belongs to an industrial society, may think that he can obtain this unity merely by conforming himself to the society in which he lives. But the perfect attainment of personality does not consist in a merely exterior balance between personal life and its social context, but it looks especially toward the attainment of Christian wisdom.

For this reason catechesis must strive to lead man to observe the order of priority among ends, that is, to perceive more fully the meaning of life and death, in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ.

## OLD AGE

**95** The importance of old age is still not sufficiently recognized in the pastoral ministry.

In our times the number of the aged is increasing more and more. The aged are often neglected by contemporary society, however, and this fact must be carefully noted for its relevance to pastoral activity.

As a matter of fact, the aged can contribute no small benefit to the community both by their work, which is not always justly appreciated, and by the witness that flows from their experience.

Moreover, there is a duty in justice to help the aged by a catechesis that has reference to death, which biologically is near at hand, and socially is to some extent already present, since almost nothing is expected any more from their activity.

Catechesis should teach the aged to have supernatural hope, by virtue of which death is considered a crossing over to true life and as a meeting with the divine Savior. In this way old age can become a sign of the presence of God, of immortal life, and of the future resurrection. This will, indeed, be an eschatological witness that the aged can bear by their patience toward themselves and toward others, by their benevolence, by their prayers poured out in praise of God, by their spirit of poverty and the trust that they put in God.

Unquestionably, it would be a serious loss to the Church if the great number of the aged who have been baptized were not to show that their faith shines with a brighter light when death approaches.

## SPECIAL FORMS OF CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS

**96** There are conditions and circumstances that demand special forms of catechesis.

a) There is the catechesis of Christian initiation or the catechumenate for adults.

b) There is the catechesis for those who are involved in the lay apostolate in a special way. Clearly catechesis must provide for a deeper study of the Christian message in these cases.

c) There is a catechesis which is to be given on the occasion of the principal events of life, such as marriage, the baptism of one's children, first communion and confirmation, the more difficult periods of the children's education, one's illness, and so forth. These are times when people are moved more strongly than ever to seek the true meaning of life.

d) There is a catechesis which is to be given on the occasion of some change in the circumstances of one's life, as for example on the occasion of starting work, on entering military life, when migrating, or when changing one's profession or social status. These changes can indeed increase one's spiritual goods, but they can also disturb the spirit and snatch away hope. The Christian community has a duty to supply those who experience them with necessary helps in fraternal love. The word of God, which in these circumstances is sometimes more readily accepted, ought to be a light and an aid to them.

e) There is the catechesis which is concerned with a Christian use of leisure, and that which is to be given on the occasion of recreational traveling (cf. *Directorium Generale pro ministerio pastorali quoad "turismum,"* n. 19, 25).

f) There is the catechesis which is to be given on the occasion of special events touching the life of the Church or of society.

These special forms of catechesis in no way lessen the need for establishing catechetical cycles which are devoted to a systematic study of the entire Christian message. This organic and well-organized formation is certainly not to be reduced to a simple series of conferences or sermons.

## THE SPECIAL FUNCTIONS OF CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS

**97** So that it will always be able to respond to the more urgent demands of our time, a catechesis for adults should:

a) *Teach them to evaluate correctly, in the light of faith, the sociological and cultural changes in contemporary society.* The Christian people are becoming more and more aware of the necessity of examining where the contemporary development of society may be leading and of distinguishing between true blessings and the dangers of our present human civilization. They

desire help in evaluating the changes which are constantly taking place, and they want to be enlightened about the styles of behavior which they can and should make their own.

b) *Explain contemporary questions in religious and moral matters.* Catechesis must make its own the new questions which men of this age are asking themselves. For example, today great importance is attached to questions that deal with social relations. Man wishes to imprint a new form on the society in which he lives. Such attempts at renewal, in which the responsibilities and also the limits of man are clearly evident (cf. *Encycl. Populorum progressio*, AAS, 1967, pp. 257-299), simply cannot escape the interest of catechesis.

c) *Shed light on the relations between temporal action and ecclesial action.* Catechesis should educate Christians to perceive the mutual relations between temporal duties and ecclesial duties. Catechesis should make it clear that the performance of temporal duties can have a useful influence on the ecclesial community itself, when it makes it more aware of its transcendent goal and of its mission in the world, and that the performance of ecclesial duties serves in turn to benefit human society (cf. GS, 40-45).

d) *Develop the rational foundations of the faith.* The Church has always guarded the rational foundations of the faith against fideism. Catechesis must develop more and more a correct understanding of the faith, and thereby show that the act of faith and the truths which are to be believed are in conformity with the demands of human reason. Catechesis must show that the Gospel is always contemporary and always relevant. For this reason pastoral action must be promoted in the area of Christian doctrine and Christian culture.

