

## Catechetical Methodology Check-In

In their document *Disciples Called to Witness* (USCCB, 2012), the bishops of the United States outline seven catechetical methodologies that are distinct, yet complementary. Take a moment to assess your ministry, reflecting upon each of the seven catechetical methodologies and noting any thoughts (with 1 being lowest, or a weakness, and 5 being highest, or a strength).

Methodology	How much of a priority does our parish place on . . . ?	How would others rate our parish's commitment to . . . ?	Areas of challenge?	Areas of opportunity?
Discipleship	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
The Christian life	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
Vibrant parish life	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
Liturgical life (including popular devotions and piety)	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
A family-centered approach	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
Commitment to catechesis and catechists	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		
Human experience	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5		

## New Ardor, New Methods, New Expressions

It has been said that the seven most dangerous words in ministry are *We have always done it that way!* Fueling a new ardor for the gospel and employing new methods and expressions is vital if we are to bring alive the Person of Jesus.

Examine your ministry and each of the following areas in turn. Reflect upon the questions, and note your thoughts.

### Let's Get Practical!

#### New Ardor: Your Catechist In-Service

A good way to build enthusiasm and ardor for any aspect of your catechetical program is a catechist in-service. In what ways can this event be used to inflame the hearts of all your catechists?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### New Methods: Technology

Social media continues to be the means through which young people like to communicate. Being prudent with safety, in what ways can I harness technology to bridge the gap between my parish catechetical program and young people's experience?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### New Expressions: The Environment

Young people today have a strong concern for the environment and ecology. In what ways can the parish catechetical program speak to this interest and express itself in a new way?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## The Kerygma Experience

The following template, based on the five movements of the kerygma, can be adapted for any faith-formation experience and can vary in length and depth.

### **Movement 1: God is love and has created me for relationship with him.**

- Scripture: Genesis 1:27–31
- Image: *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo
- Music Suggestions: “Our God Reigns,” “How Great Thou Art”
- Prayer: The Our Father

#### **Suggested Reflection**

Remember a day when you were flooded with happiness . . . the day you graduated, the day you got your first job, the day you fell in love, the day you got married, the day you held your first child. . . . Remember the day . . . the day you realized that none of this was enough. The day you realized that you wanted more . . . more from life. We are made to love and to be loved. We hunger for acceptance, we hunger for genuine relationship, and we hunger for a love that is eternal. This desire for God is written into our hearts. Only in God do we find the love and happiness that we are all searching for. We are created by God, for God. Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O God.

#### **Reflection Questions**

- Do you struggle with belief in God? Why or why not?
- When you think about love, what do you hunger for most? Who in your life has given you an experience of unconditional love?

### **Movement 2: I have broken my relationship with God by my sin.**

- Scripture: John 1:7–9
- Image: *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt
- Music Suggestions: “Hosea,” “Lord Have Mercy,” “Kyrie”
- Prayer: The Confiteor

#### **Suggested Reflection**

Relationships sometimes become broken. Refusing to admit any wrongdoing and refusing to apologize can break relationships, seemingly beyond repair. Our relationship with God can become broken too. It can be broken by sin. A sin is any choice that goes against God’s love. Sin is how we say no to God. Sin damages our relationships with God and other people, leaving a trail of destruction and sorrow in its wake. We hurt ourselves, we hurt those we love, and we damage our relationship with God. And yet God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to give back to you—to us—an even more beautiful life, an eternal life.

#### **Reflection Questions**

- What name can you give to the restlessness in your heart? What ache and hurt do you want to be free of?
- What is the one thing you want to let go of in order to be truly happy?

### **Movement 3: Jesus restores my relationship with God through his life, death, and resurrection.**

- Scripture: Acts 2:22–24, 32–33
- Image: Any image of Jesus on the cross
- Music Suggestions: “Were You There?”
- Prayer: The Creed

## Suggested Reflection

Broken, beaten, spit upon, despised, taunted, battered, whipped, tortured, mocked, crucified. Died. Buried and rose again. All to bring you to new life. Jesus died so that you may live. He wants your whole heart. Not just a small piece of you, but all of you. He loves you and wants to be in close relationship with you.

