Catechesis: National Directory for Catechesis

Introduction

This section includes a series of ten articles on the *National Directory for Catechesis*. It highlights the chapters of the *Directory* in order, however the themes presented will also direct you to relevant material throughout the *Directory*. At the conclusion of each article is a process to help you integrate the content of the *Directory* into planning for catechesis in your local parish or personal ministry. The process may be used by individuals or groups. It will be helpful to read the articles along with the accompanying chapter of the *NDC*.

Part 1: Proclaiming the Gospel in the United States

It is fitting that the first chapter of the *National Directory for Catechesis* describes salient features of the culture in the United States. It is also telling that rather than name diversity as a characteristic of American culture, it gives this phenomenon its own section. Whether it was intended or not, I think this ordering of things prompted me to think about the fact that where one stands in the diversity curve is a significant factor in how one will hear, read, or emphasize different parts of the document. Like the devout Jews who heard the words of the disciples after the Pentecost experience, we will hear or read the document from our own personal perspective and background. Diversity will be a factor for planning groups as they engage in diocesan and parish planning processes.

Personally I hear and read the document from the perspective of a Caucasian middle class, older lay minister whose professional life and career has always been associated with catechetics and whose

cultural experience is pretty mainstream and traditional. Because I am married to an ordained Methodist, and have a keen interest in families who are preparing for sacraments, I have a peculiar sensitivity to ecumenism and to the effect that has on marriage and family life. Having tasted both the joy and loneliness of mobility, I have always been loosely tethered to a large loving extended family. Along with the parishes I have been a member of, they have supported and challenged me in my baptismal call and my Roman Catholic identity.

The six characteristics of US culture which are presented in the document (Freedom, Religious Freedom, Economic Freedom, Pragmatism, Interest in Science and Technology, Globalization and Mobility) affect every person living within the boundaries of this country, regardless of their religion, race, age, or class. As the document points out, there are positives and negatives to each of the characteristics. From a catechetical perspective, we need to examine these characteristics to see where they might point out catechetical imperatives, such as, in the case of mobility, the importance of small faith sharing groups and intentional communities, or in the case of freedom or pragmatism, more intentional catechesis on ethics, morality and conscience development. Most people hear the word *inculturation* in reference to specific immigrant or ethnic groups. However, since these characteristics cut across all groups, the question of the inculturation of the Gospel message into the American culture as a whole, as it is characterized here, might be one well worth pursuing at a deeper level.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Describe the perspective from which you read the document. From that perspective, looking at the Table of Contents, which areas will be of most interest to you?

- Read each of the six characteristics of US culture and list examples of positive and negative expressions of each as you experience them in your neighborhood, parish and school.

- Inculturation is "the insertion of the Gospel message into cultures" (p. 64). What catechetical efforts would support this process?

- Read the section Family and Home in the United States.

  - Highlight what rings true to your local situation.

  - Add hopes, changes, and trends that you are experiencing locally that are not named here.

- List the implications this section has for you in regard to content, method, or structures of your present catechetical programs.

Part 2: Catechesis Within the Church's Mission of Evangelization

The positioning of evangelization in the second chapter of the *National Directory for Catechesis* is one of the more significant points of the document. It also points to one of the noteworthy differences between the present *National Directory for Catechesis* and its predecessor, *Sharing the Light of Faith*. The previous *Directory* described evangelization and catechesis as:

…distinct forms of the ministry of the Word… which are closely linked in practice. Evangelization "has as its purpose the arousing of the beginnings of faith." It seeks to bring the good news "into all the strata of humanity," in this way "transforming humanity from within and making it new" (16). It aims at interior change, conversion of "the personal and collective conscience of people, the activities in which they engage, and the

lives and concrete milieux which are theirs"(17).