## PART SIX

# PASTORAL ACTIVITY IN THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

### PASTORAL ACTION

**98** Those things which have been explained about the catechetical act and the content of catechesis provide the basis for a plan of pastoral action, the main points of which are treated in this part.

This pastoral action requires appropriate organs on the national level, to be set up by the Conferences of Bishops, for the purpose of planning or research and for administration. Generally these organs include: (a) an episcopal commission for catechesis on which work selected *ex officio* members and experts; and (b) a permanent executive structure (office, center, and so on).

So that with the aid of these organs the pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be carried out in an efficient and coordinated way, it is necessary that:

- 1) a report be prepared about the actual state of affairs and the place, and about what it is possible to achieve through the ministry of the word under those conditions;
- 2) a program of the action to be carried out be published;
- 3) attention be given to the formation and instruction of those who have responsibility in this matter;
- 4) appropriate aids for the work be rightly planned and made available;
- 5) organizational structures suitable for catechesis be promoted;
- 6) pastoral action in catechesis be coordinated with the other fields of pastoral work;



- 7) provision be made for research; and
- 8) international cooperation be encouraged.

The guides and suggestions presented in this part cannot be implemented always and all at the same time in all parts of the Church. In the case of countries or regions where catechetical action is not yet sufficiently advanced, the purpose of these suggestions and guides is to point out goals which are to be accomplished gradually.

# Chapter I

## Analysis of the Situation

### PURPOSE

**99** It is necessary that there be within a Conference a clear knowledge of the situation in which the ministry of the word is exercised.

The analysis aims at bringing out to what extent the Church's evangelical activity is attaining the goals that have been set for it. Careful study must be made of the way in which the ministry of the word is being practiced and of the results—to the extent that these can be ascertained by human knowledge—which have been obtained by catechesis or by other ways of presenting the Christian message. To be subjected to examination are the undertakings of the Church and how they have been received, where and by what persons, with what results, and so on.

### OBJECT

**100** The object of this investigation is multiple. Included are examination of pastoral action and analysis of the religious situation as well as of the sociological, cultural, and economic conditions, to the extent that these facts of collective life can greatly influence the success of evangelization.

### METHODS

**101** Since this work is rather arduous, it is necessary that two dangers be avoided, that is to say, one must guard against:

- a) considering principles and indications which have not been sufficiently tested and proved as though they were certain;
- b) demanding a degree of scientific accuracy so high that it cannot be attained.

It must also be rightly noted that technical research carried out by means of questionnaires or interviews is of little value

unless preceded by diligent consideration of the various forms of pastoral action that can be chosen. It seems necessary, then, for the Conferences of Bishops to have a complete picture of the situation. This can be obtained by consulting experts truly skilled in examining the evidence available and by drawing conclusions from pastoral action which has already been started. Monographs can be of very useful help in this regard.

The entire Christian community should share in the study of the situation, so that the people may be made aware of the questions and be disposed to action.

## EFFECTS

**102** An investigation of this sort is not its own end. Rather, it should bring to light the more effective activities and pave the way for the undertaking of them, both by intensifying the works and undertakings that have already been proved effective and by promoting others. For it deals with foreseeing and preparing for those things that will necessarily have to be done in the future.

An investigation of this sort should also convince those who work in the ministry of the word that, so far as pastoral action is concerned, human situations are ambivalent. Therefore, workers in the service of the Gospel should learn to note the many possibilities that are opening up for their action in new and diverse circumstances. There is a danger that knowledge of difficulties might lead one to conclude that pastoral action is impossible. On the contrary, everyone should be convinced that cultural realities are not inert, immutable, univocal principles which have the effect of reducing grace and pastoral action to impotence as it were in their regard. For always possible is a process of change which can make clear the way to the faith.

## Chapter II

### Program of Action

#### PROGRAM OF ACTION

**103** After the situation has been carefully examined, it is necessary to proceed to the publishing of a program of action, especially by means of a catechetical directory. This program determines the objectives, the tools for pastoral catechetical action, and the guiding norms for that same action, and these are determined in such a way that they are altogether in harmony with the objectives and norms of the universal Church and at the same time they fully respond to the local needs.

In proposing a program of action, one should carefully bear in mind the functions of strictly ecclesial institutions, such as parishes, special communities of the faithful, and societies devoted to the apostolate; of the institution of the family; of educational institutions, such as schools, both Christian and neutral; and of all other forms of social and cultural groups.

The goals to be attained and the means to be used should be considered the cardinal points of any program of action.