## Reflection Questions

- Place yourself at the scene of Christ's death. What are you seeing?
- What are you hearing? Who is standing beside you?
- What are you feeling as you watch Jesus die in front of you?

## Movement 4: Jesus invites me to trust him, to turn from sin and give my life to him.

- Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1–14
- Image: An image of Jesus with the disciples or with other people, or an image of an outstretched hand
- Music Suggestions: "Hosea," "Suscipe"
- Prayer: The Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola

## Suggested Reflection

Imagine that while you are out walking, you stumble into quicksand. At first you try to pull yourself out, but the more you struggle to free yourself, the quicker and deeper you sink. What do you need right at that moment? You need someone to save you! You need a person who grabs you by the hand and pulls you out of the quicksand. God's answer to your struggle in the quicksand we call *sin* is Jesus Christ. As our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ intervenes for each one of us to save us from sin. He died for you and lives for you. He wants you to give your entire life to him.

## Reflection Questions

- Have I handed my entire life over to Jesus? What areas of my life have I handed over? What areas have I not handed over? Why?
- What does my life look like today after handing parts of it over to Jesus?

## Movement 5: Jesus has poured the Holy Spirit into my heart to bring me to new life in his church and sends his church on mission so that others can experience new life.

- Scripture: Acts 2:1–21
- Image: An image of the Holy Spirit or Pentecost
- Music Suggestions: "Come Holy Spirit," "Holy Spirit, You Are Welcome Here"
- Prayer: Prayer to the Holy Spirit

## Suggested Reflection

The Holy Spirit remains with us, his disciples, and gives us the gifts we need to live a new life in Christ: faith, hope, and love. One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us who Jesus is. No one can say, "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. In that love we are called to proclaim the Good News to all of creation—making disciples everywhere.

## Reflection Questions

- When I pray, which Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) do I pray to?
- How do I share the Good News with others?
- In what ways do I have a sense that the Holy Spirit is calling me to share my story and share in the church's mission?

## The Seven Signs of an Evangelizing Community

In the document *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis outlines seven principles of an evangelizing community. This printable is adapted from paragraphs 24–33 of that document. It is intended to help you to reflect upon your ministry’s evangelizing efforts and how they might be strengthened.

### An Evangelizing Ministry . . .

#### 1. Knows that the Lord has taken the first step in the evangelization process. (EG #24)

##### Questions for Reflection

- How do I show that I believe the Lord has taken the initiative in loving us?
- Does my ministry foster a community of mercy? How is this expressed?
- How can I “kneel” before the people I serve and become truly involved in their lives?

#### 2. Is a supportive, action-oriented community that patiently responds to people’s real needs. (EG #24)

##### Questions for Reflection

- In what ways is my ministry supportive and action-oriented?
- How do we address the real needs and struggles of the people in our community?

#### 3. Bears fruit. (EG #24)

##### Questions for Reflection

- Are the people involved in my parish’s catechetical ministry growing? Is the ministry growing? What are the fruits of our labor?
- Where are the “weeds” in our parish catechetical program? How can we address them?
- What are the fruits of new life in the catechetical program in my parish?

#### 4. Is marked by deep joy and rejoicing. (EG #24)

##### Questions for Reflection

- Would a visitor consider my catechetical program joyful?
- How do I celebrate the small victories of our parish catechetical program?
- Are joyful worship and prayer at the heart of our parish catechetical ministry? If not, why?

#### 5. Is marked by flexibility and frequent contact with its members. (EG #28)

##### Questions for Reflection

- Would those not currently participating in faith formation consider us to be inflexible, out of touch, or self-absorbed? If so, why?
- What checks and balances are in place to ensure that my ministry continually strives to welcome all?
- Do the same people make up all my committees/councils/groups? In what ways is this a problem? How can this be solved?

#### 6. Fosters a Spirit-filled environment where members are trained to be evangelizers. (EG #28)

##### Questions for Reflection

- What steps are involved in moving people from being complacent consumers of religion to being active disciples in ministry?
- Is the catechetical ministry in my parish characterized by missionary outreach?
- What ministries have the potential to become catalysts of missionary outreach?

