

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

PROPOSALS FOR CATECHETICAL RENEWAL

BROTHER ENRIQUE GARCÍA AHUMADA, FSC



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2018

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INTRODUCTION

Catechesis, the act of initiation and perfection into the Christian life, is a ministry established by Jesus Christ when forming disciples. Without using the term catechesis, Saint John Baptist de La Salle considered it the main task of the family, the Christian school and the Church¹.

Thus, the present Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools - founded by him - says: "The life and the educational activity of the Brothers are an integral part of the Church's work of evangelization. They believe that catechesis, as the Founder insisted, is 'their principal function.' This conviction determines their formation as well as the choice of tasks to which they may be assigned."² In addition, "The Brothers joyfully share the same mission together with their Partners who recognize and live the Lasallian charism."³

In order to help understanding the need to renew our catechesis and offer ways to carry it out, this study offers:

1. The Second Vatican Council and Post-Conciliar Catechetical Teaching.
2. Some analyses and witnesses supporting the need for a renewal of catechesis.
3. Renewing catechesis through contemplation of Jesus as a catechist.
4. The catechist as seen by Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

United in Jesus Christ with Mary, Joseph and De La Salle,

Brother Enrique García Ahumada, FSC

¹ Saint John Baptist de La Salle, RC 1.3-1.6.2.3). *Rule and Foundational Documents*, (RFD) Translated and edited by Augustine Loes, FSC, and Ronald Isetti, 2002 Lasallian Publications Christian Brothers Conference Landover, Maryland, USA found in <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Rule-and-Foundational-Documents.pdf>

² Rule art.17.

³ R. 19.

CHAPTER I
THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
AND POST-CONCILIAR
CATECHETICAL TEACHING

1.1. Basic Documents

The Magisterium of the Church since the Second Vatican Council is the sound basis to renew catechesis. In 1971, the Congregation for the Clergy published the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD), as requested by Vatican II, greatly expanded and updated by the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) in 1997, the year in which the corrected version of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CEC, *Catéchisme de l'Église Catholique*) was published, as requested in the Synod of Bishops of 1985, whose first version dated 1992. In 1972, the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments published the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults* (RCIA), in Latin *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*, (OICA)⁴. The Catechesis was renewed by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) of St. Paul VI in 1975 and *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) of St. John Paul II in 1979. In 1983 the *Code of Canon Law* (CIC, *Codex Iuris Canonici*) applied this teaching to the ecclesial legislation, and it was followed by the Post-Synodal Exhortations *Verbum Domini* (VD) of His Holiness Benedict XVI in 2010 and *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) of His Holiness Francis in 2013, as well as his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* in 2015. Along with these important documents there are other regional documents of the ecclesial teachings⁵ which invite to a renewal.

⁴ *Ritual of the Christian Initiation of Adults*. (Rome 1972).

⁵ In addition to what was mentioned earlier concerning Latin America: Theological Concerns-FABC, *The Spirit at Work in Asia Today*, Samphran Thailand, May 1997, in Eilers FJ. (Ed.) *For All the Peoples of Asia, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Documents from 1997-2001*, Quezon City Philippines, Claretian Publications, 2002. Santedi Kinkupu, L. *Nouvelle évangélisation et catéchèse dans la vista de l'Église famille of Dieu in Afrique*, in: Routhier, G., Bressan, L., Vaccaro, L. (ed.). *La catechesi e le sfide dell'evangelizzazione oggi*. Brescia, Editrice Morcelliana, 2012, pp. 91-101. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Our Hearts were Burning within Us. A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*. Washington DC, Saddle Stitched Paperback, 1999. *Katechese in veränderter Zeit*. Bonn, Secretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2004.

1.2. The Mission of the Church is to Evangelize in order to Extend the Kingdom of God

The Council teaches the essence of the Church in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (LG): "...the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG 1). It explains its mission: "The mystery of the Holy Church is manifest in its very foundation. The Lord Jesus set it on its course by preaching the Good News; that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, for centuries, had been promised in the Scriptures: 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand' (*Mk* 1:15, cf. *Mt* 4:17). From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples, the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that Kingdom" (LG 5). In turn, the *Ad Gentes* (AG) Decree explains the evangelizing action.

1.3. Evangelizing Involves Four Stages

1.3.1. The Missionary Stage Prepares the First Christian Announcement

Before proclaiming the Kingdom of God, Jesus showed the love of God the Savior through facts. When he went to see him, Nicodemus said: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." (*Jn* 3:2) Prior to Jesus taking action, John the Baptist prepared the people (cf. *Mk* 1:2-14; *Mt* 3:1-17). His revelation was prepared since the time of Abraham, in the XIX century B.C., completed by Moses in the XII century B.C., and by the prophets who followed. The Holy Scripture asked the great questions: what is man? (cf. *Ps* 62:9, *Ps* 39:5-7, 102, 11, *Ps* 109:23, *Ps* 144:4, *Ps* 139:13-18). Job's dramatic poem reflects on the suffer-

ing of the innocent (see *Jb* 17:1-16). Ecclesiastes compares the immensity of God with the limitation of the human intellect (cf. *Eccles* 3:11; 7:24; 8:17; 11:5). The mother of the Maccabees martyrs adds to her amazement for the wonderful gestation of each child, her hope in the power of God to give them back their lives (cf. *2Maccabees* 7: 22f). Jesus Ben Sirac wonders about the human being (see *Eccles.* 18:8) and admires the sublimity of God (see *Eccles.* 18:1-7). The Book of Wisdom reiterates these themes with astonishment (cf. *Wis* 2:2-5; 9:13-18; 15:11). These writings offer the agenda to prepare today's Christian announcement, rendering it desired and significant for those who will receive it.

Jesus began to preach for Himself and for His Apostles only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (*Mt* 10:6; 15:24), the people of God with a long history of preparation for the announced Messiah. Who could have understood him? Only those who had been educated to a monotheistic faith, the natural moral of the Decalogue and liturgical rites focusing on the Jewish Passover, which entailed liberation. However, local masses of Israelites listened to Him, as well as those from neighboring countries (see *Mt* 4:23-25).

The AG Decree explains in detail the Christian testimony, arising concerns and fostering dialogue as an indispensable initial missionary action in a non-Christian environment (AG 12). His Holiness Pope Paul VI affirmed: "Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization" (EN 21). Christian witness and dialogue aiming at sharing values are the two initial components of the first announcement of salvation, without even yet mentioning the Savior. "By the witness of their life and word, missionaries are to establish a sincere dialogue with those who do not believe in Christ so that, in a manner adapted to their own temperament and culture, avenues are opened enabling them to understand the message of the gospel." (CIC 787§1).

For reflection/discussion:

1. In the place where you teach or offer catechesis, how is the preparation for the Christian announcement presently carried out, in such a way that it may be desired and meaningful for those who receive it?
2. If Jesus showed merciful love when proclaiming the Kingdom of God, how does the Church today involve witnesses in evangelization?
3. In our pastoral work, what is the balance between the number of missionaries and that of catechists?

1.3.2. The Second Stage is a Brief proclamation of the Good News Calling for Conversion

In the Greek-Roman culture, *kérygma*⁶ was the proclamation or announcement of a herald announcing a victory or another merry public event. Jesus in His public life preached the Good News of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (*Mk* 1:14-15). This Christian or missionary kerygma, called like this in order to distinguish it from those of the Greek-Roman culture, calls for at least an initial conversion to God. When the people, whom the missionaries are addressing, are well disposed, and not before, it is time for making a brief proclamation of the Gospel with a call to an initial conversion. This is the Christian *kerygma*, which constitutes both the third and most important component of the first announcement of salvation, as well as the second very short stage of evangelization, so crucial in order to move on to the third stage, catechesis. Some hasty language reduces the first proclamation to the Christian kerygma, a clear mistake with predictable consequences. When evangelizing,

⁶ Grave and not proparoxytone Greek name, derived from the verb *keryssein*, to proclaim, to preach.

mission is a priority, without which the kerygma does not arouse interest and catechesis fails.

Those who are interested in the synthetic proclamation of the Kingdom of God by Jesus, then turn to follow His teachings, all referring to that Kingdom or reign of God⁷, Kingdom of the Father⁸, Kingdom of Heaven⁹ or simply, the Kingdom¹⁰. After His Resurrection, Jesus continued explaining His message to the Apostles (see *Acts* 1:3). The Kingdom of God is the name of what Jesus announces and also the whole content of His message. The Son of God is interested in God reigning over the world. It is important that through catechesis one feels that this is peacefully about God reigning over people and the world, with all issues related to that unique project of Jesus. “Wherever God opens a door of speech for proclaiming the mystery of Christ, there is proclaimed to all men with confidence and constancy the living God and He, Whom He has sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ, in order that non-Christians, when the Holy Spirit opens their heart, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord, that they may cleave sincerely to Him.”¹¹(AG 13) In addition to proclaiming the Kingdom of God in its wholeness, as did John the Baptist (cf. *Mt* 3:2), Jesus explained to Nicodemus why He was doing it:

⁷ *Mt* 11:28 (*Lk* 11:20); *Mt* 19:24 (*Mk* 10:25; *Lk* 18:25), *Mt* 21:43; *Mk* 1:15; *Mk* 4:11 (*Lk* 8:10); *Mk* 4:26; *Mk* 4:30 (*Lk* 13:18); *Mk* 9:1 (*Lk* 9:27); *Mk* 9:47; *Mk* 10:14-15 (*Lk* 18:16-17); *Mk* 10:23-24 (*Lk* 18:25); *Mk* 12:34; *Mk* 14:25 (*Lk* 22:18); *Lk* 4:43; *Lk* 6:20; *Lk* 7:28; *Lk* 9:60.62; *Lk* 10:9.11; *Lk* 13:20.28.29; *Lk* 16:16; *Lk* 17:20-21; *Lk* 18:29; *Lk* 21:31; *Lk* 22:16; *Jn* 3:3.5. Parallel texts appear in parentheses.

⁸ *Mt* 6:10 (*Lk* 11:2); *Mt* 6:33 (*Lk* 12:31); *Mt* 13:43; *Mt* 26:29.

⁹ *Mt* 4:17; *Mt* 5:3.10.19.20; *Mt* 7:21; *Mt* 8:11; *Mt* 10:7; *Mt* 11:11-12; *Mt* 13:11.24.31.33.44.45.47.52; *Mt* 16:19; *Mt* 18:3..4.23; *Mt* 19:12.14.23; *Mt* 20:1; *Mt* 22:2; *Mt* 23:13; *Mt* 25:1.

¹⁰ *Mt* 8:12; *Mt* 13:19.38; *Mt* 24:14; *Mt* 25:34; *Lk* 12:31.32; *Lk* 19:12.15.

¹¹ This description of the Christian kerygma made by the Council is very close to *Jn* 3:16, thus confirming my belief about this great biblical passage being a Christian kerygma.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” (*Jn* 3:16)

In this statement, Jesus summarizes God’s plan for the world: the whole Bible in one verse! Who else could do it? God created the world out of love, where those who know the Gospel implicitly recognize the Holy Spirit. In the face of human freedom which generates good deeds and sins, God the Father sent His Son, so that those who believe in Him could collectively form the Church.

This broader proclamation implies that only the proclamation of God’s Kingdom as a whole can be defined as kerygma of Jesus Christ the Savior, center of history. His announcement of the Good News to the ruler Nicodemus is more explicit and thoughtful than the most popular short one concerning the Kingdom of God. It encompasses the main Christian mysteries: the Holy Trinity with its works *ad extra*: the creation, the incarnation of the Word, the redemption or salvation or liberation¹², the Church of the disciples and the eschatological aspect of the Kingdom of God. A good criterion for grasping the importance of a biblical text is to look for the presence or absence of a close relationship to this capital statement. For example, is Mary of Nazareth important in the Christian mystery? As she is connected to incarnation and redemption, she is truly placed on a higher rank of hierarchy than many others.

I think that this kerygma of Jesus as the center of the history of salvation is at the highest rank in the hierarchy of revealed truths¹³, studied not only by theology as such, but also by the pastoral and spiritual ones, thus reunited. They should not be separated, for divine revelation is not for theoretical contemplation, but for our sal-

¹² E. García Ahumada, F.S.C., *Salvación, redención, liberación*, in: V. Ma. Pedrosa, Ma. Navarro, R. Lázaro, J. Sastre (Directores). *Nuevo Diccionario de Catequética*. Madrid, San Pablo, 1999.

¹³ “There exists a “hierarchy” of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith.” Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio* about ecumenism, 11.

vation and sanctification. Being at the top of revealed truths, it is not enough to consider the divine Trinity without referring to its external interventions, for theology is studied for our salvation (cf. GDC 43).

The Holy Father Pope Francis says: “The kerygma is Trinitarian. The fire of the Spirit is given in the form of tongues and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ who, by His death and resurrection, reveals and communicates to us the Father’s infinite mercy” (EG 164). By saying that it is Trinitarian, I understand that he refers to this kerygma of Jesus as the center of the history of salvation, although he is also referring to another kerygma. In fact, in addition to the two already mentioned kerygmata of Jesus, the Apostles proclaim other Good News, whose enthusiasm precisely produced the so-called Gospels after the Lord’s passion, crucifixion and death. These latter devote several chapters to another message, which should be called paschal or apostolic kerygma, derived from the core of Peter’s speech on Pentecost (see *Acts* 2:22-24). Peter went back to deal with Jesus’ Passover, the greatest event in the history of salvation in the house of the centurion Cornelius (see *Acts* 10:38-43) and in his first letter (see *1Peter* 3:18). It was also inspiration for Paul (see *Rm* 8:34-37, *Phil* 2:8-11). In the present pastoral literature the most usual form of missionary kerygma is this apostolic or paschal kerygma¹⁴.

In all of its versions, the missionary kerygma is not merely a story. It includes a call to conversion or turning to God, who has sent Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal and present happiness of human beings. In the New Testament, there are two formulations by Jesus and one by the Apostles, and each missionary can proclaim the Good News in the clearest and most suitable way to persuade his public. Francis says: “We should not think, however, that the Gospel message must always be communicated by fixed formulations learned by heart or by specific words which express an absolutely invariable content.” (EG 129) Catechesis begins with the Christian kerygma, but evangelization starts even before, with the mission.

¹⁴ See E. García A., F.S.C. *Tres versiones neotestamentarias del kerygma cristiano*, “Sinite” 174 (2017) 109-131.

1.3.3. Given Christian Kerygma, the Third Stage of Evangelization is Catechesis

The Council declares and explains the purpose of catechesis: “Bishops should take pains that catechetical instruction -which is intended to make the faith, as illumined by teaching, a vital, explicit and effective force in the lives of men- be given with sedulous care to both children and adolescents, youth and adults” (CD 14). “Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it ... that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free.” (PO 6b). “Catechetical instruction... enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery and gives motivation for apostolic activity.” (GE 4). Therefore: “It is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people so that the living faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life.” (CIC 773)

“Under the direction of legitimate ecclesiastical authority, solicitude for catechesis belongs to all members of the Church according to each one’s role” (CIC 774§1). “Parents above others are obliged to form their children by word and example in faith and in the practice of Christian life; sponsors and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equal obligation.” (CIC 774§2) “Catechetical instruction is to be given by using all helps, teaching aids, and instruments of social communication which seem more effective so that the faithful, in a manner adapted to their character, capabilities and age, and conditions of life, are able to learn Catholic doctrine more fully and put it into practice more suitably.” (CIC 779). “Local ordinaries are to take care that catechists are duly prepared to fulfill their function properly, namely, that continuing formation is made available to them, that they understand the doctrine of the Church appropriately, and that they learn in theory and in practice the methods proper to the teaching disciplines.” (CIC 780)

Catechesis is not for everyone, but only for those who are at least initially converted, otherwise it bears no fruit. When forming Christians, it is not advisable to begin with catechesis, but rather to start preparing the spirit to welcome it, at the risk of failing. There are catechetical programs which erroneously assume that all participants are believers and this creates many difficulties in the current era of secularized global culture, after the Christian era. “Frequently, many who present themselves for catechesis truly require genuine conversion. Because of this the Church usually desires that the first stage in the catechetical process be dedicated to ensuring conversion... Catechetical renewal should be based thus on prior missionary evangelization.” (GDC 62, cf. CT 19).

It is therefore necessary to give catechesis for adults the form of catechumenate of Christian initiation of adults. “The catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrine and precepts, but a training period in the whole Christian life..., during which disciples are joined to Christ, their Teacher. Therefore, catechumens should be properly instructed in the mystery of salvation and in the practice of Gospel morality and by sacred rites which are to be held at successive intervals, they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy and of love, which is led by the people of God” (AG 14). The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Liturgy (SC) requested the Council to restore the adult catechumenate (SC 64).

For reflection/discussion:

1. In our catechetical programs, how do we ensure a gradual preparation of the spirit so that they are well received?
2. How do catechists prepare to gradually incorporate themselves into Christian life?

1.3.3.1. The RCIA Indicates Three Liturgical Steps to Grow in Holiness

“**W**hen the period of the pre-catechumenate has been completed, those who have made known their intention to embrace faith in Christ are to be admitted to the catechumenate in liturgical ceremonies and their names are to be inscribed in the book designated for this purpose.” (CIC 788§1). The first step is the Rite of Acceptance of the sympathizer. After scrutiny or evaluation with discernment in which they also have participated, they are welcomed and inscribed as catechumens into the community by accepting the Christian kerygma through a first act of holiness. The pre-catechumenate thus comes to an end, which the RCIA called evangelization, although AG defines it as missionary action, which is the first stage of evangelization.

The RCIA liturgical scheme defines catechumenate as a second period (of holiness) as it follows the acceptance of Christian kerygma (first act of holiness), although catechumenate is the third stage of evangelization. “Through instruction and the first experience of Christian life, catechumens are to be initiated suitably into the mystery of salvation and introduced into the life of the faith, the liturgy, the charity of the people of God, and the apostolate.” (CIC 788§2) According to RCIA, after the initial conversion, catechumenate makes use of four means for initiation:

1. Gradual and integral catechesis on the basic doctrine and Christian life, practiced by qualified personnel, enriched with celebrations of the Word, which favor the knowledge and experience of the mystery of salvation, to which one wishes to participate.
2. Practice of the Christian life animated by the Christian community to which each catechumen belongs. The person grows in the practice of prayer to God and the pursuit of His will, gives testimony of his Christian faith, strengthens his hope in Jesus Christ and gradually unites himself to the mystery of the

Cross, death and resurrection, and exercises interpersonal, social and self-sacrificing love.

3. Participation in rituals of purification and divine blessing, the Liturgy of the Word of the Mass, but not in its Eucharistic Liturgy, before which, “they should be kindly dismissed before the liturgy of the Eucharist begins (unless their dismissal should present practical or pastoral problems). For they must await their Baptism, which will join them to God’s priestly people and empower them to participate in Christ’s new worship” (RCIA 75.3 found in <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RCIA.pdf>).
4. Progressive cooperation in the evangelization of others through their testimony of life and Word.

