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Welcome to the draft curriculum guidelines.

Other than the table of contents, these pages have not been reviewed by the bishop or any clergy in the diocese. These are a draft for conversation purposes only.

The official document will be shared and discussed as a meeting with clergy in November 2024 and subsequently published *ad experimentum* for one year before becoming norms.

If you share or discuss this document or the contents herein, remember that you are discussing a draft.

draft

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noun

1. a preliminary version of a piece of writing.

Please, for the love of all that is holy, do not change anything in your parish or personal life based on this document. To do so only brings confusion and needless suffering.

DRAFT

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2 Draft as of September 10, 2024

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- 27
- 28

DRAFT

1 I. Basic Principles

2 1. Catechesis in general

3
4 The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines catechesis as: "...the totality of the Church's
5 efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing
6 they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building
7 up the body of Christ."¹

8
9 More concretely, catechesis is "is an education in the faith of children, young people, and
10 adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally
11 speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the
12 fullness of Christian life."²

13
14 The 2020 *Directory for Catechesis* begins by describing catechesis as:

15
16 ...an essential part of the broader process of renewal that the Church is called to bring
17 about in order to be faithful to the command of Jesus Christ to proclaim always and
18 everywhere his Gospel (cf. Mt 28:19). Catechesis participates according to its own nature in
19 the effort of evangelization, in order that the faith may be supported by an ongoing
20 maturation and express itself in a way of life that must characterize the very being of the
21 disciple of Christ. Because of this, catechesis is related to the liturgy and to charity in
22 making evident the essential unity of the new life which springs forth from Baptism.³

23 24 A. Kerygmatic catechesis ("evangelizing catechesis")

25
26 "Kerygma" is a Greek word meaning "proclamation." In our Catholic context, kerygma
27 refers to the initial proclamation of the Gospel, especially as embodied by the person and
28 saving mission of Jesus Christ.

29
30 The 2020 *Directory for Catechesis* calls upon the Church to adopt a kerygmatic catechesis
31 (sometimes also called an "evangelizing catechesis"). Kerygmatic catechesis is teaching or
32 presenting the faith in a way that is radically informed by the kerygma—that is, the
33 message of the Gospel and a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. As the *Directory for*
34 *Catechesis* tells us:

35
36 "Catechesis is an ecclesial act, arising from the missionary mandate of the Lord (cf. Mt
37 28:19-20) and aimed, as its very name indicates, at making the proclamation of his passion,
38 death and resurrection continually resound in the heart of every person, so that his life may
39 be transformed."⁴

40
41
1 CCC 4

2 CCC 5, quoting Pope St. John Paul II in *Catechesi tradendae*

3 Directory for Catechesis, 1

4 DC 55

1 Therefore:

2

3 “Kerygmatic *catechesis*, which goes to the very heart of the faith and grasps the essence of
4 the Christian message, is a catechesis which manifests the action of the Holy Spirit, who
5 communicates God’s saving love in Jesus Christ and continues to give himself so that every
6 human being may have the fullness of life.”⁵

7

8 Kerygmatic catechesis is catechesis which seeks to move away from teaching the faith as a
9 mere intellectual exercise, as rote memorization, as a moral checklist, or as an abstract
10 theory divorced from one’s lived experience. Rather, as the *Directory* tells us:

11

12 “Catechesis must always convey the beauty of the Gospel that resounded from the lips of
13 Jesus for all: the poor, the simple, sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes, who felt
14 welcomed, understood and helped, invited and educated by the Lord himself. In fact, the
15 proclamation of the merciful and gratuitous love of God that was fully manifested in Jesus
16 Christ, dead and risen, is the heart of the *kerygma*. There are also aspects of the evangelical
17 message that are generally difficult to accept, especially where the Gospel calls to
18 conversion and the recognition of sin. Catechesis, however, is not primarily a presentation
19 of morality, but the proclamation of the beauty of God, which can be experienced, and
20 which touches the heart and the mind, transforming life.”⁶

21

22 Doctrine and morality remain important; however, they should be presented as the logical
23 flowering of a personal relationship with Christ as opposed to isolated ends in and of
24 themselves.

25

26 **B. Settings and contexts for catechesis**

27

28 • **The liturgy and sacraments** – As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* eloquently states:
29 “The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the
30 font from which all her power flows. It is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the
31 People of God. Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental
32 activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in
33 fullness for the transformation of men.”⁷

34

35 • **The family** – Recognizing the family as the domestic church, the *Directory* underscores
36 the importance of family in the transmission of the faith.

37

38 • **The parish** – The parish is a place of shared faith, sacramental life, and communal
39 worship, making it a natural center for catechetical activity.

40

41 • **Schools and educational institutions** – Catholic schools and other Catholic educational
42 settings (including Catholic homeschool programs) play a significant role in catechesis,

⁵ DC 2

⁶ DC 175

⁷ CCC 1074

1 providing a formal setting for religious education and the integration of faith in the
2 learning process.

3
4 • **Small Christian communities** – Small Christian communities include groups such as lay
5 ecclesial movements, Third Order groups, various kinds of Catholic associations, and guilds.
6 These smaller communities can be vital spaces for catechesis, fostering a sense of close-knit
7 community and a shared faith journey. As the *Directory* tells us: “These are a reality in the
8 Church that show a great capacity for evangelization, reaching into environments that are
9 often distant from the traditional structures.”⁸

10
11 • **Catholic media** – Catholic media, including both new media and more traditional forms,
12 can be a fruitful context for catechesis. In particular, the *Directory* expresses the Church’s
13 interest in utilizing online and social media.⁹

14
15 • **Special circumstances** – There are also circumstances and occasions when “standard”
16 means of catechesis may not be appropriate or feasible, such as catechesis for the disabled,
17 for migrants, or for those in prison. In such cases, specialized catechesis tailored to the
18 specific needs of the group should be arranged.

19 20 **C. Kerygmatic catechesis in Scripture**

21
22 The book of Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament gives us several “prototypes,” or early
23 examples, of a kerygmatic catechesis.

24
25 One good example can be found in the second book of Acts, where St. Peter proclaims the
26 Gospel to the crowd that assembled at Pentecost. After the Holy Spirit descended upon the
27 Apostles—who were gathered together with Our Lady—in the form of a great wind and
28 tongues of fire, “they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different
29 tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”¹⁰ The Jews who were gathered in
30 Jerusalem for their feast came from all over the ancient world, yet each was able to
31 understand the Apostles as if they were speaking their own languages. The crowd was
32 greatly perplexed by this, prompting the Apostle Peter to proclaim:

33
34 “You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to
35 you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your
36 midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge
37 of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him
38 from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. [...] God raised
39 this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the
40 promise of the holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you (both) see and hear.
41 [...] Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both
42 Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified. [...] Repent and be baptized, every one of

⁸ DC 304

⁹ E.g., see DC 324

¹⁰ Acts 2:4

1 you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift
2 of the holy Spirit.”¹¹

3
4 This passage in Acts concludes by telling us: “Those who accepted his message were
5 baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.”¹²

6
7 This episode in the New Testament clearly demonstrates kerygmatic catechesis because:

- 8
9 **1.** It was first of all rooted in the Apostles’ personal encounter and relationship
10 with Jesus Christ, and then more immediately inspired by a direct encounter
11 with God the Holy Spirit;
- 12
13 **2.** Peter proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ, announcing and describing his
14 saving mission with personal conviction (“God raised Jesus; of this we are all
15 witnesses.”);
- 16
17 **3.** Peter spoke to the crowds in ways they were able to understand in view of their
18 background and cultural context;
- 19
20 **4.** Peter guides his listeners into a lived acceptance of the faith (“Repent and be
21 baptized, every one of you”);
- 22
23 **5.** Peter’s “catechesis” bore fruit in his listeners (“...about three thousand persons
24 were added that day”).

25
26 Other examples of kerygmatic catechesis in the New Testament include¹³:

- 27
- 28 • Acts 3:12-26 — Peter to the crowds amazed at the healing of the paralyzed man
- 29 • Acts 4:8-12 — Peter to the Jewish leaders at the healing of the paralyzed man
- 30 • Acts 5:29-32 — Peter again the Jewish leaders who order the Apostles to be silent
- 31 • Acts 10:34-43 — Peter to the household of Cornelius
- 32 • Acts 13:16-41 — Paul to the Synagogue in Pisidian Antioch
- 33 • Acts 14:15-17 — Paul to the crowds in Derbe
- 34 • Acts 17:22-31 — Paul at the Areopagus
- 35
- 36

¹¹ Acts 2:22-24, 32-32, 36

¹² Acts 2:41

¹³ Msgr. Charles Pope assembled this list in his article “What do we mean by the term ‘Kerygma?’” for the National Catholic Register, published online July 20, 2021 in “The Denver Catholic.”

(<https://denvercatholic.org/what-do-we-mean-by-the-term-kerygma/> accessed February 26, 2024)

1 **Key points:**

2
3 → Catechesis is the ministry of handing on the faith and forming disciples of Jesus Christ.

4
5 → The kerygma is the proclamation of the Gospel, especially rooted in the life and saving mission of Jesus.

6
7
8 → The Church calls us to a kerygmatic catechesis, meaning that our catechetical efforts are to be radically informed by a personal encounter with Jesus in the Gospels.

9
10
11 → “Kerygmatic catechesis” is a term which indicates a catechesis which includes teaching information about our faith, but which always goes beyond that; kerygmatic catechesis primarily involves assisting others to embrace fully a Christian way of life (even while the catechist strives always to deepen his or her own conversion.)

12
13
14 → Catechesis takes place in a variety of settings and contexts.

15
16
17
18 → The Apostles give us several examples of early kerygmatic catechesis in the New Testament.

19
20

DRAFT

1 **I. Basic principles**

2 **2. The catechumenate as a model**

3

4 In the early Church, catechumens—that is, those aspiring to baptism—formed a distinct
5 group within the Church. Their time of testing and preparation was treated very seriously
6 by the early Christian community, as a new Christian had to be adequately prepared to
7 remain faithful to the Gospel in the face of persecution.

8

9 Eventually, Western society became predominantly Christian, with most members being
10 baptized as infants. Because of this, the institution of the catechumenate as it was known in
11 the Church’s first centuries gradually fell into disuse. However, Vatican II, with its interest
12 in revisiting the Church’s foundational roots, reintroduced the idea of the catechumenate to
13 the life of the modern Church. As the decree promulgating the Rite of Christian Initiation
14 for Adults states:

15

16 “The Second Vatican Council prescribed the revision of the rite of baptism of adults and
17 decreed that the catechumenate for adults, divided into several steps, should be restored.
18 By this means the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of well-suited
19 instruction, would be sanctified by liturgical rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of
20 time.”¹⁴

21

22 Now, the Church calls us to be more broadly inspired by the catechumenate.

23

24 **A. Contemporary culture and the spirit of mission**

25

26 The *Directory* sees contemporary catechesis as having a strong missionary dimension, even
27 in historically Christian cultures such as our own. As Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii*
28 *Gaudium*: “We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience understands the full
29 background to what we are saying or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of
30 the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty and attractiveness.”¹⁵

31

32 That is, in generations past, most “cradle Catholics” would have been raised amidst a family
33 and broader community culture of Catholicism. Basic Catholic prayers, beliefs, and customs
34 would have been naturally understood and assimilated throughout childhood and
35 adolescence, with textbook religion courses serving to fill the gaps in more technical
36 knowledge of Catholic teaching. While we should still strive to create a wholesome
37 formative Catholic culture in our homes, parishes, and schools, we can no longer presume
38 that those being catechized—even those who were baptized Catholic as infants—will have
39 a baseline understanding of the truths of our faith.

