

Quotes from the *General Directory for Catechesis*

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The situation of catechesis: its vitality and difficulties

29. The missionary character of contemporary catechesis and its ability to secure adherence to the faith on the part of catechumens and those to be catechized in a world in which religious sense is obscured must also be underlined: in this dynamic there is an acute awareness that catechesis must have a catechumenal style, as of integral formation rather than mere information; it must act in reality as a means of arousing true conversion.

62. Only by starting with conversion, and therefore by making allowance for the interior disposition of "whoever believes", can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfill its proper task of education in the faith.

Fundamental characteristics of initiatory catechesis

67. Catechesis acquires certain characteristics in virtue of being an "essential moment" in the process of evangelization, in the service of Christian initiation. It is:

– a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith. The Synod of 1977 underscored the need for a "comprehensive and structured" catechesis, since catechesis is principally distinguished from other forms of presenting the word of God by its comprehensive and vital deepening of the mystery of Christ;

– this comprehensive formation includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a "complete Christian initiation", which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith...

– a basic and essential formation, centered on what constitutes the nucleus of Christian experience, the most fundamental certainties of the faith and the most essential evangelical values...

The object of catechesis: communion with Jesus Christ

80. The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ. All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ. Starting with the initial conversion of a person to the Lord, moved by the Holy Spirit through the primary proclamation of the Gospel, catechesis seeks to solidify and mature this first adherence.

The baptismal catechumenate: structure and progression

88. Faith, moved by divine grace and cultivated by the action of the Church, undergoes a process of maturation. Catechesis, which is at the service of this growth, is also a gradual activity. Good catechesis is always done in steps. In the baptismal catechumenate, formation is articulated in four stages: [pre-catechumenate, catechumenate, purification and illumination, mystagogy]

89. These stages, which reflect the wisdom of the great catechumenal tradition, also inspire the gradual nature of catechesis. In the patristic period properly, catechumenal formation was realized through biblical catechesis, based on recounting the history of salvation; immediate preparation for Baptism by doctrinal catechesis, explaining the Creed and the Our Father which had just been handed on, together with their moral implications; and through the phase following the sacraments of initiation, a period of mystagogical catechesis which help the newly baptized to interiorize these sacraments and incorporate themselves into the community. This patristic concept continues to illuminate the present catechumenate and initiatory catechesis itself. This latter, in so far as it accompanies the process of conversion, is essentially gradual and, in so far as it is at the service of one who has decided to follow Christ, it is eminently christocentric.

The baptismal catechumenate: inspiration for catechesis in the Church

90. Given that the *missio ad gentes* is the paradigm of all the Church's missionary activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is joined to it, is the model of its catechizing activity...

A comprehensive and hierarchical message

114. This message transmitted by catechetics has a comprehensive hierarchical character, which constitutes a coherent and vital synthesis of the faith. This is organized around the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, in a christocentric perspective, because this is the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. Starting with this point, the harmony of the overall message requires a hierarchy of truths, in so far as the connection between each one of these and the foundation of the faith differs. Nevertheless, 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.

Nature and purpose of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

121. The Prologue to the Catechism of the Catholic Church states its purpose: "This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition". The Magisterium of the Church intends to render an ecclesial service for our times with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, recognizing that it is:

- a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion: it desires to promote the bond of unity in the faith by helping the disciples of Jesus Christ to make the profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
- a sure norm for teaching the faith: the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers a clear response to the legitimate right of all the baptized to know from the Church what she has received and what she believes; it is thus an obligatory point of reference for catechesis and for the other forms of the ministry of the word...

The nature or character proper to this document of the Magisterium consists in the fact that it is a comprehensive synthesis of the faith and thus it is of universal value.

Quotes from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

42. The prerequisite for making this first step [Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens] is that the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates. Thus there must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization... there must also be evidence of the first stirrings of repentance, a start to the practice of calling upon God in prayer, a sense of the Church, and some experience of the company and spirit of Christians through contact with a priest or with members of the community.

75 § 1. A suitable catechesis is provided by priests or deacons, or by catechists and others of the faithful, planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word [See RCIA #81-89]...

75 § 3. Celebrations of the word of God are arranged for their benefit [See RCIA #81-89], and at Mass they may also take part with the faithful in the liturgy of the word.

76. The time spent in the catechumenate should be long enough – several years if necessary – for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong...

78. The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.

Appendix III: National Statutes: 7. A thoroughly comprehensive catechesis on the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life, aided by approved catechetical texts, is to be provided during the period of the catechumenate.