



Discipleship: The Goal of Catechesis

Core Competency:

The primary focus of the Core Sessions is the evangelization and faith journey of the catechist. It is essential that these sessions invite the catechist to discipleship by cultivating their relationship with Christ and a life of holiness.

Focus of the Session:

The catechist should understand the goal of all catechetical efforts is to create an environment, program, and community that forms healthy and active disciples of Jesus. Guided by the catechumenate process, our efforts need to be attentive to the participant's whole faith journey. Good catechesis is concerned with making, maturing, and missioning disciples.

Content of the Session:

The Great Commission: Jesus' final command to the Church is to "make disciples" (Mt 28:19). That is to help others to know, love, and follow Jesus. Discipleship making is relational and includes evangelization, catechesis, and the sacraments.

1. Making Disciples: Pre-catechumenate (*In Depth Exploration*)

This period of inquiry and encounter is essential and often skipped. It is the time in which the participant is invited to encounter Jesus and God's saving love. Without this initial evangelization, all subsequent catechesis is ineffective.

Elaborate on and offer practical means to foster these key elements.

- Belonging- The sense that despite one's sins and brokenness, the participant is seen and valued by others in the community as a beloved Child of God.
- Open inquiry- An atmosphere where the participants can exercise genuine curiosity.
- Evangelization- Sharing the Good News of salvation in Jesus through our words and actions. It is often accompanied by our own personal witness and includes an invitation to encounter Jesus and have a relationship with Him.
- Kerygma- The core proclamation of our faith, that God loves you and wants to save you (Jn 3:16, Rm 5:8).
- Encounter- Recognizing God's presence and invitation to relationship in their life.
- Narrative- Finding one's place in God's plan of salvation.

2. Maturing Disciples: Catechumenate & illumination (*In Depth Exploration*)

After the participants feel loved and accepted, they are disposed to believe and willing to commit to deeper formation and transformation. In this second period, the catechist accompanies and apprentices the participant in the Christian life, which is only made possible by grace.

- a. Accompaniment- is the process of being present to and walking with participants in their faith journey.
 - Invest in them by understanding their concerns, values, and lives.
 - Help them participate in the communal and liturgical life of the parish.

- b. Apprenticeship- is the processes of forming participants as disciples through
 - Kerygmatic catechesis.
 - The lived witness of your faith.
 - Inviting them to conform their lives and behavior to Christ and the precepts of the Church.
 - Encourage spiritual growth.
- c. The life of Grace- without a connection to grace, discipleship is just an act
 - Sacraments of initiation- Grace transforms the participant into a new creation.
 - Sustained and renewed by the grace of the sacraments the participant matures in Christian life.
 - Regular prayer, fasting, and acts of charity are also necessary.

3. **Missioning Disciples: Mystagogy** (*In Depth Exploration*)

- Participants become fully engaged in the life and mission of the Church.
 - Active participation in the parish community.
 - They evangelize others through words and deeds.
- Lifelong discipleship
 - Continued personal formation.
 - Continue to grow in holiness through the sacraments, prayer, Scripture, and acts of charity.

4. **Primacy of the Mission to make Disciples** (*Moderate Development*)

There are many competing goods in Religious Education, Youth Ministry, and Schools. None compare to our responsibility to “make disciples” of Jesus.

- a. Evaluating a ministry or our role in it. The metric of success for all ministries is, does it serve the Church’s mission to make disciples?
 - When evaluating a catechetical ministry, it is important to ask questions such as:
 - How does this ministry make, mature, and mission disciples?
 - In which of these areas is it strongest and where it weakest?
- b. Improvements- Many ministries are strong in one area and weak in others. For example, many religious education programs focus on maturing disciples but have poor results because participants were not adequately evangelized prior to formation.
 - Regularly incorporate elements of all three stages. We never outgrow the need for evangelization, formation, and participation.
 - Parish Ministry Partnerships. Some ministries specialize in specific areas of the discipleship process. Partnerships between ministries can enhance both.

Additional References:

- Catechism of the Catholic: #520, 787-788, 1248, 1533,
- Directory for Catechesis: #63
- National Directory for Catechesis: #35.D, 61.A2-4b, 61.A6, for schools 61.A4b
- *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell
- *3M Ministry* Deacon Keith Strom