Such change and renewal are also goals of catechesis, which disposes people "to receive the action of the Holy Spirit and to deepen conversion," and does so "through the word, to which are joined the witness of life and prayer." (Sharing the Light of Faith, 35)

In the previous *Directory,* the tasks of evangelization and pre-evangelization were depicted as presuppositions for catechesis. However in this document more prominence is given to the role of catechesis in the process of evangelization. "Today, however, catechesis must often take the form of the primary proclamation of the gospel because many who present themselves for catechesis have not yet experienced conversion to Jesus Christ." (19D). Alluding to "the diverse, social, religious, and cultural contexts," the *NDC* broadens the scope of who needs evangelization from the original subjects, those who have not encountered Christ and are unbaptized, to include those who have been baptized but never fully catechized and those who are baptized but who are alienated from the Church and those who have drifted away. The naming of these groups helps situate the challenge but it also implicitly urges the centrality of conversion to the person and message of Jesus as the primary goal of both Initiatory and Ongoing Catechesis. It is a message of discipleship.

The simple answer to the question: "What are we about in the catechetical endeavor?" is to make disciples. Seeing the end of catechesis as discipleship, means that we are looking at catechesis as a holistic practice. It is a process that involves the whole person—head, heart, hands and feet. This is well described in the six tasks of catechesis (20). Meditation and reflection on the six tasks leads to the realization that catechesis as an ecclesial action includes but is *more than* formal programming around a scope and sequence or doctrinal

themes, rather it expands to the community's actions for justice, liturgical life, prayer experiences, moral fiber, witness, and life in the world. In its life together, the faithful community becomes and attracts disciples.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- How do you define evangelization?

- What do you see as distinctions between evangelization and catechesis?

- Read the section "Pastoral Directives for Evangelization" 19E. Make two lists from the seven directives. In the first, list the directives which you feel are most practiced in your school. In the second, list the directives that you think your school needs to develop more fully and write one concrete suggestion for development.

- How would you describe the difference between alienated and drifted Catholics?

- What approaches have you found most effective in ministering to alienated or drifted Catholics?

- Using the six tasks of catechesis, name all of the catechetical activities that are occurring in your school.

Part 3: This Is Our Faith: The Faith of the Church

It is no secret that the issue of Catholic identity is a major concern in this postmodern era. We hear the term "cafeteria Catholic" and know it is a reality for many people. Some younger Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials are not sure what is really essential

to being "Catholic" today. To this issue, the third chapter of the *National Directory for Catechesis* sheds some light on where to go and how to discern the authentic content for Roman Catholic catechesis. The first part of the Chapter (24) uses the fitting image of a symphony to describe the normative instruments of catechesis: Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis*. The music of Catholic identity and the scores that are written and handed on in this generation are and will be shaped from these documents.

The Symphony of Faith

Sacred Scripture, of course, holds the most important instrumental place in the symphony because it is the written word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. This follows the ancient and consistent practice of a catechetical methodology begun in the early Church and continued today. In 1969 Pope Paul VI in the *Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Missal* reminded the Church: "Sacred Scripture will be at the same time a perpetual source of spiritual life, an instrument of prime value for transmitting Christian doctrine and finally the center of all theology." What differentiates Roman Catholics from many of the other Christian Traditions is our belief in a "deposit of faith" contained in both Scripture and Tradition. In any given historical period it is the task of the magisterium, the living, teaching office of the Church which is the bishops in communion with the Pope to serve the Word of God and authentically interpret what has been handed on. The development of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by Pope John Paul II is an example of the work of the magisterium doing just this work. The Catechism is both an authentic reference text and a collection of the truths of the Catholic faith. The *National Directory for Catechesis* presumes that catechists will refer to the Catechism often

for reflection and understanding of the basic beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church.

Criteria for Authentic Presentation

The second part of this chapter goes on to list the criteria for authentic presentation of the Christian Message. These are both the components of vision for a parish or individual catechetical program and the touchstones from which catechists, education committees, parish leadership and pastoral staffs can judge and evaluate the quality and wholeness of their catechetical programs and processes for both adults and children. Nine criteria are named and described in the chapter. (25 A–I) They might be reworded into the following evaluative questions:

- Do our programs and processes intentionally place Jesus Christ at the center of what we do and say?

- Are we focused on the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and how that Trinitarian relationship relates to us?

- Do our teachings and actions enflesh salvation and freedom for people who are bound by sin or oppressed for any reason?

- Is the Church the source and end of our catechetical efforts?

- Do we attend to the historical nature and character of both the past and present?

