

## Catechesis: What is Catechesis?

### Introduction

*And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ (Mt. 28:18–20)*

With these words, Jesus empowered the Church to continue his mission. “Catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways.” (*General Directory for Catechesis*)

This segment is meant to help you reflect on the importance of liturgical catechesis. Just follow the outline. Begin by reflecting or journaling on the *first question*. Then read the article, “What is Catechesis?” and jot down your responses to the *reflection questions*.

### First Question

What is the most important task of a catechist?

### What is Catechesis

The word catechesis comes from the Greek words *katekheisis* (teaching or instructing by spoken words) and *katekhein* (to teach or instruct by spoken word); *kata-* (out, down) + *ekhein* (to sound or echo the teaching), means that catechesis or the teaching of the faith is an

interactive process in which the Word of God re-sounds between and among the community: the proclaimer of the Word, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit. Catechesis is not a once in a lifetime event, or for one stage of a person's life. It is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Catechesis leads all God's people to an ever deepening relationship with God, who reveals himself in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and with the community of the faithful.

Catechesis takes many forms and includes the Initiation of adults, youth and children as well as the intentional and systematic effort to enable all to grow in faith and discipleship. In its most general sense *catechesis* is all of the ecclesial (church) activities that bring people to faith. It is important to remember that catechesis is an action of the Church. It is the Church who hands on her Tradition. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (Par. 84-86) gives the following tasks of catechesis:

- Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.
- Catechesis promotes knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the Sacraments.
- Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.
- Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.
- Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
- Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.

The listing and description of these tasks in the *Directory* give a much broader view of what catechesis entails. It includes more than instruction. Without doing all of tasks, Christian faith will not develop fully (see GDC, par.87).

So what does this mean for you as you catechize your group? Primarily, remember you are not the only one who catechizes, families do, the worshiping assembly does, and other activities in the parish or diocese do. The other important implication is that the way you interact with young people is important. The way young people relate to one another in a given session, and your guidance for interaction, will form them, as will the social action projects they do as a group in and for the communities of Church and world.

### Reflection Questions

- Since catechesis is a lifelong process, how have you been catechized or brought to deeper faith recently?
- Besides instruction in the faith, which of the tasks of faith given above are you most comfortable with and how will you accomplish it with your group?