The longest and most dutiful step of the catechumenate is followed by its final part, a deeper preparation for the sacraments of Christian initiation. It requires a new scrutiny of the catechumens’ sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine, their change of mentality and habits according to the Gospel, faith criteria, attitudes of compassion and charitable habits. Through the solemn rite of “election” or “enrolment of names”, chaired by the Bishop or his delegate, the catechumens thus fall into the category of “the chosen”, “enlightened” or “competent ones” for their personal preparation towards Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, normally celebrated on the Easter Vigil.

The time of holiness, called purification and enlightenment, thus starts, and it takes place preferably during Lent. Any time of the year is valid, provided that the four stages of evangelization are respected, and therefore the three times of sanctification explained in the RCIA. “Missionaries are to take care that they teach the truth on faith to those whom they consider prepared to receive the Gospel message so that they can be admitted to receive Baptism when they freely request it” (CIC 787§2). This final part of the catechumenate, more similar to a spiritual retreat than to catechesis, is characterized by two types of activities:

- A) On Sunday, new sessions of community scrutiny are held in order to favor the examination of conscience. The aim is to heal weak or defective intentions and foster a progressive change towards a new life in Christ.

- B) Catechumens are presented with the Creed, which “recalls the wonderful deeds of God for the salvation of the human race, suffuses the vision of the elect with the sure light of faith”. They are also given the Lord’s prayer (*Domini* in Latin), which “fills them with a deeper realization of the new spirit of adoption by which they will call God their Father, especially in the midst of the Eucharistic assembly.” (RCIA 134).

This last statement might be questioned if it is understood as Saint John Chrysostom did in his XIX homily on Matthew excludes explaining the Our Father to catechumens, “For the uninitiated could not call God Father” (found in: http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0345-0407,_Iohannes_Chrysostomus,_Homilies_on_The_Gospel_Of_Matthew,_EN.pdf). His opinion did not prevail among the Fathers of the Church, nor did it enter the ecclesial tradition, considering divine paternity in creation and not only from the point of view of redemption. The Jews claimed to Jesus: “We have no father but God” (*Jn* 8:41). During the meetings of leaders of different religions, summoned by the popes since John Paul II, God is invoked reciting the Our Father¹⁵.

¹⁵ H.E. Msgr. Walther Ruspi, PhD in Liturgy, Episcopal Vicar for Evangelization of the Diocese of Novara, Italy, [wruspi050@gmail.com] in his speech on *Catechumenate, cultural and anthropological mutations in Italy and Europe*, suggests enriching the RCIA with a previous missionary stage. This step would include pre-Christian biblical texts with human questions, belonging to the scientific-technical urban culture, as well as rites intended to help the Christian community to support the faith of the pre-catechumens. In addition, in the mystagogical catechesis, he proposes to add texts to motivate the neophytes to attend the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. In E. García Ahumada, *Aporte catequético del III Congreso Internacional del Catecumenado “La iniciación cristiana en el cambio de época.”* Santiago de Chile, Universidad Finis Terrae, 2017, pp. 63-66.

The third and final step in the process of sanctification proposed by the RCIA leads to a fourth period, after the catechumenate, normally placed from Easter to Pentecost, called mystagogy, which means leading up to the mystery. It is a time of accompaniment of the newly baptized or neophytes (from the Greek *néos*, new, *fytón*, plant) and it is as an important integration to the already concluded initiation step of those baptized people so well-prepared. This time of Easter joy aims at internalizing the mystery of the saving grace of Christ; living the Christian life made of shared celebrations - sacraments - and participating in community life, with the help of godparents and the faithful who introduce them to the services of the parish community. On Sundays of the Easter season, there are readings dedicated to the neophytes in the Lectionary of the liturgical year A (cf. RCIA 384-386).

For reelection/discussion:

1. How should a catechist who is far from participating in the Sunday Eucharist be approached?
2. What can we say to a Christian who does not practice the Sacraments?

1.3.3.2. The Catechumenate is a Model of Initiation into the Christian Life

The primitive Church, attacked by the pagan Romans and the Jewish believers, and complicated by heresy, imitated the strict conditions imposed by Israel to admit the People of God¹⁶. Through the catechumenate it formed Christians capable of becoming martyrs.

¹⁶ Cf. *Proselit*, in JD Douglas, and N. Hillyer, *New Bible Dictionary*. InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Clement of Alexandria (c.159 - c.213) recommended baptizing “the fourth year since time to be stably instructed on catechism is needed.”¹⁷ According to the martyr Pope Hyppolytus of Rome (+235): “Let catechumens spend three years as hearers of the word. But if a man is zealous and perseveres well in the work, it is not the time but his character that is decisive.”¹⁸ They did not predetermine the date of Baptism.

The First Council of Nicaea in 325 reduced the minimum preparation for Baptism to fifteen days. There were many cases of Baptisms of small children, who received Confirmation and Communion only with consecrated wine. In Europe and the Near East, the catechuminate disappeared. Baptized people lived the Gospel of love, personal and social justice very little. The Catechuminate endured throughout scattered communities, in countries of initial evangelization. In today’s Dominican Republic, Brother Jerónimo Fray Ramón Pané prepared the most prominent indigenous family, Naboría, for Baptism for two years (1496), and later learned that out of the 16 neophytes, 4 were the protomartyrs of the New World.¹⁹ When the Church became established, organized Christianity had less apostolic vitality than in countries of Catholic minority.

The Council restored the catechuminate by including a movement that had begun in Europe at the end of World War II.²⁰ “Given that the *missio ad gentes* is the paradigm of all the Church’s missionary

¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata*. Found in <http://www.orthodoxebooks.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/The%20Stromata%20-%20Clement%20of%20Alexandria.pdf>, p. 728.

¹⁸ Hippolytus of Rome, Lumen, 1981 (215), II, 17. The Apostolic Tradition found in [http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibilothèque_rore_sanctifica/12-pretendue_tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/1934-burton_scott_easton-tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/Burton_Scott_Easton_-_The_Apostolic_Tradition_of_Hippolytus_\(1934\).pdf](http://www.rore-sanctifica.org/bibilothèque_rore_sanctifica/12-pretendue_tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/1934-burton_scott_easton-tradition_apostolique_d_hippolyte/Burton_Scott_Easton_-_The_Apostolic_Tradition_of_Hippolytus_(1934).pdf) p. 43.

¹⁹ Br. Ramón Pané, *Relación acerca de las antigüedades de los indios. Nueva versión con notas, mapas y apéndices*. Translator and commentator J.J. Arrom. México, Siglo Veintiuno, 1987 (1974), Chap. XXV.

²⁰ Walther Ruspi. *Il catecumenato: un futuro per la Chiesa? Il catecumenato in Europa e la partecipazione italiana a EUROCAT*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014.

activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is combined with it, is the model of its catechizing activity.” (GDC 90). The key concept is initiation to Christian life: accompanying in the practice of the Gospel (cf. *Mt* 7:24-27). Instead of saying “Christian initiation,” which can be understood as only leading to the sacraments of initiation without highlighting the new life in Christ, this document speaks of initiating “into the faith and the Christian life” (GDC 48e). It introduces “into the life of faith, of the liturgy and of the charity of the People of God (AG 14)” (GDC 51). “Missionaries are to take care that they teach the truths of faith to those whom they consider prepared to receive the gospel message so that they can be admitted to receive baptism when they freely request it.” (CIC 787§2) A catechetical program of catechumenal inspiration should initiate into the Christian life by fulfilling the four stages of evangelization (see EN 21, 22, 23 and 24, summarized in GDC 47).

1.3.4. The Fourth Stage: Formation of the Community or Incorporation into the already existing one

The formation of the Christian community or incorporation into it, if it already exists, takes place after the catechumenate, through the sacraments and ecclesial ministries (AG 15-18). This incorporation commits the community, especially godparents, “so that right from the outset the catechumens may feel that they belong to the people of God.” (AG 14) “The ecumenical spirit should be nurtured in the neophytes” (AG 15). The Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO) on the ministry and life of priests points to the local community “In a special way, catechumens and the newly-baptized [...] must be educated gradually to know and to live the Christian life.” (PO 6d) In order to renew catechesis, a local welcoming Christian community must be prepared for the neophytes.

For reflection/discussion:

1. Can we briefly describe a catechumenate program of our sector?
2. Do we know a catechetical program of true catechumenal inspiration?

1.3.4.1. *Mystagogy*

Mystagogy began long before the catechumenate. Jesus did not conceive the Kingdom of God as a political rule over nations nor as independence from oppressors, against the interpretation of many (cf. *Lk* 24:21), rather stemming from a great personal change. It is not only an ethical change, leading to a social, economic, political and cultural commitment, which is obviously not forced, but free and liberating, insofar as He declared: “*The truth will make you free*” (*Jn* 8:32). Jesus changed the transmission of the faith of the people of God, which in the Old Covenant was limited to the oral history, or to the family or common reading of the Sacred Scriptures, in order to explain them and pray. He made a greatly mysterious change, which He showed in His dialogue with Nicodemus, an important Pharisee of goodwill (*Jn* 3:1-5). Nicodemus addressed Jesus as a teacher or, as he used to say, as a pedagogue. Jesus answered him as a mystagogue. Clement of Alexandria defined pedagogy as “we declare to be right guiding from childhood to virtue.”²¹ Instead, the mystagogue leads to the mystery of God²².

Jesus did not limit himself to forming good people through natural morals. He started His ministry by receiving the Baptism from John in the mystery of God as Trinity (cf. *Mt* 3:13-17; *Mk* 1:9-11; *Lk* 3:21-22; *Jn* 1:29-34). Such a mystery was not revealed in the Old Covenant, when polytheism hovered among people. His Bap-

²¹ Clement of Alexandria. *The Paedagogus*, I, 16.1, p. 107.

²² E. García A., FSC *La inclusión de los sacramentos en la transmisión de la fe*. In “Phase” 56 (2016) 547-559.

tism was an epiphany that showed Him in the mystery of God, as witnessed by the Baptist (cf. *Jn* 1:32-34). In His last Passover meal, in addition to offering His apostles with His teachings, He purified them by washing their feet (*Jn* 13:2-17); He promised them the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn* 15:23-26.16, 4b-15); He offered Himself through communion (*Mt* 26:26-29); He made them ministers of the Kingdom of God's love or communion with God who is love (cf. *Lk* 22:19). On the afternoon of His resurrection, He gave them the power to forgive sinners (*Jn* 20:19-23). Before ascending to the Father, while sending the eleven to the world, He promised them the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mt* 28:18-20), all of which is a mystery superior to knowledge and actions.

Peter's second letter begins by declaring the mystery of the Christian life of faith in terms of God's grace and a certain divinization (cf. *2 Pet* 1:2-4). New life is not limited to knowledge, enlightenment and a new conduct of love: it includes a deification of one's being or holiness. This latter, fruit of God's grace or favor, is a great mystery. Jesus insists on speaking of a great union with God in every believer and in the ecclesial community of believers (cf. *Jn* 14:23). This change takes place in one's soul and is rewarding. It entails a union to the glory of God. And what is the glory of God? "Then Moses said, 'Do let me see your glory!' He answered: 'I will make all my beauty pass before you,'" (*Ex* 33:18). Saint Thomas Aquinas defines it: "Furthermore, the entire universe, [...] shows forth the Divine goodness, to the glory of God."²³ Doing everything for the glory of God is to make God's goodness visible through one's own actions. Therefore, living in grace confers apostolic fruitfulness to spread the Kingdom of goodness and of the love of God (cf. *Jn* 15:5, 8-11). In His speech in Capernaum, Jesus had promised to the one taking communion unexpected identification with Him (cf. *Jn* 6:56-57).

The adult Christian life is "living in Christ," as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "Incorporated into Christ by Baptism,

²³ Saint Thomas Aquinas. *The Summa Theologica*, I Part, question 65, article 2.

Christians are ‘dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus’ and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord (*Rom* 6:11 and cf. 6:5; cf. *Col* 2:12). Following Christ and united with him (cf. *Jn* 15:5) Christians can strive to be ‘imitators of God as beloved children, and to walk in love’ (*Eph* 5:1) by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the ‘mind... which is yours in Christ Jesus,’ (*Phil* 2:5) and by following his example (cf. *Jn* 13:12-16)” (CEC 1694).

This dwelling in God is transforming and divinizing. In John’s terminology, it is a way of entering into the family of God (cf. *1Jn* 3:1). This union gives us the power to be good witnesses of Christ in evangelizing, even if we have to suffer, and to share His glory more as an inheritance than as a reward, as Paul proclaims (cf. *Rm* 8:14-17). Paul falls in adoration in front of such greatness (*Eph* 3:14-17.19). The transmission of the Christian faith according to Jesus changes not only one’s works but also one’s being, due to a mysterious deification of the person, a filling “with all the fullness of God” (*Eph* 3:19).

The first Christian speaking of mystagogy was St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Catechetical Lectures*²⁴. He defined as *mystagogical* his last five catechetical lectures, which are his homilies for the week after Easter Sunday, in which he explains the three “mysteries” or sacraments of initiation: Baptism in the XIX and XX; Chrism (Confirmation) in the XXI; the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist in the XXII and its celebration in the XXIII.

The so called treaty *On the Mysteries*²⁵ by Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (340-397), is a set of six mystagogical post-baptismal homilies for the period from Easter Monday to Saturday, perhaps transcribed in the year 390.

St. Augustine (354-430), in a sermon, defines the week of Easter as follows: “All these days after the passion of our Lord, during which

²⁴ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Buenos Aires*, Paulinas, 1985 (348), *Catechetical Lectures* found in: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3101.htm>.

²⁵ Saint Ambrose *Los sacramentos and Los misterios*. Sevilla, Apostolado Mariano, 1991, *On the Mysteries* found in <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3405.htm>.

we sing to God with *alleluia*, we keep in joy as feast days until Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven as promised. And of these days, the seven or eight we are in at the moment are earmarked for telling the *infantes* about the sacraments they have received. A short while ago they were called Askers; now they're called infants."²⁶

XII to XVI *Catechetical Homilies*²⁷ by Theodore of Antioch, pronounced before becoming Bishop of Mopsuestia from 392 to 428, are often defined as mystagogical because they explain the meaning of the sacraments or mysteries of Baptism and the Eucharist; but, because they refer to Baptism in future terms, they are clearly pre-baptismal. Their mystagogical feature is due to their sacramental content and not to the fact of being set before or after Baptism.

Mystagogy is not a step in evangelization, but a way of evangelizing in order to approach the mystery of God by God's grace. In the Council documents, it not only appears when mentioning the sacraments, but it permeates the process of Christian initiation as a pathway to the mystery of God. This can be seen in the aforementioned fundamental texts of AG 12, 13 and 14, as well as in GE 2 and 4.

Good catechists recognize the primacy of God's grace in their work, because they bring people to God: before each session or meeting, they spontaneously entrust themselves to the Holy Spirit. In that, they are conscious mystagogues, although they do not know this Greek word. The third guiding document on catechesis published since its founding in 1955 by CELAM, the Latin American Episcopal Council, *La alegría de iniciar discípulos misioneros en el cambio de época*, 2015 (AIDM), proposed "to opt for a catechist who must be a witness, communicator, accompanying and mystagogue" (AIDM III, 4).

²⁶ *Sermon 228*, in: *Obras completas de San Agustín*, ob.cit., XXIV, 289-292. Competent, those who ask together, according to a pun with the etymology of the word, typical of Saint Augustine.

²⁷ R. Tonneau, OP and R. Devresse. *Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste*. Vatican City, Vatican Apostolic Library, 1949.

For reflection/discussion:

1. Briefly describe a person you know who seems to live “in Christ.”
2. Describe a close catechist who could be defined a mystagogue.

1.4. The Council Focuses the Ministry of the Word on the Bible and Tradition

The *Dei Verbum* Constitution on Divine Revelation (DV) teaches that God acts today in deeds and words throughout the history of salvation (DV 2). “Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church” (DV 10). “Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful” (DV 22).

In order to preserve one’s faith in our time of invading secularizing culture, each Christian needs more biblical and evangelical internalization than before. Whoever learns to be a Christian needs to know the facts narrated in the Sacred Scriptures that are more directly related to the salvation of humanity, as well as those in the history of the Church which allow him to discover his vocation within it (cf. VD 23). In order to understand the Bible and the past and present history of the Church as bearers of messages from God, the Christian needs to participate in the life of the ecclesial community, liturgy and charitable works of the world (cf. VD 29). Whoever is dedicated to evangelization needs to be assiduous to the Sacred Scripture (cf. DV 25).

“It is the task of catechesis to show who Jesus Christ is, his life and ministry, and to present the Christian faith as the following of his person. Consequently, it must base itself constantly on the Gospels, which ‘are the heart of all the Scriptures’ because they are our principal source for the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Savior.” (GDC 41)

1.4.1. Faith is a Response to the Revelation or Word of God

Faith, that deals with the revelation of God who speaks, is a relationship with Someone, something more than merely learning. When distinguishing between content of faith and attitude of faith (see GDC 92), the pastoral priority is the act of faith (see GDC 54c).

Sin is understood (serious ones, because not every sin breaks the communion with God according to 1 *Jn* 5:17), not only as a transgression of an ethical or religious norm, but as “a refusal to hear the word, as a breaking of the covenant and thus as being closed to God who calls us to communion with himself.” (VD 26)

When looking at the world in the light of faith, it is necessary to consider three aspects:

1. “The creative activity of God, which communicates goodness to all beings;
2. The power of sin which limits and numbs man; and
3. The dynamism which bursts forth from the Resurrection of Christ, the seed renewing believers” (GDC 16).

1.4.2. Prayer is Basically a Dialogue with the Word of God

Christians must learn to pray with the Bible (cf. VD 86). It is important to recognize the fidelity of saints in listening and obeying to the God’s word, which fosters towards fulfilling His will (cf. VD 48-49). These models show that “the Scripture can only be understood if it is lived” (VD 47).

“The great ecclesial spiritualities, all of which are grounded in the Sacred Scripture” (VD 84), offer many forms of prayerful reading of the Word of God. From the medieval monastic tradition comes a prayerful reading called in Latin *lectio divina* (see VD 83). This method is summarized in four steps:

1. *lectio* (reading) that asks: what does the text say in itself? The aim is to look for its authentic content and not to stick to one’s own thoughts.
2. Then the *meditatio* (meditation) updates the message with the question: what does the text say to me today?
3. The *oratio* (prayer) follows through which the question is answered: What do I say to the Lord in response?
4. And finally the *contemplatio* (contemplation) answers the question: What should I do for God?

“We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it reaches an action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.” (VD 87).

“The privileged place for the prayerful reading of the Scripture is the liturgy, and particularly the Eucharist” (VD 86). Living the liturgical year internalizes the fundamental Christian mysteries (cf. VD 52). Through frequent celebrations of the Word, the faithful can prepare for the Sunday celebration also in the absence of a priest (cf. VD 65). Some can be trained as good communicators in the liturgical reader ministry, which can be exercised by a man or a woman, even if they have not been ordered as reading ministries (see VD 58). The recitation of Morning Prayers and Vespers allows for a “greater familiarity with the word of God on the part of the faithful” (VD 62). It is necessary to promote the composition and use of songs “which are of clear biblical inspiration and which

express, through the harmony of music and words, the beauty of God's word" (VD 70).

For reflection/discussion:

1. What role does the Bible play in our prayer?
2. What role does the Gospel play in our action?
3. What is our opinion on songs of communion far from the Eucharistic mystery?

