

Evangelization Framework Rationale

From the General Directory of Catechesis 1997

(N.B. The terms “primary proclamation”, “initial proclamation”, “initial evangelization”, “kerygmatic proclamation” and “kerygma” are used interchangeably.)

Getting to First Base: Initial Evangelization leads to the choice to put Jesus at the center of one’s life.

61. Primary proclamation is addressed to non-believers and those living in religious indifference. Its functions are to proclaim the Gospel and to call to conversion. Catechesis, "distinct from the primary proclamation of the Gospel", (182) promotes and matures initial conversion, educates the convert in the faith and incorporates him into the Christian community. The relationship between these two forms of the ministry of the word is, therefore, a relationship of complementary distinction. Primary proclamation, which every Christian is called to perform, is part of that "Go" (183) which Jesus imposes on his disciples: it implies, therefore, a going-out, a haste, a message. Catechesis, however, starts with the condition indicated by Jesus himself: "whosoever believes", (184) whosoever converts, whosoever decides. Both activities are essential and mutually complementary: go and welcome, proclaim and educate, call and incorporate.

62. Nevertheless in pastoral practice it is not always easy to define the boundaries of these activities. 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. (185) In the "missio ad gentes", this task is normally accomplished during the 'pre-catechuminate'. (186) In the context of "new evangelization" it is effected by means of a "kerygmatic catechesis", sometimes called "pre-catechesis", (187) because it is based on the precatechuminate and is proposed by the Gospel and directed towards a solid option of faith. *Only by starting with conversion, and therefore by making allowance for the interior disposition of "whoever believes", can catechesis, strictly speaking, fulfil its proper task of education in the faith.* (188)

The fact that catechesis, at least initially, assumes a missionary objective, does not dispense a particular Church from promoting an institutionalized programme of primary proclamation to execute more directly Jesus's missionary command. Catechetical renewal should be based thus on prior missionary evangelization.

Between First and Second Base: Initiatory Catechesis-- Apprenticeship in the Christian Life

(Establishing the Heart and Habits of a Disciple)

63. The Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* places catechesis firmly within the Church's mission and notes that evangelization is a rich, complex and dynamic reality which comprises essential but different "moments". "Catechesis", it adds, "is one of these moments—a very remarkable one—in the whole process of evangelization". (189) This is to say that there are activities which "prepare" (190) for catechesis and activities which "derive" from it (191) The "moment" of catechesis is that which corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalized, and provides a basis for first adhering to him. Converts, by means of "a period of formation, an apprenticeship in the whole Christian life", (192) are initiated into the mystery of

salvation and an evangelical style of life. This means "initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life". (193)

64. In discharging in different ways the initiatory function of the ministry of the word, catechesis lays the foundation for the building of the faith. (194) Other functions of the same ministry will continue to build, at different levels, on that foundation.

Initiatory catechesis is thus the necessary link between missionary activity which calls to faith and pastoral activity which continually nourishes the Christian community. This is not, therefore, an optional activity, but basic and fundamental for building up the personality of the individual disciple, as it is for the whole Christian community. Without it, missionary activity lacks continuity and is sterile, while pastoral activity lacks roots and becomes superficial and confused: any misfortune could cause the collapse of the entire building. (195)

In truth, "the inner growth [of the Church] and her correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis". (196) In this sense catechesis must always be considered a priority in evangelization.

Second Base: Permanent Perfective Catechesis

69. Continuing or on-going education in the faith follows upon basic education and presupposes it. Both fulfil two distinct but complementary functions of the ministry of the word while serving the process of continuing conversion. Initiatory catechesis lays the basis for the Christian life of the followers of Jesus. The process of continuing conversion goes beyond what is provided by basic catechesis. In order to encourage this process, it is necessary to have a Christian community which welcomes the initiated, sustains them and forms them in the faith: "Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life welcomes the catechumen at a certain stage of his catechesis".