40

41 Therefore, we must commit ourselves to what Pope St. John Paul II called “the New
42 Evangelization,” meaning a re-proposal of the Gospel to those who may have already heard
43 of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, but without fully understanding, interiorizing, or

¹⁴ Citation

¹⁵ EG 34

1 embracing the Good News. This demands a certain missionary spirit among all the faithful,
2 but especially for those who dedicate themselves to the work of catechesis.

3
4 And so in light of our current cultural conditions, the Directory recommends looking
5 towards the catechumenate as an inspiration and model for all forms of catechesis. As the
6 Directory notes:

7
8 “The catechumenate is an ancient ecclesial practice, restored after the Vatican Council,
9 offered to unbaptized converts. It therefore has an explicit missionary intention and is
10 structured as an organic and cumulative whole for initiation into Christian faith and life.
11 Precisely because of its missionary character, the catechumenate can also inspire the
12 catechesis directed towards those who although they have already received the gift of
13 baptismal grace, do not actually taste its richness: in this sense, one speaks of catechesis
14 *inspired by the catechumenal model* or a *post-baptismal catechumenate* or a *catechesis of*
15 *initiation into Christian life*. This inspiration does not forget that the baptized “by baptism . .
16 . have already become members of the Church and children of God. Hence their conversion
17 is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must
18 develop.”¹⁶

19 20 **B. What is the catechumenate?**

21
22 As referenced above, the term “catechumenate” can be used to describe the period of
23 preparation, one marked by several distinct liturgical steps and progressively more focused
24 stages of formation, for an unbaptized person to enter the Catholic Church. The
25 catechumenate can also refer to a distinct group within the broader circle of the Church’s
26 life, namely those adults and older children who are preparing for baptism.

27
28 Although as unbaptized persons, catechumens are not technically members of the Church,
29 they are still loved and embraced by the Christian community. Canon 206 of the *Code of*
30 *Canon Law* tells us:

31
32 “Catechumens are linked with the Church in a special way since, moved by the Holy Spirit,
33 they are expressing an explicit desire to be incorporated in the Church. By this very desire,
34 as well as by the life of faith, hope and charity which they lead, they are joined to the
35 Church which already cherishes them as its own.”

36
37 And:

38
39 “The Church has a special care for catechumens. While it invites them to lead an evangelical
40 life, and introduces them to the celebration of the sacred rites, it already accords them
41 various prerogatives which are proper to Christians.”¹⁷

16 DC 61

17 E.g., one such prerogative is the right to a Catholic funeral should a catechumen die before baptism. See can. 1183 §1 in the *Code of Canon Law*.

1 **C. The catechumenate model**
2

3 Paragraph 62 of the Directory identifies three distinct “catechumenal initiatives” in our
4 work as catechists:
5

6 **1. The literal catechumenate “in a strict sense”** of the unbaptized. This is the normal
7 usage of the term. Catechumens properly so-called are persons of any age who have never
8 been validly baptized in any Christian faith tradition.
9

10 **2. The catechumenate “in an analogous sense,”** of baptized Christians “who have not
11 completed the sacraments of Christian initiation,” i.e. those entering into full communion
12 with the Catholic Church. This includes, for example, baptized Protestant Christians who
13 would enter the Church through the sacraments of Confirmation and first holy Communion.
14 The already-baptized are truly Christians and therefore cannot be catechumens, but they
15 can follow a similar preparation program, and there is provision made for their reception
16 in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.¹⁸
17

18 **3. A “a catechesis of catechumenal inspiration”** for Catholics. This would include fully-
19 initiated Catholics who are insufficiently formed in their faith, as well as baptized “cradle
20 Catholics” who are lacking other sacraments of initiation, e.g. Catholic children in
21 sacramental formation or Catholic adults preparing for Confirmation. It would be
22 inappropriate to apply the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* to baptized Catholics already
23 in full communion with the Church. But such Catholics can still see the catechumenate as an
24 inspiration in their own interior journey; they can embrace their deepening faith with a
25 spirit of joy and newness of life, in the same way that a catechumen would rejoice in a
26 “springtime” of faith in encountering our Lord Jesus Christ for the first time.
27

28 **D. Stages of the catechumenate**
29

30 As paragraph 63 of the Directory notes, the literal catechumenate involves a series of
31 stages and “rites of passage,” including:
32

33 **1. The pre-catechumenal period;** that is, the time of a person’s first encounter with Christ
34 and the Gospel leading to their conversion. This pre-catechumenal stage is particularly
35 relevant to a kerygmatic understanding of catechesis.
36

37 **2. The catechumenate properly so-called,** a dedicated time of formation in Catholic
38 doctrine and in the whole of Christian life. A person formally enters the catechumenate
39 with the *Rite of Admission*.
40

41 **3. The time of purification and illumination,** an especially focused period of preparation
42 for baptism. This stage is entered through the *Rite of Election*.
43

¹⁸ Citation?

1 **4. Reception of the sacraments** (at the Easter Vigil), which begins the period of
2 mystagogy a time when the new Catholic deepens their knowledge of God and His Church
3 “from within,” interiorizing and coming to a fully appreciation of what they experienced
4 first-hand in the sacraments.
5

6 **E. Spirituality of the catechumenate** 7

8 Note well that a catechesis of catechumenal inspiration is not meant to reproduce the
9 experience of the literal catechumenate in an exact way. Rather, “catechumen inspiration”
10 means allowing our work as catechists to be informed—in ways that makes sense in the
11 given context—by the major themes of the experience of the catechumenate properly so-
12 called.¹⁹
13

14 As per paragraph 64 of the *Directory*, such themes include:
15

16 **1. An orientation towards the Pascal mystery** – As the *Directory* states, “in the
17 catechumenate, everything is oriented toward the mystery of Christ’s passion, death, and
18 resurrection.”²⁰ This Pascal character is highlighted by the custom of initiating new
19 Catholics at the Easter Vigil. This serves to underscore our theology of baptism as a death
20 to sin and a rebirth to new life in Christ. In the catechesis of already-baptized Christians,
21 this theme of living into our new baptismal life should be always called to mind.
22

23 **2. Initiation** – The catechumenate is “an initiation into faith that leads catechumens to the
24 discovery of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.” The catechumenate properly so-
25 called is designed as an introduction and orientation to Christian life, which will be new
26 and unfamiliar to the unbaptized. Although the baptized will (hopefully) not need this same
27 kind of radical introduction, catechesis will likely introduce them to at least some of the
28 truths of our faith, or to a new level of depth of understanding.
29

30 **3. Liturgy, ritual, and symbols** – As can be readily observed, “the catechumenate is
31 interwoven with symbols, rites, and celebrations that touch the senses and the
32 affections.”²¹ Catechesis can also help baptized Christians come to a new or renewed
33 appreciation for the visible, tangible signs and symbols used in Catholic liturgy to help
34 deepen one’s prayer life and to facilitate a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
35

36 **4. Community** – The catechumenate “is a process that takes place in a concrete
37 community, that provides an experience of the communion given by God.”²² Through
38 catechesis, the already-baptized to be guided to a deeper understanding of their role in the
39 community of the Church.
40

¹⁹ See DC 64

²⁰ DC 64

²¹ DC 64

²² DC 64

1 **5. Ongoing conversion** – The catechumenate is clearly envisioned as a “as a journey of
2 conversion
3 and gradual purification.”²³ Yet even post-baptism, our conversion is never completed in
4 this life. After the first conversion of sacramental initiation, fully-initiated Catholic are
5 called to a continual turning away from sin and fuller embracing of the Gospel; and those
6 Catholics who have not yet completed their initiation should be prepared for each
7 successive sacramental milestone.

8
9 **6. Christian formation as progressive growth** – The literal catechumenate is comprised
10 of steps and stages that follow in a particular order suited to the catechumen’s deepening
11 commitment to the faith. As the Director phrases it, “This evolving character responds to
12 the actual life story of the person who grows and matures over time.”²⁴ Growth and
13 maturity of course continues after baptism, and catechesis should reflect this dynamic even
14 amount the baptized and fully-initiated.

15 **F. The significance of mystagogy**

16
17
18 As the new *Order of Christian Initiation for Adults* describes: “The final period [of the
19 catechumenal initiation process], which lasts for the whole of Easter Time, is given to
20 ‘Mystagogy,’ that is to gaining experience and spiritual fruits, and to spending time in the
21 company of the faithful and forming stronger links with them.”²⁵

22
23 In the early Church, the period after baptism was a special time of intense catechesis, as the
24 newly-baptized were instructed in their new Christian life “from within.” We have many
25 existing mystagogical catechetical lessons from the Fathers of the Church. One example, is
26 St. Ambrose’s treatise “On the Mysteries,” written around the year 387 A.D. In it, St.
27 Ambrose addresses the newly-baptized, helping them to see the deeper meaning of the
28 sacrament they had just experienced:

29
30 “After this the Holy of holies was opened to you, you entered the sanctuary of regeneration;
31 recall what you were asked, and remember what you answered. You renounced the
32 devil and his works, the world with its luxury and pleasures. That utterance of yours is
33 preserved not in the tombs of the dead, but in the book of the living.

34 You saw there the deacon, you saw the priest, you saw the chief priest [i.e. the bishop].
35 Consider not the bodily forms, but the grace of the Mysteries. You spoke in the presence of
36 the angels, as it is written: For the priest’s lips keep knowledge, and they seek the law at his
37 mouth, for he is the angel of the Lord Almighty. There is no place for deception nor for
38 denial. He is an angel who proclaims the kingdom of Christ and eternal life. He is to be
39 esteemed by you not according to his appearance, but according to his office. Consider
40 what he delivered, reflect upon the rule of life he gave you, recognize his position.

²³ DC 64

²⁴ DC 64

²⁵ OCIA 7

1 You entered, then, that you might discern your adversary, whom you were to renounce as it
2 were to his face, then you turned to the east; for he who renounces the devil turns to Christ,
3 and beholds Him face to face.”²⁶

4
5 Naturally, those who are baptized as infants will not have the same literal post-baptismal
6 mystagogy period. But the Church evasions all post-baptismal catechesis as having a strong
7 mystagogical aspect, in the sense that all the baptized should be guided to understand the
8 mystery of their sacramental initiation in an ever more profound way.

9
10 As the Directory states:

11
12 “Catechesis as mystagogic initiation introduces the believer into the living experience of the
13 Christian community, the true setting of the life of faith. This formative experience is
14 progressive and dynamic; rich in signs and expressions and beneficial for the integration of
15 every dimension of the person.”²⁷

16
17 **Key points:**

18
19 → The term “catechumenate” refers to the unbaptized who are preparing for Christian
20 initiation, or to their period of pre-baptismal formation.