1.4.3. The Main Manual of Catechesis is the Bible

The people of God were educated for centuries with only one book, the Bible. Benedict XVI as Joseph Ratzinger, theologian, had published an innovative treatise on the Word of God²⁸, and as Pope, he renewed the service of the Word in the Church (cf. DV 9). He rooted it in the communion with God in Christ, which is necessary to joyfully spread to humanity through the community witness of love, catechesis, liturgy and the service to justice and peace, embodying the whole life of the Church (cf. VD 2). He showed that in the Bible God speaks, listens, dialogues and manifests Himself fully in his Incarnated Word, who "reveals God Himself in the dialogue of love between the divine persons, and invites us to share in that love" (VD 6). The history of salvation continues through the work of the Holy Spirit, facing today's questions and aspirations (cf. VD 23). We need to soundly highlight God's action in history (cf. VD 35). More than knowing and memorizing biblical data, it is important to cultivate faith as an interpersonal relationship with Jesus (cf. VD 25).

Regarding the position of the Bible in the catechesis referred to GDC, it is still not well known nor assumed by pastoral leaders (VD

²⁸J. Ratzinger, *Palabra en la Iglesia*. Salamanca, Sígueme, 1976, *Dogma and Preaching*, Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1985.

74). It is urgent to prepare catechists “who can instruct the People of God in the genuine approach to Scripture” (VD 73), without falling into fideism, i.e. reading the texts only from the faith standpoint, which can be very subjective and capricious; neither into rationalism (cf. VD 36) nor into fundamentalism or literalism (cf. VD 44).

The catechist today does not need to be a biblical scholar specialized in the history and biblical languages, but he/she needs a serious study of the Bible, even if children have all kinds of information, their average education level rises and with it, the percentage of unbelief due to the autonomy of scientific-technical culture in its silence about God. Because of faulty biblical formation, false problems between faith and science arise. For a catechist it is not enough to make use of a scientific exegesis, which only clarifies the literal meaning of texts. He/she needs to find their theological meaning in order to discover their spiritual message (cf. VD 33).

In initiating his/her pupils in understanding the Sacred Scriptures, the catechist must bear in mind the unity of the Bible, despite its variety of literary genres (cf. VD 39). He/she must explain the Old Testament as a preparation for the New, because the center is the Messiah, and that the Old Testament allows us to better understand the New one (VD 40-41). The inhuman violence and the impressive immoralities of certain primitive stories are part of a progressive revelation of God to human beings such as they were, whom He patiently educated. It is necessary to have “a training that interprets the texts in their historical-literary context and within the Christian perspective,” which helps “all the faithful to approach these passages through an interpretation which enables their meaning to emerge in light of the mystery of Christ.” (VD 42) The revealed meaning is not always obvious or direct, the Bible is not synonymous with the Word of God, it contains it, and we must look for it if we have faith: “find the Word of God in Sacred Scripture.” (VD 72)

On the other hand, it is necessary that centers of formation “be established where laity and missionaries can be trained to understand, live and proclaim the Word of God.” (VD 75) The formation in pastoral biblical animation is not the same as biblical training. In addition to exegetical and theological training, it requires internal-

izing in the culture of the interlocutors (cf. AG 11), and it is convenient to add communication and animation skills, not mentioned in the document. Increasingly frequent participation of the faithful in ecumenical prayer and service activities requires training catechists who favor mutual knowledge with other churches, the appreciation of their values, the recognition of differences and the understanding and respect of the current norms (cf. VD 46).

For the biblical animation of pastoral work (cf. VD 73), the Secretariat for Christian Unity founded in 1969 the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA), now Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF). Full members are the Episcopal Conferences that are registered, and the institutions active in biblical pastoral animation, presented by a full or associated member to the Executive Committee and accepted by it, are associate members. Both categories participate with the right to vote in world assemblies held every six years, and in other regional and sub-regional ones²⁹. Every entity that is active in biblical animation has the right to request its incorporation into the CBF, by contacting the biblical pastoral commission of the episcopal conference of its country, or the General Secretariat of CBF (www.c-b-f.org). Members receive the magazine *Dei Verbum* published in Germany in Spanish, English, French and German.

Points for reflection/discussion:

1. Do we know the four Gospels enough to evangelize?
2. How much time do we devote each year to updating our biblical formation?

²⁹ In my position of Director of the National Commission of Biblical Pastoral in Chile since its foundation in 1985, I participated in 1990 in the IV Plenary Assembly of CBF in Bogotá and, representing the Higher Institute of Catechetical Pastoral of Chile “Catecheticum”, as well as my own congregation, that is a member with a representative in the Generalate, in the V one held in Hong Kong in 1996, in the VI one in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2002 and in the VII one in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 2008, contributing as much as possible to the six-year policy of the Entity.

1.4.4. God Entrusted Human Beings with the Care for Creation

Considering nature from a biblical faith point of view as a creation of God leads to a just attitude towards the natural environment and the cosmos. Francis explained this in his Apostolic Exhortation *Laudato Si'* (LS). “The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us.” (LS 13), thus discrediting without mentioning it the fundamentalist and literal interpretation of the story of the flood, that does not recognize it as a parable.³⁰

The Pope recalls the Gospel of creation (LS 62-100). First of all, he dwells on the light that faith offers (cf. LS 62-63), he justifies the necessary dialogue between science and faith due to their compatible and complementary contributions to culture; he introduces the contribution of religions to the care of the common home, for the need to face the complex ecological problem without rejecting any contribution of human knowledge, whether it come from science, philosophy, artistic intuitions or religious spirit (cf. LS 63).

He highlights the wisdom of the biblical stories about the very good creation of God, the human being created out of love in the image and likeness of God with the highest dignity, in close relationship with God, with others and with the earth that he has to care for. Man has broken these relationships through his arrogant sin of pretending to be equal to God, and this evil is manifested today in the violence against others and against nature, which takes us away from God. It must be recognized that the earth belongs to God, that our task is not only to care for plants but also for animals, and that the Creator Himself restores in freedom (cf. LS 65-75).

He deals with the mystery of the universe where God loves each creature who in turn gives him glory, where God brings forth thinking beings, without the need to mythologize nature as if it

³⁰ “When the LORD saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how no desire that his heart conceived was ever anything but evil, he regretted that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was grieved.” (*Gn* 6:6)

were a divinity (cf. LS 76-83). He admires the message of each creature offered to the harmony of all creation, with his beautiful thoughts about Saint Francis' *Canticle of the creatures* (cf. LS 84-88). He dwells upon universal communion, underlining that other creatures should not be cared for more than the poor, nor should we forget the first responsibility of the human being over the rest (cf. LS 89-92). He ends this chapter with the gaze of Jesus recalling the love of God the Father for the birds, the lilies that dress better than Solomon and counting on the obedience of the winds and the sea; and incarnated, "it is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy" and "the risen One is mysteriously holding (the creatures) to himself and directing them towards fullness at their end" (LS 99-100).

He proposes a Christian anthropology in which the human being is not the center but a creature of God, whose forgetfulness exposes him to technocratic domination, value relativity, separation from others until he loses respect for work, the human embryo or the disabled, and also separates him from God the Creator and Savior (cf. LS 115-129).

He points out "positive examples of environmental improvement" which "do not solve global problems, but they do show that men and women are still capable of intervening positively" (LS 58). He trusts in the possibility of "broadening [the] vision. We have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral", as it "does in fact happen sometimes." (LS 112)

He thinks that considering the Earth as a sister and mother, as did St. Francis in his *Canticle*, avoids the sin of plundering it (cf. LS 1-2). With Paul VI, he argues that "the most extraordinary scientific progress, the most astounding technical feats and the most amazing economic growth, unless accompanied by authentic moral and social progress, will in the long run go against man."³¹ Faced

³¹ Paul VI, *Address to FAO on its 25th Anniversary*, November 16, 1970, AAS 62 (1970) 833. Found in: http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1970/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19701116_xxv-istituzione-fao.html.

with “the harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity” (LS 18), he asks “to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it” (LS 19). He suggests subjecting technology to humanistic imperatives (cf. LS 20) and governing economics in imitation of the Creator’s wisdom (cf. LS 22). He recalls the classic doctrine of the common destiny of goods to relativize property rights (cf. LS 93-95).

The Pope identifies the moral cause of the present problem in the cultural technocratic model or paradigm, consisting in that the power granted by the growing scientific and technical development is in the hands of the owners of the economic development, motivated by their own interests, far from the common good of humanity. They dominate not only material growth but also the political configuration of society (cf. LS 104-109). “They are less concerned with certain economic theories which today scarcely anybody dares defend, than with their actual operation in the functioning of the economy. They may not affirm such theories with words, but nonetheless support them with their deeds by showing no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations.” (LS 109)

He suggests developing an environmental, economic, and social ecology that not only studies the relationships between the natural and the animal world, but also “the conditions required for the life and survival of society” and the possible impacts of economic decisions (cf. LS 138-142); a cultural ecology aiming at the preservation and development of the inherited cultural aspects maintained in the various places, including those of the indigenous communities with their social capacities (cf. LS 143-146); an ecology of daily life capable of improving the quality not only of material life, but of keeping it free from visual, acoustic and mental contamination through decent housing, suitable and frequent public transport, easy access to the necessary services, safety, cordiality and offering the possibility of enriching meetings between different people (cf. LS 147-155).

He recalls the principle of the common good as a condition for an integral ecology, where respect for human and social rights in-

cludes caring for the family as a condition of a dignified life (cf. LS 156-158). Intergenerational justice is a condition for this integral ecology, without postponing justice for the poor that, although it is intra-generational, is urgent (cf. LS 159-162). Chapter VI deserves extensive study and practice, in its proposal of an ecological education and spirituality, in order to root and give continuity to the purpose of overcoming this crisis (cf. LS 202-246).

For reflection/discussion:

1. What new educational programs has *Laudato Si'* suggested to us?
2. How has this encyclical enriched our catechesis?

1.4.5. The Disciple is a Missionary and a Servant of the World

Biblical study and prayer educate the Christian as a disciple (cf. VD 91). The apostolic role of fathers and mothers is important (cf. VD 85). The core of Jesus' message, the Kingdom of God, leads to changing people and society (cf. VD 93). The forms of art inspired by the Bible have contributed much to Christian life. It is important to encourage "a solid formation of artists with regard to Sacred Scripture in the light of the Church's living Tradition and the Magisterium" (VD 112). The missionary condition of the Christian is credible if it does not remain only in words (cf. VD 97). The "sons of the Kingdom" (*Mt* 13:38) must work for peace and justice (cf. *Mt* 5:9-12) at the risk of persecution (cf. VD 100). We must defend and promote "the human rights of every person" (VD 101), join the struggle for justice with the urgent commitment for peace (cf. VD 102). We must serve the poor so that they may "take responsibility for lives" (VD 107). It is necessary to promote "a 'virtuous circle' between the poverty which *is to be chosen* and the poverty which *is to be combated*, we need to rediscover moderation and solidarity", as Gospel values (VD 107).

1.5. The Council Demands Renewal of the Catechesis

The Decree *Christus Dominus* on the pastoral office of Bishops (CD) requires them to update catechesis: “The Bishops should present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the times, that is to say, in a manner that will respond to the difficulties and questions by which people are especially burdened and troubled.” (CD 13) It requires them to carry out this task with doctrinal and educational quality (cf. CD 14) and asks them to connect catechesis with other apostolic works under the direction of the Bishop (cf. CD 17a). It defines the spiritual goals of catechesis (cf. GE 4).

According to the Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA) on the apostolate of the laity, catechesis must form for the apostolate (AA 30c). Lay people need appropriate formation for their mission and spirituality (AA 29a). They must learn “to engage in conversation with others, believers or non-believers, in order to manifest Christ’s message to all men” (AA 31a); to defend Catholic doctrine and to witness it through life (AA 31a) and to intervene in institutions according to the social and moral teaching of the Church (AA 31b). The Council asks the presbyters to “see to it either by themselves or through others, that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ had made us free.” (PO 6b) It decided to increase the number of centers for catechist trainers (cf. AG 17) and in this it supported existing realizations.

1.5.1. The General Catechetical Directory of 1971 Guided the Renewal of Catechesis

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) did not require the publication of a catechism. After discussing the publication of a uni-

versal catechism as the Council of Trent had done, it rather preferred the composition of a Catechetical Directory (CD 44). In 1971 the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy published the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD). Some of its main norms, reiterated later, are: “catechesis, then, ought to take its beginning from this gift of divine love” (GCD 10). “Very often the actual condition of large number of the faithful necessarily demands that some form evangelization³² of the baptized precede catechesis” (GCD 19). “Catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, [...] are in some way oriented to it” (GCD 20). Catechesis must foster “a suitable knowledge of other confessions, both in matters where they agree with the Catholic faith, and also in matters where they differ” (GCD 27). “Catechesis, finally, demands the witness of faith, both from the catechists and from the ecclesial community” (GCD 35). “Though the eternal salvation of men is the objective of the Church, nevertheless faith in the living God carries with it the urgent duty of collaborating in the solution of human questions (cf. *1 Jn* 4:20-21). In this area the faithful must give witness by their works to the value of the Lord’s message.” (GCD 49). “The holiness of a man, whatever his vocation or state of life may be, is nothing other than the perfection of charity” (GCD 64).

1.5.2. Post-conciliar Catechesis Renews Liturgy

Through catechesis (SC 35, 3) the Council promotes a festive, paschal (SC 6), participatory (SC 14-15; 30), enculturated (SC 19; 36.2; 37), missionary (SC 48) and educational (SC 59b) liturgy. It proposes a special form of catechesis that it calls liturgical: “Liturgical catechesis, prepares for the sacraments by promoting a deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy. This explains the contents of the prayers, the meaning of the signs and ges-

³² After *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975, which expanded the notion of evangelization, this stage prior to catechesis is called mission, and both mission and catechesis are part of evangelization.

tures, educates to active participation, contemplation and silence.” (GDC 71) “Catechesis [...] must also educate the disciples of Jesus Christ ‘for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for community spirit, for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds’” (GDC 85b).

For reflection/discussion:

1. Have you participated in a festive, paschal, participatory, enculturated, missionary and/or educational liturgical celebration? Share your experience.
2. Describe briefly your liturgical experience seen from the catechesis standpoint.

1.5.3. Social Catechesis Seeks to Transform Society through the Gospel

The good pre-Christian Jew was not individualistic, nor is the Jewish believer today, despite the current globalized individualistic culture. The primitive, medieval, Renaissance, modern and contemporary, well-educated Christian, showed great community and social zeal, as shown by the saints and theologians of all times. For centuries, reducing catechesis to an issue for children, who are individualist out of self-defense, wiped away the social heritage of the Christian mystery and limited its goal to individual salvation, even if every catechesis must have a social content.³³ The Bible is a book for adults. Jesus only evangelized adults. Jesus’ goal was the Kingdom of God, so that His will be done “on earth as it is in heaven.” (*Mt* 6:10) Other holy masters and tools for Catechism to

³³ E. García A., F.S.C., *Lo social en la catequesis de niños, adolescentes y adultos*. “Sinite” 86 (1987) 431-458. *A dimensão social na catequese das crianças, adolescentes e adultos*. “Revista de Catequese” X-40 (1987) 46-52, XI-41 (1988) 34-37, XI-42 (1988) 35-40, XI-43 (1988) 41-44.

Christian adults were Erasmus of Rotterdam, Saint Peter Canisius, the *Roman Catechism* ordered by the Council of Trent, the *Tercero catecismo y exposición de la Doctrina Cristiana, por sermones para que los curas y otros ministros prediquen y enseñen a los Indios y a las demás personas conforme a lo que en el Sancto Concilio Provincial de Lima* of 1582 and 1583 and its translations that even reached Central America, as well as the following catechisms for heads of families written by Saint Joseph of Anchieta, SJ, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Saint Antonio Maria Claret and others.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the main recipient of catechesis has been the adult, with his various social responsibilities. The rule was: “The Christian who neglects his temporal duties, neglects his duties toward his neighbor and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation.” (GS 43) The Council promoted Christian commitment in society (GS 47-52; 77-90), culture (GS 53-62), economics (GS 64-72) and in politics (GS 73-76). It opened the evangelizing dialogue of the Church with today’s cultures (GS 53-54), with arts and human sciences (GS 57; 62) for a better service to justice and the poor (GS 63) as well as for the defense of human rights (GS 73). The Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* on Ecumenism (UR) commits the Catholic Church to unity among all Christians (UR 1). It mentions catechetics as one of the means to achieve it (UR 6b); it requires giving a dialogical and non-controversial orientation to the presentation of doctrine and history within the service of truth (UR 11). It reserves the theological ecumenism to experts (UR 9) and asks all the faithful to participate in spiritual and social ecumenism (UR 8, 12).

The goal of social catechesis is not to learn the social doctrine of the Church, even if the latter enlightens its content. Saint Paul VI in his social Encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* (OA) overcame the mere learning of existing social doctrine by proposing that communities objectively analyze social situations (see), enlighten them with the Gospel to deduce principles of reflection (judge) and discern guidelines for a transforming action (act), with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the Bishops and in dialogue with other Christians and people of good will (cf. OA 3-4). This is the process adopted by the Catholic Action of the last Bishop of the Moravian

Brothers, John Amos Comenius³⁴ and adopted by the Council (*sub lumine fidei aspicere, iudicare et agere*, AA 29f). The emphasis on discernment is innovative. The social discernment of the Christian allows facing new situations, even though they are not foreseen by the established doctrine. In catechesis and education this process perfects cognitive, affective, evaluating and active social abilities.

In Chile, the *Oficina Nacional de Catequesis* (ONAC) [National Catechetical Office] offered this kind of social catechesis during the military dictatorship from 1973 to 1990 and developed its criteria³⁵. The Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences in Aparecida³⁶ confirmed this orientation: "The Fifth General Conference commits itself to carry out an incisive social catechesis, because 'The Christian life is not expressed solely in personal virtues, but also in social and political virtues'" (DA 505).

For reflection/discussion:

1. Does the school or parish catechesis that we know form social leaders?

³⁴ John Amos Comenius, *Didactica Magna* (The Great Didactic) found in: https://monoskop.org/File:Comenius_John_Amos_The_Great_Didactic_1967.pdf

³⁵ E. García Ahumada, F.S.C., *Catequese social*, "Revista de Catequese" VII-25 (1984) 46-52. *Catequesis social*, "Catequesis Latinoamericana" IV-15 (1985) 543-549. *Catequesis social y económico-política*, "Sinite" 76 (1984) 195-203. *Une catéchèse ouverte à la société en Amérique Latine*. «Lumen Vitae» XL-4 (1985) 403-413. *Social Catechesis in Latin America*, "Lumen Vitae" XLI-2 (1986) 216-225. *Qué es una catequesis liberadora*, "Medellín" 64 (1990) 516-526. *Qu'est-ce qu'une catéchèse libératrice?* "Lumen Vitae" XLVI-4 (1991) 425-436. *Situación y propuestas para una catequesis social liberadora*, "Catecheticum" 5 (2002) 109-124. *Una catequesis social incisiva*, "Medellín" 136 (2008) 649-668.