#### 7. Is bold and creative in assessing how it operates and conducts itself. (EG #33)

##### Questions for Reflection

- How often do I resort to a “We have always done it this way” mentality in my ministry?
- When I consider the various aspects and components of my parish catechetical ministry, what things are indicative of a complacent mentality?
- What three steps could I undertake that would be bold and creative?

## The Process of Evangelization

Here is an outline of each stage of the evangelization process, the audience for which it is intended, the methodology that is best for working with this group of people in each stage, and typical opportunities in the life of a catechetical program for engaging people in each stage.

Stage	Audience	Methodology	My Ministry
<b>1.</b> Pre-Evangelization	Nonbelievers Those indifferent to the gospel Those who follow other religions Children of believers Those who live on the margins of Christian life Seekers/inquirers	Relationship building / friendship Building on human needs such as love, security, and acceptance	Registration Parent nights Sacramental preparation Catechetical Sunday Prospective classroom aides or hall monitors
<b>2.</b> Initial Proclamation or Missionary Preaching	Nonbelievers Those indifferent to the gospel Those who follow other religions Children of believers Those who live on the margins of Christian life Seekers/inquirers	Kerygmatic proclamation Storytelling Focusing on the person of Jesus Christ	Parent nights Sacramental preparation Retreat ministry One-on-one exchanges Small groups
<b>3.</b> Initiatory Catechesis	Catechumens Those who are coming to the Catholic faith from another religion Catholics who need to complete their initiation Catholics who are unfamiliar with the teachings of the church, including youth and young adults	Introduction to the life of faith Introduction to the liturgy and the sacramental life of the church Introduction to the charity of the people of God	Faith-formation Sacramental preparation Teaching Masses Adult faith formation
<b>4.</b> Mystagogical or Postbaptismal Catechesis	Baptized Christians	Ongoing study and exploration of: Prayer Missionary activity Celebration of the sacramental life	Adult faith formation for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsors/godparents</li> <li>• Catechists</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b> Permanent or Continuing Catechesis	Believers	Systematic presentation of the truths of the faith and Christian life	Adult faith formation for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsors/godparents</li> <li>• Catechists</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>

## Questions for Reflection

List three ways you can reach out to people in the pre-evangelization stage of the process.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How has initial proclamation or missionary preaching been incorporated into my faith-formation program?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How has our faith-formation program made provisions for classes that combine young people who need initial catechesis with those who need more advanced catechesis?

## Addressing the Six Tasks of Catechesis with Children

In his book *A Well-Built Faith* (Loyola Press, 2008), Joe Paprocki uses the acronym *HELP* to talk about the four pillars of our faith and the corresponding four sections of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Pillars	Section of the CCC
<b>H</b> old on to our faith	Creed
<b>E</b> xpress our faith	Liturgy and Sacraments
<b>L</b> ive our faith	Moral Life
<b>P</b> ray our faith	Prayer

Adding *ME* to this acronym gives us two additional tasks of catechesis:

- M**entor our faith: form apprenticeships in Christian living
- E**vangelize our faith: promote a missionary spirit

### 1. Hold On to Our faith: Creed

Contextualize the Creed for younger children by speaking to them about the apostles. Encourage them to “spiritually adopt” one of the apostles and find out more about that person. The Creed contains lot of information and can be challenging to memorize, so using an activity can help. Try cutting the Creed into strips to form puzzle pieces, then give each child a bag with a set of puzzle pieces and have him or her try to put the pieces in order. Make it engaging!

### 2. Express Our Faith: Liturgy and Sacraments

Many children and youth find a church space interesting even if they can’t understand all the architectural details. Take them to the church often, beginning or ending your session with prayer. Conduct a “church search” or a walk through the Mass just for them. If your parish has stained-glass windows, consider taking pictures of them, sharing the meaning of each window with children, and inviting children to draw and color their own versions of the windows. Teach older children the symbols and metaphors used by the artist so that they can learn to “read” stained-glass windows. Consider a field trip to a neighboring church to discover similarities and differences between windows.

