

Catechesis

Section Two: Models of Faith Formation

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Intergenerational Faith Formation

The Christian community is the context in which individuals undertake their journey in faith toward conversion to Christ and discipleship in his name. (NDC, no. 29C)

There are many parish activities where intergenerational faith formation takes place. These are events, planned or spontaneous, in which participants of all ages gather to build community, pray and share in a variety of activities geared toward a range of interests and abilities. All six tasks of catechesis can be accomplished in intergenerational settings.

To maximize the faith formation that takes place during such gatherings, it helps to identify the tasks of catechesis that are being engaged in such events as a community-service undertaking, a parish dinner, a prayer service, and so forth. A catechetical leader might prepare some discussion questions for various ages of the lifecycle to help small groups share faith while they work or eat together. Another good idea is to distribute some printed or audiovisual materials to take home to continue the formation in family, home, work, and individual settings.



Faith formation opportunities also can be created expressly for intergenerational settings. A doctrinal teaching or an important Church day or liturgical season can be the theme. The catechetical leader can create materials and activities for various age groups that can honor the many ways people learn and share faith together. Textbooks that are created with a “spiral scope and sequence” are good sources of age-appropriate materials on a specific theme or teaching that can be used in these community events.

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A “spiral scope and sequence” is a special kind of framework for presenting the teachings of the faith. In this approach, the learner returns to each topic every year he or she participates in a religious education program. As the learner matures, the content is explored in more depth and is presented in age-appropriate ways.

Family-Centered Catechesis

Catechetical opportunities situated in family settings foster both adult and family faith growth, while also addressing one of the major reasons adults give for not participating in adult education: time away from their families. (OHWB, p. 35)

Family-centered catechesis can take many forms, but basically it is a plan for catechesis designed to give a family the primary responsibility for sharing faith with its members, within a supportive parish community. Family-centered catechesis may be a family's choice, such as home-schooling planned with the support of the pastor and parish; may be one of many options of faith formation offered in a parish; or may be the only form of catechesis in a parish where there are too few children to form age groups. The Church recognizes the family, the domestic Church, as the primary educator of their children. "Family catechesis precedes, accompanies and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith."¹

It is important to remember that the parish community promises when a child is baptized to help the parents with the responsibility to bring the child up in the faith. All forms of organized family catechesis should flow from and lead back to the parish. Within family-centered programs are opportunities for parents to catechize their children, for spouses to catechize each other, and for children to catechize one another and their parents.² Family catechesis should be planned to include all six tasks of catechesis over time.

Models of family-centered catechesis include:

- Families catechize at home, and gather periodically at the parish
- Families gather at the parish for faith formation, then continue at home
- The whole parish is catechized in intergenerational family groups
- Families gather for special seasonal programs of formation
- Home-centered catechesis is offered in addition to parish parent-enrichment sessions
- Classroom catechesis takes place in addition to parent or family sessions
- Classroom catechesis is supplemented by home materials for families
- Cluster groups of children are taught in a home with parent leaders
- Catechesis takes place in intergenerational family clusters with a trained leader
- Sacramental preparation is done in family settings

¹ CCC, no. 2226

² NDC, no. 61A2




INTERIM

A Koinonia class is offered to help a parish understand and prepare to offer family-centered catechesis. Contact your vicariate Faith Formation Consultant for information.

Gathered and Non-gathered Faith Formation

Whenever people come together in a parish, or when parishioners meet in a location outside the parish, at least one of the six tasks of catechesis usually is taking place. The witness of the Christian community is an important element in faith formation. Through a connection to a parish, the members of the Christian community “become aware of being the people of God,”³ In the parish the faithful are nurtured by the word of God and nourished by the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. From the parish the faithful are sent on their apostolic mission in the world. The parish serves as an effective catechetical agent to the extent that it is a clear, living and authentic Sacrament of Christ.⁴

A gathered catechetical event is a group setting that is planned with the intention to incorporate one or more of the six tasks of catechesis. Examples of gathered events include classes grouped by age, intergenerational events, liturgical worship, prayer services, study groups, and service events.



A non-gathered event is where catechesis takes place while the individual is alone, reading or studying at home or on the Internet. Some individuals need to be alone with material for learning to take place. Materials that can be provided by the parish for home use are important resources in the catechetical programs of a parish.

³ GDC, no. 257

⁴ NDC, no. 29c

Liturgical Catechesis

Liturgical catechesis means that we are being formed by and for all liturgical actions, symbols, prayers, music, and words. While all liturgy has a catechetical dimension, liturgical catechesis is most explicit in the form of the homily delivered during the celebration of the sacraments. Liturgical catechesis within the context of a sacred action is an integral part of that action.⁵ Its function is "the immediate preparation for reception of the different sacraments, the celebration of sacramentals, and, above all, of the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist, as a primary means of education in the faith."⁶ The purpose of liturgical catechesis is to promote a love for the liturgy and to prepare those who are catechized to participate in the Church's rites and symbols with deeper understanding.⁷

Liturgical catechesis flows from personal and communal reflection on different parts of the liturgical celebration to reach a deeper understanding or appreciation of the actions, and to make connections with one's life and faith.

⁵ CSL, no. 35

⁶ GDC, no. 51

⁷ GDC, no. 71