

# **NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS**

## **THE SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS**

1. ***Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.*** The initial proclamation of the Gospel introduces the hearers to Christ for the first time and invites conversion to him. By the action of the Holy Spirit, such an encounter engenders in the hearers a desire to know about Christ, his life, and the content of his message. Catechesis responds to this desire by giving the believers a knowledge of the content of God's self-revelation, which is found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and by introducing them to the meaning of the Creed. Creeds and doctrinal formulas that state the Church's belief are expressions of the Church's living tradition, which from the time of the apostles has developed "in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit." **This is what we believe – the Creed, our statement of faith – the knowledge of our faith.**
2. ***Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments.*** Since Christ is present in the sacraments, the believer comes to know Christ in the liturgical celebrations of the Church and is drawn into communion with him. Christ's saving action in the Paschal Mystery is celebrated in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, where the closest communion with Jesus on earth is possible as Catholics are able to receive his living Flesh and his Precious Blood in Holy Communion. Catechesis should promote "an active, conscious genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds." Sacramental catechesis prepares for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides enrichment following their reception. **This is how we celebrate our beliefs.**
3. ***Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.*** Jesus' moral teaching is an integral part of his message. Catechesis must transmit both the content of Christ's moral teachings as well as their implications for Christian living. Moral catechesis aims to conform the believer to Christ—to bring about personal transformation and conversion. It should encourage the faithful to give witness— both in their private lives and in the public arena—to Christ's teaching in everyday life. Such testimony demonstrates the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel. **This is our Life in Christ – how we live our beliefs according to the teachings of the Master Teacher.**
4. ***Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.*** Conversion to Christ and communion with him lead the faithful to adopt his disposition of prayer and reflection. Jesus' entire life, death, and Resurrection were an offering to his Father. His prayer was always directed toward his Father. Catechesis should invite the believer to join Christ in the Our Father. Prayer should be the ordinary environment for all catechesis so that the knowledge and practice of the Christian life may be understood and celebrated in its proper context. **This is how we pray our beliefs and communicate with our Father.**

5. ***Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.*** Jesus said to his disciples, "Love one another. As I have loved you. . . ." This command provides the basis for the disciples' life in community. Catechesis encourages an apprenticeship in Christian living that is based on Christ's teachings about community life. It should encourage a spirit of simplicity and humility, a special concern for the poor, particular care for the alienated, a sense of fraternal correction, common prayer, mutual forgiveness, and a fraternal love that embraces all these attitudes. Catechesis encourages the disciples of Jesus to make their daily conduct a shining and convincing testimony to the Gospel. "He also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church, as it is written, 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (1 Cor 12:7). "Preparation for community life has an ecumenical dimension as well: "In developing this community sense, catechesis takes special note of the ecumenical dimension and encourages fraternal attitudes toward members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities." It should always provide a clear exposition of all that the Church teaches and at the same time should foster a "true desire for unity" and inculcate a zeal for the promotion of unity among Christians. Catechesis will have an ecumenical dimension as it prepares the faithful to live in contact with persons of other Christian traditions, "affirming their Catholic identity while respecting the faith of others." **How do we live our faith and actively participate in it while interacting with all the different communities of our life?**
6. ***Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.*** "The 'world' thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation." Catechesis seeks to help the disciples of Christ to be present in society precisely as believing Christians who are able and willing to bear witness to their faith in words and deeds. In fostering this spirit of evangelization, catechesis nourishes the evangelical attitudes of Jesus Christ in the faithful: to be poor in spirit, to be compassionate, to be meek, to hear the cry of injustice, to be merciful, to be pure of heart, to make peace, and to accept rejection and persecution. Catechesis recognizes that other religious traditions reflect the "seeds of the Word" that can constitute a true "preparation for the Gospel." It encourages adherents of the world's religions to share what they hold in common, never minimizing the real differences between and among them. "Dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*." **How do we witness our faith through our words and deeds? Do I radiate my love for Jesus when I speak, act, or present myself?**