21
22 → In the early Church, the catechumenate was a distinct, recognized group. The second
23 Vatican Council reintroduced the catechumenate as a means of adult baptismal preparation
24 to the life of the modern Church.

25
26 → The catechumenate properly so-called refers *only* to the unbaptized. However, we can
27 apply the structure of the catechumenate in an analogous sense to already baptized but
28 non-Catholic Christians who seek to enter full communion with the Church.

29
30 → We can also speak of a “catechesis of catechumenal inspiration,” meaning that some
31 spiritual themes of the catechumenate process can be adopted even in the catechesis of full-
32 initiated Catholics.

33
34 → Contemporary culture, with its tendency to increasing secularization, suggests the
35 appropriateness of a “catechesis of catechumenal inspiration.”

36
37 → Some of the spiritual themes of the catechumenate include: a focus on signs and symbols
38 in the liturgy, a sense of belonging to the broader community of the Church, personal
39 conversion, progressive growth in the spiritual life, and the centrality of the Paschal
40 mystery.

41

²⁶ St. Ambrose “On the Mysteries,” chapter 2. From NewAdvent.org:
<https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3405.htm>

²⁷ DC 2

1 → “Mystagogy,” strictly speaking, is the period of post-baptismal catechesis when the
2 newly-baptized deepened their understanding of the sacraments “from within” the Church.
3 Yet since all the baptized are called to deepen their faith continually, we should view all
4 post-baptismal catechesis as a kind of mystagogy.

5
6
7

DRAFT

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1 **I. Basic principles**

2 **3. The identity and vocation of the catechist**

3
4 Although ultimately “the whole Christian community is responsible for the ministry of
5 catechesis,”²⁸ the *Directory for Catechesis* identifies a catechist in particular as: “a Christian
6 who receives a particular calling from God that, when accepted in faith, empowers him for
7 the service of the transmission of faith and for the task of initiating others into the Christian
8 life.”²⁹

9
10 **A. What is a catechist?**

11
12 We might be tempted to think of a catechist as a part-time volunteer position that almost
13 anyone can simply “sign up for” (perhaps akin to something like a secular scout leader or
14 soccer coach). But in reality, the Church sees the role of the catechist as a vocation. That is,
15 a catechist is not only called to take their mission seriously, but to offer themselves—mind,
16 heart, and spirit—to the important work of catechesis, in such a way that it becomes a true
17 part of their spiritual identity.

18
19 Pope Francis made this especially evident when he decided to make the role of catechist
20 into an instituted ministry in May 2021. When a role such as catechist is an instituted
21 ministry, this means that the one carrying out the role is formally commissioned in a
22 liturgical ceremony to serve officially in the name of the Church.

23
24 Paragraph 122 of the *Directory* speaks of a catechist’s special calling:

25
26 The vocation to the ministry of catechesis flows from the sacrament of Baptism and is
27 strengthened by Confirmation, both sacraments through which the layperson participates
28 in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ. In addition to the common vocation to
29 the apostolate, some faithful feel called by God to take on the role of catechists in the
30 Christian community, at the service of a more organic and structured catechesis. This
31 personal call of Jesus Christ and the relationship with him are the true engines of the
32 catechist’s activity: “from this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim
33 him, to ‘evangelize,’ and to lead others to the ‘yes’ of faith in Jesus Christ.” The Church
34 fosters and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission of catechizing.

35
36 **B. The catechist’s “job description” (See DC 113)**

37
38 On a very concrete, practical level, catechists communicate and hand on the faith. Naturally,
39 this occurs in a wide variety of contexts. For example, catechists teach children in parish
40 faith formation programs; they walk with adult converts preparing for baptism; in some
41 cases may assist fully-initiated Catholics to grow in their faith; etc.

42

²⁸ DC 111

²⁹ DC 112

1 However, the role of a catechist cannot be reduced to the particulars of any one given
2 volunteer opportunity. Thus, paragraph 113 of the *Directory* describes the “job description”
3 of a catechist in more foundational terms.

4
5 Namely, a catechist is called to be:

6
7 • **A witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God.** An important part of our faith is
8 the memory of God’s history of love and care for His people; He created us in His own
9 image; guided the people of Israel through the law and the prophets; and finally, sent His
10 own son to die to save us from our sins and bestow eternal life on all who believe in Him.
11 From the time of Jesus’s resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, God
12 continues to care for and nourish us, His adopted family, through the Church and the
13 sacraments.

14
15 Catechists are called to foster and maintain this living memory of God. They live as personal
16 witnesses to God’s goodness and providential care, in such a way that they can be a
17 credible “sign of hope” for all their brothers and sisters in Christ.

18
19 • **A teacher and a mystagogue.** The *Directory* describes the catechist as having the
20 “twofold task of transmitting the content of the faith and leading others into the mystery of
21 the faith itself.” In other words, a catechist both transmits the “content” and objective facts
22 of the faith, and also introduces those being catechized to the faith as a lived experience
23 and way of life.

24
25 A “mystagogue” is “one who leads others into mystery”—that is, a catechist as mystagogue
26 leads others into the sacred mysteries of our faith as a guide.

27
28 • **An accompanier and educator.** A catechist is like a travelling companion along the
29 journey of Christian life. Catechists are skilled listeners—as the *Directory* puts it, “experts
30 in the art of accompaniment”—who can share the faith with a strong sense of patience,
31 acceptance, and understanding. As the expression goes, they “meet people where they are,”
32 but help them overcome any ignorance and spiritual limitations so that they may mature in
33 the Christian life.

34 35 **C. The formation of catechists**

36
37 Catechists are formed primarily to be “persons who have experienced the love of God and
38 who, for this reason alone, place themselves at the service of the proclamation of the
39 Kingdom.”³⁰

40
41 The Church has always shown a concern for the proper formation of catechists.³¹
42 Catechists’ own formation is essential, as nobody can give away what they do not

³⁰ DC 138

³¹ DC 130

1 themselves have. As Jesus says in the Gospel “If a blind person leads a blind person, both
2 will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:14)

3
4 Like catechesis in general, formation opportunities for catechists may take a variety of
5 practical concrete forms. However, the *Directory for Catechesis* indicates some fundamental
6 principles for all forms of catechist formation.

7
8 As per paragraph 135 of the *Directory*, formation should:

9
10 • **Be integral.** That is, a catechist’s formation should enable them “to transmit not only a
11 teaching but
12 also an integral Christian formation, by developing ‘tasks of initiation, of education, and of
13 teaching. Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators and
14 witnesses of the faith.”³² While it is important for catechists to have an intellectual grasp of
15 the doctrinal truths of our faith, a catechist’s formation should be truly integral, in the
16 sense of forming the whole person and imparting a “comprehensive vision of Christian
17 life.”³³

18
19 • **Emphasize accompaniment.** Catechists should be formed in the art of spiritual
20 accompaniment, which the *Directory* describes as “a humble willingness to allow oneself to
21 be touched by the questions and confronted by the situations of life, with a gaze full of
22 compassion but also respectful of the other’s freedom.”³⁴

23
24 • **Promote consistency.** In general, formation for catechists should have parallels and
25 similarities with the catechetical formation the catechists will be imparting to others. As
26 the *Directory* notes: “It would be very difficult for the catechist in his activity to improvise a
27 style and a sensibility to which he had not been introduced during his own formation.”³⁵

28
29 • **Impart an attitude of docility and love of learning.** Catechists should be open to
30 formation themselves, and should be always eager to learn and deepen their knowledge of
31 the faith.

32
33 • **Be hands-on.** “The consummate place of formation for the catechist is therefore the
34 Christian community, in the variety of its charisms and ministries, as the ordinary
35 environment in which one learns and lives the life of faith.”³⁶ To a large extent, catechists
36 should learn by doing.

37

³² DC 135, quoting GDC 237, cf. also Congregation for Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (April 11, 1971), 31

³³ DC 135, b

³⁴ DC 135, c

³⁵ DC 135

³⁶ DC 133

1 • **Focus on the spirituality of mission and evangelization.** “Formation sets as its goal, in
2 the first place, making catechists aware that as baptized persons they are true missionary
3 disciples, meaning active participants in evangelization.”³⁷
4

5 **This all being said**, the *Directory* reminds us that “The catechist is also a *teacher* who
6 instructs in the faith. In fact, while making witness his main virtue he does not forget that
7 he is also responsible for the transmission of the ecclesial faith.”³⁸ To this end, the catechist
8 must take care to learn “the content of the faith, with the *Directory* noting that:

9
10 “The assimilation of the content of the faith as *wisdom of the faith* takes place above all
11 through familiarity with Sacred Scripture and with the study of the *Catechism of the*
12 *Catholic Church*, of the catechisms of the particular Church, of magisterial documents [i.e.,
13 other documents from Rome].”³⁹
14

15 **Key points:**

16
17 → A catechist is “a Christian who receives a particular calling from God that, when accepted
18 in faith, empowers him for the service of the transmission of faith and for the task of
19 initiating others into the Christian life.”⁴⁰
20

21 → Although a catechist may carry out their ministry in a variety of concrete instances, the
22 role of catechist itself is a vocation rather than a “job.”
23

24 → A catechist hands on the faith not only through teaching, but also through their own
25 faith and spirituality, by personal accompaniment, and especially by the witness of their
26 Christian way of life.
27

28 → Formation for catechists should be hand-on; should promote a spirituality of mission;
29 should aim to teach the art of accompaniment; and should apply to a catechist’s whole life
30 in an integral way.
31

32 → Nevertheless, catechists should also take care to study sacred scripture, the *Catechism of*
33 *the Catholic Church*, and the relevant teaching documents from the Holy Father in Rome.
34
35
36
37
38
39

³⁷ DC 132

³⁸ DC 143

³⁹ DC 143

⁴⁰ DC 112

1 **I. Basic principles**
2 **4. Catechesis and community**

3
4 The *Directory for Catechesis*, quoting Pope Francis’ encyclical letter *Lumen fidei*, notes that
5 “Faith is necessarily ecclesial; it is professed from within the body of Christ as a concrete
6 communion of believers.”⁴¹

7
8 That is, while catechesis is meant to be personal (and even, in some cases, to be custom
9 tailored to the needs of the individual), it can never be a truly private endeavor or a “do-it-
10 yourself” project. Catechesis is fundamentally situated in the broader community that is the
11 Church. As the Directory goes on to state:

12
13 “In fact, ‘when catechesis transmits the mystery of Christ, the faith of the whole people of
14 God echoes in its message throughout the course of history: the faith received by the
15 Apostles from Christ himself and under the action of the Holy Spirit; that of the martyrs
16 who have borne witness to it and still bear witness to it by their blood; that of the saints
17 who have lived it and who still live it profoundly; that of the Fathers and doctors of the
18 Church who have taught it brilliantly; that of the missionaries who proclaim it incessantly;
19 that of the theologians who help to understand it better; that of the pastors who conserve it
20 with zeal and love and who interpret it authentically. In truth, there is present in catechesis
21 the faith of all those who believe and allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit.’
22 Moreover, catechesis initiates believers into the mystery of communion as lived, not only in
23 relationship with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, but also in the community of
24 believers through the work of the same Spirit. In educating for communion, catechesis
25 educates for living in the Church and as the Church.”⁴²

26
27 **A. The universal Church and particular Churches**

28
29 Our catechetical activity first of all requires communion with the universal Church—that is,
30 the Catholic Church as it exists with one shared faith throughout the world, united in
31 communion with the Holy Father in Rome, and open to the Pope’s teaching authority as
32 expressed by the Church’s law and other teaching documents.