### 3. Live Our Faith: Moral Life

Contextualize the moral virtues by referencing specific stories and people in the Bible. Here are some ideas:

Virtues	Scripture
Honesty, bravery, sacrifice, dedication	Joseph (Genesis 37–50)
Hospitality, joyfulness, helpfulness	Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24)
Loyalty, friendship, generosity, steadfastness	The book of Ruth
Justice, charity, self-control, goodness	The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:16–34)



## **4. Pray Our Faith: Prayer**

Introduce children to various prayer forms. One often-overlooked prayer is from the Eastern Orthodox tradition and is called the Jesus Prayer (or the Prayer of the Heart). The Jesus Prayer is very simple: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Coupled with synchronized breathing, this powerful prayer introduces young people to Christian contemplative prayer and meditation.

## **5. Mentor Our Faith: Form Apprenticeships in Christian Living**

Assign younger children a “big sister” or “big brother” prayer partner at the beginning of the year. This is especially important if there are new children who join the program in the middle of the year or are new to the parish community. Cultivate opportunities for young people to get to know one another and have time to pray together. Post a note about big sisters and big brothers on the bulletin board each month or in the parent newsletter.

## **6. Evangelize Our Faith: Promote a Missionary Spirit**

If your parish has a sister parish, consider reaching out to that parish to assign pen pals. Classes can exchange information on what being Catholic is like in their respective communities. Have children write letters or organize a mission drive for families to collect supplies needed in the sister parish.

Speak of the work of the missions often. Include mission work in the prayers of the parish and ask young people to keep those who work in the missions in prayer.

For specific information on the missions and how your faith-formation program can support them, introduce catechists and children to the Missio app created by the Pontifical Mission Societies and launched by Pope Francis in 2013.

## Catechesis and the Catechumenate

Here is a helpful chart identifying the stages of the catechumenate and their respective elements and components.

Stage	Pre-Catechumenate	Catechumenate	Purification and Enlightenment	Mystagogy
<b>Name</b>	Inquirer	Catechumen	Elect	Neophyte
<b>Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial proclamation</li> <li>• Stirrings of faith and repentance</li> <li>• Practice of prayer</li> <li>• Awareness of church</li> </ul>	Formation in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the word</li> <li>• the community</li> <li>• the liturgy</li> <li>• the mission</li> </ul>	Spiritual intensification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prayer</li> <li>• fasting</li> <li>• almsgiving</li> <li>• discernment</li> <li>• reflection</li> </ul>	Postbaptismal catechesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greater participation in parish life</li> <li>• deepening of liturgical catechesis</li> <li>• discipleship</li> </ul>
<b>Aspect of the Process</b>	Evangelization	Catechesis	Prayer and discernment	Continual and ongoing formation

### Invite, Welcome, and Include

Consider how your parish and faith-formation program might be more inviting and welcoming. Here are two ideas.

#### Welcome Desk

Establish a welcome desk with clear and attractive signage in a visible area. Invite friendly, knowledgeable, and engaging parishioners to staff the desk before and after weekend Masses. Provide desk staff with simple training in basic hospitality grounded in Christ. Model scenarios in which people come by to ask for help or information. Provide language that desk staff can use to enquire how the parish can help newcomers or visitors become members of the parish. Provide basic information on the parish, Jesus, and the Catholic Church.

#### Mentors

Assign and pair new members and families with appropriate mentors who will take the time to follow up and build relationships. Don't let the process end with a parish registration card. Instead, personally and continually invite new parishioners to faith-formation opportunities at the parish. Peer companions for young people in religious education can make all the difference in modeling what a lived faith looks like.

### Questions for Reflection

1. How might your faith-formation program include a consistent, welcoming presence for new families or children?
2. Do you match children or families with a mentor? How might you incorporate mentoring in your ministry?

List three ways that your program can be more inviting and welcoming.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **From “Class” to Life**

The catechumenate process takes its cues more from the world of liturgy than from the world of academia. Here are some ideas to spark your inspiration.