³⁶ Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences, *Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples may have life in Him. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"* (Jn 14:6). Aparecida, Final Document. Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora Aparecida, Brazil, May 13-31, 2007. Abbreviation: DA. Found in: <https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf>

2. Do you think that the baptized people who exercise public or private tasks are guided by the Gospel? How could you help them?

1.5.4. We must Update the Marian Catechesis

Due to its importance in Christian life, the social message of the Bible and of the ecclesial tradition requires updating the presentation of Mary in the catechesis. Along the path of Saint Paul VI, it is necessary to correct her image, promoted by the macho mentality as a false model of a passive woman, oblivious to public events, with only domestic virtues.³⁷ However, in her Canticle she praises God without thinking only of the benefits she received, but above all for His mercy towards the faithful (cf. *Lk* 1:50), for dispersing the arrogant of mind and heart (cf. *Lk* 1:51), because “he has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly” (*Lk* 1:52), for preferring the hungry over the rich (cf. *Lk* 1:53) and for fulfilling “forever” His promise to the people chosen (*Lk* 1:55). Like the people of God, Mary is the radiant woman of grace crowned with twelve stars (cf. *Rev* 12:1-2), who gives birth to the Messiah (cf. *Rev* 12:5), is protected by God with “the wings of the great eagle” (*Ex* 19:4, *Rev* 12:14), whose children fight with her against the dragon of evil and are “those who keep God’s commandments and bear witness to Jesus” (*Rev* 12:17).

In fact, Mary shares poverty at the birth of Jesus (cf. *Lk* 2:7) and with him endures persecution and exile (cf. *Mt* 2:13). She takes the initiative to assist Elizabeth who is pregnant (cf. *Lk* 1, 39-40) not hastily but for “about three months.” (*Lk* 1:56) With Joseph, she fulfills with sacrifice the civil norms (cf. *Lk* 2:4-5) as well as the religious ones (cf. *Lk* 2:21-24.27.39) which both regularly abide by (cf. *Lk* 2:41f). Friendly with her neighbors, she is invited to a wedding (cf. *Jn* 2:1). “Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding” (*Jn* 2:2) where the wine ran short, and she hastened to him, confident that her Son would make his first sign with his pow-

³⁷ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Mariialis cultus*, 37.

er (cf. *Jn* 2:3-11). With Joseph, she asks her son for an explanation of his actions in a non-permissive way (cf. *Lk* 2:42-50), exercising parental authority together (cf. *Lk* 2:51). She tries to take care of Jesus' health during his busy public life (cf. *Mk* 3:20-21, 31). She participates with full social commitment in the redemptive suffering (cf. *Lk* 2:34-35). She boldly accompanies the unjust execution of her Son while almost all the male disciples have fled (cf. *Jn* 19:25). She shares the collective discernment to choose the replacement for Judas Iscariot (cf. *Acts* 1:14-23). Her victory against evil is foreshadowed by both Judith, whom Elizabeth alludes to by greeting her as "blessed among women" (*Jdt* 13:18, *Lk* 1:42), as well as Jael, also praised for taking down Sisera, enemy of the people of God (cf. *Jg* 5:24-27). Mary is also prefigured as the creative "ideal woman" of the book of Proverbs (*Pr* 31:10-31).

1.5.5. The General Directory for Catechesis Guides its Complete Renewal

The GDC takes on the rich universal catechetical teaching. Every time Saint John Paul II recommended it, the CEC mentioned it immediately, in order to include the doctrine in an evangelizing process of persons and communities: "In positive terms, a catechesis which inspires not only intellectual assimilation of the faith, but also touches the heart and transforms conduct is correct" (GDC 205). This is the basic reference document for training catechists with the criteria of the Church. It was already necessary to mention its extensive and careful content in various parts of the present study. In it Part One deals with catechesis in the Church's mission of evangelization. When analyzing the religious and moral situation, it also asks to evaluate key aspects of the internal life of the ecclesial community (GDC 27-28). Part Two deals with the Gospel message, introducing criteria for its presentation: it must be Christocentric and Trinitarian, saving and liberating, ecclesial and historical, enculturated and integral, organic, hierarchical and significant (see GDC 97-118). Part Three deals with the pedagogy of

the faith, based on God's pedagogy. Part Four deals with those to be catechized, including the disabled, maladjusted and marginalized. It also addresses workers, artists, professionals, scientists, university students (GDC 189-191) for whom it is necessary to plan special programs of evangelization. Part Five deals with catechesis in the particular Church. It highlights the ministry of catechesis (GDC 219), emphasizing the importance of family catechesis, in which it is necessary to help parents (GDC 226 and 255); it deals at length with the formation of catechists (GDC 233-251); it states that the Catholic school is "a most important *locus* for human and Christian formation" (GDC 259) and among the duties of the Bishop it requests to "establish an articulated, coherent and global program in the diocese in order to respond to the true needs of the faithful: it should be integrated into the diocesan pastoral plan" (GDC 223f). At present, it is the most complete catechetical document.

1.5.6. The Council Explains the Evangelizing Mission of Education

The *Gravissimum Educationis* declaration³⁸ proclaims the universal right to an integral education for freedom and responsibility towards others (GE 1); the right of Christians to Christian education in the Mystical Body of Christ (GE 2) and the right of the Church to educate and proclaim salvation (GE 3c). It highlights the importance of the school and the vocation of educators (GE 5), the service of the members of the Church in non-Catholic schools (GE 7), in the Catholic school (GE 8-9) and in the faculties of sacred sciences so that divine revelation is increasingly understood (GE 11).

The *Code of Canon Law* instructs institutions of special consecration "to take care that catechetical instruction is imparted dil-

³⁸ Br. Michel Sauvage, FSC made a decisive intervention in the last stage of this work. Cf. Michel Sauvage, Miguel Campos and others, *The fragile hope of a witness. The itinerary of Brother Michel Sauvage (1923-2001)*. Rome, Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2014, 320-335

igently” (CIC 778). It declares that education must train people to achieve their final end and the common good of society (CIC 795); the duties and rights of parents and guardians regarding the Catholic education of their children (CIC 793, 797, 798); the duty of the faithful to ensure that civil society legislates in favor of the educational rights of parents according to their conscience (CIC 799), as well as the duties and rights of the local Ordinary regarding Catholic education and religion teachers (CIC 802 to 806).

In the school, audiovisual and computer media are increasingly used, but it is necessary to guide their use as a means at the service of Jesus Christ and salvation in each catechetical instructional act that makes use of them. The Decree *Inter Mirifica* (IM) on social media encourages “[...] the media of social communication [to be used effectively] especially in regions where more urgent efforts to advance morality and religion are needed.” (IM 13a) It establishes offering lay people the artistic, doctrinal, moral and social preparation for the good use of social communication media (IM 15b). It commands teaching Catholic doctrine and discipline on the correct use of social media in catechesis (IM 16).

For reflection/discussion:

1. How important have schools been in the evangelization of our country?
2. How do we help Catholic educators to evangelize in our country or district?

1.5.6.1. *Characteristics of School Religious Education*

Students attending school religious education are not all believers nor are they stable believers. The goal of religious school education, that is different from that of catechesis for converts, is to make known what is faith in Jesus Christ and what are the Church’s

answers to their questions, thus making room for the missionary proclamation of the Gospel.

“It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigor as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. It should not be an accessory alongside these disciplines, but rather it should engage in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue. This dialogue should take place above all at that level at which every discipline forms the personality of students. In this way the presentation of the Christian message influences the way in which the origins of the world, the sense of history, the basis of ethical values, the function of religion in culture, the destiny of man and his relationship with nature, are understood. Through inter-disciplinary dialogue religious instruction in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school.” (GDC 73e).

There is a way to train Christian teachers to carry out this indispensable dialogue.³⁹ “What conveys to religious instruction in schools its proper evangelizing character is the fact that it is called to penetrate a particular area of culture and to relate with other areas of knowledge. As an original form of the ministry of the word, it makes the Gospel present in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation.” (GDC 73c) “When given in the context of the Catholic school, religious instruction is part of and completed by other forms of the ministry of the word (catechesis, homilies, liturgical celebration, etc.). It is indispensable to their pedagogical function and the basis for their existence.

In the context of state schools or non-confessional schools where civil authorities or other circumstances impose the teaching of religion common to both Catholics and non-Catholics, it will have a more ecumenical character and have a more inter-religious awareness” (GDC 74). This teaching helps students who believe to un-

³⁹ *Evangelizar la cultura académica*, in Enrique García Ahumada, F.S.C., *Teología de la educación hoy*. Santiago de Chile, Universidad Finis Terrae, 2017, 297-364.

derstand the relationship between their faith, the existential problems of every human being, religions and the conceptions of life present in their culture (cf. GDC 75).

“Christian education in the family, catechesis and religious instruction in schools are, each in its own way, closely interrelated with the service of Christian education of children, adolescents, and young people. [...] It is for each diocese or pastoral region to discern the diverse circumstances which arise with regard to the existence or not of Christian initiation of children in the context of the family, and with regard to the formative duties which are traditionally exercised by the parish, the school, etc.” (GDC 76)

For reflection/discussion:

1. How do we offer Christian formation in or out of class in Catholic schools?
2. How do Catholic teachers, Catholic parents and Catholic students evangelize in non-Catholic schools?

1.6. The Education of the Faith in *Evangelii Gaudium*

Even at the risk of some repetition, it is important to gather here the catechetical contribution of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*. His motivating preamble on *the joy of the Gospel* (cf. EG 1-8) followed by a similar section on *the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing* (cf. EG 9-13) answer the basic question of why to evangelize. He is in line with Saint Augustine for whom catechizing requires first of all love and joy.⁴⁰ In this document, one may

⁴⁰ Saint Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. Found in: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1303.htm>

note ten very important aspects for the training of catechists and religion teachers.

1.6.1. Good Communication as a Basis

Communication, which is fundamental in every catechetical act, requires:

1. To awaken sympathy for the good and the truth before explaining it. “Some things are understood and appreciated only from the standpoint of this assent, which is a sister to love, beyond the range of clear reasons and arguments.” (EG 42)
2. Do “not assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying” (EG 34) or that they understand it as we understand it.
3. To tune our own language and the meanings that we attribute to words with that of the interlocutors. “There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another.” (EG 41)
4. Maintain a fitting sense of proportion. “This would be seen in the frequency with which certain themes are brought up ... in preaching and catechesis” (EG 38).

1.6.2. The Indispensable Orthodoxy

Loyalty to the revealed heritage requires:

1. Verifying if the interlocutors grasp *the heart of the Gospel* and not only secondary aspects disconnected from its core that gives them meaning, beauty and attractiveness (cf. EG 34-35).
2. Always connecting the truths with “the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead.” (EG 36)
3. Living Christian life so as “to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others”, trying to make it Good News for all and have “the fragrance of the Gospel” (EG 39)
4. Orienting the teaching of virtues so that “The foundation of the New Law is in the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is manifested in the faith which works through love’ (*S. Th.*, I-II, q. 108, a. 1., cf. *Ga* 5:6)” (EG 37). “In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit.” (EG 12)
5. Distinguishing in the Church the truths of faith regarding “countless issues that are being studied and reflected upon with great freedom.” (EG 40)

1.6.3. The Importance of Pre-catechesis

Pre-catechesis is a mission. Everyone has the right “to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet.” (EG 15) In this commitment, a humble and patient testimony of

life is a priority. “An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.” (EG 24) Missionary action is not only the responsibility of the catechists, but of the entire Church, which must be transformed in a Church which “goes forth” (cf. EG 20-27).

1.6.4. Introducing the Kingdom of God as Fullness of Life for All

Francis quotes a text from the General Conference of Aparecida: “Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others” (EG 10, cf. DA 360). This statement, enriched with various passages from the New Testament, enabled the Latin American Bishops to affirm that the Kingdom of God is fullness of life for all (see DA 347-363; 382-386) and derive from it enormous pastoral consequences.

This concept of the Kingdom of God reappears in the long chapter on the social dimension of evangelization. The Indian professor of catechetics Jerome Vallabaraj, SDB, embodied this theology of the Kingdom of God in the most multidisciplinary treaty on catechesis for adults.⁴¹ In several statements, Francis offers consolation with that vision of the Kingdom of God. “Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.” (EG 39) “Today and always, ‘the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel’, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish.” (EG 48)

⁴¹ Jerome Vallabaraj, S.D.B., *Delving into the World of Catechetical Education of Adults. A Multi-Perspective Elaboration*, Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2008.

1.6.5. A Completely Kerygmatic Catechesis

“**T**he first proclamation also calls for ongoing formation and maturation” (EG 160). Francis beautifully brings up the kerygma accepted through conversion and developed in Christian growth as a dialogue of love between God and the believer, made not only of words, but also of works on both sides. Catechesis must offer proclamation “at every level and moment” (EG 164), deepen the content of kerygma and maintain its characteristics of expressing “God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines.” (EG 165) The Pope focuses the deepening of the kerygma on the Word of God, because “all evangelization is based on that word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to” (EG 174). And for that he makes reference to *Verbum Domini* (EG 175).

1.6.6. The Mystagogical Catechesis

In Aparecida⁴², where Cardinal Bergoglio was the final speaker, the Latin American Bishops had introduced this aspect: mystagogical catechesis (cf. DA 290). Francis recalls it, as it had been mentioned when dealing with mystagogy. He does not limit mystagogy to the catechetical intervention, but commits the whole community, including the mystagogue, to experientially share the formative meaning of the signs of the liturgy.

⁴² Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops’ Conferences, *Disciples and Missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples may have life in Him. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14: 6)*. Aparecida, Final Document. Sanctuary of Nuestra Señora Aparecida, Brazil, May 13-31, 2007. Abbreviation: DA. Found in: <https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf>

The issue is about helping to feel the presence of Christ in the sacred environment created during the celebration by colors and forms (lights, temple architecture, paintings, sculptures, ornaments, cult objects), fragrances (candle, oil, incense, ash), musical sounds, flavors (bread, wine, salt) and contacts (handshake, hug, kiss), proclaimed or prayerful words, silences, as well as gestures and postures in the rites.

1.6.7. Faith and Beauty in Catechesis

He immediately links the liturgical symbolism to the communication of faith through all the arts. “Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the ‘way of beauty (*via pulchritudinis*)’ (*Propositio* 20).” (EG 167) The Son made man, revelation of the infinite beauty, is to be deeply loved, and draws us to himself with ties of love. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the formation in the *via pulchritudinis* be inserted in the transmission of faith. It is desirable that each particular Church encourage the use of the arts in its evangelizing commitment, in continuity with the richness of the past, but also in the vastness of its many contemporary expressions, in order to transmit the faith in a new “language of parables.”⁴³ “We must be bold enough to discover new signs and new symbols, new flesh to embody and communicate the word, and different forms of beauty which are valued in different cultural settings, including those unconventional modes of beauty, which may mean little to the evangelizers, yet prove particularly attractive for others.” (EG 167)⁴⁴

⁴³ Benedict XVI, *Address on the Occasion of the Screening of the Documentary Film “Art and Faith – Via Pulchritudinis”*, (25 October 2012), *L’Osservatore Romano* (27 October 2012), 7. Found in: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121025_arte-fede.html

⁴⁴ The sacred painter, doctor in theology and professor of Symbolic Theology at the Catholic University of Uruguay, Ricardo Ramos Blasi [ramos.blasi@gmail.com] distinguished himself in the III International Congress of the Catechuminate, “Christian initiation in the change of era”. E.G.A.

1.6.8. Presenting Morality as Good News

When asking for moral education “with the fragrance of the Gospel”, he says: “As for the moral component of catechesis, which promotes growth in fidelity to the Gospel way of life, it is helpful to stress over and over again the attractiveness and the ideal of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment. In light of that positive message, our rejection of the evils which endanger that life can be better understood. Rather than experts in dire predictions or judges bent on rooting out every threat and deviation, we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel.” (EG 168)

1.6.9. A Catechesis that accompanies

In the area of pastoral communication, in addition to highlighting the encounter with the living Christ, the General Conference of Aparecida had originally urged spiritual and pastoral accompaniment (DA 282), reiterated in its Final Message (FM 3; 5). Francis expands on that proposal. He lays the foundation for the need for priests, religious and laity to learn the “art of accompaniment” (EG 169). He orients it to God in order to overcome loneliness and self-centeredness (EG 170). He briefly describes the “pedagogy which will introduce people, step by step, to the full appropriation of the mystery” where the experience of accompaniment is reflected (EG 171). He points out precautions (EG 172) and considers accompanying and allowing oneself to be accompanied as indispensable for missionary disciples (EG 173).

1.6.10. The Social Message of the Gospel

Francis explains the community and social dimensions of the kerygma, which should not be disfigured or mutilated (EG 176), because “at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others” (EG 177). It is required by a correct relationship with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit (EG 178), and the practice of the reading of the Gospel without making it sterile (EG 179; 193; 209). It is a matter of extending the Kingdom of God and its justice in the world (EG 180). “True Christian hope, which seeks the eschatological kingdom, always generates history.” (EG 181) The Pope proposes among the guiding documents of the catechesis the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (EG 184). “Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor.” (EG 187) He dedicates 81 of its 288 paragraphs to *The social dimension of evangelization*.

Thus, “ecumenism can be seen as a contribution to the unity of the human family.” (EG 245) Interreligious dialogue is essential for peace in the world, hindered by fundamentalisms on both sides, surmountable to share the service to justice and peace. (EG 250) It is necessary to join the sincere dialogue to the steadfast announcement, while accepting differences without diplomatic tricks, (EG 251) And this statement is extended to the consequences of love.

CHAPTER II

**SOME FIELD REPORTS
SUPPORTING THE RENEWAL
OF CATECHESIS**

In this chapter, some catechetical experiences are offered, which show the urgent need to find relevant strategies in the evangelical proclamation through catechesis.

As an example, and with the valuable information at hand, the following are listed here.

2.1. Assessment on the Change of Era

Christianity developed in a cultural situation in which the Church, rooted in the Gospel, influenced civil legislation, public education, customs and artistic currents. This influence existed in the Roman Empire since Theodosius had proclaimed the official status of Christian religion, in the Asian and African regions under Portuguese rule and in areas of America colonized by Spain.

On the other hand: “The human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world.” (GS 4) “These new conditions have their impact on religion ... and exact day by day a more personal and explicit adherence to faith... On the other hand, growing numbers of people are abandoning religious practice.” (GS 7)

Today, an enormous portion of mankind suffers in misery (GDC 17). There is more awareness than before about human rights, however in large areas those are systematically violated (GDC 18). Science and technology show great development, but they do not always leave room for other wisdom, which would allow the human being to be sufficiently understood (GDC 20). Indigenous cultures are attacked, and population identities and values are destroyed (GDC 21). Religious indifference, atheism and secularism seeking to exclude God from social life are widespread, while sects and new religious movements - often fundamentalist and intolerant - are born (GDC 22). An ethical relativism is on the rise (GDC 23). Many baptized do not lead a Christian life (GDC 25).

The General Conference of Aparecida says: “We are living through a change of era, the deepest level of which is cultural” (DA 44). “A high percentage of Catholics are unaware of their mission to be salt and leaven in the world, and their Christian identity is weak and vulnerable. This constitutes a great challenge that deeply questions the way we are educating in the faith and how we are nourishing Christian living; a challenge that we must face decisively, boldly, and creatively, because in many places Christian initiation has been poor or fragmented.” (DA 286-287)

For reflection/discussion:

1. What happens if in our catechetical programs we assume that all the participants are believers?
2. What evangelization programs do we know that are adapted to our pluralistic era?