- How are we paying attention to and discerning the interplay between the Christian message and the postmodern culture?

- Is the school religion curriculum a comprehensive presentation of the whole message of the Gospel and respectful of the hierarchy of

truths?

- In what ways do we communicate and act upon the value of the profound dignity of every human person?

- How do students in our programs and processes learn a common language of faith?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Make a list of all of the characteristics that define Catholic identity for you. With a partner or in a small group compare and contrast your lists.

- What does the term "cafeteria" Catholic mean to you? How do you respond to that terminology?

- How does reading or listening to Scripture help you discern the content of your faith?

- Read 25 A-I and using the nine questions above evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your present school catechetical programs and processes.

Part 4: Catechesis and Methodology

To truly savor this chapter of the *NDC*, one cannot take it in linear fashion. It needs to be digested in wholes and then, perhaps, taken apart. Although it is entitled "Methodology," the chapter is not about how to do catechesis with adults or children; it is more about the *divine pedagogy* — God's method or way of revealing himself to humans; it asserts God's way of revealing himself should be modeled in human life and is the heart of catechesis. Two points that are woven throughout the chapter are:

- "Catechesis as communication of divine revelation…. [it] seeks to bring about a conversion to Christ…a profession of faith…a genuine personal surrender…to become disciples…to discern the vocation to which God is calling them." (p. 94)

- "the communication of faith in catechesis…can happen in diverse ways, not always completely known to us." (p.96)

This chapter moves catechesis into a very broad context, which includes formal catechetical structures but affirms that catechesis is not limited to the familiar formal structures of today's parishes.

Communication of Divine Revelation

The mighty, transcendent God chooses to reveal himself in the three Persons of the Trinity who constantly break into the human condition through Creation; through the human face of Jesus; and through the power of the Holy Spirit moving and inviting us into deeper relationship through events, experiences, and historical situations of our lives and our lives in community. Methods are means to an end. God's end is that we will gradually come to know who God is and know conversion and salvation within the community of Church, which, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, "continues God's own methodology in a living catechesis" (p. 93).

Diversity of Catechesis

This living catechesis is expressed in a variety of ways. The chapter mentions two fundamental processes as catechetical methods (pp. 96–97). The first is the inductive method, which flows from persons' human experiences, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, leads them to an understanding of God and the teachings of the Church. Second is deductive reasoning which begins with the faith as it is expressed

in doctrines and teachings, and then makes application to human experience. Inductive and deductive methods are complementary, not competing processes. Both are essential. Note the phrase: "the deductive method, has full value only when the inductive process is completed" (p. 97). No matter how the catechetical situation is approached, the primary goal or end is conversion of the life of individuals or communities. From this point, one can look at the elements of human methodology and reflect on more specific ways that catechesis is both done and happens within and outside formal structures of parish life.

For Reflection and Discussion:

- Read through the "Elements of Human Methodology" and identify:

    - which elements have been most important for you in your faith journey?

    - which elements are most and least affirmed in your parish or school setting?

- If you are a catechist in a formal catechetical setting, read about the inductive and deductive methods (pp. 96–97) and identify:

    - which method do you feel most comfortable with?

    - which methods are used in the text or other resources you use with adults or children?

- Name and describe a time when you have experienced the communication of God's revelation outside of a formal catechetical setting.

- Name and describe a time when you have experienced the

communication of God's revelation within a formal catechetical setting.

Part 5: Catechesis in a Worshiping Community

Liturgical catechesis fosters a deeper sense of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments. 'In other words, sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns into hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments, and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice.' [CT 23] NDC, 33

This is a radical and visionary chapter of the *NDC* because in so many ways it provides the reader with a new way to think about how to do catechesis in general as well as how to do catechesis for sacraments. It begins with the affirmation of the intimate connection between catechesis and liturgy. The affirmation collects the basics of the earliest Christian Tradition, which mirrors the action of taking out, dusting off, and displaying valuable rich treasures which somehow were lost or misplaced. Not to say that we ever lost either catechesis or liturgy, but over the years the connection and intimacy between them was ruptured in some cases. The most visible was the rupture in local situations where people spoke of "turf" wars between catechists and liturgists. The disconnect was even more insidious when people learned facts, beliefs, and images about liturgy and sacrament that bore no relationship to what happened when they gathered to celebrate them. Or, the facts, beliefs, and images about liturgy and sacraments were presented in a magical or anorexic fashion and did not involve experiences of conversion or liturgical catechesis.