71. For continuing education in the faith, the ministry of the word uses many forms of catechesis. Among these the following may be highlighted:

– The study and exploration of Sacred Scripture, read not only in the Church but with the Church and her living faith, which helps to discover divine truth, which it contains, in such a way as to arouse a response of faith. The "lectio divina" is an eminent form of this vital study of Scripture.

– A Christian reading of events, which is required of the missionary vocation of the Christian community. In this respect the study of the social teaching of the Church is indispensable, since "its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching". (215)

– 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 gestures, educates to active participation, contemplation and silence. It must be regarded as an "eminent kind of catechesis". (216)

– Occasional catechesis which seeks to interpret determined circumstances of personal, family, ecclesial or social life and to help live them in the prospect of faith. (217)

– Initiatives of spiritual formation which seek to reinforce conviction, open new perspectives and encourage perseverance in prayer and in the duties of following Christ.

– A systematic deepening of the Christian message by means of theological instruction, so as truly to educate in the faith, encourage growth in understanding of it and to equip the Christian for giving the reason for his

hope in the present world. (218) In a certain sense, it is appropriate to call such instruction "**perfective catechesis**".

Third Base: Preparation for the Apostolate

(GDC 31-32)

Formation for the apostolate and for mission is one of the fundamental tasks of catechesis. Nevertheless while there is a new sensitivity to the formation of the laity for Christian witness, for inter religious dialogue, and for their secular obligations, education for missionary activity "ad gentes" still seems weak and inadequate. Frequently, ordinary catechesis gives only marginal and inconsistent attention to the missions.

31. Having tested the ground, the sower sends out his workers to proclaim the Gospel through all the world and to that end shares with them the power of his Spirit. At the same time he shows them how to read the signs of the times and asks of them that special preparation which is necessary to carry out the sowing.

From *Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis.

(28) In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers.

Home Plate: Go out to all the world and make disciples.

The Need for a Coordinated Approach

Catechetical activity in the context of new evangelization

276. If catechesis is defined as a moment in the total process of evangelization, the problem inevitably arises of *co-ordinating catechetical activity with the missionary activity which necessarily precedes it, as well as with the pastoral activity which follows it. There are in fact "elements which prepare for catechesis as well as those deriving from it". In this respect, the link between missionary proclamation which seeks to stir up the faith, and initiatory catechesis, which seeks to deepen its roots, is decisive for evangelization.* This link is, in a certain sense, more evident in the mission *ad gentes*. Adults converted by the primary proclamation enter the catechumenate where they are catechized. *In situations requiring "new evangelization", co-ordination becomes more complex because ordinary catechesis is, at times, offered to young people and adults who need a period of prior proclamation and awakening in their adherence to Christ.*

Similar difficulties arise with regard to the catechesis of children and the formation of their parents. (314) At other times forms of ongoing catechesis are applied to adults who, in fact, require a true initiatory catechesis.

277. *The current situation of evangelization requires that both activities, missionary proclamation and initiatory catechesis, be conceived in a co-ordinated manner and be given, in the particular Church, through a single programme of evangelization which is both missionary and catechumenal.* Today, catechesis must be

seen above all as the consequence of an effective missionary proclamation. The directives of the decree *Ad Gentes*—which sets the catechumenate in the context of the Church's missionary activity—remain a particularly valid reference point for catechesis.

Why we should build the Kerygma into Everything We Do

Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*

Kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis

163. Education and catechesis are at the service of this growth. We already possess a number of magisterial documents and aids on catechesis issued by the Holy See and by various episcopates. I think in particular of the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), the General Catechetical Directory (1997) and other documents whose contents need not be repeated here. I would like to offer a few brief considerations which I believe to be of particular significance.

164. In catechesis too, we have rediscovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the centre of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal. 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. On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you." This first proclamation is called "first" not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment. For this reason too, "the priest – like every other member of the Church – ought to grow in awareness that he himself is continually in need of being evangelized".[127]

165. We must not think that in catechesis the kerygma gives way to a supposedly more "solid" formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart. The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express 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 which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which

foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental.