

Demand Excellence

Parish leaders can sometimes fall into the trap of feeling like they cannot or should not require anything from those who engage in catechetical efforts. Let's bust that myth and talk about why it is important to demand excellence for our catechists and how leaders can help make that happen through God's grace.

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Directory for Catechesis:

<https://store.usccb.org/directory-for-catechesis-p/7-669.htm>

Identity of the Catechist

- *Directory for Catechesis*, 113:

“By virtue of faith and baptismal anointing, in collaboration with the Magisterium of Christ and as a servant of the action of the Holy Spirit, the catechist is:

- a. A witness of **faith and keeper** of the memory of God;
- b. A **teacher and a mystagogue** who introduces others to the mystery of God, revealed in the paschal mystery of Christ; as an icon of Jesus the teacher, the catechist has a two-fold task of transmitting the content of the faith and leading others into the mystery of the faith itself.
- c. An **accompanier and educator** of those entrusted to him by the Church; the catechist is an expert in the art of accompaniment, has educational experience, is able to listen and enter into the dynamics of human growth, becomes a traveling companion with patience and a sense of gradualness, in docility to the action of the Spirit and through a process of formation helps his brothers to mature in the Christian life and journey toward God.”

The Call

- All the baptized are called to evangelize; all parents are called to evangelize and catechize their children; but not all the baptized are called to be lay catechists in a parish setting.
- *Directory for Catechesis*, 112:
The catechist is a Christian who receives a particular calling from God that, when accepted in faith, empowers him for the service of the transmission of faith and for the task of initiating others into the Christian life.
- *Directory for Catechesis*, 122:
The vocation to the ministry for catechesis flows from the sacrament of Baptism and is strengthened by Confirmation, both sacraments through which the layperson participates in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ. In addition to the common vocation to the apostolate, some faithful feel called by God to take on the role of catechists in the Christian community, at the service of a more organic and structured catechesis. This personal call of Jesus Christ and the relationship with him are the true engines of the catechist's activity: "from this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to 'evangelize,' and to lead others to the 'yes' of faith in Jesus Christ." (From the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 429) The Church fosters and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission of catechizing.
- Help potential catechists discern their charisms.
- Lay out responsibilities and expectations for those who do become catechists.

Formation

- *Directory for Catechesis*, 130:
Over the course of the centuries, the Church has never neglected to give priority to the formation of catechists. At the beginning of Christianity, formation, which was lived in experiential form, revolved around the vital encounter with Jesus Christ... The character of witness became the salient feature of the whole formative process... In the face of the

complexity and demands of the time in which we live, it is appropriate that the particular Churches should devote sufficient energies and resources to the formation of catechists.

- Education: kerymatic witness; theology; apologetics
- Skills training

Teaching the Art of Living requires Teaching the Art of Prayer

- Ultimately all of the above needs to be anchored in prayer and sacraments.
- Offer many opportunities for catechists to pray together and to learn more about prayer; to go to Confession; to sit in Adoration; to go to Mass.

Inspiration/Guidance/Accountability

- It is the catechetical leader's responsibility, along with the pastor, to demand excellence of those who say "yes" to engage in the work of catechesis. Which means they need to seek excellence.
- All through grace! Don't let our coming out of the pandemic be the time to fall back into "what we have always done" - it is an opportunity for new ardor, methods, and expression.

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