#### GOALS TO BE ATTAINED

**104** The goals to be attained in the field of pastoral action may differ in degree and style according to differences of place and of needs. Nevertheless, all must pertain to the growth of faith and morality among Christians and to a strengthening of their relationships with God and neighbor. They should, for example, have the objectives that adults achieve a mature faith, that Christian teaching reach scientific and technical groups, that the family be able to carry out its Christian duties, that the Christian presence exert an influence on the work of social transformation.

Since the goals are generally numerous, it is altogether advisable that they be determined in due time and according to an order of priority for the objectives to be accomplished.

It is also helpful for the pastoral goals established in one region to be opportunely compared with those established by the Conferences of Bishops that are closest to it geographically or culturally.

#### MEANS TO BE USED

**105** The chief means to be used are: catechetical institutes, which are to be promoted or supported; programs; texts (cf. Chapter 5 of this part); working tools; instructions on methods (cf. Part Four). The area of research on means can hardly be defined. Yet this is always to be carefully borne in mind: the means proposed should always respond appropriately to the spiritual objectives that are to be attained.

#### NORMS

**106** The norms that can be given with regard to catechesis are many and they vary with the ends to be attained. In comparison with the others, the norms for preparing the faithful for the sacraments have a special importance. These include, for example, norms for the catechumenate of adults, for the sacramental initiation of children, and for the preparation of families for the baptism of their children.

To be effective, all such norms should be few in number, simple in character, and set external rather than internal criteria.

As is obvious, no particular norm can derogate from the Church's general laws and common practice without the approval of the Apostolic See.

#### DISTRIBUTION AND PROMOTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

**107** First of all, attention must be given to a clear and effective distribution of tasks and responsibilities. It is very important, for example, to clarify and put in their proper light the responsibilities of Christian families, of associations of the faithful, of the clergy, and of catechists. Nevertheless, it is not enough to rest content with the distribution of forces already existing; it is also necessary that effort on the part of all Christians be more and more stimulated and promoted. Care must be taken to make the Christian community every day conscious of its duty, which is to be a sign

of the wisdom and love of God that was revealed to us in Christ. For this, it is expedient that the entire community and each of its members as far as possible always be informed at the proper time about what things are to be done, and also that all be invited to take an active part in the undertaking of projects, in the making of decisions, and in the carrying out of what has been decided.

In preparing programs of catechetical activity, one must consider well the fact that various undertakings can at times give rise to inconveniences and disputes. For example, difficulties can arise from the changes in terminology and from the new opinions on the relationship between education and the apostolate. In these cases, every effort should be made to avoid all those things which can unduly disturb people.

Finally, it is necessary that all catechetical activities be provided with suitable financial support.

## Chapter III

# Catechetical Formation

### CATECHETICAL FORMATION

**108** Any pastoral activity for the carrying out of which there are not at hand persons with the right formation and preparation will necessarily come to nothing. The working tools themselves cannot be effective unless used by catechists who have been rightly formed. Hence, the suitable formation of catechists must come before reform in texts and strengthening of the organization for handling catechesis.

First of all, it is necessary that attention be given to the formation of those who carry out catechetical activities on the national level. The duty here belongs to the Conferences of Bishops. Nevertheless, the formation of those who direct catechetical activities on a national level should be joined, as it were with an extension and completion of itself, with the formation of the catechists who carry out this activity on regional and diocesan levels. Responsibility for this latter formation belongs to the regional Conferences of Bishops, where such exist, and to the individual bishops.

### HIGHER INSTITUTES AND CATECHETICAL SCHOOLS

**109** Higher institutes for training in pastoral catechetics should be promoted or founded, so that catechists capable of directing catechesis at the diocesan level, or within the area of activities to which religious congregations are dedicated, may be prepared. These higher institutes can be national or even international. They ought to function as a university so far as curriculum, length of courses, and requisites for admission are concerned.

Schools of religious education should also be founded within individual dioceses, or at least within the area of regional Conferences, in order that, through a curriculum that is less ad-

vanced but still effective, full-time catechetical personnel may be prepared.

## CONTINUING FORMATION

**110** Continuing formation includes diverse methods and grade levels. It is necessary that this formation be continued over the entire time that the catechists remain committed to their functions. Thus this pertains to directors of catechesis as well as to ordinary catechists.

Continuing formation cannot be entrusted to the central offices alone. Rather, Christian communities on lower levels must also give attention to it, also for the reason that the conditions and needs for catechesis can vary from place to place. The clergy and all who have responsibilities for supervising and directing catechesis have a duty to see to the continuing formation of all their co-workers in catechesis.

## OBJECTIVE OF CATECHETICAL FORMATION

**111** The summit and center of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message. This formation requires, therefore, an accurate formation in theological doctrine, in anthropology, and in methodology, geared to the level of knowledge that is to be attained. The formation does not end, however, with the acquisition of doctrinal knowledge. The formation is complete when the catechist becomes competent to select the most suitable method for communicating the Gospel message to groups and individuals who live in circumstances always different and singular.