- Instead of referring to children as “students,” consider referring to them as “apprentice disciples” or “disciples.”
- Rather than holding “interviews” for confirmation candidates, consider referring to these encounters as “confirmation conversations” or “disciple dialogues.”
- When assigning young people mentors, consider calling them “spiritual guides” or “spiritual mentors.”
- Instead of holding “meetings” with your catechists or parents, consider referring to them as “gatherings” or even “discipleship check-ins.”

## The Principles of Adult Faith Formation

Here is an overview of the principles of adult faith formation as outlined in *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us*, the United States Bishops' document on adult faith formation.

### General Principles

- Adult faith formation must be planned to serve the glory of God, the building of the kingdom, and the good of the church.
- Adult learning must be oriented toward adult Christian living.
- It also must strengthen the role and mission of the family in the church and society.

### Planning Principles

- Give adult faith-formation programs the best pastoral resources and energies.
- Ensure that adult faith formation is essential and integral to the pastoral plan of the parish.
- Design adult faith-formation opportunities to serve the needs and interests of the entire faith community.

### Principles for Implementation

- Use the catechumenate model as a basis for catechesis of adults.
- Respect the different learning styles and needs of participants, treating adults as adults, respecting their experience, and actively involving them in the learning process.
- Engage adults actively in the actual life and ministry of the Christian community.

### Principles of Inculturation

- Bring the power of the gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures.
- Let the gifts of culture enrich the life of the Church.
- Involve the whole people of God in inculturating the faith.
- Allow adult faith-formation efforts to be opportunities for inculturation and service.

### Consider the following questions and how they can shape adult faith formation in your parish community:

1. In what ways is our parish in touch with Church directives concerning the primacy of adult faith formation?
2. What expressions of adult faith formation are present in the parish?
3. In what ways has our parish been supportive of adults as they grow in their faith?
4. Is adult faith formation a priority in our parish? If not, why?
5. What steps can we take to ensure that adult faith formation is a priority in our parish?
6. Identify the challenges in providing lifelong faith formation in your parish. How have these challenges impacted the efficacy of adult faith formation?
7. What are the needs of the adults in our community?
8. How, as a parish, can we meet these needs?
9. As a parish, what do we do well in the area of adult faith formation?
10. How can we build upon our successes and provide additional opportunities for growth in adult faith formation?

## Nine Indicators of an Evangelizing Catechetical Program

Below is a checklist of nine indicators that your catechetical program has an evangelizing focus. Take a moment to assess your faith-formation program in light of evangelization.

Indicator	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Is the kerygma proclaimed?				
2. Is prayer—particularly intercessory prayer—at the heart of the process?				
3. Would outsiders feel genuinely welcomed, loved, and accepted?				
4. Are people given a chance to witness and to share with one another, formally and informally?				
5. Are faith learning and faith living connected?				
6. Do we avoid acronyms or terminology that people might find difficult to understand?				
7. Are people invited personally?				
8. Is there consistent and timely follow-up?				
9. Is flexibility built into the process?				

## Key Church Documents on Evangelization and Catechesis

Over time, you'll want to get to know the following key catechetical documents, which will guide and assist you in your ministry. As you get to know each one, jot down a few thoughts about it. Summarize its focus, and note how it can best serve your ministry.

Document	Summary of focus or content	How can this resource best serve me in catechetical leadership?
<i>The Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> (CCC)		
<i>The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>		
<i>The General Directory for Catechesis</i> (GDC)		
<i>The National Directory for Catechesis</i> (NDC)		
<i>Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time)</i> (CT)		
<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World)</i> (EN)		

# The Effective Catechetical Leader

Document	Summary of focus or content	How can this resource best serve me in catechetical leadership?
<i>Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)</i> (EG)		
<i>Compendium on the New Evangelization</i>		
<i>Go and Make Disciples (A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States)</i> (GMD)		
<i>Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization</i>		
<i>Our Hearts Were Burning within Us (A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States)</i> (OHWB)		
The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA)		