2.2. A Great Catechetics Professor and Council Theologian

The Austrian Joseph Andreas Jungmann, SJ (1889-1975) created the concept of kerygmatic theology. In 1936 in Regensburg, Germany, he published a study on the primitive preaching of the proclamation of the Good News, where he gave preference to the religious and joyful understanding of the Christian message over the insistence on obligatory dogmas, precepts and rites. It was removed from bookstores by order of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office. He revised it in 1963 in Innsbruck.⁴⁵ In his *Kateche-*

⁴⁵ J. A. Jungmann, S.J., *Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung*, Regensburg, Pustet, 1936, revised as *Glaubensverkündigung im Lichte der Frohbotschaft*, Innsbruck, Tyrolia, 1963, *La predicación de la fe a la luz de la buena nueva*. San Sebastián, Dinor, 1964.

*tik*⁴⁶ he harmonized the attitude of faith (*fides qua creditur*, faith with which one believes) with the content of faith (*fides quae creditur*, faith in which one believes). He defined two things as kerygmatic: a) a theological discourse done as a more exhortatory proclamation than a doctrinal and theoretical one, and b) the first paschal announcement with a call to conversion. He was a consultant to the Second Vatican Council as a pioneer of kerygmatic theology.

Renovating steps of progress were transmitted to the Council: considering the Bible and tradition as bearers of the revelation of God the Savior's love (DV 7); considering the present human being within the framework of the history of salvation (DV 4); as Church, being the light of people as Christ is the light of the world (LG 1); considering morality as a manifestation of Christ's life received through Baptism (LG 7); understanding the sacraments as sanctifying actions of Christ (LG 7; 41) and the liturgy as a manifestation of the mystery of Christ and the celebration of his Passover (SC 2;6); linking the Bible with liturgy and catechesis (DV 35; SC 16).

2.3. Some Forms of Catechesis with Catechumenal Inspiration

The Third International Congress of the Catechumenate, "Christian Initiation in the Changing Era", held in July 2014 in Santiago, Chile, in cooperation with the Catholic University Cardenal Raúl Silva Henríquez and the Catholic University of Paris, had speakers from four continents. In my position, as a theologian and secretary of the Local Team of Chile in contact with the Paris Committee, headed by Dr. François Moog in 2012 and since 2013 by Dr. Joël Molinaro, I made sure that in the case-study workshops, in addition to other very varied experiences about the catechumenate, the following programs of catechumenal inspiration were presented:

⁴⁶J. A. Jungmann, S.J. *Handing on the faith: A manual of catechesis*. (A.N. Fuerst, Trans.). New York: Herder and Herder. (Original work published as *Katechetik* in 1955).

*Family Catechesis for Eucharistic Initiation as Christian Initiation of Children and Adults*⁴⁷, by Father Gerardo Díaz, CM, MA in Pastoral Catechetics, Professor at the Seminary of Valparaiso, Member of the Chilean Society of Catechetics, now Director of the National Commission for Catechesis, [gerardocmch@yahoo.com].

Youth Initiation to Confirmation by César González, Master of Education, Member of the Executive Team of the Salesian Youth Ministry in Chile, [cgonzalez@salesianos.cl].

Catechumenally-Inspired Life Journey for former beginners, by Dr. Roland Lacroix, Professor at the Superior Catechetical Pastoral Institute of the Catholic University of Paris, [lacroixroland@live.fr].

Catechumenally-Inspired Christian Initiation of Baptized Children, by Fr. Dr. Antonio Godina, Coordinator of the Diocesan Section of Evangelization and Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Guadalajara, Mexico, [agodinat@hotmail.com], with Dr. María Elena Ocegueda Juárez, Executive Secretary of the same institution [meoj13@hotmail.com].

Mystagogy: Catechetical Initiatives, by Daniel Laliberté, PhD in Theology with the specialization in Theology of Christian Initiation, Director of the Archdiocesan Center of Catechesis of Quebec, Associated Professor at the University of Laval in Canada in catechetics formation [daniel.laliberte@ecdq.org].

These programs are carried out by personnel with diocesan or university responsibilities in small groups. They can count on specialized catechists with sound biblical and liturgical formation, who are experienced in the culture of their recipients or interlocutors. They also proceed by steps and carry out evaluations and co-evalu-

⁴⁷ Cf. E. García Ahumada, F.S.C. *La catequesis familiar de iniciación eucarística*, in: *La educación integral*, “Cuadernos MEL” N.º 19 (Rome, 2005) pp. 29-53. Enrique García Ahumada, F.S.C. and Joaquín Silva Soler (Coordinators) *Congreso Internacional de Catequesis Familiar de Iniciación Eucarística*, Santiago, Faculty of Catholic Theology of the Tübingen University, Germany – Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile – Instituto Superior de Pastoral Catequética of Chile “Catecheticum”, 2005, with experiences from America, Asia and Europe.

ations before moving from one stage to the next; they include celebrations of the word; their trainers take care of their own biblical, doctrinal, spiritual, pedagogical, communicative and ecclesial communion preparation, and carry out quality-supervised assessment mainly to catechists' trainers.

2.4. Pre-Council Institutes for the Training of Catechetics

Since 1938, in the United States of America, superior training centers for religious education have been created.

In 1951, the Catholic Institute of Paris, now the Catholic University of Paris, began its courses of Pedagogy for Catechesis, giving birth to the Superior Catechetical Pastoral Institute. In 1954, the Dutch Bishops established the Superior Catechetical Institute in Nijmegen. In 1956, the Salesian Pontifical University founded in Rome its Catechetical Institute that disseminates its research on catechetics in the magazines *Salesianum*, *Orientamenti pedagogici* and *Rassegna delle Riviste*, today *Annale*, reviewing books and important catechetical articles in Italian from different European languages. In 1957, the Pontifical University of Salamanca created the Superior Institute of Catechetical Sciences "Saint Pius X," recognized as a Pontifical Institute in 1960 and based at the Saint Pius X Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In 1958, the Jesuits the International Institute Lumen Vitae at the Catholic University of Leuven founded in Brussels. In 1959, Cardinal Godfrey of Westminster opened in London the National Catechetical Center for England and Wales. In 1959, the Episcopal Conference of Rwanda and Burundi established in Astrida, today Butare, the International Liturgical and Catechetical Pastoral Center associated with *Lumen Vitae*, and in 1962, the African Catechetical Institute was created. In 1961, the Department of Catechesis of CELAM created the ICLA, the Latin American Catechetical Institute, in Santiago, Chile, later incorporated into the Theological Pastoral Institute of

Bogotá. In 1961, the Laval University, in Québec, Canada, created its Institute of Catechesis, and the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences of the University of Montreal founded its Catechetical Department. In 1962, Joseph Colomb, PSS, founded the Institute of Catechetical Pastoral Care in Strasbourg, France. In 1964, he set up in Mukumbi, Tanzania, the Catechetical Institute of the Diocese of Mwanza.

After the Council, other catechetical training centers were created. Unfortunately, there is not enough demand to prepare specialists in training catechists and in renewing catechesis.⁴⁸

For reflection/discussion:

1. What catechetical specialist operates in our district or diocese?
2. What priority is given in our district or country to prepare and employ catechetical specialists?

2.5. The Catechumenate in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2010

The first Latin American catechetical survey, sent to the dioceses through the presidents of 22 Episcopal Conferences reunited in CELAM, was about catechumenate⁴⁹.

Direct answers came from dioceses or other ecclesiastical districts of nine Episcopal Conferences: Argentina (Comodoro Rivadavia, Santísima Concepción, Concordia, Deán Funes, Lomas de Zamora,

⁴⁸ E. García Ahumada, F.S.C. *El Instituto Superior de Pastoral Catequética de Chile "Catecheticum" 1992–2006*. "Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia en Chile" 30 (2012) 33-51.

⁴⁹ Enrique García A., F.S.C., *El catecumenado en América Latina en 2010*. "Sinite" LII-158 (2011) 523-534.

Nueva Orán, San Nicolás, Villa of the Concepción del Río Cuarto), Cuba (Camagüey, Ciego de Ávila, Guantánamo-Baracoa and Matanzas), Chile (Arica, Iquique, Valparaíso, Episcopal Center of Santiago, Talca, Temuco, Osorno, Puerto Montt, Aysén and Punta Arenas), Guatemala (Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Santa Cruz of Quiché, Santiago de Guatemala, Sololá-Chimaltenango, Apostolic Vicariate of Petén, Zacapa) ; while Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela only sent synthetic reports.

The country with the largest tradition of catechumens is Cuba, under communist dictatorship since 1959, where it has existed since 1970 in the Diocese of Guantánamo-Baracoa and Matanzas. It has also existed in San Juan de Cuyo in Argentina since 1965, in Panama since 1980 (it does not indicate in which diocese), in Chile since 1984 in Punta Arenas, in Venezuela in several dioceses since 1998, and it already existed in 303 parishes and 4 vicariates, while in Nicaragua it did not exist. According to an unquantifiable estimate, 20 % of the 12,000 parishes in Brazil had adopted the catechumenate for adults.

Most parishes that had catechumenate did not offer missionary preparation to be admitted. This is quite strange, as one entered the process without accepting the kerygma, which is even more amazing. The application of RCIA was scarce. In general, the duration was established in advance and this indicates absence of thorough examinations to admissions, as well as to the step of preparation close to Baptism. The date of the latter, with exceptions, was decided in advance, therefore, without being connected to doctrine acceptance or Christian life. In short, even where it is practiced, the catechumenate in Latin America and the Caribbean was at its first steps, and required many improvements if it were to train people and adult communities in their faith, as proposed in 1992, at the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopal Conferences in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

2.6. The Latin American Popular Reading of the Bible

In many places in Latin America the mode of prayerful reading of the Bible called committed, pastoral or even popular reading, does not begin with the text, but with a conversation about the most relevant present events, which are of interest for the community. Afterwards, a pertinent text, preferably prophetic or evangelical, is sought honestly, with which collective biblical knowledge is enriched. Steps similar to those of the well-known *lectio divina* are given (what does the text say? What does the text tell us? What do we say to the Lord? What conversion of the mind, heart and life does the Lord ask us? Or what are we going to do now?). Motivated by the Word of the Lord, the reading always closes with a commitment concerning the situation, which can sometimes be painful and unjust and other times joyful, for some success or advance, which calls for celebration with Him and, in this Marian continent, with His Mother, including some signs. This came from the Catholic Action, which, with its practice of revision of life between 1931 and 1960, discovered the mobilizing power of the Gospel and interested people in the Old Testament, giving birth shortly before the Council to biblical circles.⁵⁰ The basic Christian communities that emerged shortly after the Council in Latin America have spread, perhaps independently, to other continents.

2.7. The Family Catechesis of Christian Initiation to Eucharistic Life

The second and most recent Latin American survey on catechesis sent to the dioceses was about the family catechesis of Christian initiation to the Eucharistic life, since it is the most widespread

⁵⁰ E. García Ahumada, F.S.C. *Historia de la educación de la fe católica en Chile*. Santiago, Tiberiades, 2009, 353-356. It seems that in various Latin American countries the process was similar.

catechetical system in Latin America. From April to July 2013, we carried out a survey addressed to the Bishops Presidents of National Catechetical Commissions, who gathered information from their own dioceses or authors or program managers. The countries which responded were Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Cuba, Guatemala and Uruguay. These last three informed that they do not have organized family catechesis, and the same can be assumed for those who did not answer, although their existence is confirmed in many parishes and dioceses of several of those countries.

All the Latin American programs presented in this regard, almost all of them over a two-year span, encourage the following of Christ, employ committed Christian catechists for parents and children, accompany the Christian community and at Sunday Mass. They prepare adults and children for the sacraments of Confession and Communion, encourage parents to serve in the world according to their vocation and have weekly meetings at least for the children.

In Chile, the program of the Instituto Pastoral Apóstol Santiago, INPAS held, in 2013, 36 weekly meetings in two years for parents, and 9 liturgies of the word and other parallel ones for children. Those who guide the parents are married couples, except for the Military Ordinariate. Parents have an educational and evangelizing responsibility, but doctrinal formation has been entrusted to the animators of the children since the year 2000, as has occurred for two other diocesan programs. Eight meetings try to improve intra-familial relationships. The program does not include pre-catechesis; it presents Jesus Christ from the beginning and calls for conversion. It does not favor postponing Communion for children who are not sufficiently prepared, but it gives criteria to allow it. The diocese of Valdivia in its *Catechesis of Christian initiation for people with disabilities*, which started in 2010, has 30 weekly meetings addressed to one of the parents committed to Christian life, and it invites relatives who wish to participate; it promotes solidarity among participants; it dedicates 10 pre-catechesis sessions to improve intra-familial relationships and six regarding the person of Jesus Christ; it includes 4 celebrations of the Word; the catechist of children, and

not their parents, is responsible for doctrinal instruction, and he postpones Communion for the children who are not prepared.

In Argentina there are several family catechesis programs in different dioceses, although not all parishes use them. All aim at having couples serve as catechists for the parents. Santa Fe has a three-year program with weekly meetings of parents and children and other dioceses have a two-year one. Several dioceses believe that the program aims at improving family relationships, but only a few indicate how many sessions have that goal. Only San Isidro has pre-catechism, in 4 sessions, and does not entrust parents with the doctrinal responsibility, which is instead given to the children's catechist; in others this is shared by children's catechists. Fr. Pedro Oeyen, who planned the San Isidro program, affirms: "In Argentina, unfortunately, family catechesis has lost its presence for many reasons explained in the document *Catequesis Familiar para el mundo de hoy*, Cosquín, April 2008."⁵¹ Most of them avoid postponing Communion for the unprepared child. In Santa Fe, there are worries connected to cultural change, the so-called egalitarian marriage, instability and addictions; they hold catechetical camps in the summer, and in each parish catechists belong to teams of spirituality, formation or fraternity. According to information from Bariloche, this family catechesis has spread in Argentina since the Second National Catechetics Congress in 1987, but today it is difficult to engage parents in accompanying their children in this area; usually, the mothers are those who go to the meetings. In Río Gallegos the Diocesan Board of Catechesis has undertaken accompaniment to the catechists and the change is noticeable.

In Peru the two-year long weekly program supported by the Episcopal Conference since 1978 has 50 sessions for adults, most of them held by married couples of catechists and 50 celebrations for children. Parents are responsible for the doctrine; each year they have 5 celebrations of the Word. There is no pre-catechism, nor sessions to

⁵¹ Cf. Episcopal Commission for Catechesis and Biblical Pastoral – National Department of Catechesis, *Catequesis familiar para el mundo de hoy. Documento final del 3.º Encuentro Nacional de Catequesis familiar*, Buenos Aires, Oficina del Libro, 2009.

improve intra-family relations nor to promote mutual solidarity. It is preferable to postpone Communion for unprepared children.

In Bolivia, the program of the Archdiocese of La Paz supported by the Episcopal Conference was adopted at the national level from 1977 to 2003, the year in which freedom of choice was assured. Not all parishes took it. There are 80 weekly sessions with 9 Liturgies of the Word for parents and 80 for children, but there are parishes with a one-year program with 40 sessions. It has 10 sessions of pre-catechesis, of which 4 aim at improving family relationships. Most of the parents' catechists are married couples; parents are responsible for teaching the doctrine, but if necessary, the animators of the children assume it. Mutual solidarity among the participants is proposed. Postponing Communion for unprepared children is not favored. A large number of the basic ecclesial communities come from the family catechesis of Eucharistic initiation.

In Ecuador there has been a national program of Christian initiation which started only a few years ago, not followed by all the dioceses. When there are children to be prepared for the sacraments, 20 meetings for the parents take place once a month, which include the Liturgy of the Word, and 80 weekly meetings that are for the children. There is no pre-catechesis. For one year they prepare for Confession and the next for Communion. It is required that the catechists of parents be married couples. Those responsible for doctrinal teaching are the catechists of the children and not their parents, who maintain their educational responsibility. Four fifths of the sessions try to improve intra-familial relationships. It is preferred that Communion for the unprepared child be postponed. A greater formation of catechists appears to be needed.

Since 1996 in Venezuela there has been a program with 34 weekly sessions for parents and children, with 7 celebrations of the Word for parents, followed by some parishes of several dioceses. There is no pre-catechism or special session to improve intra-family relationships. The catechists of the parents are mostly unmarried couples. Those responsible for doctrinal teaching are children's parents and catechists. Solidarity among the participants is one of the aims. It is not preferred to postpone Communion for the unprepared child.

Working with children's parents has facilitated adult catechesis that aims at initiation or renewal in Christian life.

In the Dominican Republic, since 2003, the Diocese of Higüey has had a two-year program with weekly sessions for adults and children, with 6 Liturgies of the Word for parents and 12 sessions of pre-catechesis. Most of the parents' catechists are unmarried couples. Parents are responsible for doctrinal teaching, but they do not get involved much. Solidarity among participants is not the aim of the program nor is the improvement of intra-familial relations. Jesus Christ is presented especially in 11 sessions. Postponing Communion for the unprepared child is not favored. The Episcopal Conference provides catechumenal initiation with the national catechism and the formation of small communities of children and adolescents, which are giving good results, and it does not deem it relevant to involve families.

In Paraguay in four dioceses with family catechesis of Eucharistic initiation, there are married couples who encourage parents and promote mutual solidarity, while encouraging parents to serve in the Church and in the world. The Diocese of Encarnación has had a two-year Diocesan Project since 1995, in which parents and catechists of children transmit the doctrine, including six months of pre-catechesis and 10 sessions to improve intra-familial relations, 8 celebrations of the Word, as well as 10 sessions dedicated to Jesus Christ. Communion for unprepared children cannot be postponed.

Since 2000, the Diocese of San Lorenzo has had a one-year program in which doctrine is taught to children by parents and catechists. There are six months of pre-catechesis, including 15 sessions to improve intra-familial relationships, then 10 on Jesus Christ, 8 celebrations of the Word, no delaying Communion for unprepared children. The Diocese of Ciudad del Este has a two-year program, with three sessions of pre-catechesis, in which the catechists of the children offer the doctrine and the parents only have educational responsibility, and there is a specific Sunday Mass. Since 2010, the Archdiocese of Asunción has run the archdiocesan program *Conmigo Podrás*, headed by a missionary who implemented it for 14 years in Chile and reformulated it over a one-year program for nine

age levels where the first is from 0 to 6 years; doctrine is taught by parents and children's catechists, and it focuses on Jesus Christ in almost all sessions, with 8 to 12 celebrations of the Word; it seeks to improve intrafamilial relationships and the Communion of the unprepared child is postponed. Fathers do not attend parents' meetings. Many are single or divorced and in a second marriage, and there are almost no guiding married couples; the clergy tends to reject the program because it entails a lot of work, and it is difficult for the catechists to prepare and run it, but where it operates there is adult evangelization and a good participation in the Church.