## THEOLOGICAL-DOCTRINAL, ANTHROPOLOGICAL, AND METHODOLOGICAL FORMATION

**112** a) *Doctrine.* That a strong doctrinal heritage must be acquired is self-evident. This must always include adequate knowledge of Catholic doctrine, together with a degree of scientific theology obtained at higher catechetical institutes. Sacred Scripture should be as it were the soul of this entire formation.

In any case, the doctrine ought to be mastered in such a way that the catechist will be able not only to communicate the



Gospel message accurately, but also to make those being taught capable of receiving it actively and of discerning what in their spiritual journey agrees with the faith.

b) *Human sciences.* Our era is marked and distinguished by a very great growth in the sciences about man. These sciences are no longer reserved for the learned and the specialists. They penetrate the awareness that modern man has of himself. They influence social relationships and shape a cultural pattern, as it were, for humanity today, even that not very sophisticated.

In the teaching of human sciences, given their very great number and diversity, there are difficult problems in regard to choosing from among them and in regard to the method of teaching them. Since the question here is one of training catechists, not experts in psychology, the norm to be followed is this: determine and choose that which can directly help them to acquire facility in communication.

c) *Methodological formation.* Methodology is by its very nature nothing other than careful consideration of means that have stood the test of experience. Therefore, more importance is to be attributed to practical exercises than to theoretical instruction on pedagogy. Still, theoretical instruction is necessary for helping the catechist to meet various situations appropriately, for avoiding an empirical form of teaching catechesis, for grasping the changes found in educational reports, and for directing future work correctly.

Careful attention should be given to the fact that, when it is a question of training ordinary catechists (that is, those who teach the primary elements of catechesis), the principles we have considered above can be acquired better if they are taught at the same time the work is being performed (for example, during sessions in which lessons of catechesis are being prepared and tested).

## LEARNING THE ART OF CATECHESIS

**113** The preparation of the catechist must be such that he will be able accurately to interpret the reactions of each person or group, and thus be able to discern their spiritual capacities and choose the means by which the Gospel message can be received

fruitfully and effectively. Many methods for this can be given: practical exercises, working in groups, analysis of cases, and so on. The whole question here turns on weighing well and understanding the communicative power of the Christian message. Catechesis, which is the Church's practice, is not learned in a merely theoretical way. The art of teaching catechesis is acquired from experience, from the guidance of skilled teachers, and from actually performing the function. An aptitude for apostolic action and knowledge of the faith, of men, and of the laws that govern the development both of individual men and of communities, contribute to the acquisition of skill in this art.

#### SPIRITUAL LIFE OF CATECHISTS

**114** The function entrusted to the catechist demands of him a fervent sacramental and spiritual life, a practice of prayer, and a deep feeling for the excellence of the Christian message and for the power it has to transform one's life; it also demands of him the pursuit of the charity, humility, and prudence which allow the Holy Spirit to complete his fruitful work in those being taught.

#### FORMATION OF CATECHISTS

**115** It is necessary that ecclesiastical authorities regard the formation of catechists as a task of the greatest importance.

This formation is meant for all catechists (cf. AG, 17, 26), both lay and religious, and also for Christian parents, who will be able to receive therefrom effective help for taking care of the initial and occasional catechesis for which they are responsible. This formation is meant for deacons, and especially for priests, for "by the power of the sacrament of Orders, and in the image of the Eternal High Priest (cf. Heb. 5, 1-10; 7, 24; 9, 11-28), they are consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament" (LG, 28). Indeed, in individual parishes the preaching of the word of God is committed chiefly to the priests, who are obliged to open the riches of Sacred Scripture to the faithful, and to explain the mysteries of the faith and the norms of Christian living in homilies throughout the course of the liturgical year (cf. SC, 51, 52). Hence it is of great importance that a thorough catechetical preparation be given students in seminaries and scholasticates,

which should be completed afterwards by the continuing formation mentioned above (cf. n. 110).

Finally, the formation is meant for teachers of religion in public schools, whether these belong to the Church or to the state. To carry out a task of such great importance, only persons should be selected who are distinguished for talent, doctrine, and spiritual life (cf. GS, 5).

It is highly desirable that in this area of formation there be genuine cooperation between the various apostolic activities and catechesis, because they are performing, although under different aspects, a common task, that of communicating the Christian message.

## Chapter IV

# Catechetical Aids

### AIDS

**116** Of the chief working tools for catechesis, the following are considered here:

- directories of the Conferences of Bishops;
- programs;
- catechisms;
- textbooks;
- audiovisual aids.