Once the document sets up the relationship between catechesis and

liturgy, it moves on to present general principles for sacramental catechesis followed by a description of the content that should be the curriculum for each of the particular sacraments — content that is appropriate for both immediate preparation for the Sacraments, and for lifelong catechesis.

It is possible to read those paragraphs without catching the paradigm shift, unless the reader takes to heart and mind the significance of both the statement and the placement of the rather short sentence: "The baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for all catechesis." (33.D) Using the baptismal catechumenate as normative, the *NDC* puts forth the vision of an initiation process that calls people, children and adults, to gradual and on-going conversion within a faithful assembly. It is a vision that supports sacramental catechesis and preparation for fuller and deeper participation in the faithful life of the community that is shaped and held together by its common belief in the mystery and relevance of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. It is not a vision that supports an apologetic or devotional approach to instruction on, or preparation for, sacraments. What that sentence and the following paragraphs do is call into question many of the ways we have done catechesis for and about liturgy and sacraments, such as, doing catechesis for or about sacraments without ever doing ritual well, or using the primary symbols and rites as the foundation for catechesis and connecting the celebration of sacraments to conversion, commitment to the community, and missionary activity.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Name and describe a time when you have experienced an intimate connection between liturgy and catechesis, for example a time when a liturgical celebration caused you to understand more about the mystery of God or a doctrine of faith.

- Read the General Principle for Sacramental Catechesis (33B) and evaluate your present school environment:

  - In what area(s) is your school strong?

  - Which areas need improvement?

- In the section Catechesis for particular sacraments, read section 3b.1–3 and assess how your school is meeting those needs.

- What do you see as the implications for taking seriously the principle: "The baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for all catechesis?" (33.D)

  - What would remain the same in sacramental catechesis?

  - What would change?

Part 6: Moral Formation in Christ

Moral catechesis involves more than the proclamation and presentation of the principles and practice of Christian morality. It presents the integration of Christian moral principles in the lived experience of the individual and the community. This moral testimony must always demonstrate the social consequences of the gospel. National Directory for Catechesis, 42

This chapter of the *National Directory for Catechesis* speaks directly to the issue of "walking the walk" of commitment to the values of the Gospel and the teachings of Roman Catholicism. It goes to the heart of the goal of all catechetical activity which is persons and communities shaped, formed, and actively witnessing in the world through lives that have been transformed in Christ. The chapter moves from the starting point of the presence of the image of God in every human being to the challenges that confront the dignity of the human person in a society where "Individual freedom becomes the absolute

and the source of other values" (41, B). This is a reality that poses the danger of losing the sense of the existence of God and diminishing the capacity to make real moral decisions based on the principles of faith that we are all children of the same God and creator, responsible to and for each other in both local and global communities.

A Process of Moral Formation

Moral formation is neither simple nor one-dimensional. It is presented here as a process of lifelong transformation and abandonment to the will of God. It involves the freely given grace of God and the practice of virtue by individuals and communities. It is a process of conversion. The presentation of the formation of moral conscience in the chapter is excellent because it names the dynamics between forming and informing, and incorporates the illumination of the word of God, the influence of human factors, and the role of the Magisterium of the Church (42, C). It presents a clear description of sin (D) and it names twenty all-encompassing characteristics of moral catechesis (E) that help us understand that moral formation and conscience development more than simply teaching the Ten Commandments, Precepts of the Church, and the Beatitudes.

A Social Endeavor

While the contemporary term "global village" is not used in the chapter, the section on the human community (43, A-D) ought to be read with that reality in mind. It highlights the fact that Christian morality or life in Christ has a mission that moves individuals and communities into the world to work for justice and to put into practice the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching (43, C). The section on social sin (43, D) is an extremely important one. Social sin as a concept is a "new kid on the block." It is often difficult for persons

to see social sin and injustice in structures and institutions in which they participate. It is probably more often experienced in situations of powerlessness where people are victims of some kind of system or structure where they are exploited or oppressed or in situations of prophecy when individuals or groups do see social sin speak out and act as advocates for its demise. Whatever the case, the *NDC* points the responsibility back to individuals.

