

+ The Word of God became flesh

ASPECTS OF CATECHESIS

The Church's mission

In his love for humanity God wants to enter into a relationship of love with everybody, and for this reason, while on earth, Jesus founded the Church so that salvation may reach all people at all times. Catechesis is not a task that the followers of Jesus decided to take upon themselves out of their own initiative but it was given to them by divine command. Jesus said to his disciples, **"Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them ...and teach them to obey all the commands I gave you."** (Mt. 28:19-20) Since then, the Church has continuously recognised herself as a servant of the Word of God and considered catechesis as one of her primary tasks as she prepares the faithful through teaching for a life of faith through the sacraments.



In this mission, the Church recognises herself only as a tool in the hands of God. It is God who is taking the initiative and carrying out the work. Catechesis is possible because of the action of God working through his Spirit. It is the **Holy Spirit** who inspires each individual to proclaim the gospel and causes the Word to be accepted and understood. God, through the catechist, leads all people to him. The catechist is only an instrument in the hands of God.

Jesus Christ

At the centre of catechesis there is the person of **Christ**. In her call, since Pentecost day, the Church has always been faithful to her vocation of proclaiming Jesus Christ and his Good News to the world. Catechesis, therefore, ought to lead people to reflect about Jesus, welcome him in their lives and make a decision to follow him. Since catechesis is about proclaiming the teaching of Christ, all that is taught is with reference to him. Christ is so central in catechesis that the Church considers catechists as Christ's spokespersons, enabling Christ to teach with their voice.



Catechists do not only proclaim the teaching of Christ - they themselves **represent** him. Hence, they ought to lead a life that mirrors his life. In the

same way that Jesus was always gentle and welcoming, for example, even with those who were against him, so should a catechist try to be.

In order to accomplish such a great work, Christ is always present with catechists. He is there to sustain them in trying to always strive to lead a holy life, as when their teaching is followed by example, it reaches even deeper into the hearts of those they catechise.

One way to grow in holiness is through the reception of the sacraments. During the Mass, Jesus feeds those present both with his Word as well as with his Body and Blood. During the mass therefore, the catechists themselves are evangelised and nourished by Christ himself and are empowered by him to go forth and proclaim his Word to everybody.

Everybody's mission

Though for some, to catechise is their main vocation, yet all Christians are called to evangelise; the call to participate in this task is for everybody in the Church. All the faithful are called to witness to Christ and make him known. Consider the great responsibility we all have! Jesus himself wants us to do this. He said to us that we are the salt and the light of the world. We are called to lead others to the light of the Truth, and to show others that living a holy Christian life is a pleasant thing to do, in the same way as salt adds flavour to food. As members of the Church we are impelled out of charity to share with all people the spiritual gifts that we receive through our faith. Through our witnessing people are made aware that God loves them and this may lead unbelievers or the indifferent to enquire about the faith and change their lives. Thus, we become instruments through which others may reach Christ.

Since it is the Church's vocation to proclaim the gospel message to everybody, catechesis demands that attention is given to all, even those outside of the Church. St Paul ponders on the thought: how can unbelievers begin to believe if they are not taught, and how may they be taught if no one teaches them? In line with this, the Church holds that Christianity is not for an inner circle of believers but expresses itself in service to others. All Christians, therefore, are called to converse with those among whom they live, and learn about the good things these people possess, even if they are unbelievers. Through good example, discernment and dialogue with them, they show them the riches of God's love for everybody and be the instruments that may open the way for their conversion. Through dialogue, unbelievers are introduced to a Church that is open to everybody, a Church that greets everybody and one that also embraces sinners.

The Church considers parents as the first catechists. Parents share the responsibility to catechise their children. Talking highly of the family, the Church compares the family to the Church community itself: the family ought to be a place where the gospel is transmitted and from which the gospel radiates.



Community

The task of the Church in catechesis is not only to put its members in touch with Jesus but also with the whole community. We are called to be a community – the Church. It is in the Church that the sacraments are administered. Without the Church we cannot have the sacraments. It is through catechesis that the church makes humanity conscious of God's love for everybody and invites everyone to follow Jesus through a life of love for him in prayer. Through catechesis the Church prepares people to participate in the celebration of the sacraments. Through the sacraments, given to her by Christ himself, the Church leads people to a special union with him and with each other within the family of God.

Witnessing

Through catechesis the church leads people to live a life of faith in Christ that should be expressed in their actions. Thus, while imitating Christ in his love for the needy, the Church invites all to be generous in self-denial, in almsgiving, in forgiving others and in being of service to others. For this reason, in the Church we find many organisations that work for justice and peace, especially with those who are suffering and in need. Again, by offering service to all in need, the Good News is brought to them.

God is continuously seeking to enter into a relationship with every individual. This is a call for holiness or conversion – to change for the better. This call is for unbelievers as well as for believers – perhaps even more so for the latter group. This is as a result of the responsibility we received in our baptism to follow Jesus and witness to him. Through a sound relationship with God, us believers should be filled with joy and confidence in God in all we say and do. When we relate to others, our words and actions should reflect this joy and confidence. By being grateful for the gift



and showing enthusiasm for our faith we give witness and seek to share this gift with others. A truly genuine and committed Christian feels compelled to help others love God.

Leading a life of prayer, meditating on the Bible and celebrating the sacraments frequently, especially Holy Eucharist are valuable ways of trying to be genuine and with a maturing faith and always ready to be true witnesses of Jesus.

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