### CATECHETICAL DIRECTORIES

**117** Directories are concerned with promoting and coordinating catechetical action in the territory of a region or nation, or even of several nations of the same sociocultural condition. Before they are promulgated, every local Ordinary should be heard, and they should be submitted to the Apostolic See for approval (cf. n. 134).

### PROGRAMS

**118** Programs set up the educational goals to be attained according to ages or places or set times, the methodological criteria to be used, and the content to be taught in catechesis. By all means care must be taken that the mysteries of faith to be believed by adults are already indicated in the programs for children's and adolescents' catechisms in a way adapted to their age (cf. n. 134).

### CATECHISMS

**119** The greatest importance must be attached to catechisms published by ecclesiastical authority. Their purpose is to provide, under a form that is condensed and practical, the witnesses of

revelation and of Christian tradition as well as the chief principles which ought to be useful for catechetical activity, that is, for personal education in faith. The witnesses of tradition should be held in due esteem, and very great care must be taken to avoid presenting as doctrines of the faith special interpretations which are only private opinions or the views of some theological school. The doctrine of the Church must be presented faithfully. Here the norms set forth in Chapter I of Part Three are to be followed.

In view of the great difficulties in putting these works together and the great importance of these witnesses, it is most expedient that:

a) there be collaboration by a number of experts in catechetics and in theology;

b) there be consultation with specialists in other religious and human disciplines, and also with the other pastoral organizations;

c) individual local Ordinaries be consulted and their opinions be carefully considered;

d) limited experiments be tried before definitive publication; and

e) these texts be duly reviewed after a certain period of time.

Before promulgation, these catechisms must be submitted to the Apostolic See for review and approval (cf. n. 134).

## TEXTBOOKS

**120** Textbooks are aids offered to the Christian community that is engaged in catechesis. No text can take the place of a live communication of the Christian message; nevertheless, the texts do have great value in that they make it possible to present a fuller exposition of the witnesses of Christian tradition and of principles that foster catechetical activity. The putting together of these texts requires a cooperative effort by a number of catechetical experts, and also consultation with other experts.

## MANUALS FOR CATECHISTS

**121** These books should contain:

—an explanation of the message of salvation (constant reference must be made to the sources, and a clear distinction must be kept between those things which pertain to the faith and to the doctrine that must be held, and those things which are mere opinions of theologians);

—psychological and pedagogical advice;

—suggestions about methods.

Books and other printed materials intended for study and activity by those being taught should also be provided. These printed materials can be made part of the books for the use of those being taught, or they can be published as separate booklets.

Finally, care should be taken to publish books for the use of parents, if the question is one of giving catechesis to children.

## AUDIOVISUAL AIDS

**122** Audiovisual aids are used especially:

a) as resources for enriching catechetical instruction with objective elements; for this use, they should excel in truthfulness, careful selection of ideas, and pedagogical clarity; and

b) as images for properly cultivating the powers of the senses and the imagination; for this use they should have real beauty and be effective in moving people.

In regard to these aids, the following are necessary functions:

—fostering studies concerning the criteria which should guide the production and selection of these aids in keeping with the particular aspects of the Christian message that are to be presented and the particular groups of people for whom they are intended; and

—instructing catechists in a right use of these aids (it often happens that catechists are ignorant of the proper nature of visual language; it happens more often that audiovisual aids used improperly lead to passive rather than active behavior; and so on).

## MASS MEDIA

**123** The mass media have the effect, among other things, of giving an aura of reality and actuality to the events, undertakings, and ideas about which they speak, and, contrariwise, of diminishing in popular estimation the importance of the things they are silent about.

The message of salvation, therefore, must have a place among the media of social communication (cf. IM, 3). It is not enough to perfect the media that the Church already possesses in this field, but rather it is necessary to promote cooperation among the producers, writers, and actors who offer their services for this purpose. Such cooperation requires that on the national and international levels there be set up groups of experts who can give genuine assistance if consulted about programs of activities that pertain to religion.

Also, it is the function of catechesis to educate the faithful to discern the nature and value of things presented through the mass media. This, as is obvious, demands a technical knowledge of the language proper to these media.

## PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION

**124** Catechesis can and should use audiovisual aids so that it will be better able to achieve its goal. In this area there is a new method which is gaining ground more and more today and which in the educational field is called "programmed instruction." It ought not to be ignored.

In this matter, however, one must consider the difficulties which arise, either from the truths to be taught, or from the purpose of catechesis itself. Unprepared explanations are to be avoided. Rather, both for preparing the programs, as well as for expressing truths with the help of pictures, one should call upon the joint effort of experts in sacred theology, in catechetics, and in the art of audiovisual teaching.

# Chapter V

## Organization for Catechesis

### ORGANIZATION FOR CATECHESIS

**125** The organization for catechesis within the area of every Conference of Bishops consists chiefly of diocesan, regional and national structures.