Questions for reflection and discussion

- Read through the section: "Some Challenges to the Dignity of the Human Person" (41, B) and identify the following:

    - How are those challenges apparent in your local situation?

    - Which challenge is most important to you personally?

    - How does your school offer catechesis on the seven points noted at the end of the section?

- Read through the section "Catechesis on the Decalogue and the Decalogue in the Spirit of the Beatitudes" and identify ways that you informally thread or might thread these teachings throughout your sessions.

- Name and describe a time when you had a moral conversion—when you made a choice to turn away from some way of acting toward another which was more in the light of Gospel teachings.

- What examples of social sin can you point to in contemporary life? Identify one way you can work with others to eradicate it.

Part 7: Catechizing the People of God in Diverse Settings

This chapter provides a wealth of vision and information for

diocesan offices and school faculty to reflect on as they develop local catechetical structures, strategies and programs. In the document, diverse settings include readiness and human development cycles from the elderly adult to infants and children. It addresses persons with disabilities and special situations, which embraces a wide range of groups from the professional to the economically disadvantaged. It also attends to the growing contemporary challenge of catechesis in relation to ecumenical and inter-religious settings.

Organizing Principle

As you work with this chapter, keep in mind that it represents a paradigmatic shift—a new way of looking at catechetical activity. If taken seriously, this new way will change the vision, emphases, structures, and even budget priorities in parish or diocesan catechetical activity One of the most significant statements of this chapter is "Adult catechesis should be the 'organizing *principle* which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular Church …This is the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as old age.'"(48 A) It is especially significant since it was picked up from the *General Directory for Catechesis* (275) for the Church in the United States where the real organizing principle up to this time has been children's catechesis. While it is not new to acknowledge that the developing and nurturing of the faith of adults, in particular parents and significant caregivers, is essential to the faith life of infants and children, it is new to imply that adult catechesis in and of itself is the foundation and starting point. For as long as the catechesis of adults remains connected to infants and children, parishes risk that many adults go uncatechized in areas of their lives which are ripe for conversion and catechesis. How many adult Catholics go elsewhere because they do not know what they believe, do not feel their spiritual

needs are being met, or are evangelized by friends, neighbors and colleagues who are convincing witnesses to another tradition?

Engaging the person

This chapter continues the underlying vision of catechesis as a multidimensional activity. It is all of the activities that bring people to faith, including liturgy, pastoral ministry and instruction. It also highlights the importance of those who are developing a vision or planning strategies or programs to consult with those who are to be catechized about their catechetical needs and to engage them in planning. In doing this, most parishes will find that "Adult catechesis requires a comprehensive, multifaceted, and coordinated approach and a variety of learning activities…" (48A.4) This includes bringing the groups named later: young adults, adolescents, children, families, persons with disabilities and special situations, along with those who may be engaged in ecumenical and inter-religious settings at work or home, to the table of planning and needs assessment.

Conclusion

The reader may say, "We have done that and it hasn't worked;" "We've tried it and gotten minimal results." The questions are: when you did it "What was your organizing principle?" "Were you aiming for a paradigm shift?" "Did you add on or make changes?"

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

- If you are one who might respond "We have done that and it hasn't worked;" "We've tried it and gotten minimal results." How would you answer the above questions?

- Make a three column list all of the groups mentioned in this chapter. In the first column write the name of the group (e.g.

young adult, elderly, special needs). In the second column jot down how they are involved in needs assessment and planning. In the third column list the catechetical activities that involve or are designed for them in your parish. Discuss the implications of the blank spaces on your lists.

- Discuss or reflect on why you think ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is significant in the Roman Catholic community today. Read Section 51 of the chapter and choose three significant statements that apply to your local situation. Share and discuss those statements with a small group.