33
34 We are also called to be connected in a special way to the life of our local diocesan Church
35 in the Diocese of Bridgeport—that is, the “particular Church.” A local diocesan church is led
36 by a bishop, who is a successor to the Apostles; just as Peter was “first among equals”
37 among the original twelve Apostles, our modern bishops shepherd their diocese in a spirit
38 of brotherhood with the Holy Father in Rome.

39
40 As catechists, we are to be co-workers with the local bishop (Bishop Caggiano and his
41 successors) in his mission of teaching and handing on the faith in our diocese. The *Directory*
42 reflects on this dynamic:

43
⁴¹ DC 176
⁴² DC 176

1 “Equipped with every means by the Holy Spirit, it is up to the particular Churches to
2 continue the work of evangelization, contributing to the good of the universal Church.
3 Brought together by the word of God, they are called to proclaim and spread it. Accepting
4 the challenge of evangelization means bringing the word of God to the farthest reaches,
5 opening oneself to all types of peripheries. Moreover, by living in a specific place the
6 particular Churches evangelize by rooting themselves in the history, the culture, the
7 traditions, the languages, and the problems of their people. The word of God ‘fosters and
8 takes to itself, insofar as they are good, the ability, riches and customs in which the genius
9 of each people expresses itself. Taking them to itself it purifies, strengthens, elevates and
10 ennobles them.’ This fulfills the gift of Pentecost, thanks to which the Church ‘speaks all
11 tongues, understands and accepts all tongues in her love, and so supersedes the
12 divisiveness of Babel.’”⁴³

13

14 **B. The role of parishes**

15

16 The 1965 magisterial document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* from Pope St. Paul VI “on the
17 apostolate of the laity” states that the lay faithful “should develop an ever-increasing
18 appreciation of their own diocese, of which the parish is a kind of cell.”⁴⁴ For most of us, the
19 parish will be our first and main point of contact with the wider Church. The parish is
20 where most of our major life events (such as baptisms and weddings) are celebrated, and
21 the parish is the setting where we routinely encounter the Lord in sacraments such as
22 reconciliation and the Eucharist.

23

24 The current 1983 *Code of Canon Law* defines a parish as “a certain community of Christ’s
25 faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the
26 authority of the diocesan
27 Bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor.”⁴⁵ The parish pastor serves as
28 the bishop’s co-shepherd for the faithful entrusted to his pastoral care, making the bishop’s
29 sacramental ministry as a successor to the Apostles more present to the people in a given
30 area of the diocese.⁴⁶ And as the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* describes:

31

32 “...because it is impossible for the bishop always and everywhere to preside over the whole
33 flock in his Church, he cannot do other than establish lesser groupings of the faithful.
34 Among these the parishes, set up locally under a pastor who takes the place of the bishop,
35 are the most important: for in some manner they represent the visible Church constituted
36 throughout the world.”⁴⁷

37

38 With a few exceptions, parishes are territorial.⁴⁸ A person becomes a member of their local
39 parish simply by virtue of their home address. While a Catholic is free to attend Mass and
40 receive the sacraments at any parish, they automatically have a territorial parish as their

⁴³ DC 295

⁴⁴ AA 10. See also DC 298

⁴⁵ CIC can. 515 §1

⁴⁶ See CIC can. 519

⁴⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 42

⁴⁸ See CIC can. 518

1 ecclesial “home,” and pastors are charged with the spiritual care of all souls living within
2 his parish boundaries.

3
4 The Church calls us to love our neighbor by uniting us with our literal neighbors in the
5 structure of the parish. As *Apostolicam Actuositatem* notes:

6
7 “The parish offers an obvious example of the apostolate on the community level inasmuch
8 as it brings together the many human differences within its boundaries and merges them
9 into the universality of the Church.”⁴⁹

10
11 While all are welcome at their parish, regardless of their state of spiritual development,
12 ideally a parish would become a true community of missionary disciples. As the *Directory*
13 tells us:

14
15 “...At the heart of the parish’s presentation of evangelization is not a pastoral strategy,
16 much less an elite and exclusive group of the perfect and of experts, but a community of
17 missionary disciples, people with a living experience of the risen Christ who live out new
18 relationships generated by him. A Christian community that, even in the weakness of its
19 members and in the paucity of its resources, lives out this *mystical fraternity*, itself becomes
20 the first and natural proclamation of the faith.”⁵⁰

21
22 Since the parish is meant to be both a spiritually nurturing home as well as a community
23 ordered toward the proclamation of the Gospel, the parish is “a privileged place of
24 education in the faith” and for all catechetical activity.⁵¹

25 26 **C. Catechesis and the liturgy**

27
28 The liturgy is the Church’s public, official prayer. Examples of liturgical prayer include the
29 Liturgy of the Hours; the celebration of the sacraments; and above all the holy sacrifice of
30 the Mass.

31
32 The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* tells us:

33
34 “Though prayer in private and in seclusion is always necessary and to be encouraged and is
35 practiced by the members of the Church through Christ in the Holy Spirit, there is a special
36 excellence in the prayer of the community. Christ himself has said: ‘Where two or three are
37 gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst’ (Mt 18:20).”⁵²

38
39 In contrast with private prayer (such as our interior conversation with God during a silent
40 holy hour) or popular devotional prayers (e.g., prayers such as the Divine Mercy chaplet or
41 the miraculous medal novena), when we participate in liturgical prayer we are praying

⁴⁹ AA 10

⁵⁰ DC 303

⁵¹ DC 302

⁵² GILH 9

1 with the voice of the Church herself. Therefore, the liturgy connects us to the Church and
2 the broader Catholic community in an especially profound way.

3
4 There is a Latin maxim: “*lex orandi, lex credendi*,” which can be roughly translated as: “What
5 we pray is what we believe.” And so liturgical prayer, which is primarily ordered to the
6 praise and worship of God, is at the same time an opportunity for the faithful to be
7 catechized. That is, the liturgy itself can instruct us in the truths of our faith; and
8 sacramental liturgies in particular are an occasion for a direct encounter with Christ, most
9 especially in the Eucharist.

10
11 As the *Directory* describes:

12
13 “The liturgy is one of the essential and indispensable sources of the Church’s catechesis, not
14 only because catechesis is able to draw its contents, vocabulary, actions, and words of faith
15 from the liturgy, but above all because the two belong to one another in the very act of
16 believing. Although each has its own specificity, the liturgy and catechesis, understood in
17 the light of the Church’s tradition, are not to be juxtaposed but rather to be seen in the
18 context of the Christian and ecclesial life as both being oriented toward bringing to life the
19 experience of God’s love.”⁵³

20
21 **Key points:**

22
23 → Catechesis is always ecclesial—that is, its necessarily context is from within the
24 community that is the Church.

25
26 → We are called to be in communion with the both universal Church (the Catholic Church
27 throughout the world united under the Holy Father in Rome) and the particular Church
28 (our local diocese).

29
30 → The parish is like “a cell” of the diocese, and is the usual place where most of the faithful
31 interact with the broader Church.

32
33 → The parish is meant to be a community of disciples eager to proclaim the message of the
34 Gospel, and is therefore a privileged place for catechesis.

35
36 → The liturgy is the public prayer of the Church; when we engage in liturgical prayer we
37 pray with the voice of the Church herself.

38
39 → The liturgy is primarily ordered to the praise and worship of God, but it can also be a
40 valuable occasion for catechesis.

41

⁵³ DC 95

1 **I. Basic principles**
2 **5. Role of the family**

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Pope St. John Paul II writes in his post-synodal exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*: “Christian marriage and the Christian family build up the Church: for in the family the human person is not only brought into being and progressively introduced by means of education into the human community, but by means of the rebirth of baptism and education in the faith the child is also introduced into God’s family, which is the Church.”⁵⁴

10 **A. The role of marriage**

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16

With his miracle at the wedding at Cana, Christ raised marriage—which until that point had been a fundamentally good but still merely human and natural institution—to the supernatural dignity of a sacrament among the baptized. The Church values marriage as a sign to the world of God’s love for his people and Christ’s love for his Church.

17 *As Familiaris Consortio* goes on to tell us: “The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman,”⁵⁵ and “The communion between God and His people finds its definitive fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom who loves and gives Himself as the Savior of humanity, uniting it to Himself as His body.”⁵⁶ Given this, the Church sees marriage as a priority in the realm of catechesis.

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23
24

The *Directory for Catechesis* acknowledges that “some moments [in a person’s life] are decisive passages in which people more readily allow themselves to be touched by God’s grace and become open to making a journey of faith,”⁵⁷ and notes that many of these moments are directly tied to marriage.

25 For instance, such privileged moments for catechesis include:

26
27
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37

- The catechesis of young people looking forward towards eventual marriage;
- Adults who are actively preparing for marriage;
- The time immediately after marriage.

38 **B. Families with children**

39
40
41

John Paul II further states: “When they become parents, spouses receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to become for the children the visible

⁵⁴ *Familiaris Consortio*, 15
⁵⁵ FC 12
⁵⁶ FC 13
⁵⁷ DC 232

1 sign of the very love of God, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.' (cf.
2 Ephesians 3:15)"

3

4 A primary "good" or fundamental aspect of marriage is traditionally called the "*bonum*
5 *prolis*." This short Latin term encompasses all at once several big concepts: openness to
6 new life and (if willed by God⁵⁸) the actual begetting of children; the care and nurturing of
7 one's offspring; and the education of children, including not only their academic and
8 intellectual education, but also their moral and spiritual formation.

9

10 As such, families are recognized by the Church as playing a vital and irreplaceable role in
11 catechesis. In fact, the ritual for infant baptism refers to parents as the "first witnesses" of
12 the Christian faith for their young children.⁵⁹

13

14 The *Directory*, quoting from the earlier *General Directory for Catechesis*, tells us that the
15 family:

16

17 "...has an unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound
18 human values. On this human base, Christian initiation is more profound: the awakening of
19 the sense of God; the first steps in prayer; education of the moral conscience; formation in
20 the Christian sense of human love, understood as a reflection of the love of God the Father,
21 the Creator. It is, indeed, a Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more
22 occasional than systematic, more on-going and daily than structured into periods."⁶⁰

23

24 And quoting from *Amoris Laetitia*:

25

26 "Believing parents, with their daily example of life, have the most effective capacity to
27 transmit the beauty of the Christian faith to their children. "Enabling families to take up
28 their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for 'an effort at evangelization and
29 catechesis inside the family."¹⁸ The greatest challenge in this situation is for couples,
30 mothers and fathers, active participants in catechesis, to overcome the mentality of
31 delegation that is so common, according to which the faith is set aside for specialists in
32 religious education. This mentality is, at times, fostered by communities that struggle to
33 organize family centered catechesis which starts from the families themselves. "The Church
34 is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in
35 the fulfillment of their educational mission" to become above all the first catechists of their
36 own children."⁶¹

37

38 Catechists, while fulfilling their mission in catechizing young people, should be mindful of
39 parents' role as the primary educators of their children. Whenever possible, catechists and

⁵⁸ JPII notes: "It must not be forgotten however that, even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services to the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children." FC 14

⁵⁹ Cite

⁶⁰ DC 227

⁶¹ DC 124

1 catechetical programs should strive to work with parents, empowering them to catechize
2 their children at home so as to both provide a foundation of faith as well as to reinforce the
3 formation imparted by whatever catechetical programs their children attend.