The principal purposes of these structures are:

a) to promote catechetical activities; and

b) to cooperate with other apostolic undertakings and works (for example, with the liturgical commission, with associations for the lay apostolate, with the ecumenical commission, and so on), because all these activities of the Church have a part, even though in different ways, in the ministry of the word.

### DIOCESAN STRUCTURES

**126** The Decree *Provido sane* (cf. AAS, 1935, pp. 151 ff.) established the Diocesan Catechetical Office, the function of which is to supervise the entire catechetical organization. This diocesan office should have a staff of persons who have special competence. The extent and diversity of the problems which must be handled demand that the responsibilities be divided among a number of truly skilled people.

It is also the task of the diocesan office to promote and direct the work of those organizations (such as the parish catechetical center, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and so on) which are as it were the basic cells of catechetical action.

Permanent centers for training catechists should be set up by local communities. It will thus become clear among Christian people that the work of evangelization and the teaching of the message of salvation pertain to all.



The Catechetical Office, therefore, which is part of the diocesan curia, is the means which the bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all the catechetical activities of the diocese.

No diocese can be without its own Catechetical Office.

## REGIONAL STRUCTURES

**127** It is useful for a number of dioceses to combine their actions, bringing together for common benefit their experiences and undertakings, their offices and equipment; for the dioceses that are better provided for to give help to the others; and for a common action program to be prepared for the region as a whole.

## NATIONAL STRUCTURES

**128** It is by all means necessary that the Conferences of Bishops, and more directly, the Bishops' Catechetical Commission, be equipped with a permanent structure.

This National Catechetical Office or Center has a twofold task:

—to serve the catechetical needs of the country as a whole. The effort here would extend to publications of national importance, national congresses, relations with the mass media, and generally all those works and projects which are beyond the powers of individual dioceses and regions;

—to serve dioceses and regions by publicizing catechetical ideas and undertakings, by coordinating action, and by giving assistance to those dioceses that are less advanced in catechetical matters.

Another function of the National Office or Center is to coordinate its own work with the action of the rest of the national pastoral undertakings, and also to cooperate with the international catechetical movement.

## Chapter VI

# Coordination of Pastoral Catechetics with all Pastoral Work

### CATECHESIS AND PASTORAL ACTION

**129** Since every important act in the Church participates in the ministry of the word, and since catechesis always has a relation to the universal life of the Church, it follows that catechetical action must necessarily be coordinated with the overall pastoral action. The aim of this cooperation is to have the Christian community grow and develop in a harmonious and orderly fashion; for, surely, although it has distinct aspects because of the various functions, it nevertheless strives toward a single basic goal.

It is necessary, therefore, that catechesis be associated with other pastoral activities (cf. *Motu proprio, Ecclesiae sanctae*, n. 17), that is, with the biblical, liturgical, and ecumenical movements, with the lay apostolate and social action, and so on. Besides, it must be kept in mind that this cooperation is necessary from the very outset, that is, from the time that studies and plans for the organization of pastoral work are started.

### CATECHUMENATE FOR ADULTS

**130** The catechumenate for adults, which at one and the same time includes catechesis, liturgical participation, and community living, is an excellent example of an institute that springs from the cooperation of diverse pastoral functions. Its purpose is to direct the spiritual journey of persons who are preparing themselves for the reception of baptism, and to give direction to their habits of thought and changes in moral living. It is a preparatory school in Christian living, an introduction to the religious, liturgical, charitable, and apostolic life of the People of God (cf. AG, 13-14; SC, 65; CD, 14). Not only the priests and catechists, but the entire Christian community, through sponsors who act in its name, is engaged in this work.

## Chapter VII

# Necessity of Promoting Scientific Study

### SCIENTIFIC STUDY

**131** Because of the rapid development in present-day culture, the catechetical movement will in no way be able to advance without scientific study.

Hence it is necessary that the national organs of the Conferences of Bishops promote joint research projects. Clearly it is necessary that a program of questions to be researched be determined, that there be awareness of the questions already under study and occasional consultation with the experts who are working on them, and that a study be undertaken of questions that have not yet been researched, the necessary financial support for this having been provided.

There can be subjects for research that have universal importance: for example, the relations between catechesis and modern exegesis, between catechesis and anthropology, between catechesis and the mass media, and so on. Because of the nature and difficulties of such kinds of research, international cooperation is often advisable.

## Chapter VIII

# International Cooperation and Relations with the Apostolic See

### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**132** The Apostolic College performs its function in a closely cooperative way (cf. LG, 22-23; AG, 38; CD, 2, 4). Consequences of this solidarity which affect catechesis have been considered a number of times in this part of the *Directory* (for example, Chapter II: comparing pastoral goals among neighboring countries; Chapter III: establishing higher institutes; Chapter IV: working out common aids; Chapter VII: doing scientific research).