Part 8: Those Who Catechize

It is clear from the beginning of this chapter that catechesis is the responsibility of the whole community, from bishops and priests to religious women and men, from families to catechetical leaders and catechists, from youth and campus ministers to Catholic school principals and religion teachers and faculties. The *NDC* does a fine job of describing the roles and responsibilities of each of these "catechists." Keep in mind that each school, parish and diocese has its own unique characteristics: Some are rural and some are urban. Some are economically advantaged. Some are not. Some have large administrative staffs. Some do not. Some have large ethnic and specific cultural populations. Some do not. In instances where there are both Catholic schools and religious education programs, either at a diocesan or parish level, some work together and some do not. It is with this mindfulness that catechetical leaders and committees need to read the section on the "Differing Roles of those who Catechize" and ask the questions: Does this fit in our situation? If not, who carries out this responsibility or role? Do we need to re-examine our situation and make some changes? Another thing to consider as you

integrate the document is the possibility that over the years, roles and responsibilities have become less clear for people or have never been articulated. This often causes tension, especially at a local school or parish level.

The ministry of catechesis is accomplished in many different ways. The more we come to an awareness and practice of using the initiation model as the inspiration for catechesis, the more we will begin to draw others into the catechetical mix. Although "Others who Catechize," (54B.10) may almost seem a footnote or a catch-all on first reading, it is actually a visionary piece. When the next *NDC* is written, look for it to have blossomed just as Adult Catechesis blossomed from the past *Directory*.

What is probably the most important part of this chapter is the section "Preparation and Ongoing Formation of Catechists," (55). It calls for discernment and initial and ongoing formation. Discernment is a component that is not always understood or incorporated into catechetical ministry. We all know of instances where people volunteer for the ministry who are not suited for it or we "arm twist" people to volunteer out of desperation. More attention needs to be given to discernment for the work of catechesis. A discernment for ministry event is becoming common in many parishes where parishioners come together in a spirit of prayer and reflection and look at their gifts and talents along with the needs of the parish and consider where they can best be of service. The issue of catechist formation is also extremely important. Most teacher's editions and publishers' websites today are written in such a way that catechists get "on-the-job" formation, and there are some excellent programs for catechist formation on the market. It is important that catechists be given the opportunity to form a community of faith and to grow in their own faith life and understanding of their faith. Notice the

gamut of goals listed in article 55. To be faithful to the vision of this chapter, catechetical leaders need to be creative and consistent about formation. This is not an easy task in our busy and over-scheduled world.

Questions for discussion and reflection

- How aware is your school about catechesis being the responsibility of everybody? Are there ways to raise people's consciousness of their role in catechesis?

- Read the section on the "Differing Roles of Those Who Catechize" and ask the questions: Does this fit in our situation? If not, who carries out this responsibility or role? Do we need to re-examine our situation and make some changes? What kinds of changes are necessary?

- Read all of Article 55 and discuss which areas are strong and which ones need to be developed in your local situation. What are some creative ways to provide ongoing catechist formation in your local setting?

Part 9: Organizing Catechetical Ministry

The managerial impetus is easy to take in as one reads through the chapter and sees the outline of parish and diocesan and universal church structures and the groups and types of catechesis mentioned. It can be overwhelming in one read and leave the school religion coordinator or parish catechetical leader saying to her or himself, "How could I ever do all this?" The chapter assumes that it is not one person's task but the task of a community of committed parishioners and staff people.

School Plan

A very significant point in the chapter is the mandate for parish planning, and this can be applied to school environments as well:

> *"Like the diocese, every parish needs to develop **a coherent catechetical plan** that integrates the various components of the overall program and provides opportunities for all parishioners to hear the Gospel message, celebrate it in prayer and Liturgy, and live it in their daily lives. That plan should reflect the priority of adult catechesis, take into account the needs of everyone in the parish, and provide special accommodations for cultural, racial and ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, the neglected, and those unable to represent their own rights and interests."* (60A)

The idea for a parish plan also expands the notion of catechesis from applying principally to children's religious education in school or parish programs and a few adults attending adult education sessions to a plan that will reach further than what has been accepted as sufficient for parish catechesis.

