

## 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 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). Those who teach, the *catechists*, echo the teachings of Jesus

Christ and his apostles. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states that life in Christ is a process of continuing conversion (46). 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. There are six major tasks of catechesis, according to the *General Directory for Catechesis* (84-86):

- Promotes knowledge of the faith
- Liturgical education
- Moral formation
- Teaching to pray
- Education for community life
- Missionary initiation

The listing and description of these tasks in the *Directory* give a much broader view of what catechesis entails. It includes more than instruction. Unless our catechesis includes all of these 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. The *General Directory* states that, “No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to him by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method” (156).

### Reflection Questions

- Keeping in mind that catechesis is a lifelong process, how have you been catechized or brought to deeper faith recently?
- Other than 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?