

Your Call to Be a Catechist or Teacher

Goal, Objectives, and Skill

The goal of *The Call to Be a Catechist or Teacher* is to help deepen your understanding of your calling, which means knowing and following Christ and leading others to him.

Your objectives are

- to better understand the nature of catechesis;
- to emphasize and teach that discipleship is the outcome you seek in catechesis;
- to take the catechumenate as a model for fuller initiation into the life of Christ and the Church.

Skill

- Sacrifice yourself as a catechist or teacher, working selflessly for your learners.

Preparation

- **Step One:** Experience the *Spiritual Exercises* for this session, and write your reflections about your experience.
- **Step Two:** Read booklet #1 *What Does Your Heart Desire?* of the *Growing Faith Project* and do the reflections and exercises, recording your reflections.
- **Step Three:** Read *The Tools for Teaching* section carefully. It is important to articulate your reflections and applications in writing or verbally, whether alone or working as part of a group. If you are studying with a group, you will also enjoy the opportunity to share your experiences in learning sessions.

Step One: Setting the Tone

This optional section introduces you to a discussion of catechesis. Read the story on your own.

To Know Christ

A dialogue between a recent convert to Christ and an unbelieving friend developed like this.

“So you have been converted to Christ? Then you must know a great deal about him. Tell me, what country was he born in? How old was he when he died?”

“I don’t know.”

“How many sermons did he preach?”

“I don’t know.”

“You certainly know very little for a man who claims to be converted to Christ.”

“You are right. But this much I do know. Three years ago I was a drunkard. I was in debt. My family was falling to pieces. But now I have given up drink and am out of debt. Ours is a happy home. All this and more Christ has done for me. This much I know of Christ!”

To *really* know means to be transformed by what or whom one knows.



The Christian faith is, above all,
conversion to Jesus Christ.

GDC 53



Step Three: What Is Catechesis?

Part three helps you reflect on the nature of catechesis. Read this on your own. If you take part in the group sessions, share your reflections with your group.

When the first disciples began to share the good news, they proclaimed their experience of the person of Jesus Christ, living, healing, saving, teaching. Jesus revealed to each one the very life of God and God's plan for his people. Jesus didn't come just to *tell* us about God. He came to show us God, to put us in touch with God in his own person. That's the reality of the incarnation: that God walked with us, spoke with us, ate with us, dreamed with us, in the person of Jesus. This loving plan of salvation revealed in the person of Jesus and handed on to the Church is the very heart of catechesis.

All catechesis includes much more than instruction (GDC 104). It is about a guided encounter with the *entire Christian life*, a journey toward ongoing conversion to Christ (GDC 105). As important as good content is, catechesis involves a lot more than content. Catechesis brings content to bear on our lives such that we celebrate our faith in prayer with the community of believers, such that our entire lives are converted to lifelong growing into discipleship of Christ, and such that we learn to share this conviction with all those who turn to us as we share faith with them. We are called to acquire the attitudes of Jesus, attitudes found in the gospels. We are to incarnate our faith daily, to become "living editions of the gospel" for our learners. All of this is nothing less than a gift of the Holy Spirit.

ON YOUR OWN

■ When did you first feel the call to be a catechist or teacher? Who or what was instrumental in helping you realize and follow that call?

In this journey we are not alone. Just as the Church sends teachers and catechists forth for this ministry, so the Church is the setting for our ministry. Catechesis is a key element of the Church's pastoral activity. The word you live and proclaim, the sacraments you celebrate and teach belong to the life of the Church, the body of Christ of which you are a member.



Integrating What You Have Just Learned

■ Discuss with others in your group what catechesis means to you—not theoretically but practically. Reflect on your own experiences. Write down your reflections and ideas.

Notes



Step Five: The Catechumenate as Inspiration for Catechetical Ministry

The baptismal catechumenate provides inspiration for lifelong catechesis. Read this on your own. If you take part in the group sessions, share your reflections with your group.

We need patience with everyone
but first of all with ourselves.

St. Francis de Sales

The process of the catechumenate is a model for the initiation and ongoing faith formation of those being catechized in the life of Christ and of the Church. The baptismal catechumenate involves a journey. This journey involves passing through steps in which the catechumen first accepts the gospel and is signed with the cross, is buried, and ultimately rises to new life with Christ in the sacraments of initiation. Similarly, catechesis is for catechists, teachers, and learners a journey with Christ through his paschal mystery, ritually experienced in the celebration of the liturgy.

The word catechesis
has its roots
in the Greek word *katecheo*,
which means to resound or echo.

The catechumenate includes several rites and rituals, such as the signing with the cross, blessings, anointing, the Scrutinies, the presentations of the Creed and the Our Father. Catechumens break open the Word through a deep faith sharing that flows from their daily lives. Like the catechumenate, lifelong catechesis enables you and your learner to experience the Church's rites and symbols and unfolds their meaning. It provides ever deeper insight into the Scriptures and the faith of the Church through reflection, instruction, and formation. It draws you and your learners more deeply into the life of the faith community, especially in the Sunday Assembly. One of the vital aspects of liturgy is service, so ongoing catechesis encourages and motivates persons of all ages to acts of loving service to others, meeting the needs of the faith community as well as the larger community of the neighborhood, the country, and the world.

