



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

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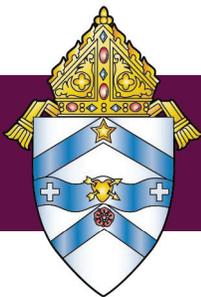
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DIOCESE OF AUSTIN OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

We, the Diocese of Austin, through the Word and Eucharist, prayer, formation and education, social ministries and advocacy, embrace diverse cultures throughout the diocese so that together, as the Catholic Church, we may continue the mission of Christ in the world today.

The Vision of the Diocese of Austin Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is:

- To deepen the local Church's communion with the Lord Jesus while equipping individuals and parishes for Christian discipleship that includes fruitful sacramental life;
- To enliven the local Church's missionary impulse through spiritual formation and support so that Catholics may become more effective witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- To support the vital ministry of catechesis through the education and formation of parish catechists and ministry leaders.
- To implement the directives of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan through a consistent, professional, and pastoral response to the needs of deaneries, parishes, and language/ethnic groups.



EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

The General Directory states three specific situations in which the seeds of the Gospel need to be planted:

1. Those persons and situations in which Christ and his Gospel are not known. These persons need to be invited to initial conversion.
2. Those persons who have heard the word and want to grow and mature in faith. This refers to the ongoing catechesis with children, youth and adults which leads them to mature faith and makes evangelizers of those who have been evangelized.
3. Those who have lost a living sense of the faith. They may have been baptized but no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life removed from Christ and his Gospel. These persons are in need of a “new evangelization.” (See GDC, 58.)

In 2005, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published the National Directory for Catechesis (NDC). This document, intended to be a “source of inspiration for catechesis” (NDC, p. 17), has three basic purposes:

1. To provide those fundamental theological and pastoral principles drawn from the Church’s Magisterium and apply them to the pastoral activity of catechesis
2. To offer guidelines for the application of those fundamental theological and pastoral principles in this country in order to continue the renewal of catechesis
3. To set forth the nature, purpose, object, tasks, basic content, and various methodologies of catechesis.

Catechesis, as an essential moment in evangelization, shares in the central characteristics of evangelization, but expresses them in a particular manner. The intent of catechesis is to make a person’s faith become “living, conscious and active through the light of instruction” (AGD, 14). Our National Directory, quoting *Catechesi Tradendae* makes it clear that all our evangelizing, catechizing activity has one object or “definitive” aim—“to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (CT, 5; NDC p. 55).

Catechesis must form informed disciples (GDC, 56) in a systematic way to carry out the Church’s missionary call to transform the world. For the disciple, faith must be “known, celebrated, lived and expressed in prayer” (NDC, p. 60). Catechesis carries out six fundamental tasks and “all efforts in evangelization and catechesis should incorporate these tasks” (NDC, p. 60):



1. “Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith” (NDC, p. 60). It faithfully instills in the believer a knowledge of the content of God’s self-revelation which is found in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition and in the Creed.
2. “Catechesis promotes knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments” (NDC, p. 60). The believer comes to know Christ in the liturgy and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Catechesis fosters the “full, conscious and active” (SC, 14) participation in the liturgy of the Church. It prepares people for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides deeper understanding and enrichment following their reception.
3. “Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ” (NDC, p. 61). It transmits the content of the moral teachings of Christ and invites believers to transformation and conversion as they conform their lives to Christ. Catechesis encourages faithful witness to those teachings in everyday life and the public, social arena.
4. “Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ” (NDC, p. 61). It invites conversion to Christ and communion with him. Catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, using the “Our Father” as the model for all prayer and a summary of the Christian life.
5. “Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church” (NDC, p. 61). It fosters a spirit of community and active participation in the life and mission of the Church and encourages apprenticeship in Christian living that is based on Christ’s teachings about life in community. Catechesis affirms Catholic identity, while fostering the longing for unity among all Christians. It deepens our understanding and desire for dialogue with persons of other Christian traditions (ecumenism).
6. “Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society” (NDC, p. 62). It empowers the faithful to fulfill their vocation in the world and to understand their role in bringing Christ to all environments. Catechesis nourishes the evangelical attitude of Christ, which seeks out to develop believers who are compassionate, merciful and just. (See NDC, pp. 59-63 for further amplification.)



ADULT FORMATION

Within the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops document *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, a Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, the Bishops note that “maturity of faith is the intent of all catechesis from the earliest years” (OHWB, p. 13). Adult formation is the “principal form of catechesis because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form” (CT, 43). While the Bishops emphasize that they in no way wish to weaken the commitment to catechetical formation for children, they also make it abundantly clear that adult faith formation is a priority and that “catechesis needs to give more attention to adults than it has been accustomed to do” (OHWB, p. 14). This priority of adult formation is reinforced in the National Directory when it notes that “the catechetical formation of adults is essential for the Church to carry out the commission given the apostles by Christ” (NDC, p. 187) and that formation needs to be addressed to adults in “different stages in the development of their faith” (NDC, p. 187). The Directory also delineates the goals, tasks, content and methodology for adult catechesis (see NDC, pp. 188-193).

Faith formation leaders in the parish are called to form individuals from along the whole trajectory of life “...It means calling and equipping all Christians of every age and stage of life to fulfill their baptismal call to holiness in family, Church, and society—their mission is to evangelize and transform the world into a more caring and just society. Ongoing faith formation is essential to accomplish this mission; it does not end at Confirmation or Graduation but continues until one’s death” (OHWB, p. 14).

Catechesis for all levels and for all ages is a continuous process of being formed and informed by the Word of God, by the sacramental life of the Church, by the Church’s rich tradition and by the Catholic value system. It is “an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted...in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (CCC, 5).

In *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, the Bishops pledged their support for adult faith formation and promised a “renewed commitment to adult faith formation, positioning it at the heart of ...catechetical vision and practice” (OHWB, 2). The document encourages parishes to examine existing programs to determine how their programs meet the goals for adult formation to:



- invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in holiness of life;
- promote and support active membership in the Christian Community;
- call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world. (See OHWB, pp. 22-24.)