International cooperation is also required in the ministry of the word for immigrants.

The task to be accomplished is twofold. On the one hand, the word of God must be brought to the immigrants. Because of the differences in language, culture and customs, this requires an exchange both of information and of persons between the churches of the countries from which the immigrants come and the churches of the countries which accept them. On the other hand, it is necessary that this ministry of the word make the Christians of the host countries aware of the pressing problems of the immigrants, and ready to welcome them out of brotherly love.

International cooperation is also required for the catechesis of tourists. It is clear that "tourism," as it is called, is spreading more and more among all nations (cf. *Directorium Generale pro ministerio pastorali quoad "turismum,"* passim).

International cooperation must show regard for the tasks and conditions of the local churches. Hence, those countries that have made greater advances in personnel, in economic goods, and in scientific research, should assist the other countries that have not progressed that far, but should not impose their own styles of thinking and acting, nor their own methods.

## HOLY SEE

**133** Just as Peter was made the head of the Apostolic College and the foundation upon which the Church is built, so the Successor to Peter, namely, the Roman Pontiff (cf. LG, 22), is the visible head of the College of Bishops and of the entire People of God. He fulfills his universal office of teaching and of ruling as Vicar of Christ and Shepherd of the whole Church (cf. LG, 22), always for the welfare and spiritual development of the People of God. He can, however, freely carry out this office according to the needs of the Church, either in a personal way, or in a strictly collegial way, that is, together with the bishops of the entire Church. The personal way he exercises either by his own acts or through acts of his ministers, principally by acts of the Offices of the Roman Curia.

## SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

**134** The central responsibility for catechesis in territories of so-called common law has been entrusted to the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (Second Office). This Congregation has the task of working out, of coordinating, and of moderating matters that have to do with promoting the preaching of the word of God and the works of the apostolate; it also has the task of publishing information, and of promoting, as much as possible, collaboration among the various countries.

This Office assists the development of and gives guidance to offices that are in charge of catechesis.

It reviews and approves catechetical directories, catechisms, and programs for preaching the word of God produced by Conferences of Bishops. It encourages national catechetical congresses, or it approves or calls international ones (cf. Const. Apost., *Regimini Ecclesiae universae*, n. 69; Letter of the Secretariat of State, August 20, 1969, N. 143741).

## ADDENDUM

### The First Reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist

Among the tasks of catechesis, the preparation of children for the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist is of great importance. With regard to this, it is held opportune to recall certain principles and to make some observations about certain experiments that have been taking place very recently in some regions or places of the Church.

#### THE AGE OF DISCRETION

**1** The suitable age for the first reception of these sacraments is deemed to be that which in documents of the Church is called the age of reason or of discretion. This age "both for Confession and for Communion is that at which the child begins to reason, that is, about the seventh year, more or less. From that time on the obligation of fulfilling the precepts of Confession and Communion begins" (Decree *Quam singulari*, I, AAS, 1910, p. 582). It is praiseworthy to study by research in pastoral psychology and to describe this age which develops gradually, is subject to various conditions, and which presents a peculiar nature in every child. One should, however, be on guard not to extend beyond the above-mentioned limits, which are not rigid, the time at which the precept of Confession and Communion begins to oblige *per se*.

#### FORMATION AND GROWTH OF THE MORAL CONSCIENCE OF CHILDREN

**2** While the capacity to reason is evolving gradually in a child, his moral conscience too is being trained, that is, the faculty of judging his acts in relation to a norm of morality. A number of varying elements and circumstances come together in forming this moral conscience of a child: the character and discipline of his family, which is one of the most important educative factors

during the first years of a child's life, his associations with others, and the activities and the witness of the ecclesial community. Catechesis, while carrying out its task of instructing and forming in the Christian faith, puts order into these various factors of education, promotes them, and works in conjunction with them. Only in this way will catechesis be able to give to the child timely direction toward the heavenly Father and correct any goings astray or incorrect orientations of life that can occur. Without doubt children at this age should be told in the simplest possible way about God as our Lord and Father, about his love for us, about Jesus, the Son of God, who was made man for us, and who died and rose again. By thinking about the love of God, the child will be able gradually to perceive the malice of sin, which always offends God the Father and Jesus, and which is opposed to the charity with which we must love our neighbor and ourselves.