4
5 This empowerment will likely involve directly catechizing the parents themselves. This is
6 reflected in paragraph 232 of the Directory, which notes that the above-mentioned
7 privileged times for catechesis for married couples includes “catechesis of parents who are
8 asking to have their children Baptized” and “catechesis of parents whose children are
9 making the journey of Christian initiation.”

10 11 **C. Families and the kerygma**

12
13 Catechists should always recall the role of the family unit itself in proclaiming the Gospel,
14 and should further seek to educate and remind families of this particular aspect of their
15 collective family vocation.

16
17 As the Directory states:

18
19 *The family proclaims the Gospel.* As a domestic church founded on the sacrament of
20 marriage that also has a missionary dimension, the Christian family takes part in the
21 Church’s mission of evangelization and is therefore an agent of catechesis. [...] In addition
22 to its natural service of child-rearing, the family is therefore called to contribute to building
23 up the Christian community and to bear witness to the Gospel in society.⁶²

24
25 A Christian family is a witness to the world, because it shows the possibility of
26 disinterested unconditional love, reflecting God’s love for His family. The love of the
27 members of a family for each other reflects the inner life of the Trinity. A family’s joyful
28 welcoming of new members communicates the goodness of new life. And a family’s care for
29 its ill, suffering, or elderly members is a powerful testimony to the worth and dignity of
30 every human being.

31
32 Families do not need to do anything extraordinary or unusual to fulfill this evangelizing
33 mission; it finds its expression in the ordinary duties of daily life when these are informed
34 by a Christian spirituality. “The family is a proclamation of faith in that it is the natural
35 place in which faith can be lived in a simple and spontaneous manner.”⁶³

36 37 **D. Catechesis across generations**

38
39 The Directory reflects on the crucial role that grandparents may play in the catechesis of
40 their families. Paragraph 268 of the Directory observes that “the elderly are natural
41 catechists,” and as paragraph 126 tells us:

62 DC 31

63 DC 227

1 “In addition to the parents, it is the *grandparents*, above all in certain cultures, who carry
2 out a special role in the transmission of the faith to the very young.²² Scripture as well
3 presents the faith of grandparents as a witness for their grandchildren (cf. 2 Tm 1:5). ‘The
4 Church has always paid special attention to grandparents, recognizing them as a great
5 treasure from both the human and social, as well as religious and spiritual viewpoints.’ In
6 the face of family crisis, grandparents, who are often more deeply rooted in the Christian
7 faith and have a past rich with experience, become important points of reference. Often, in
8 fact, many people owe their initiation into the Christian life precisely to their grandparents.
9 The contribution of grandparents turns out to be important in catechesis on account of
10 both the greater amount of time they are able to dedicate and their capacity to encourage
11 younger generations with their characteristic affection. The prayer of petition and song of
12 praise from grandparents sustains the community in the work and struggles of life.”
13

14 **E. Troubled families**

15
16 The Directory observes that: “The precariousness and unpredictability of the social and
17 cultural processes underway have changed, among other things, even the notion and reality
18 of the family.”⁶⁴
19

20 Sadly, in our current times many of the families we encounter in our ministry will have
21 been wounded by divorce, or will involve parents who were never married; or parents who
22 are in an irregular marriage situation⁶⁵ and may feel alienated from the Church as a result.
23 Some families may also be struggling with issues related to homosexuality or gender
24 identity. And of course, in every age there have been families facing challenges related to
25 loss, serious physical or mental illness, or other factors which gravely disturb a family’s
26 home life.
27

28 While we are called to promote healthy family life, we must also take special care to
29 accompany those in troubled family situations with sensitivity, tact, and special pastoral
30 concern. As the Directory tells us: “It is important that every Christian community take a
31 realistic view of the heterogeneous [i.e., irregular or troubled] family realities, with their
32 ups and downs, for the sake of accompanying them in an adequate way and discerning the
33 complexity of the situations, without giving in to forms of idealism and pessimism.”⁶⁶ We
34 must avoid the twin temptations to expect all families to be already perfect on the one
35 hand, or on the other, to lower our expectations inappropriately in such a way that we view
36 virtue and embracing God’s plan for marriage as impossible for most people.
37

38 Children in fractured or difficult family situations should be reminded of God’s love for
39 them and their status as a beloved member of God’s family.
40

⁶⁴ DC 233

⁶⁵ Explain this

⁶⁶ DC 234

1 Adults in irregular situations should be accompanied, ideally either towards a resolution of
2 their situation or else towards participating in the life of the Church to the fullest extent
3 that their circumstances allow:
4

5 “Accompanying in the faith and introducing into community life the situations referred to
6 as *irregular* therefore “entails taking seriously each person and God’s plan for his or her
7 life” with a style of togetherness, listening and understanding. In addition to personal
8 spiritual accompaniment, catechists should find ways and means to foster the participation
9 of these brothers in catechesis as well, in specific groups made up of persons who share the
10 same conjugal or family experience or in other pre-existing groups of families or adults. In
11 this way it is possible to avoid forms of solitude or discrimination and to reawaken the
12 desire to accept and respond to the love of God.”⁶⁷
13

14 **F. Catechesis for persons with disabilities**

15
16 Those members of our communities who are living with disabilities are children of God
17 who also need and are entitled to appropriate catechesis. As we read in the Directory:
18

19 “The theme of disability is of great importance for evangelization and Christian formation.
20 Communities are called not only to take care of the most fragile, but to recognize the
21 presence of Jesus who in a special way manifests himself in them.”⁶⁸
22

23 Furthermore, the *Directory* tells us that “Persons with disabilities are called to the fullness
24 of sacramental life, even in the presence of severe disorders.”⁶⁹
25

26 The term “disability” covers a wide range of impediments or disorders, so catechesis will
27 need to be adapted to the strengths, limitations, and capacities of each individual person.
28

29 **Key points:**

30
31 → The family should have a significant place in our catechetical efforts.
32

33 → Marriage is a sign of God’s love for His Church, and so promoting healthy Christian
34 marriages should be a priority for catechesis.
35

36 → Families are both in need of catechesis as well as a means of catechesis; families need to
37 be catechized, but the members of a family should also catechize each other within the
38 setting of their home.
39

40 → Parents are the primary educators of their children; catechists should respect this and
41 also help parents fulfill this role.
42

⁶⁷ DC 235

⁶⁸ DC 269

⁶⁹ DC 272

- 1 → The family is called to be an evangelizing witness, allowing the mutual love of its
2 members to show forth God’s love to the world.
3
4 → Grandparents can play a special role in the catechesis of the family.
5
6 → Families in challenging or irregular situations should be accompanied with sensitivity
7 and pastoral concern.
8
9 → Those living with disabilities are valued members of our community, and are entitled to
10 appropriate catechesis. Catechesis should be adapted to the capacities of each individual.
11

DRAFT

1 **II. Sacramental preparation for Catholics**

2 **1. In general**

3
4 The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells that, in the Church: “Christ now acts through the
5 sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs
6 (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power
7 of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.”⁷⁰

8 9 **A. What are the sacraments?**

10 The *Catechism* goes on to define sacraments as:

11
12
13 “...efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which
14 divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated
15 signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who
16 receive them with the required dispositions.”⁷¹

17
18 Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The
19 sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By
20 the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the
21 grace that they signify—that is, the graces that are symbolized through the tangible
22 elements of the sacraments actually become real. For example, the symbolic washing with
23 the waters of baptism becomes a real and profound cleansing from sin.

24 25 **B. Christian initiation for “cradle Catholics”**

26
27 In canon law, a person is considered Catholic if they were baptized Catholic or were
28 received into the Catholic Church at any point in their life.⁷² The general rule is “once a
29 Catholic, always a Catholic.” Of course we know that a Catholic may fall away from the faith,
30 or begin to practice a different religion, or sadly might even choose to renounce the faith.
31 But none of this changes the fact of that person’s Catholic baptism.

32
33 Customarily, children born to Latin (a.k.a. “Roman”) Catholic parents are baptized as
34 infants; then make their first confession and first Holy Communion at seven or eight years
35 old, to coincide with their reaching the canonical “age of reason”; then receive the
36 sacrament of Confirmation at some later point in early adolescence. In this sequence, it is
37 presumed that the child is involved in regular a parish and/or school faith formation
38 program, and that the faith is being taught and actively lived at home.

39
40 Yet it can happen that children are not prepared for the sacraments of initiation “in
41 sequence.” Sometimes this is due to the parents being unready to pass on the faith; other
42 times this might be due to challenging life circumstances.

⁷⁰ CCC 1084

⁷¹ CCC 1131

⁷² Citation needed

1
2 A potential lack of catechesis should be taken into account when determining how to
3 prepare an “out of sequence” Catholic child or adult for sacraments they have not yet
4 received. For example, a teenager who has participated in regular faith formation but who
5 still needs to be confirmed due to a family relocation is not in the same situation as a
6 Catholic teenager who never received any faith formation and who has yet to receive first
7 Holy Communion; it would be inappropriate and unhelpful to treat these two teenagers as
8 though their situation was the same.

9
10 However, baptized Catholics are not catechumens, and so strictly speaking they are not
11 eligible to participate in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Uncatechized Catholics
12 need sacramental formation that is tailored to their specific spiritual needs as baptized
13 Catholics.

14 **C. Phases of preparation**

15
16
17 We speak of sacramental preparation taking place in three distinct but overlapping phases:
18

19 • **Remote preparation** is a young person’s Catholic upbringing. That is, remote
20 preparation is essentially the “background” Catholicism a child or adult was raised in or
21 grew up with.

22
23 Remote formation for the sacraments can include a child witnessing the faith and
24 spirituality of his or her parents or older siblings in the home; exposure to Catholic
25 sacraments and other signs and symbols; and participation in the sacred liturgy as a
26 normal part of the family routine.

27
28 • **Proximate preparation** is the ordinary regular formal faith formation children receive
29 during their school-aged years, often in the form of parish religious education classes or
30 other structured catechesis. Proximate preparation prepares children for the sacraments in
31 a more general way, but systematically teaching them the truths of our faith and
32 introducing them to the lived reality of a Christian way of life.

33
34 • **Immediate preparation** takes place in the months or weeks leading up to the reception
35 of a sacrament. Immediate preparation should take place in the context of the parish,
36 except for specific exceptions as authorized by the bishop.⁷³ and it includes catechesis on
37 the specific sacrament in question, spiritual preparation for its reception, and rehearsals or
38 practical information on how to receive the sacrament.

39
40 **Note:** immediate preparation should take place in addition to (that is, “on top of”) a child or
41 young person’s ongoing proximate preparation in their religious education program and
42 the remote preparation they receive at home in their family life.

⁷³ For example, Bishop Caggiano authorized [School] to attend to the immediate sacramental preparation of their students.