2.8. Development of the Catechumenate in Russia⁵²

The change of era took place in Russia in 1991 when the Soviet Union was peacefully suppressed. Since 1992, out of 143 million inhabitants, 73% of whom live in urban groups, the total population has decreased due to high mortality and low birth rate. There are 10% who are atheists, 7% undecided and 83% believers: of the latter, 56.4% are Orthodox, 8 to 15% Muslims, 9% Protestants mainly Lutheran and Baptist, 2% Buddhist, 2% Jews, 1% Catholic, 0.8% belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church. There are a million people in 300 sects. The Russian Orthodox Church has 1 Patriarch, 47 Metropolitans, 12 Archbishops, 147 Bishops, 26,158 priests, 3,292 deacons, 30,142 parishes, 428 monasteries, 38 seminars, 5 academies of theology, 87 theological institutes, 11,051 catechism schools.

The first years of Catholic rebirth were difficult. The Totalitarian Communist regime with its anti-religious propaganda, which considered the Sacred Scriptures as a myth, prohibited all missionary, educational and social work and trampled on human dignity. A cen-

⁵² Sr. Thérèse Kanacry, F.M.M., in E. García A., *Aporte catequético del III Congreso Internacional del Catecumenado, "La iniciación cristiana en el cambio de época"*. Santiago, Universidad Finis Terrae, 2017.

tury before those 73 years of atheist power, from 1814 when Pius VII had restored the Society of Jesus and the Jesuit educators that the late Empress Catherine the Great had summoned left Russia to rebuild communities in Europe, the popular tradition of Christianity had declined, although backed by imperial ideology which did not request personal choice. Although parents had passed to Marxism, many were baptized in secret by grandmothers of faithful Christian life, and they received clandestine Eucharist. This was the source of catechists and priests.

When democracy returned, many expressed their liberation by asking for Catholic or Orthodox Baptism. At the beginning, Baptism was imparted without preparation, with one to three talks with the parish priest, while in the Orthodox Church it was enough to agree with a priest on the day and time. The situation was like this until 1995, when Catholic missionaries began arriving.

The Administration of the Mother of God in Moscow appointed a catechetical committee, which organized the first catechetical session for catechists in all of Russia. They were Catholics of good will with vague ideas of God, the human being and Christian values. During this gathering, the translation of RCIA *ad experimentum* was presented, because an appropriate religious language was sought. The use of a tool for catechists, the Russian mentality and identity, the art of forming a Christian community with the values it implies were also explained. The meeting also included the sharing of experiences of several parishes which had begun to prepare Baptisms. The catechumenal path proposed in the RCIA awakened much interest. The parish priests, the religious and the catechists, who were mostly foreigners, were beginners in terms of catechumenate. Together we studied the catechumenate and formulated guidelines for our catechetical service. Most priests did not grasp the importance of the preparation step, the pre-catechumenate, which is key to welcome the Christian message, to the progressive understanding by catechumens of the history of salvation, and their incorporation in the parish and Church community. Christian initiation began little by little. Our task was to listen to people and give testimony of our faith through our own life, because they said this was what they

needed, as they were tired of empty words. They rediscovered their own dignity through our own respect, love and compassion and then they felt that they were people loved and saved by God.

Until 1991 the Catholic Church had two Administrations, one in Moscow for the European region and the other one in Novosibirsk, Siberia. In 1997 their number was increased to four, and in 2002 they were erected as dioceses for the largest country in the world with 17,098,242 km²: the Archdiocese Mother of God in Moscow with 62 parishes, 138 priests and 127 women religious, Saint Joseph of Irkutsk with 42 parishes, 47 priests and 47 women religious, Saint Clement of Saratov with 52 parishes, 47 priests and 77 women religious, and Transfiguration in Novosibirsk with 83 parishes, 28 priests and 37 women religious.

In 1999 the Bishop in charge of catechesis, H.E. Mons. Mazur, organized the first national catechetical session on the catechumenate. With six directors of catechetical centers and with interested parish priests, an experimental program was developed while revising the religious vocabulary. The pre-catechumenate roused much interest. A parish priest reported that at the end of each Eucharist he offered to hold meetings for those who wished to meet God, run by volunteers with some preparation, who talked about knowing and clarifying motivations, and having informal contacts with parishioners and visits. The parish kindly welcomes newcomers, offers them a seat and answers their questions. Many remain in the community, touched by those first gestures. The parish priests, the laity and religious missionaries, and the catechists learned the initiation process in the catechumenate, a subject of formation introduced in the diocesan seminaries. In the pre-catechumenate, weekly meetings are proposed for two months without a fixed program, to strengthen the desire of Baptism and for those who ask for it, the catechumenate begins.

In the year 2000, requests for Baptisms dropped sharply. In 2002, the official translation of the RCIA was published. The number of parishes with catechumenate increased thanks to the insistence of the Bishops, to a better knowledge of the Ritual and to the catechetical formation that the seminarians received. The Fi-

nal Call and the Scrutinies are practiced in the parishes in private, in preparation groups, because catechumens prefer it like this given their shyness. Most parish priests use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as their program with its theoretical doctrinal approach, instead of attending to the process of faith of the people. New priests prefer to accompany the truths of the faith with their journeys translated from Polish or French, with a more anthropological and pedagogical approach.

In 2013 the Episcopal Conference published the *Directory of Catechesis for Russia*, with great attention to the catechumenate and its preparation with its stages and rites, and it was agreed that each Bishop should decide the form and duration of the catechumenate. Between 2008 and 2013 the Baptism of young people and adults in Russia fell from 448 to 205 while those of children increased from 318 to 518 and 5% of families did not baptize their children early. Catechesis is now being promoted for families. The reasons for asking for personal Baptism or for a child are very varied, sometimes linked to superstitions: it is necessary to discern and accompany. The catechists and godparents who collaborate in the preparation sometimes do not understand the need for prayer and constant contact with the catechumens, nor the need for them to be witnesses of the Christian life, nor do they know how to put the catechumens in contact with the living God, which impels the improvement of Christian initiation programs.

To date, only the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow has defined since 2010 that the catechumenate begins in September, and lasts until Easter of the following year. Parish priests have to send to the Archbishop the list of those who will be admitted to the catechumenate and at the beginning of Lent the names of those asking admission to the final call. The Scrutinies take place in Lent, in the most appropriate form according to the animator and the number of people he takes care of in the parish, and it is necessary to obtain the agreement of the Archbishop to celebrate the sacraments of initiation at a different time besides the Easter Vigil. In three dioceses with small scattered parishes, the parish priests, very isolated, do what they can, they do not always apply the whole

RCIA as in the larger parishes, with a preparation that is limited to theoretical teaching for a period from three months to two years, and the godparents are only witnesses at the Baptism. Our team translated from French *Meeting Christ* for Christian initiation and another from English for the companions of the catechumens.

In St. Petersburg, from January 29 to February 1, 2013, the National Conference on the Catechumenate, *The Easter Path of our Faith*, gathered a Bishop, the Apostolic Nuncio and 74 priests, women religious and catechists who are active in the catechumenate. They came to realize that the Word of God must occupy a central place at all stages, not to confirm what was explained in the catechetical meetings, but as the intervention of God in the spiritual experience of catechists and catechumens in their encounter with God in a new life that welcomes the Redemption and opens up to the Church. It was an important moment for the growth of the Catholic Church in Russia. According to the preparatory survey, the catechumens come from atheist or non-practicing environments with believing parents, but also indifferent ones, Muslims or sect members. They are Russian of German, Polish, Lithuanian origin; young, adults or older; students, workers, or belonging to “post-Soviet intelligentsia” interested in the West and the Catholic culture; people who are sick or go through mourning or other problems in life. Their request comes from a search for the truth or the absolute, sometimes due to magical beliefs that require discernment. Their frequently asked questions are about God, the meaning of life, of love, of suffering; the role of faith in everyday life, eternity; if trials are punishments of God; religions and shamanism; what is specifically Christianity and the official position on magic; the scandal of the Church’s divisions; the history of the Church; sin and confession. Those coming from Islam are interested in the incarnation of God in Jesus and the Trinity. During this time, it is very important to offer: a respectful reception of the personal path, learning to build good relationships; the monthly meeting with a priest; support and testimony of life with Jesus of those who accompany the pre-catechumen, and the godparents; a suitable preparation of the catechists, the accompaniment of the parish for the integration in the community, in the activities of prayer and ser-

vice. The difficulties that are present are their inconstancy due to obstacles of distance, working or study commitments, opposition from relatives or friends, the challenge of Christian morality and change of mentality.

For reflection/discussion:

1. What has your experience as a catechumen been regarding your preparation for the Christian Life?
2. Share a positive experience as a catechist and/or catechetical responsible for nurturing the faith of your children or students.

CHAPTER III

TO RENEW CATECHESIS, IT IS
NECESSARY TO CONTEMPLATE
JESUS AS CATECHIST

The main source for renewing catechesis is to contemplate Jesus in his catechetical action in the New Testament⁵³. By reflecting on His characteristics in this role, He inspires and guides the formation of catechists, a key factor in renewal. It is possible to discover at least Jesus' basic features as catechist.

3.1. Jesus is an Apostle

The Greek word *apostles* means *sent*. Jesus defined himself with insistence as the one sent (cf. *Jn* 5:24.30.37; 6:57; 8:26.42). When talking to the righteous Pharisee judge Nicodemus He solemnly alluded to this original mission in a kerygma of His own, explaining the reason and purpose of His being sent: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him not perish, but might have eternal life." (*Jn* 3:16) When the Jews asked him, who are you? He said: "The one who sent me is with me, he has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him." (*Jn* 8:29) In discussions with the Jews, He mentions His works as a guarantee of being sent by God the Father: "The works I do in my Father's name testify to me. ... If I do not perform my Father's works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works" (*Jn* 10:25.37-38, cf. *Jn* 5:19-34; 6:45-46.57; 8:26-29.38.42). Being sent or being an apostle is the root of His being a catechist.

3.2. Jesus is a Witness of God

Jesus declares Himself to be a witness of God the Father: "I tell you what I have seen in the Father's presence; [I have] told you the truth that I have heard from God" (*Jn* 8:38.40). He claims to be the

⁵³ Dr. Sergio Silva Gatica, SS.CC., former Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, is an exegete.

only witness to have seen God (cf. *Jn* 7:28f; 8:38-47) and witness of the truth (cf. *Jn* 18:37), who comes from God and reveals the Father (cf. *Jn* 3:31-34; 13:3; 16:28). He adds that whoever sees Him sees the Father (cf. *Jn* 14:9). He communicates His experience of God (cf. *Mt* 11:27, *Lk* 10:22, *Jn* 1:1). He promises a similar experience to Nathanael and other disciples (cf. *Jn* 1:51). He lives in the company of God (cf. *Jn* 8:16.29; 16:32b). He dedicates time to pray alone.⁵⁴ The experience of God in Him is active (cf. *Jn* 5:17-20), capable of raising the dead (cf. *Jn* 5:21). The witnesses of His communion with God communicate it to make others happy (cf. *1 Jn* 1:1-4). Jesus, being a witness of God, is part of His being a catechist to bring others to God.

3.3. Jesus is a Communicator

If He refers to God as a witness, when addressing others, Jesus is a communicator. He prefers to speak with facts rather than words (cf. *Mt* 11:2-6.18f). A model in dealing with people, He dedicates time to them (cf. *Mt* 14:14) even when looking for solitude (cf. *Lk* 9:10f). He is close to everyone and He is sensitive to tears (cf. *Lk* 19:41, *Jn* 11:33-36), dejection (cf. *Jn* 12:27), dread, sadness and anguish (cf. *Mk* 14:33f). He receives the one who approaches Him (cf. *Mt* 8:1-3; 17:14-18) or when He is on His way (cf. *Mt* 8:1f), or is retired at night (cf. *Jn* 3:1f). He calmly dismisses people (cf. *Mt* 14:22f; 15:39). He leaves everything to attend to an urgent request (cf. *Mt* 9:18f). He takes care of marginalized people whom others silence (cf. *Mt* 19:13-15; 20:29-34), foreigners (cf. *Mt* 8:5-13, 15:21-28), a military member of the invading army (cf. *Mt* 8:5-13), important people (cf. *Mt* 9:18), beggars (cf. *Mt* 9:27-29), children (cf. *Mt* 19:13-15), relatives of friends (cf. *Lk* 4:38f), women, then more neglected and excluded than today (cf. *Jn* 4:27), he accepts their company and support (cf. *Lk* 8:1-3) and, once He is resurrected, He appears first to them (cf. *Mt* 28:1-9), and then to disciples without emphasis (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35). He prevents them from

⁵⁴ Cf. *Mk* 1:35-37; 6:46; *Lk* 5:16; 6:12; 9:18.28-36.

sending away the needy (cf. *Lk* 18:35-43). When He is not well received, he leaves (cf. *Mt* 8:34; 13:58; *Lk* 8:37), especially if they want to kill him (cf. *Mt* 12:14f; 14:1-2.13).

Just as His people do, Jesus uses the expression: “son of man”, which in Hebrew still a son of a neighbor or simply a man; “Not to judge” (cf. *Lk* 6:37) in this context means not to condemn instead of not thinking or analyzing; “Seventy times seven” means what in Spanish is “a hundred times” or “a thousand times” and in French “thirty-six times”. He prefers a direct language (cf. *Mt* 5:37) and he conveys truths with powerful experiences⁵⁵. He uses visual media⁵⁶. In His oratory, he uses brief memorizable sentences and easy-to-remember schemes, such as the parallel⁵⁷ sometimes doubled⁵⁸, the speech in three parts⁵⁹ or in seven parts (cf. *Mt* 6:9-13). He uses pleasant and understandable images⁶⁰, simple comparisons (cf. *Mt* 6:24.28f; 13:10-16), emphatic statements to make one think (cf. *Mt* 6:34; 7:22), enigmatic sentences⁶¹, striking contrasts⁶², impressive exaggerations⁶³, curious comparisons⁶⁴, categorical qualifiers (cf. *Mt* 7:1-5) and irony (cf. *Jn* 3:10; 7:28; 13:38). He repeats popular ways of saying (cf. *Lk* 17:37) and current observations without doctrine or prophesy (cf. *Mk* 6:4, *Mt* 26:52). He drives

⁵⁵ Cf. *Mt* 17:1-9; 21:18-22; *Lk* 8:23-25; *Lk* 14:1-6; *Jn* 13:3-15.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Mt* 18:1-4; 22:19-21.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Mt* 6:5f.16f.19f; 6:31-33; 7:11.21-23.24-27; *Lk* 11, 27f.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Mt* 6:14f.24; 7:13f.17f; 11:16-19; 12:33-35.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Mt* 7:7f.22; 8:20; *Lk* 12:52f.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Mt* 6:3; 7:6; 16:26; 17:10-13; *Lk* 12:49.

⁶¹ Cf. *Mt* 16:5-12; 16:24; *Lk* 14:26; 22:35-38; 23:26-31; *Jn* 2:18-22; 3:3-8.14f; 16:25.

⁶² Cf. *Mt* 12:38-42; 16:25; 21:31.

⁶³ Cf. *Mt* 5:27-30.39-41.48; 8:22; 13:31f; 17:20; 18:8f.2 2; 19:24; 23:24.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Mt* 11:13-15. 21-24; 18:1-4; 19:30; *Lk* 14:13f.

dialogue towards what is important⁶⁵. He expresses ideal facts in tangible images⁶⁶. He uses humor⁶⁷ (*Mt* 7, 3.6.19; *Mk* 10:25). He fosters thinking through His many questions⁶⁸. The guards sent to arrest him say: “Never before has anyone spoken like this one” (*Jn* 7:44-46).

Jesus is better accepted among the simple than the learned (cf. *Mt* 11:25). Sometimes people do not understand Him (cf. *Jn* 10:6), nor His disciples (*Mt* 16:5-12, *Jn* 4:31-40), not even Joseph or Mary (cf. *Lk* 2:50). He mentions the need for a gift from God to understand certain things (cf. *Mt* 19:10-12), and to have a good disposition (cf. *Jn* 8:43.47). He ignores the jokes (cf. *Mt* 9:24f). He does not argue with those who reject the evidence (cf. *Mt* 21:14-17; 26:59-63) or with falsifiers (cf. *Mt* 27:11-14), but only with those who ask for reasonable guarantees (cf. *Jn* 6:23-69). To those who are not interested in following Him, He keeps quiet⁶⁹ or responds evasively (cf. *Mt* 21:23-27). He argues in order to save His interlocutors (cf. *Jn* 5:34).

Jesus is not always kind in communicating, aware of having a mission from God the Father, who fulfills all his demands before anyone, even the poor and the sick⁷⁰. At the age of twelve, He told Joseph and Mary who were looking for him in anguish: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (*Lk* 2:49). He energetically rebuked his Apostles on

⁶⁵ Cf. *Mt* 19:17; 22:41-46; *Jn* 4:7-26.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Mt* 6:2.5.16f.22f; 7:15.17; 13:19-23.

⁶⁷ Examples of humor are mentioned by Wolfgang Gruen, *Jesucristo, centro del mensaje, es el modelo de la catequesis inculturada*, speech for the II Latin American Week of Catechetics, Caracas, September 18 to 24, 1994, reprinted in Departamento de Misión y Espiritualidad, *La catequesis en América Latina y el Caribe. Semanas Latinoamericanas de Catequesis*. Bogotá, Celam, 2015, Colección Documentos CELAM.° 194, p. 339-379, in pag. 353, note 34.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Mt* 5:46f; 6:25-31; 7:3f.9f.16; 9:4; 11:7-9; 12:26f.29; 16:13; 22:41-46.

⁶⁹ Cf. *Mt* 26:63; *Lk* 23:6-11; *Jn* 19:9.

⁷⁰ Sergio Silva Gatica, SS.CC. *Jesús. ¿Por qué murió Jesús? Iniciación a los Evangelios*. Santiago, Ediciones UC -Fundación Coudrin, 2009, Vol, III, 308-310.

several occasions. When Peter criticized Him for announcing that he was going to be killed but that He would be resurrected on the third day, He replied: “Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings” (*Mk* 8:33). He was not naive: “Many began to believe in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all, and did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well” (*Jn* 2:23-25). To one whom He called to follow Him, who asked Him for some time to bury his father, He said: “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (*Lk* 9:60). To a royal official who asked Him to go to his house to heal his seriously ill child, He started saying: “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe’. The royal official said to him: ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’ Jesus said to him: ‘You may go; your son will live’” (*Jn* 4:48-50). When a Canaanite woman begged Him for her demon-possessed daughter and He kept silent, “his disciples came and asked him: ‘Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us’. He said in reply: ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But the woman came and did him homage, saying: ‘Lord, help me!’ He said in reply: ‘It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.’ She said: ‘Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters.’ Then Jesus said to her in reply: ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed from that hour.” (*Mt* 15:23-28) The faith of that foreigner made Him stop restricting His mission to the Israelites, who called foreigners dogs. His sometimes hard treatment did not come from anger or hatred, but from the desire to form the new people of God in the service of His Father. Every time they wanted to crown Him king he escaped⁷¹. His communicative variety is an indispensable part of his catechistic teaching.

⁷¹ Sergio Silva Gatica, SS.CC. *Jesús. ¿Por qué murió Jesús? Iniciación a los Evangelios*, op. cit. vol. III, 203-204.

