PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

In her book, *Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation*, Jane Regan affirms that adult faith formation should be rooted in the overall life of the parish. As mentioned in the section on Approaches to Adult Faith Formation (12.1), it is not necessarily a matter of creating new programs so much as integrating adult learning into what is already taking place at all levels of the parish. What is important is to include elements of information, formation and transformation in all catechetical sessions. In so doing, Regan reiterates the GDC in maintaining that catechesis is not solely a matter of head knowledge but geared toward an inner appropriation of the Christian faith that has a real effect in people’s lives (GDC, # 67-68). In order to facilitate this transformative learning, adults need to be engaged in sustained, critical conversations with other adults about things that matter (*Toward an Adult Church*, Ch. 4). This implies asking effective questions and allowing sufficient time to discuss them.

In addition to the principles of adult learning offered below by James DeBoy, one can refer to the NDC which provides a number of guidelines for the selection of effective methods for adult catechesis (see NDC, p. 190-191).

Adults learn best when…

- They are treated with respect, as self-directing persons
- The learning situation is related to their past experiences
- They have participated in the planning of the learning activity and set their own goals
- They are physically comfortable and can socialize with those in the learning group
- They are with their peers, freely learning in groups
- There are opportunities for a variety of learning activities
- They need to resolve a problem/question or complete a task
- They can see progress, immediate results and some rewards for the time they put into learning
- They evaluate themselves