1 Sacramental preparation tends to occur at certain customary ages, in and of itself
2 immediate sacramental preparation is not akin to a grade level and is not merely a part of
3 an academic curriculum. Rather, immediate sacramental preparation is its own occasion of
4 faith formation, based primarily on the child’s personal readiness for the sacrament.
5

6 **D. Sacramental formation: a personal journey**

7

8 While we do have customary timelines and traditional ages for sacramental formation, it is
9 important not to base our understanding of sacramental preparation on an academic
10 model. This is first of all because, although formation should involve the intellect, it cannot
11 stop there. That is, sacramental formation must embrace the whole person, forming their
12 mind, heart, and will.
13

14 But we must also keep in mind that reception of the sacraments are part of a personal
15 journey, a journey that even children walk with the Lord.
16

17 As a corollary to this, we should regard Catholic formation in general, and sacramental
18 preparation in particular, not as a “checklist,” or a series of “hoops to jump through.” We
19 likewise should not think of formation as a burden to be borne by the one being catechized,
20 or as an onerous obligation that the Church demands on the part of those who would seek
21 the sacraments.
22

23 Rather, Catholic formation is a gift and a birthright. The faithful and those aspiring to enter
24 the are owed Catholic formation; and we, the catechetical leaders of the Diocese, have a
25 responsibility to provide this for them. Solid and comprehensive formation programs are a
26 positive benefit that we give the faithful entrusted to our ministry.
27

28 **Key points:**

29

30 → The sacraments are “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the
31 Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.” (CCC 1131)
32

33 → Canonically, anyone who was ever baptized Catholic at any point in their life is
34 considered technically “Catholic.”
35

36 → Although a potential lack of catechesis should be taken into account when preparing “out
37 of sequence” Catholic children or “fallen away” Catholic adults for the sacraments, baptized
38 Catholics are not catechumens and are not eligible for RCIA.
39

40 → A Catholic child’s sacramental preparation takes place in three distinct but overlapping
41 phases: remote preparation (a child’s Catholic home and family life), proximate
42 preparation (regular age-appropriate faith formation), and immediate preparation (a
43 shorter-term formation program specific to the sacrament to be received).
44

- 1 → Reception of the sacraments should ultimately be determined by a child’s or adult’s
- 2 personal readiness for the sacrament, and not merely based on age, grade level, or
- 3 academic achievement.
- 4
- 5 → Catholic formation should be understood as a gift and a benefit to the one being formed,
- 6 as opposed to a bureaucratic burden on the faithful.
- 7

DRAFT

1 **II. Sacramental preparation for Catholics**
2 **2. Baptism**

3
4
5 We know from the Gospels that Jesus called even young children to follow him. As we read
6 in Luke’s Gospel:

7
8 People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them, and when the disciples
9 saw this, they rebuked them. Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, “Let
10 the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such
11 as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will
12 not enter it.” (Luke 18:15-17)

13
14 Infant baptism is a venerable tradition in the Catholic Church, with a Scriptural basis in the
15 various passages in the Acts of the Apostles which mention entire households—which
16 presumably included young children—receiving baptism.⁷⁴

17
18 **A. Who is an “infant”?**

19
20 In canon law, an “infant” is a young child who has not yet attained “the age of reason”; that
21 is, they are not considered to have reached the level of mental development where they are
22 able to make reasoned choices and understand the consequences of their actions.
23 Therefore, parents or guardians are responsible for making positive choices for them on
24 their behalf.

25
26 While the actual point at which a child *de facto* develops the use of reason will vary
27 somewhat for each individual child, canon 97 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law* identifies the
28 legal age of reason as seven years old. (I.e., a child is considered canonically to have
29 attained the use of reason on his or her seventh birthday.) Therefore, any child under the
30 age of seven is considered a canonical infant.

31
32 Infants may be baptized at the request of their parents, or those who take the place of
33 parents.⁷⁵ Once a child turns seven, however, technically speaking baptism must be his or
34 her own choice (even if a choice made under the guidance of parents⁷⁶); and an unbaptized
35 child should participate in an adapted catechumenate process.⁷⁷

36
37 Canon 852 §2 additionally notes that “one who is incapable of personal responsibility”—
38 such as an adult with an intellectual disability that leaves them with the mental capacity of
39 a young child—“is regarded as an infant even in regard to baptism.”

40

⁷⁴ For example, see Acts

⁷⁵ Citation. “Those who take the place of parents” are generally adoptive parents or another legal equivalent of adoptive parents. Foster parents, or other legal guardians in situations where living parents retain parental rights, do not take the place of parents canonically.

⁷⁶ I think there might be a citation/reference for this in RCIA?

⁷⁷ Citation needed

1 **B. Which infants may be baptized?**
2

3 In a scenario where the infant in question is in danger of death, he or she is to be baptized
4 immediately, “no questions asked.”⁷⁸ If there is concern that a priest or deacon may not
5 arrive in time, a layperson (or even a non-Catholic) can baptize validly and licitly in this
6 case,⁷⁹ as long as he or she: 1. Has the intention to baptize the child into the Catholic
7 Church; 2. Uses the correct formula⁸⁰; 3. Pours water over the head of the child while
8 saying the formula.
9

10 In situations where the infant is not in danger of death, an infant may be baptized if:
11

- 12 1. At least one parent consents to the child being baptized;
 - 13 2. There is at least some hope that the child will be raised Catholic.
- 14

15 Note that this is actually quite a low bar. That is, the Church asks for merely a “founded
16 hope” that the child will be raised in the faith; the Church does not demand a guarantee.
17 And it is one parent’s mere consent that is required, meaning that an infant might be
18 baptized on the initiative of another party. For example, an infant with a grandparent who
19 wanted the child to be raised Catholic and was prepared to take responsibility for the
20 child’s formation could, assuming that at least one parent consented, be baptized at the
21 request of the grandparent.
22

23 The Church’s goal is that all should be redeemed through the saving power of baptism, and
24 so it is important to approach the question of baptism for infants in unusual or difficult
25 family circumstances with the utmost pastoral sensitivity. The Church does not desire that
26 any roadblocks to infant baptism be created on a local level.
27

28 That being said, it is to be hoped that infants will have parents who actively seek baptism
29 for their children and who are prepared to raise the child in a fully Catholic home.
30 Therefore, under ordinary circumstances, parents seeking to baptize their infants should
31 be provided with appropriate sacramental formation.
32

33 **C. Formation for parents**
34

35 Ordinarily, catechesis for infant baptism is directed primarily towards the parents (or
36 those guardians who take the place of parents) of those who are to be baptized. As canon
37 851, 2° of the *Code of Canon Law* tells us:
38

39 The parents of a child who is to be baptized, and those who are to undertake the office of
40 sponsors, [i.e., godparents] are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this sacrament
41 and the obligations attaching to it. The parish priest is to see to it that either he or others
42 duly prepare the parents, by means of pastoral advice and indeed by prayer together; a

⁷⁸ See canon 867 §2

⁷⁹ See canon 861 §2

⁸⁰ Include formula here in the footnote?

1 number of families might be brought together for this purpose and, where possible, each
2 family visited.

3
4 Parents are ordinarily expected to participate in a minimum of **two formation sessions** in
5 preparation for the baptism of their first child.

6
7 The first session should cover the sacrament in general. That is, the nature and importance
8 of baptism in the life of faith, the effects of baptism, and the ritual itself.

9
10 The second session should stress the importance of the parents' call to be "first
11 witnesses"⁸¹ to their children and their role as their children's first teachers of the faith.

12
13 If the parents are blessed with more children, they are encouraged to attend at least **one**
14 "**refresher**" **formation session** in preparation for each subsequent baptism.

15 16 **D. Godparents**

17
18 For infants, a baptismal sponsor is called a godparent. As we read in canon 872: "In the case
19 of an infant baptism, the role is together with the parents to present the child for baptism,
20 and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfil the duties
21 inherent in baptism."

22
23 An infant may have two godparents, one male and one female. However, one godparent is
24 sufficient.⁸² (And note that godparents are not strictly necessary for baptismal validity.)
25 Because the role of a godparent is to assist the parent in raising the child in the Catholic
26 faith, parents cannot serve as the godparents to their own children.⁸³

27
28 As per canon 874 §1, In order to serve as a godparent, the person must have the following
29 qualifications:

- 30
31 • He or she must be a fully-initiated Catholic, meaning that he or she has received the
32 sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist;
- 33
34 • He or she must be a Catholic in good standing; that is, he or she must be living according
35 to the teachings of the Church; [The canon verbatim speaks of "not laboring under any
36 canonical penalty"—basically, the Code is talking about excommunication or interdict
37 here—"whether imposed or declared." Do we want to mention this technical detail, or is
38 that sufficient covered by saying "living according to Church teaching?]
- 39
40 • He or she must be at least sixteen years old [The canon allows for the bishop to specify a
41 different age, and also for pastors to allow for an exception "for a just cause." Do we want a
42 different minimum age? Or to remind pastors that they can make exceptions?]

⁸¹ citation

⁸² CIC can. 873

⁸³ CIC can. 874 §1, 5°

1
2 • He or she must normally be appointed by the child’s parents; failing that, the godparent
3 may be appointed by the pastor or by the priest or deacon celebrating the baptism;
4

5 •He or she must understand and be willing to accept the responsibilities of a godparent.
6

7 Non-Catholics cannot serve as godparents. However, a baptized non-Catholic may stand
8 next to the Catholic godparent and be noted as a Christian witness to the baptism.⁸⁴

9 [Discuss formation for godparents? Must they join the parents in their pre-baptismal
10 formation? Should they be encouraged to do so? Or is there some other means of formation
11 for godparents in the Diocese of Bridgeport? What if the godparents have previously served
12 as godparents before—are they still required/encouraged to do formation?]
13

14 **E. Record keeping**

15
16 See CIC can. 877:
17

18 “§1 The parish priest of the place in which the baptism was conferred must carefully
19 and without delay record in the register of baptism the names of the baptized, the
20 minister, the parents, the sponsors and, if there were such, the witnesses, and the
21 place and date of baptism. He must also enter the date and place of birth.
22

23 §2 In the case of a child of an unmarried mother, the mother’s name is to be entered
24 if her maternity is publicly known or if, either in writing or before two witnesses,
25 she freely asks that this be done. Similarly, the name of the father is to be entered, if
26 his paternity is established either by some public document or by his own
27 declaration in the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses. In all other cases,
28 the name of the baptized person is to be registered, without any indication of the
29 name of the father or of the parents.
30

31 §3 In the case of an adopted child, the names of the adopting parents are to be
32 registered and, at least if this is done in the local civil registration, the names of the
33 natural parents in accordance with §§1 and 2 subject however to the rulings of the
34 Episcopal Conference.”
35

36 **F. Special circumstances**

37
38 [Discuss what to do in sensitive pastoral situations. I’m thinking of cases where, for
39 example, there is a grandparent who wishes the child to be baptized; the parents’ consent
40 but don’t want to be involved; but the grandparents are willing to step up to ensure the
41 child is properly formed in the faith.]
42
43

⁸⁴ See can. 874 §2

1 **Key points**

2
3 → Infant baptism is a venerable tradition in the Catholic Church, which finds its origin in
4 sacred Scripture.