3.4. Jesus Deepens the Teaching of the Bible

Jesus encourages us to know the Sacred Scripture well (cf. *Mt* 22:29). He promises a great reward for fulfilling and teaching it (cf. *Mt* 5:19f). He reproaches those who demand its respect without fulfilling it (cf. *Mt* 23:4). He explains its unity and coherence then unknown (cf. *Jn* 5:39f; *Lk* 24:24). He relates His themes to the Kingdom of God: He identifies happiness with God's reign (cf. *Mt* 5:3-12; 6:33), He congratulates the pure of heart who will see God (cf. *Mt* 5:8), He subordinates traditions to the adherence to God (cf. *Mt* 15:1-20); He teaches to live in the presence of God (cf. *Lk* 4:42; 6:12; 9:29) and to dedicate Him one's actions (cf. *Mt* 6:3f.6.17); He subjects one's conduct to the final judgment of God (cf. *Mt* 16:27). He accepts a certain breach of precepts if it is out of love and mercy⁷². He bases the commandments on respect for parents and the golden rule (cf. *Mt* 19:18f) superior to the negative silver rule (cf. *Tb* 4:15), He summarizes them in love of God and neighbor (cf. *Mt* 22:34-40; *Dt* 6:5; *Lev* 19:18). He calls on to overcome the mere fulfillment of commandments with total dedication to God (cf. *Mt* 19:16-21). He refers to Scripture to contrast criticism (cf. *Mt* 12:1-8, 15:1-9, 22:23-33). He uses the reason when interpreting it (cf. *Mt* 12:9-13). He puts the teachers of the law under pressure (cf. *Jn* 3:10; *Mt* 22:15-22.34-40). He finds the meaning of some difficult text (cf. *Jn* 10:34f). He highlights neglected biblical texts (cf. *Mt* 22:34-40). He contrasts with God's plan an authorization from Moses, which He does not identify with the law of God (cf. *Mt* 19:7f). He declares himself Lord of the Sabbath (cf. *Mt* 12:8), superior to the Temple (cf. *Mt* 12:6), to Jonah (cf. *Mt* 12:41), to Solomon (cf. *Mt* 12:42), to David (cf. *Mt* 22:41-46), to Jacob (cf. *Jn* 4:12), to Abraham (cf. *Jn* 8:53). He abides by the laws of Israel but brings them to their ultimate consequences (cf. *Mt* 5:17-19) and perfects the laws of God (cf. *Mt* 5:21-22.27-28.31-45). He sets the example for the catechists of having the Bible as the main source of their ministry.

⁷² Cf. *Mt* 12:1-13; 19:8; *Jn* 8:3-9.

3.5. Jesus is a Prophet

A prophet is a spokesman for God (cf. *Ex* 4:11-12; 7:1; *Jr* 1:9f; *Ez* 3:10f). Jesus is the Word of God (cf. *Jn* 1:1) that we can hear, and the mental image of God (cf. *Heb* 1:3) that we can see as an image of the Father. He declares that His arrival opens up the Kingdom of God⁷³ (cf. *Mt* 12:28). It is the face of the Father who sent Him to save the world (cf. *Jn* 12:44-47). He is the light of the world to give life to those who follow Him (cf. *Jn* 8:12). He comes into conflict with the darkness of evil⁷⁴. He is the Word who is life and has come as the light of humanity (cf. *Jn* 1:4). Those who welcome Him are begotten as children of God (cf. *Jn* 1:12). He encourages us to believe in Him as light, to be children of the light (cf. *Jn* 12:35), whom the truth sets free (cf. *Jn* 8:31f) and receive eternal life (cf. *Jn* 5:24). Jesus Christ, “faithful and true” who “was called the Word of God” (*Rev* 19:11-13), defeats the worldly powers of the false prophet (cf. *Rev* 19:19-21). The Church of His disciples, animated by the Spirit and the light of God (cf. *Rev* 21:9-11), is light for nations (cf. *Rev* 21:23-25). The facts are proof of one’s siding with the truth (cf. *1 Jn* 3:18-22) and one’s living with God (*1 Jn* 3, 19-24).

Like some prophets of the Old Covenant (cf. *Num* 11: 24-30; *Jr* 1: 5), Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His Baptism (cf. *Mt* 3:16). He declared himself anointed by the Spirit to evangelize the poor, liberate the oppressed and proclaim a jubilee of grace (cf. *Lk* 4:14-21). He compared himself to the prophets rejected in their land (cf. *Lk* 4:24) or murdered in Jerusalem (cf. *Lk* 13:33). He was recognized as a prophet⁷⁵ and the prophet *par excellence* (cf. *Jn* 6:14; 7:40).

⁷³ Against a usual expression, Benedict XVI teaches: “Certainly we can not ‘build’ the Kingdom of God by our own efforts ... The Kingdom of God is a gift, and precisely because of this, it is great and beautiful, and constitutes the response to our hope.” (*Spe Salvi*, 35) We welcome, we announce, we proclaim, we spread the Kingdom of God and we collaborate in its growth. God builds it, it is the work of His Spirit.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Jn* 1:9-14; *1 Jn* 1:5-7; *Ap* 19:11-21.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Mk* 6:15; *Mt* 21:11.16; *Lk* 7:16; 24:19.

The prophet's task is to proclaim the will of God at present or announce it for the future (cf. *1 Sam* 10:1-7), denounce provoking a change (cf. *2 Sam* 12:1-12; *Jr* 30:32) and console (cf. *Is* 40-55).

Jesus declares God's present will: "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." (*Jn* 18:37). He performs actions whose symbolism he will explain, just as the miraculous catch (*Lk* 5:4-10) or healing of a blind man (cf. *Jn* 9:1-7.39-41). He manifests a hidden meaning in certain actions (cf. *Mt* 26:6-13).

Jesus repeatedly predicts His death and resurrection (cf. *Mt* 16:21; 17:22f; 26:1f). He anticipates the betrayal of a friend (cf. *Mt* 26:21.24), the denial of another (cf. *Lk* 22:33f) and the weakness of His Apostles (cf. *Mt* 26:31). In His Last Supper he promises His disciples to send them the Spirit to overcome worldly limitations (cf. *Jn* 14:16f). Finally, He announces His help until the end of time (cf. *Mt* 28:20).

Jesus denounces His inconsistencies to the doctors of the law and to the Pharisees (cf. *Mt* 23:1-39, *Lk* 11:37-54). He discloses the false prophets by their fruits (cf. *Mt* 7:15f). He warns the rich and satisfied of this world (cf. *Lk* 6:24-26). In front of the sacrilege of a ruler and an accident, He calls up to conversion to God (cf. *Lk* 13:1-5). With symbolic actions he denounces the hypocritical fasting of the Pharisees, their excluding the sinners and the predominance of prohibitions over the defense of life (cf. *Mk* 2:15 - 3, 6). He is hated for unmasking evil (cf. *Jn* 7:7; 15:18f). He is rejected by those eager for prestige and power (cf. *Jn* 7: 1-5), who find justification in the opinion of the majority and powerful (cf. *Jn* 7: 45-48); they contend with legality instead of accepting the truth (cf. *Jn* 9:13-16; 19:7); they pretend to know the truth beforehand, insult and abuse of their power instead of surrendering to evidence (cf. *Jn* 9:24-34); they defend their power by disguising it as a common good (cf. *Jn* 11:47-50, *Lk* 22:25) they accuse Him cleverly (cf. *Jn* 8:3-6). Their separation from God prevents them from listening to Him (cf. *Jn* 8:43.47) and leads them to murderous violence (cf. *Jn* 8:37-40, 44). Attachment to power makes them turn away from the truth (cf. *Jn* 18:37f), discharge their responsibility on others (cf. *Jn* 19:1-8) and condemn an innocent (cf. *Jn* 19:5-16).

Another characteristic of the prophet is self-renunciation as it happened to the Baptist (cf. *Jn* 1:19-31) and detachment from pleasure, power and worldly possessions (cf. *1 Jn* 2:15-17) in the sense of not becoming attached while instead using them well for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is detached from personal attachments in order to do God's will (cf. *Jn* 5:30). He does not receive glory from men (cf. *Jn* 5:41), He rather aims everything to the glory of God (cf. *Ex* 33:18; *Jn* 15:8). He teaches to renounce human prestige and to prefer the glory of God (cf. *Jn* 5:44) in order to remain in the truth (cf. *Jn* 7:18); to detach from one's life in order to have eternal life (cf. *Jn* 12:25).

Jesus comforts the suffering with the beatitudes (cf. *Lk* 6:20-23; *Mt* 5: 3-6), those who are oppressed with burdens (*Mt* 11:28-30), the merciful, clean of heart, compassionate, pure, peacemakers and persecuted for the sake of righteousness (cf. *Mt* 5:7-12). His being a prophet is part of His being a catechist.

3.6. Jesus is an Evangelizer

More than comforting, Jesus proclaims the Good News of the arrival of the Kingdom of God⁷⁶ which is taking place with Him, who is the Savior and the core of history (cf. *Jn* 3:16). He brings joy (cf. *Jn* 15:11; 17:13) even if it is necessary to go through the cross (cf. *Jn* 16:20-24). He announces happiness to the poor, the suffering and to those who are thirsty for righteousness (cf. *Mt* 5:1-12). His parables of mercy insist on the joy of heaven and earth when sinners repent (cf. *Lk* 15:3-32). He does not always achieve conversions (cf. *Mt* 11:20). He proclaims blissful those who listen to the word of God and practice it (cf. *Lk* 11:28), those who fulfill their daily duty (cf. *Mt* 24:45-47). He is the liberating truth from the bondage of sin (cf. *Jn* 8:31-34). His first sign protracts the nuptial joy by multiplying the wine (cf. *Jn* 2:11). He gathers disciples (cf. *Lk* 8:1-3; 10:1) to attract all peoples with their cultures (cf. *Mt*

⁷⁶ Cf. *Mt* 4:23f; 14:13-21; 15:32-38.

28:16-20). “Jesus is the first and the greatest evangelizer” (EN 7). Being an evangelist includes in Jesus His being catechist.

3.7. Jesus is a Teacher

In what way is Jesus a unique teacher? Jesus has the inimitable traits of a divine teacher. He is the only teacher capable of saying: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (*Jn* 8:12), or also: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” (*Mt* 24:35) He saves people with His message: “whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.” (*Jn* 5:24).

In what way is Jesus a model teacher? Jesus is imitable in His way of behaving, if it is considered without taking into account His revelations as Son of God. *Didáskalos* is translated by master, in the sense of teacher, which should not be reduced to professor. When in the New Testament John Baptist is called teacher (cf. *Jn* 1:35; 3:26) the last teacher of the Old Covenant (cf. *Lk* 16:16), or Jesus, it is not because they teach things, but because they teach how to live, to change one’s life or to perfect it. Jesus “did and taught” (*Acts* 1:1). He is a model for every educator, even if he is not a catechist or a preacher, since until he died he was a layman, without an official role for the cult (cf. *Heb* 7:13f).

In what way is He an excellent teacher? Jesus was called teacher without having attended the studies of the Jewish teachers of the law, but with an authority similar to that of the prophets, rooted in the fulfilment of God’s will. His first teaching was to grow up in a small unknown town (cf. *Jn* 1:46) as a good son, pleasing to God and to men (cf. *Lk* 2:40.51), showing holiness within reach of a child and other ordinary people. He sits down to teach with a call for all (*Mt* 11:28) and he attracts numerous disciples (cf. *Mt* 5:1). He was recognized as Teacher (cf. *Jn* 1:35-39), not only by his dis-

ciples⁷⁷, but also by critical scribes and Pharisees (cf. *Jn* 8:3f). His enemies recognized his prestige: “Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone’s opinion, for you do not regard a person’s status.” (*Mt* 22:16).

What authority does he use? Jesus has an ascendancy because He knows where He comes from and where He is going (cf. *Jn* 8:14). He uses His authority to serve (cf. *Mt* 20:28, *Jn* 13:2-15). He is accepted because He only seeks to please God (cf. *Jn* 8:27b-30). He precedes His disciples, guides them with His voice (cf. *Jn* 10:4). He values the legitimate authority of others (cf. *Mt* 8:4; 23:1-3), and that of disciples who do good without being from the near group (cf. *Lk* 9: 49f). He refuses to intervene in what does not concern Him (cf. *Lk* 12:13f). He fosters integral development (cf. *Jn* 10:10). He offers God as a model in His compassionate love (cf. *Mt* 5:48; *Lk* 6:36). He tolerates rebellion against Him as a man, but not rebellious contempt against the Spirit of God (cf. *Mt* 12:31f). He prohibits to let people call them teachers or masters, because He is the only teacher and the others are brothers (cf. *Mt* 23:8,10), but sends “prophets, wise men and scribes” (*Mt* 23:34). He proposes that each teacher be a disciple of the Kingdom of God, hoarding old and new things (cf. *Mt* 13:52). He gives His life for his disciples (cf. *Jn* 10:14-18).

What educational task does He assign to the family? Jesus values the educational rights and duties of the family (cf. *Mt* 15:4-6). He entrusts the family with communicating God’s benefits (cf. *Mk* 5:18-20). He caresses and blesses the children (cf. *Mk* 10:16), he answers their needs but returns them to their parents (cf. *Lk* 9:38-43). Before dying, he takes care that his mother is not left alone (cf. *Jn* 19:25-27). He promotes family as monogamous unity (cf. *Mt* 19:4-9), loyal (cf. *Mt* 5:27f) and mutually tolerant (cf. *Mt* 5:31f), but he subordinates family relationships to union with God (cf. *Mt*

⁷⁷ Cf. *Jn* 3:1f; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:28.

10:37), accomplishment of His will (cf. *Mt* 12:47-50) and practice of His Word (cf. *Lk* 11:27f).

What importance does He give to children? Jesus demands to be like a child in not pretending to be important (cf. *Mt* 18:1-3). He prohibits that they be prevented from approaching God because the Kingdom of God is of those who are like them (cf. *Mt* 19:13-15). He maintains that to welcome a child is to receive Him (cf. *Mt* 18:5); that the child is highly respectable (cf. *Mt* 18:10), and that he is an example of simplicity to welcome the Kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 18:15); that giving a bad example or corrupting a child deserves maximum punishment (cf. *Mt* 18:6).

What position does he attribute to love? Jesus attracts through His friendly love and joy (cf. *Jn* 15:9-15). All of His disciples as outstanding educators focus their teaching on love⁷⁸. He energizes His disciples with the law of love (cf. *Mt* 22:34-40). He brings human relationships to perfection through the golden rule (cf. *Mt* 7:12). He manifests love in deeds rather than words: he calls each disciple by his name (cf. *Jn* 10:3), He does His utmost for them (cf. *Jn* 10:11-13), He relieves them through His company and example (cf. *Mt* 11:28-30). He overcomes conflicts through reconciliation (cf. *Mt* 5:22-24), mutual understanding (cf. *Mt* 5:25-26) and fraternal correction (cf. *Mt* 18:15-17).

How does He train His will? Jesus directs His will to fulfill that of God (cf. *Mt* 7:21). He nurtures self-esteem within sensible humility (cf. *Mt* 6:26-27, 13:16-17). He congratulates in public (cf. *Mt* 8:10-11; 15:28) and in private (cf. *Lk* 10:17-24; 19:9). He tests those who want to follow Him (cf. *Mt* 8:19-22) or ask for favors (cf. *Mt* 15:21-28). He aims at improving intentions and not only behavior (cf. *Mt* 5:28). He encourages people with promises⁷⁹. He stimulates them with earthly and spiritual rewards⁸⁰ (cf. *Mt* 19:29). He pities

⁷⁸ Enrique García A., F.S.C. *Los cristianos en la historia de la educación*. Santiago, Tiberiades, 2007, 4 v.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Mt* 7:7-11; 18:19-20; 19:27-29; 21:22.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Mt* 6:4.6.17-18; 10:40-42; 19:17.28; *Lk* 10:20.

those who lack guidance (cf. *Mt* 9:36). He motivates people with His example to accept daily suffering (cf. *Lk* 9:23). He respects the freedom of each person (cf. *Lk* 9:51-56) but he explains the responsibilities (cf. *Lk* 10:10-12.16). He defends the things of God (cf. *Mt* 21:12f). For scandalous sins he explains the procedure of medicinal excommunication (cf. *Mt* 18:15-17). He questions people's way of being (cf. *Mt* 12:27; 21:23-27) and groups' (cf. *Mt* 23:19-29) until touching the consciences (cf. *Jn* 8:3-11).

How does He teach about thinking? Jesus nurtures critical capacity and He offers criteria of discernment (cf. *Mt* 7:15-20; 12:33-35). He helps distinguish appearance from reality (cf. *Jn* 7:24), the durable and the transient (cf. *Mt* 24:1f), the important and the secondary, for though the latter might be valid (cf. *Mt* 23:23), the earthly and the eternal (cf. *Lk* 12:16-21.31-34), the appreciation of men and of God (cf. *Lk* 16:15). He accurately corrects mistakes (cf. *Mt* 22:23-32; 23:13-36). When criticizing he points out what to improve (cf. *Mt* 12:24-28; 22:1-14.15-21). He warns against distorted teachings (cf. *Mt* 16:5-12). He rejects the lack of concern for the poor and the longing for human praises (cf. *Lk* 6:24-26), falsehood teaching (cf. *Mt* 16:6.12), bad actions or pushing others to do evil (cf. *Mt* 18:7). He contrasts bad habits with what pleases God (cf. *Mt* 6:1-8.16-21; *Lk* 14:7-11). He condemns being concerned for worldly issues, listening to teachings without believing in them or practicing them (cf. *Mt* 13:18-23). He rebukes to straighten out the criterion (cf. *Mt* 16:23; 17:14-20).

Does He educationally take advantage of circumstances? Jesus offers occasional teachings stemming from facts⁸¹ and people's concerns (cf. *Jn* 4:5-26), he draws moral conclusions from experiences⁸², he gives spiritual orientations by appealing to the imagination (cf. *Mt* 7:13f). He does not agree to capricious requests (cf. *Mt* 12:38-42; 16:1-4) or useless questions (cf. *Lk* 13:23f).

⁸¹ Cf. *Mt* 12:1-8.46-50; 17:24-27; 22:19-21; 24:1f; *Lk* 13:1-4; 21:1-4.

⁸² Cf. *Mt* 12:46-50; 17:24-27; 19:13-15; *Lk* 14:12-14; 17:1-19.

How does He personalize His teaching? Jesus explains His parables to those who are well disposed (cf. *Lk* 8:9f). He patiently repeats difficult teachings⁸³, His exhortations (cf. *Mt* 26:37-46) and His corrections (cf. *Lk* 9:46-48; 22:24-27). He teaches gratitude to God (cf. *Lk* 17:11-19) but He is resigned to receiving ingratitude (cf. *Mt* 26:47-50) and He prepares His disciples to endure it (cf. *Lk* 6:35). He makes the most out of a sign of good will to approach a wayward person (cf. *Lk* 19:1-10).

What does He evaluate and value? Jesus evaluates achievements and frustrations (cf. *Lk* 9:18-21; 10:17-24). He prepares His disciples for difficulties and pain⁸⁴. He encourages to face suffering in the perspective of eternal life (cf. *Mt* 5:11f; 16:24-27). He reorients material interests towards spiritual ones⁸⁵ in order to leave everything behind for God (cf. *Mt* 19:28).