Structures and Needs

The organizational principles and guidelines for planning (58) both envision an analysis of the present situation in parishes and dioceses and a plan that flows from that analysis and needs assessment. The last principle, in particular, names the reality that catechetical structures take their life from the needs of the community and as those needs change, structures need to change with them in order to achieve catechetical goals. A planning group needs to be attentive to the makeup of the school and parish at the present time and in the near future and what kinds of structures will meet their needs. Structures here will not only mean content or scheduling but in this post–modern society it may also mean methods and new ways of communication,

just for starters. Throughout the document we have seen the emphasis on adult catechesis. This is an area which will demand creative thinking and viable options, especially in a school environment. As always, creating a plan and organizing catechetical ministry in a diocese or school includes and affects personnel and money. The *NDC* implies the importance of collaboration, discernment, and "equitable sharing of services, resources, and opportunities." (58)

Questions for discussion and reflection

- Read the General Principles and Guidance section (58) and discuss the following:

    - Why is an overall pastoral plan important in a parish, school or diocese?

    - In what concrete ways does your school support and respect the family?

    - How do you understand the statement "The responsibility for catechesis is shared by each member of the Church?

    - At the present time how does your school communicate the principles and goals of catechesis?

    - How do you feel about sharing your services, resources or opportunities with the parish or another school?

    - Are the present structures in your parish, school and diocese based on the needs of the people?

- Read Sections 61A and B and list those areas that are pertinent to your school or diocese. Make two lists. On the first list, rank the areas in order of importance to you. On the second list, rank them in accordance to how much time, money, and personnel appear to be given to them at your school or diocesan level. Discuss the discrepancies and what this might mean for future planning and

organizing.

Part 10: Resources for Catechists

Probably the catechist's most often asked question is, "How? How will I present the message of catechesis? *How* do I know what I am presenting is authentic to the teachings of the Church? How can I be sure these texts or that book or program will help me get the message across?" The final chapter of the *National Directory for Catechesis* responds to those questions in a broad sense, as it describes the "principles, guidelines, and criteria for those developing and producing catechetical resources, as well as for those who are charged with selecting, evaluating and using them in various catechetical settings"(66). As always, it highlights the primary resource in the catechists themselves: "No catechetical materials, resources or tools— no matter how excellent can replace the catechist." (66). Added to that, there are specific references throughout the chapter to the importance of quality catechist training and formation. It also centers itself in Scripture as the preeminent resource (67A), the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as the "basic resource" (67 B), and local catechisms prepared by bishops conferences which adapt the *Catechism* to local culture and methodologies. The recently published *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* is a response to this part of the directory, and can be an important resource in the formation of Catholic school teachers.

The section on Catechetical Textbooks (68A) presents eighteen different criteria for these materials for both adults and children. They range from "presenting the authentic message of Christ and his Church" to engaging "the intellect, emotion, imagination, and creativity" of the learners. Included here also are the essential elements of promoting conversion and cultural adaptations. The chapter

emphasizes the importance of evaluation both of the learners' progress (68A), and of catechetical materials overall (70 B). While the section on Preparation and Evaluation of Catechetical Materials (70) is addressed primarily to publishers and diocesan staff, it explains to the reader the criteria for the development and recommendation of the materials they are using and offers a response to the "How" questions noted above.

Within the chapter is a rich section on Communications, Technology and Catechesis (69). Its insertion here is of itself a "sign of the times." One would not be out of bounds to predict that the next *Directory* will have more than a section on it as we adapt to being a technological society and observe how information is disseminated and received. The section emphasizes the positive and negative outcomes of this development. It encourages the use of them (69 A) and points out the need for media literacy (69B.3). It also calls for instruction on the communications media (69C) which will help the faithful be critical and discerning of the messages presented.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

- Read the guidelines on catechesis from the Scriptures (67). Reflect or discuss how your current catechetical structures, school liturgies, service projects, and religion classes exhibit these guidelines.

- List what you consider the most important elements in choosing a catechetical text or program. Compare your list to the eighteen guidelines given in section 68A.

- Read the section on Communications, Technology and Catechesis (69) and discuss the following:

    - How can communications media be more effectively used in your catechetical programs?

    - What are the advantages and disadvantages of using

electronic and computer related media as instruments for catechesis?

- How could your school more effectively use the media as a subject of catechesis?