5
6 → Canonically, an “infant” is a child under the age of seven.

7
8 → In danger of death, an infant is to be baptized immediately.

9
10 → Parents make the choice to baptize their infant children; but an unbaptized child age
11 seven or older must choose baptism for his or herself (even if this choice is made under the
12 parents’ guidance.)

13
14 → For an infant not in danger of death to be baptized, the bare minimum requirements are
15 that: 1. At least one parent consent to the baptism; 2. There is a “founded hope” that the
16 child will be raised in the faith.

17
18 → Under usual circumstances, parents should receive formation in preparation for their
19 child’s baptism.

20
21 → In the Diocese of Bridgeport, parents should ordinarily attend two formation sessions
22 prior to the baptism of their first child; and one “refresher” formation session for the
23 baptism of any other children.

24
25 → Godparents must be fully initiated Catholics in good standing who are willing and able to
26 assist the parents in raising their child in the faith.

27
28 → [Some point about special circumstances.]

DRAFT

1 **II. Sacramental preparation for Catholics**

2 **3. First reconciliation**

3
4 **A. Who is ready to make their first confession?**

5
6 Children are ready—that is, at an apt stage of life—to make their first confession when they
7 are capable of knowing right from wrong. Generally, this is identified as the canonical age
8 of reason, that is, age seven.

9
10 In the Diocese of Bridgeport, first Reconciliation is ordinarily celebrated at the age the
11 correlates with the second grade.

12
13 **B. Formation for children**

14
15 Ordinarily, children are prepared for their first reconciliation in at least six sessions [or
16 literal “hours”?] of immediate preparation. These sessions of immediate preparation are
17 provided in addition to the children’s regular faith formation classes either at a Catholic
18 school or a parish program.

19
20 Unless special provision has been made otherwise by the Bishop, in the Diocese of
21 Bridgeport immediate preparation for sacraments is to take place in a parish context.
22 [Discuss the specific exceptions?]

23
24 [Content of children’s immediate preparation sessions for first reconciliation?]

25
26 **C. Formation for parents**

27 A child’s first reconciliation is also an occasion to provide parents with effective catechesis
28 that will assist them in their role as their children’s primary teachers of the faith.

29 Ordinarily, parents should attend one catechetical workshop in preparation for their child’s
30 first reconciliation. [At least one? Are more workshops encouraged? Do parishes decide
31 how many workshops are appropriate for their parents? If so, what happens if one parish
32 decides to have one workshop and a neighboring parish requires more, etc.?)

33 This workshop should include [among other things?]:

- 34 • A basic catechetical explanation of the sacrament;
35 • The importance of Sunday Mass attendance;
36 • [Anything else?].
37

38 **D. Reconciliation and privacy**

39 Because reconciliation is a private sacrament, with the seal of the confessional applying to
40 even the youngest of penitents, first reconciliations are never recorded. It is likewise
41 inappropriate to, for example, print the names of the first-time patients in the parish
42 bulletin, or to issue certificates commemorating the first reconciliation.

43
44 [Do we need a discussion on confessional set-ups vis-à-vis Safe Environment concerns? E.g.,
45 I’ve heard of some parishes setting up a makeshift confessional in the sanctuary or some

1 other place that is in full view of parents but still out of earshot. Does the Diocese have any
2 thoughts or policy on this?]

3

4 **E. Special circumstances**

5

6 [How do you handle first reconciliation for “out of sequence” children?]

7

8 [Should there be a word on first reconciliation for disabled children?]

9

10 [Should there be a word on how to handle first reconciliation in other pastorally sensitive
11 circumstances, such as divorced and remarried parents?]

12

DRAFT

1 **II. Sacramental preparation for Catholics**
2 **5. Confirmation**
3
4

5 The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells notes that “In the Eastern rites the Christian
6 initiation of infants ... begins with Baptism followed immediately by Confirmation and the
7 Eucharist, while in the Roman rite it is followed by years of catechesis before being
8 completed later by Confirmation and the Eucharist, the summit of their Christian
9 initiation.” (CCC 1233) and “in the Roman liturgy the post-baptismal anointing announces a
10 second anointing with sacred chrism to be conferred later by the bishop-Confirmation,
11 which will as it were ‘confirm’ and complete the baptismal anointing” (CCC 1242)
12

13 Canon 879 of the *Code of Canon Law* provides us with a brief theology of the sacrament:
14 “The sacrament of confirmation confers a character. By it the baptized continue their path
15 of Christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more
16 closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and
17 deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith.”
18

19 **A. Who can receive Confirmation?**
20

21 **Canon 889.** §1 Every baptized person who is not confirmed, and only such a person, is
22 capable of receiving confirmation.
23

24 [Is there a customary age for Confirmation in the Diocese of Bridgeport?]
25

26 **B. Formation for Confirmation**
27

28 Canon 889 §2 Apart from the danger of death, to receive confirmation lawfully a person
29 who has the use of reason must be suitably instructed, properly disposed and able to renew
30 the baptismal promises.
31

32 [How many “hours” of immediate preparation? Are these literal hour or simply class
33 sessions?]
34

35 [What content/concepts are to be covered in the mandatory immediate Confirmation
36 preparation?]
37

38 [Is a pre-Confirmation retreat required? Just strongly encouraged? Optional? What
39 qualifies as a pre-Confirmation retreat?]
40

41 **C. Sponsors**
42

43 **Canon 892.** As far as possible the person to be confirmed is to have a sponsor. The
44 sponsor’s function is to take care that the person confirmed behaves as a true witness of
45 Christ and faithfully fulfils the duties inherent in this sacrament.
46

1 Sponsors must meet all the requirement of a baptismal sponsor, i.e. a godparent.⁸⁵

2

3

4 [Explain how a person is verified as an appropriate sponsor? E.g., is there a standard
5 diocesan form? Are there options besides a form from the diocese?]

6

7 [Are Confirmation sponsors required to do formation? Are they strongly encouraged? Or is
8 it optional on a parish-by-parish basis? Do parishes do the sponsor formation? Is this
9 done/can this be done on a diocesan level?]

10

11 It is desirable, but not required, that a baptismal godparent also serve as the child's
12 Confirmation sponsor.⁸⁶

13

14 **D. Record-keeping**

15

16 **Canon 895.** The names of those confirmed, the minister, the parents, the sponsors and the
17 place and date of the confirmation are to be recorded in the confirmation register of the
18 diocesan curia or, wherever this has been prescribed by the Episcopal
19 Conference or by the diocesan Bishop, in the register to be kept in the parochial archive.
20 The parish priest must notify the parish priest of the place of the baptism that the
21 confirmation was conferred, so that it be recorded in the baptismal register, in accordance
22 with [can. 535](#) §2.

23

24 [Include diocesan protocol for recording Confirmations when several parishes share one
25 celebration?]

26

27 **E. Special circumstances**

28

29 [Explain what to do with an “out of sequence” child?]

30

31 [Include guidance for disabled children?]

32

33 [Include a note on pastoral sensitivity in other difficult situations?]

34

⁸⁵ CIC can. 893 §1

⁸⁶ CIC can. 893 §2

- 1 **ADDENDUM**
- 2 **WHAT FOLLOWS ARE SAMPLE PROCESSES BASED ON THE CATECHUMENAL MODEL.**

DRAFT

DRAFT

1 Sample Process for Infant Baptism Formation

2
3 Applying the catechumenate model to prepare parents for the baptism of their infant involves a
4 journey through different stages of spiritual and community formation. Below is a structured
5 process adapting the catechumenate stages:
6

7 1. Pre-Catechumenate: Period of Inquiry and Welcome

- 8 • **Objective:** Help parents understand the significance of Baptism and foster a sense of
9 belonging within the Church community.
- 10 • **Activities:**
 - 11 ○ Welcoming sessions that introduce parents to the sacrament of Baptism.
 - 12 ○ Community-building activities that connect families within the parish.

13 2. Catechumenate: Period of Deepening Understanding and Commitment

- 14 • **Objective:** Deepen parents' understanding of the responsibilities and commitment involved
15 in baptizing their child.
- 16 • **Activities:**
 - 17 ○ Structured catechesis sessions explaining the symbols, rites, and theology of
18 Baptism.
 - 19 ○ Discussions or reflections on the role of parents as the "first teachers of the faith."
20

21 3. Purification and Enlightenment: Period of Intense Preparation and Reflection

- 22 • **Objective:** Prepare parents spiritually as they approach the baptism of their child.
- 23 • **Activities:**
 - 24 ○ Retreat or reflection sessions for parents to deepen their own spiritual journey.
 - 25 ○ Participation in Lenten or Advent practices as a way to connect with the larger
26 Church's penitential practices.
27

28 4. Celebration of the Sacrament: Baptism

- 29 • **Objective:** Celebrate the joyous sacrament where their child is initiated into the Church.
- 30 • **Activities:**
 - 31 ○ A warm and welcoming Baptism ceremony that underscores the community's
32 support.
 - 33 ○ Celebration with the parish community, emphasizing the communal aspect of the
34 sacrament.
35

36 5. Mystagogy: Ongoing Formation and Community Participation

- 37 • **Objective:** Nurture ongoing faith formation in the family and foster active participation in
38 the Church.
- 39 • **Activities:**
 - 40 ○ Post-baptism gatherings to foster community and sharing of experiences.
 - 41 ○ Encouragement and guidance for ongoing participation in parish life and catechesis.
42

1 **Guiding Principles:**

- 2 • **Community Involvement:** Incorporate activities that integrate the families into the
- 3 broader parish community.
- 4 • **Pastoral Support:** Provide pastoral care and support to families, recognizing their unique
- 5 needs and situations.
- 6 • **Customization:** Adapt the process based on the pastoral needs, cultural contexts, and
- 7 unique situations of each family.
- 8

9 By implementing a process grounded in the catechumenate model, parents are comprehensively
10 prepared and supported as they undertake the significant step of baptizing their child, fostering a
11 lifelong journey of faith within the Church community.

12
13

DRAFT

1 Sample Process for First Reconciliation

2
3 Creating a process for preparing a young person for the sacrament of First Reconciliation
4 (Confession or Penance) using the catechumenate model involves guiding them through different
5 stages of spiritual growth, learning, and participation in the life of the Church. Here's a detailed
6 process:

8 1. Pre-Catechumenate: Period of Inquiry and Introduction

- 9 • **Objective:** To arouse curiosity and foster an environment where young people feel
10 comfortable asking questions.
- 11 • **Activities:**
 - 12 ○ Engaging stories and activities that introduce the concept of forgiveness.
 - 13 ○ Discussions on making good choices, consequences, and the concept of sin in simple
14 terms.

15 2. Catechumenate: Period of Formation

- 16 • **Objective:** Deepening the understanding of God's mercy, forgiveness, and the importance of
17 reconciliation.
- 18 • **Activities:**
 - 19 ○ Bible stories focusing on God's love and forgiveness (e.g., Prodigal Son).
 - 20 ○ Age-appropriate catechesis on sin, forgiveness, and the sacrament of reconciliation.