Does He form leaders? Jesus seeks to increase the number of workers dedicated to others (cf. *Mt* 9:36f). He chooses collaborators (cf. *Mk* 3:13; *Jn* 15:16f) by calling them personally (cf. *Mt* 4:18-22; 19:21). He also accepts those who freely follow Him (cf. *Mt* 20:34). He makes some people discover their own gifts (cf. *Mk* 5:18-20). He calls people of every condition and mentality (cf. *Mt* 4:18-22; 9:9; 10:4). He requests detachment (cf. *Lk* 9: 57-60; *Mt* 10:37f), trust in the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mt* 10:19f), promptness (cf. *Lk* 9:61f), self-control (cf. *Mt* 5:11f), authenticity (cf. *Mt* 5:13), serving through gratitude (cf. *Mt* 10:8), prudence (cf. *Mt* 10:16f), perseverance (cf. *Mt* 10:22), ability to organize (cf. *Mt* 13:44f; 15:32-38). He encourages them to have a critical attitude towards the opinions of others (cf. *Mt* 16:13-17). He gradually entrusts them with responsibilities: first to baptize (cf. *Jn* 3:22; 4:2), then He chooses twelve of them to preach and heal (cf. *Lk* 9:1-6), He sends another seventy-two in pairs to a preparatory preaching (cf. *Lk* 10:1). He gives them precise guidelines: where to go and where not to go (cf.

⁸³ Cf. *Mt* 16:21; 20:17-19; 26:1f; *Lk* 9:44f.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Jn* 15:18-21; 16:2-4.20-22.33.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Mt* 6:19-21; 9:1f; *Jn* 4:46-53; 5:14; 6:26f.

Mt 10:5f), what to say (cf. *Mt* 10:7.27), what attitudes to have (cf. *Mt* 10:8. 16), what to do (cf. *Mt* 10:8), what attachments to have and distractions to avoid (cf. *Lk* 10:4), how to act according on how they were welcomed (cf. *Mt* 10:11-14.23; *Lk* 10:5-12), how to overcome fear (cf. *Mt* 10:26-28) and He promises His personal support (cf. *Mt* 10:19f). He finally retires and entrusts them with full responsibility, although He keeps his spiritual presence (cf. *Mt* 16:18f; 28:18-20).

Being a teacher is one of the charisms of Jesus as a catechist.

3.8. Jesus Enculturates Revelation

Jesus embodies His revelation in the culture of His listeners⁸⁶. He appeals to observation of nature⁸⁷. He practices the correct religious customs: pilgrimage to Jerusalem (cf. *Lk* 2:41f), celebration of Passover (cf. *Jn* 2:13; 6:4; 12:12f) and other feasts (cf. *Jn* 5:1) like the one of the tabernacles (cf. *Jn* 7:2-10) and the dedication of the temple (cf. *Jn* 10:22f). He corrects bad religious practices: the undue desire for miracles (cf. *Mt* 12:38-40; 16:1-4), the ostentatious in giving alms (cf. *Mt* 6:2), the exaggerated prayers (cf. *Mt* 6:5) the exhibitionist fasting (cf. *Mt* 6:16), legalism in the cult (cf. *Mt* 12:9-12), purely external religion (cf. *Mt* 15:1-20). He compares popular beliefs to divine revelation (cf. *Mt* 16:13-17). He answers to religious pride with humility (cf. *Lk* 18:10-14), rigor in observance with mercy (cf. *Mt* 9:11-13). He changes a mournful religion for the joy of being with God (cf. *Mt* 9:15).

⁸⁶ Wolfgang Gruen, SDB *Jesucristo, centro del mensaje, es el modelo de la catequesis inculturada*, op. cit., makes a documented study of the manifold aspects of culture in Israel at the time of Jesus, analyzing its endoculturation. He emphasizes His questioning freedom in his worry to establish the Kingdom of God, to the benefit first of all of the neglected or excluded, who follow Him, while the powerful reject Him.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Mt* 6:22; 12:33; 13:3-8.32.43; 15:10-20; 16:2f; 18:8f; 24:32; *Lk* 12:54-56; 16:20f; *Jn* 4:10-14; 6:35; 11:11-14; 16:21.

Jesus takes as an example social traditions: communication of pleasant events to the family (cf. *Mk* 5:18f); the preference for natives over foreigners (cf. *Mk* 7:27); the different family relationship of children and slaves (cf. *Jn* 8:35); the meek submission of slaves (cf. *Jn* 8:36); the solitude of the sick and prisoners (cf. *Mt* 25:36.43); the attention to visits (cf. *Lk* 7:44-46); the prudence of guests (cf. *Lk* 14:8-11); the courtesy at the banquets (cf. *Mt* 22:1-14), at ceremonies (cf. *Lk* 15:22); the organization of a feast (cf. *Lk* 15:23-25); the foresight in the ladies of company (cf. *Mt* 25:1-13); the domestic traditions (cf. *Mt* 13:33.51f); the urge to communicate joys (cf. *Lk* 15:4-6.8f); the toilet bowl inside and outside (cf. *Mt* 23:25f); children's games (cf. *Mt* 11:16-19); the repented prostitutes (cf. *Mt* 21:32); the many married ones who long for separation (cf. *Mt* 19:3); the capricious children (cf. *Mt* 21:28-31); the white-washing of the tombs (cf. *Mt* 23:27); the destiny of excretes (cf. *Mt* 15:17f); the young rebels and parasites (cf. *Lk* 15:11-13); the criminals' search for the darkness (cf. *Jn* 3:20); the ways of the thieves (cf. *Lk* 12:39f) and of the robbers (cf. *Mt* 12:29; *Lk* 10:29-37).

Jesus enables the understanding of economics: parables on domestic assets (*Mt* 13:52), the difference between family and compensated work (cf. *Jn* 10:11f), pruning to increase production (cf. *Jn* 15:2), the aging of wine (cf. *Lk* 5:37-39), the foundations of construction (cf. *Lk* 6:47-49), the good moneylenders (cf. *Lk* 7:41-43), the storage of harvests (cf. *Lk* 12:16-21), the fertilizing of fruit trees (cf. *Lk* 13:6-8), the calculation of budgets (cf. *Lk* 14:28-30), animal fodder compared to workers' food (cf. *Lk* 15:15f), the comparative advantages of investment (cf. *Mt* 13:44-46), bottom-trawling (cf. *Mt* 13:47), the selection of merchandise (cf. *Mt* 13:48), the care of small cattle (cf. *Mt* 18:12-14, *Jn* 10:1-16), the prison sentencing for debts (cf. *Mt* 18:30), the good patrons (cf. *Mt* 20:13-15), the fiscal administration (cf. *Mt* 21:28-32), leasing agreements (cf. *Mt* 21:33-45), the promotion of good officials (cf. *Mt* 24:45-47); the treatment of unfulfillers (cf. *Mt* 24:48-51), business practices (cf. *Mt* 25:16-18); the unproductive capitals (cf. *Mt* 25:24-26), bank deposits (cf. *Mt* 25:27), unemployment and the contract for day workers (cf. *Mt* 20:1-16), double employment (cf. *Lk* 16:13), the contract for seasonal workers (cf. *Jn* 4:36). He mentions financial

abuses: unfair competition between farmers (cf. *Mt* 13:24-28), slavery (cf. *Mt* 18:25; 20:27), exploitation of workers (*Mt* 20:25), administrative fraud (cf. *Lk* 16:1-11), the social insensitivity of the rich (cf. *Lk* 16:19-21), the neglect of the rich for their eternal salvation (cf. *Mt* 19:23-26). He awakens awareness of the needs of the poor (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46, *Lk* 16:19-31): the production of bread (cf. *Mt* 13:33), the patching of clothing (cf. *Mt* 9:16), the sweeping of the house to find a coin (cf. *Lk* 15:8), the difference between mowing and stubble (cf. *Mt* 12:1-3).

Jesus comments on political practices: the responsibility of government (cf. *Jn* 19:11), diplomacy (cf. *Lk* 14:31f), abusive taxes (cf. *Mt* 17:24-26), tyranny (cf. *Mt* 20:25), the opposition to the ruler (cf. *Lk* 19:15.27), civil wars (cf. *Mt* 12:25), warning campaigns (cf. *Mt* 22:7), a just judicial trial (cf. *Jn* 18:19-21), the abuse of judges (cf. *Lk* 18:2), officials processing paperwork (cf. *Lk* 18:3-5). He defends his rights before the authority (cf. *Jn* 18:22f), he points out to the unjust ruler his responsibility (cf. *Jn* 18:33-36; 19:1-11), he denies respect to the unworthy authority (cf. *Lk* 13:31f; 23:8-11). Enculturating the revelation is essential to His being a catechist.

3.9. Jesus is Mystagogue

Jesus is the first mystagogue in the history of salvation. He states that He is the access door to the mystery of God (cf. *Jn* 10:9). He is the way to the Father (cf. *Jn* 14:6). He proclaims the words of God and offers the Spirit without measure (cf. *Jn* 3:34). Whoever accepts Him out of faith in Him as Word and Son of God overcomes the world (cf. *1 Jn* 5:4f). He gives water which whoever should drink it becomes “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (*Jn* 4:14). He offers “the food that endures for eternal life” (*Jn* 6:27). He is the bread of Heaven offered by the Father to give life to the world (cf. *Jn* 6:32-33). His judgments and words are those of the Father who is with Him (cf. *Jn* 8:16.28f). In doing the works of the Father, He shows that He dwells in the Father and the Father in Him (cf. *Jn* 10:37-38). He says: “Whoever serves me... the Father

will honor whoever serves me” (*Jn* 12: 26), “Whoever believes in me believes not only in me, but also in the one who sent me” (*Jn* 12:44), “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you always, the Spirit of truth” (*Jn* 14:15-17), “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (*Jn* 14:23). As Jesus is a mystagogue or conductor and introducer to the mystery of God, this is part of His catechetical ministry.

3.10. Jesus Accompanies when Forming Disciples

Jesus gives special training to the disciples chosen as apostles. He calls some of them personally (cf. *Jn* 1:42.43, *Mt* 9:9); others are chosen at special time (cf. *Mt* 10:1-7). He offers some of them particular opportunities (cf. *Mt* 17:1-8; 26:37f). He keeps them close to Him to dedicate them preferential time⁸⁸, even after resurrection (*Acts* 1:3-11). His accompaniment is an essential part of His being a catechist who trains multiplying disciples.

3.11. Jesus is a Sacrament of Communion

Jesus came to share, as a man, the communion He has in God (cf. *Jn* 1:9; 3:13; 7:29; 16:28; 17:11:20-21). Being united with Him satisfies the human need for fulfillment (cf. *Jn* 7:37). Whoever is in communion with Him can share it (*Jn* 7:38-39), extend communion with God (cf. *Jn* 15: 4-5). He called disciples to be fishers of men (cf. *Mk* 1:16-20). He had them baptize others (cf. *Jn* 3:22-30; 4:2) with a preparatory Baptism, for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit began after His resurrection and ascension (cf. *Jn* 16:7). For those

⁸⁸ Cf. *Mk* 4:10; 8:27-31; 9:33-50; *Mt* 10:5-42; 11.1; 13:36-43; 18:1; 20:17-19; *Jn* 4:31-38; 6:67-71; 11:6-16; 13:2 – 17, 26.

who know Him, sacramental Communion is a condition of life in God (*Jn* 6:53). His body and blood are signs and instruments of mutual communion with Him (*Jn* 6:54), similar to His communion with God the Father (*Jn* 6:57) that extends to eternal life (*Jn* 6:58). Celebrating the sacrament of Communion requires overcoming divisions (cf. *1 Cor* 11:17-20), especially between rich and poor (cf. *1 Cor* 11:21-22). Jesus especially asked the Father about those who welcome His word, live in the truth and extend through His word that communion of faith and life (cf. *Jn* 17:21-24). They are already in communion with God (cf. *Jn* 17:6-11), they enter into God's love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:15-16), enjoy full life (cf. *Jn* 10:10), complete joy (cf. *Jn* 15:11; 17:13; *1 Jn* 1:4) and a taste of eternal life (cf. *Jn* 17:3). They live with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn* 14:23). They are faithful to the Word of God, they live in God and God in them (cf. *1 Jn* 3:24), they enjoy the manifestation of Jesus (cf. *Jn* 14:21), they are glory for Jesus (cf. *Jn* 17:9f), they are in communion with God and with the joyful community of those united to Him (cf. *1 Jn* 1:1-3). Jesus sent His Apostles to make disciples and immerse them (baptize them) in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Mt* 28:19). Jesus as a catechist leads His disciples to the sacraments, which unite them in communion with Him, with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit.

For reflection/discussion:

1. What traits of the catechist, according to Jesus, do your catechumens/students see in you? How do you know this?
2. What features of the catechist, according to Jesus, would you like to embody or strengthen? Why?

EPILOGUE

Saint John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719) had practiced catechesis since his studies at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris. He formed catechists and their mentors⁸⁹. In his catechism, *The Duties of a Christian to God*, he innovated by including the life of Jesus Christ, the summit of the history of salvation⁹⁰. Two centuries later in France it reached an unequalled edition - N . 300. According to La Salle, the catechist is also:

1. an apostle sent by God: “Thank God for the grace he has given you in your work of sharing in the ministry of the holy Apostles and the principal bishops and pastors of the Church. Honor your ministry (*Rom 11:13*) by becoming, as Saint Paul says, worthy ministers of the New Testament (*2 Cor 3:6*).”⁹¹
2. a witness of Jesus Christ. “In the first place, your students observe you; this is why you are obliged to give them good example by your teaching, imitating our Lord in this, who, according to what Saint Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles, began to do before teaching (*Acts 1:19*).”⁹²
3. a communicator. “Because these children are simple and for the most part poorly brought up, those who help them save themselves must do this in so simple a manner that every word will be clear and easy for them to understand.” (MR 193, 3.2 p. 434) “In the questions, the teacher will make use of only the simplest expressions and words which are very easily under-

⁸⁹ José M. Valladolid, F.S.C., *San Juan Bautista De La Salle, catequista*. Madrid, Ediciones San Pío X, 2007. 3 v.

⁹⁰ *Duties of a Christian* 1, 18-35, found in <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/00674-Duties-of-a-Christian.pdf>

⁹¹ *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, Translated, MR 199.3.2, by Richard Arnandez, FSC, and Augustine Loes, FSC, Edited by Augustine Loes, FSC, and Francis Huether, FSC, 1994, reprinted 2007, Lasallian Publications, Christian Brothers Conference, United States of America, p. 448 found in: <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Meditations-2007.pdf>.

⁹² *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, MD 69 1, op. cit. p. 151, found in: <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Meditations-2007.pdf>.

stood and need no explanation, if this is possible, making the questions and answers as short as possible.”⁹³

4. one who roots his catechesis in the Bible. “See how important it is for you to know Holy Scripture well, because ... this knowledge makes a person strong in the faith and in the practice of good. As the same Saint Paul says, *this is what teaches salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, what is inspired by God and useful for instruction, reproof, correction, and for training in piety and justice, so that the man of God may be perfect and well equipped for all sorts of good work.* (2 Tim 3:15-17)”⁹⁴. “It is, then, not enough to procure the Christian spirit for children and to teach them the mysteries and doctrines of our religion. You must also teach them the practical maxims that are found throughout the holy Gospel.” (MR 197,2,1 p. 442)
5. a prophet: “[Jesus Christ] wants your disciples to see Him in you and to receive your instructions as if He were instructing them (2 Cor 5, 20). They must be convinced that your instructions are the truth of Jesus Christ, who speaks with your mouth, that it is only in His name that you teach, and that He has given you authority over them.” (MR 195,2,1 p. 437).
6. an evangelizer: he proclaims and spreads the Kingdom of God. “Often recall to mind the purpose of your vocation, and let this inspire you to do your part to establish and to maintain the kingdom of God in the hearts of your students.” (MS 67,1,2 p. 147). “You have a work that is honorable only in the sight of God because it seeks to spread his kingdom.” (MF 143,3,2 p. 263)

⁹³ *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, 9,2,7, Translated by F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arandez, FSC, Edited with notes by William Mann, FSC, 1996, reprinted 2007, Christian Brothers Conference, Landover, Maryland, USA, p. 107 found in: <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Conduct-2007-reprint.pdf>

⁹⁴ *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, MF 192,1,2, op. cit. p. 358, found in: <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Meditations-2007.pdf>

7. a master disciple of Jesus: “If you love Jesus Christ well, you will try in every possible way to enkindle his holy love in the hearts of the children you are forming to be his disciples. See to it that they often think of Jesus, their good and only Lord, that they often speak of Jesus, and that they long only for Jesus and desire only Jesus.” (MF 102,2,2 p. 188) He is a liberating teacher: “You, who are teachers of those you guide, must take all possible care to bring those under your guidance into the *liberty of the children of God, which Jesus Christ obtained for us* (Ga 4:31) by dying for us.” (MR 203.2.2 p. 457)
8. a mystagogue: “yet you are obliged by your state to teach children the mysteries of religion and to give them the Christian spirit.” (MF 109,3,2 p. 199) “Do you have these sentiments of charity and tenderness toward the poor children whom you have to educate? Do you take advantage of their affection for you to lead them to God?” (MF 101,3,2 p. 187).
9. one who enculturates Revelation: “[The teacher] shall especially keep watch over their morals and seek to inspire them with love for virtue and hatred for vice, and should speak to them often about this and tell them impressive stories on the subject. Children are not capable of deep thoughts. They are more easily led and inspired to the practice of what is good by examples proposed to them, especially stories about young people like themselves, than they are by long-winded discourses (CCS *Manual of the Prefect of Boarding Students*, p. 268).
10. one who accompanies his disciples, “morning and evening” “to teach them to live a good life by instructing them in the mysteries of our religion and inspiring them with Christian maxims, and so give them a suitable education. (RFD 1, 3 p. 14 found in <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Rule-and-Foundational-Documents.pdf>) “During recreations, the Prefect shall neither leave any of the boarders alone nor leave a few separated from the rest.” (CCS *Manual of the Prefect of Boarding Students*, p. 269).

11. a promoter of communion, since he cultivates good coexistence as it is stated in the book of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*⁹⁵, and promotes communion with God through the sacraments. “The Prefect of the Boarding Students shall take considerable time, at least six months, to prepare those who are to make their First Holy Communion. With the advice of the Superior, the Prefect shall procure this advantage for those who are judged ready, on the basis of their piety and good conduct; the benefit they have derived from the instructions given them; ... and their ability to preserve the grace of their First Holy Communion.” (*CCS Manual of the Prefect of Boarding Students*, p. 269) “In imitation of the Apostles, you must take altogether special care that those whom you instruct receive the sacraments ... You must see to it that they go to Confession often, after learning how to do it well.” (MR 200,2,2 p. 450).

For reflection/discussion:

1. In our time and place, can we follow Jesus-catechist in a similar way? Why yes? Why no?
2. If the answer above is yes ... what do you need in order to do this?

⁹⁵ See. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, FSC, Edited with notes by William Mann, FSC, 1996, reprinted 2007, Christian Brothers Conference, Landover, Maryland, USA, found in: <https://www.lasallian.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Conduct-2007-reprint.pdf>

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