#### IMPORTANCE OF EXPLAINING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE TO CHILDREN

**3** When a child begins to offend God by sin, he also begins to have the desire of receiving pardon, not only from parents or relatives, but also from God. Catechesis helps him by nourishing this desire wholesomely, and it instills a holy aversion to sin, an awareness of the need for amendment, and especially love for God. The special task of catechesis here is to explain in a suitable way that sacramental Confession is a means offered children of the Church to obtain pardon for sin, and furthermore that it is even necessary *per se* if one has fallen into serious sin. To be sure, Christian parents and religious educators ought to teach the child in such a way that above all he will strive to advance to a more intimate love of the Lord Jesus and to genuine love of neighbor. The doctrine on the sacrament of Penance is to be presented in a broad framework of attaining purification and spiritual growth with great confidence in the mercy and love of God. In this way, children not only can little by little acquire a delicate understanding of conscience, but do not lose heart when they fall into some lesser fault.

The Eucharist is the summit and center of the entire Christian life. In addition to the required state of grace, great purity of soul is clearly fitting for the reception of Communion. One must be very careful, however, that the children do not get the impres-

sion that Confession is necessary before receiving the Eucharist even when one sincerely loves God and has not departed from the path of God's commandments in a serious way.

#### CERTAIN NEW EXPERIMENTS

4 In very recent times in certain regions of the Church experiments relative to the first reception of the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist have been made. These have given rise to doubt and confusion.

So that the Communion of children may be appropriately received early, and so that psychological disturbances in the future Christian life which can result from a too early use of Confession may be avoided, and so that better education for the spirit of penance and a more valid catechetical preparation for Confession itself may be fostered, it has seemed to some that children should be admitted to first Communion without first receiving the sacrament of Penance.

In fact, however, going to the sacrament of Penance from the beginning of the use of reason does not in itself harm the minds of the children, provided it is preceded, as it should be, by a kind and prudent catechetical preparation. The spirit of penance can be developed more fully by continuing catechetical instruction after first Communion; likewise, there can be growth in knowledge and appreciation of the great gift that Christ has given to sinful men in the sacrament of the pardon they will receive and of reconciliation with the Church (cf. LG, 11).

These things have not prevented the introduction in certain places of a practice in which some years regularly elapse between first Communion and first Confession. In other places, however, the innovations made have been more cautious, either because first Confession was not so much delayed, or because consideration is given the judgment of the parents who prefer to have their children go to the sacrament of Penance before first Communion.

#### THE COMMON PRACTICE IN FORCE MUST BE HIGHLY ESTEEMED

5 The Supreme Pontiff, Pius X, declared, "The custom of not admitting children to Confession or of never giving them absolu-



tion, when they have arrived at the use of reason, must be wholly condemned" (Decree *Quam singulari*, VII, AAS, 1910, p. 583). One can scarcely have regard for the right that baptized children have of confessing their sins, if at the beginning of the age of discretion they are not prepared and gently led to the sacrament of Penance.

One should also keep in mind the usefulness of Confession, which retains its efficacy even when only venial sins are in question, and which gives an increase of grace and of charity, increases the child's good dispositions for receiving the Eucharist, and also helps to perfect the Christian life. Hence, it appears the usefulness of Confession cannot be dismissed in favor of those forms of penance or those ministries of the word, by which the virtue of penance is aptly fostered in children, and which can be fruitfully practiced together with the sacrament of Penance, when a suitable catechetical preparation has been made. The pastoral experience of the Church, which is illustrated by many examples even in our day, teaches her how much the so-called age of discretion is suited for effecting that the children's baptismal grace, by means of a well-prepared reception of the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist, shows forth its first fruits, which are certainly to be augmented afterwards by means of a continued catechesis.

Having weighed all these points, and keeping in mind the common and general practice which *per se* cannot be derogated without the approval of the Apostolic See, and also having heard the Conferences of Bishops, the Holy See judges it fitting that the practice now in force in the Church of putting Confession ahead of first Communion should be retained. This in no way prevents this custom from being carried out in various ways, as, for instance, by having a communal penitential celebration precede or follow the reception of the sacrament of Penance.

The Holy See is not unmindful of the special conditions that exist in various countries, but it exhorts the bishops in this important matter not to depart from the practice in force without having first entered into communication with the Holy See in a spirit of hierarchical communion. Nor should they in any way allow the pastors or educators or religious institutes to begin or to continue to abandon the practice in force.

In regions, however, where new practices have already been introduced which depart notably from the pristine practice, the Conferences of Bishops will wish to submit these experiments to a new examination. If after that they wish to continue these experiments for a longer time, they should not do so unless they have first communicated with the Holy See, which will willingly hear them, and they are at one mind with the Holy See.

The Supreme Pontiff, PAUL VI, by a letter of his Secretariat of State, n. 177335, dated March 18, 1971, approved this General Directory together with the Addendum, confirmed it by his authority and ordered it to be published.

Rome, April 11, 1971, Feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord.

John J. Cardinal Wright, Prefect

✠ Pietro Palazzini, Secretary

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