21 3. Purification and Enlightenment: Period of Reflection

- 22 • **Objective:** A time for self-examination, sorrow for sins, and preparation to receive the
23 sacrament.
- 24 • **Activities:**
 - 25 ○ Activities and discussions on examining one's conscience.
 - 26 ○ Participation in Lenten practices (if it coincides with Lent) and other parish penance
27 services.

28 4. Celebration of the Sacrament: First Reconciliation

- 29 • **Objective:** To welcome the young person to the healing sacrament of reconciliation.
- 30 • **Activities:**
 - 31 ○ Guided walk-throughs of what to expect during reconciliation.
 - 32 ○ A welcoming and reassuring environment for children to receive the sacrament.

33 5. Mystagogy: Ongoing Growth in Understanding and Practice

- 34 • **Objective:** To cultivate an ongoing practice of reconciliation and moral development.
- 35 • **Activities:**
 - 36 ○ Follow-up sessions to reflect on the experience of the sacrament.
 - 37 ○ Encouragement and opportunities for regular participation in the sacrament.

1 **Guiding Principles:**

- 2 • **Parental Involvement:** Encourage and guide parents/guardians in their role as the
- 3 primary educators in their child’s faith formation.
- 4 • **Community Support:** Foster a supportive parish community that prays for and engages
- 5 with the young people.
- 6 • **Adaptability:** Ensure that the process is adaptable to cater to the diverse needs and
- 7 readiness of the young people.
- 8 • **Pastoral Sensitivity:** Ensure that the process is conducted with a pastoral sensitivity,
- 9 recognizing the uniqueness of each child’s journey.

10
11 By implementing this process, the young person is gently and comprehensively guided through the

12 essential stages, making their first experience of the sacrament of reconciliation meaningful and

13 spiritually enriching.

14

15

1 Sample Process for Preparing Young People for First Holy Communion

2
3 The catechumenate model, inspired by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), can be
4 adapted to prepare children for their First Holy Communion. This model is centered on stages of
5 gradual formation and includes periods of learning, liturgical rites, and community involvement.
6 Here is a suggested process:
7

8 1. Precatechumenate: Inquiry and Welcome

- 9 • **Objective:** Introduce the child to Jesus and His love, and the basic teachings of the Church.
- 10 • **Activities:**
 - 11 ○ Storytelling sessions about Jesus.
 - 12 ○ Basic prayers and participation in community worship.
- 13 • **Rites/Celebrations:** Welcoming ceremony in the presence of the community.

14 2. Catechumenate: Nurturing the Seed of Faith

- 15 • **Objective:** Deeper catechesis on sacraments, particularly the Eucharist.
- 16 • **Activities:**
 - 17 ○ Structured catechetical sessions using child-friendly materials.
 - 18 ○ Participation in the Liturgy of the Word for Children.
- 19 • **Rites/Celebrations:** Rite of Enrollment or similar rites, indicating the child's readiness to
20 deepen their faith.

21 3. Purification and Enlightenment: Period of Intense Preparation

- 22 • **Objective:** Preparation during Lent or another liturgical season, focusing on conversion and
23 repentance.
- 24 • **Activities:**
 - 25 ○ Teaching on the Mass and the importance of the Eucharist.
 - 26 ○ Experiencing parts of the liturgy, such as the procession, offering, and sign of peace.
- 27 • **Rites/Celebrations:** Participation in age-appropriate penitential services or other
28 preparatory rites.

29 4. Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

- 30 • **Objective:** Reception of the First Holy Communion.
- 31 • **Activities:**
 - 32 ○ Rehearsals for the celebration.
 - 33 ○ Immediate preparation activities or retreats.
- 34 • **Rites/Celebrations:** The celebration of First Holy Communion.

35 5. Mystagogy: Deepening the Mystery

- 36 • **Objective:** Post-sacramental catechesis to deepen the understanding and living of the
37 mysteries celebrated.
- 38 • **Activities:**
 - 39 ○ Sessions that help in understanding their experiences during the First Holy
40 Communion.
 - 41 ○ Encouraging active participation in Sunday Mass and other community activities.
- 42 • **Rites/Celebrations:** Thanksgiving celebrations and continual involvement in the life of the
43 community.
44

1 **Guiding Principles:**

- 2 • **Community Involvement:** Ensure active participation of the community in the preparation
3 process, and involve families as primary educators.
4 • **Liturgy and Worship:** Incorporate liturgical elements that resonate with the children’s
5 experiences, encouraging participation and engagement.
6 • **Adaptability:** Adapt the process, respecting the individual pace of each child, and be
7 sensitive to their needs and backgrounds.
8

9 **Conclusion**

10 In applying the catechumenate model, emphasis should be on a journey of faith, enriched by
11 community, liturgy, and a deepening understanding and relationship with Jesus Christ in the
12 context of the Eucharist. The child is gradually led through stages that prepare them not just for the
13 reception of the sacrament, but for a lifelong journey of discipleship.
14
15

DRAFT

1 **Sample Process for Confirmation**

2
3 Here is a structured process based on the catechumenal model for preparing a young person for the
4 Sacrament of Confirmation:

5
6 **Phase 1: Pre-Catechumenate (Inquiry and Evangelization)**

- 7 • **Objective:** Introduction to the sacrament and fostering a sense of curiosity and initial
8 conversion.

9 **Activities:**

- 10 ○ Welcome and orientation sessions.
11 ○ Sharing of personal faith journeys by older confirmands or adults.
12 ○ Involvement in community prayers and some basic liturgical celebrations.

13
14 **Phase 2: Catechumenate (Formation and Catechesis)**

- 15 • **Objective:** Deepening the understanding of faith and the sacrament, cultivating a sense of
16 belonging to the Church.

17 **Activities:**

- 18 ○ Regular catechetical sessions focusing on Scripture, Tradition, and the meaning of
19 Confirmation.
20 ○ Participation in the liturgical life of the community, including attending Mass and
21 other celebrations.
22 ○ Assigning sponsors or mentors to accompany the candidates.

23
24 **Phase 3: Purification and Enlightenment (Spiritual Preparation)**

- 25 • **Objective:** A time of reflection, repentance, and deepening spiritual awareness in
26 preparation for receiving the sacrament.

27 **Activities:**

- 28 ○ Retreats focused on personal reflection and spiritual deepening.
29 ○ Participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
30 ○ Engaging in acts of charity and service.

31
32 **Phase 4: Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation**

- 33 • **Objective:** Reception of the sacrament with the support of the community.

34 **Activities:**

- 35 ○ Proper preparation and rehearsal for the celebration.
36 ○ A meaningful celebration involving the family, sponsors, and the wider community.

37
38 **Phase 5: Mystagogy (Post-Sacramental Catechesis)**

- 39 • **Objective:** Reflection on the sacramental experience and integration into the fuller life and
40 mission of the Church.

41 **Activities:**

- 42 ○ Sharing sessions for the newly confirmed to express their experiences and insights.
43 ○ Encouragement towards active participation in the community, considering roles
44 like lector, catechist, or involvement in social justice projects.
45 ○ Ongoing formation opportunities to continue growing in faith.

- 1 **Suggested Timeline:**
2 • **Phase 1:** 1-2 months
3 • **Phase 2:** 3-6 months
4 • **Phase 3:** 1-2 months (commonly during Lent if Confirmation is celebrated at Easter)
5 • **Phase 4:** Confirmation day
6 • **Phase 5:** Ongoing, but with specific activities for at least 1-2 months post-Confirmation
7

8 **Conclusion:**
9 This process allows for a comprehensive journey of faith for Confirmation candidates, combining
10 catechesis, spiritual formation, and active participation in the Church's life. It's adaptable based on
11 the specific needs and contexts of each parish or community.
12
13

1 Catechetical Documents

2
3 Several key documents govern catechesis in the Catholic Church, providing guidelines, theological
4 foundations, and practical directions for catechetical work. These documents have been
5 promulgated by various offices of the Church, including popes and congregations, reflecting the
6 evolving understanding and practice of catechesis. Here are some of the major documents:
7

8 **1. Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)**

- 9 • An authoritative exposition of the essential and fundamental content of Catholic doctrine in
10 terms of faith and morals.

11 **2. General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)**

- 12 • Provides practical norms and principles for the work of catechesis, adapting universal
13 guidelines to various local contexts.

14 **3. Apostolic Exhortations:**

- 15 • **Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World) by Pope Paul VI**
 - 16 ○ Focuses on evangelization, highlighting its centrality in the Church's mission.
- 17 • **Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time) by Pope John Paul II**
 - 18 ○ A post-synodal apostolic exhortation focusing on how to hand on the faith.

19 **4. The General Catechetical Directory (GCD)**

- 20 • A predecessor to the GDC, providing guiding principles for catechesis.

21 **5. Directory for Catechesis**

- 22 • A recent document that updates and replaces the GDC, providing new guidelines and
23 directions for catechesis in the current pastoral context.

24 **6. Christus Vivit (Christ is Alive) by Pope Francis**

- 25 • An apostolic exhortation focusing on young people, including aspects related to youth
26 catechesis and pastoral care.

27 **7. Verbum Domini (The Word of the Lord) by Pope Benedict XVI**

- 28 • Focuses on the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church, including implications for
29 catechesis.

30 **8. Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)**

- 31 • A Vatican II document focusing on divine revelation and the place of Scripture in the life of
32 the Church.

33 **9. Redemptoris Missio (The Mission of the Redeemer) by Pope John Paul II**

- 34 • An encyclical focusing on the missionary activity of the Church, with implications for
35 catechesis.

36 **10. Ad Gentes (Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity)**

- 37 • A Vatican II decree that speaks about the missionary activity, giving guidelines that also
38 apply to catechesis.

39 **Conclusion:**

40
41 These documents collectively contribute to a rich catechetical heritage, offering theological,
42 pastoral, and practical insights for the ministry of catechesis. They guide the catechetical process,
43 ensuring its faithfulness to the Church's tradition, responsiveness to contemporary contexts, and
44 effectiveness in facilitating the transmission of faith.
45

DRAFT

1 **Directory for Catechesis: How We Got Here**

2
3 The *Directory for Catechesis* has a historical development deeply intertwined with the Church's
4 endeavor to evangelize and catechize the faithful effectively in changing cultural, social, and
5 historical contexts.

7 **1. General Catechetical Directory (1971)**

- 8 • **Background:** Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), there was a recognized
9 need to rejuvenate catechetical instruction. Vatican II's document "Christus Dominus"
10 suggested creating a directory for catechesis.
- 11 • **Content:** The General Catechetical Directory was published in 1971, focusing on principles
12 and guidelines for catechesis in response to the teachings of Vatican II.

14 **2. Guide for Catechists (1993)**

- 15 • **Background:** This document was not a directory but offered specific guidance for
16 catechists, particularly in mission territories.
- 17 • **Content:** The document focused on the vocation and the role of catechists, and their
18 formation.

20 **3. General Directory for Catechesis (1997)**

- 21 • **Background:** An updated directory was necessitated due to the publication of the
22 "Catechism of the Catholic Church" (1992), and in response to the Synod of Bishops in 1977
23 which had catechesis as its theme.
- 24 • **Content:** This directory built on the prior one and included references to the "Catechism of
25 the Catholic Church," detailing how it could be used effectively in catechesis. It also
26 emphasized the role of bishops in guiding catechetical efforts.

28 **4. Directory for Catechesis (2020)**

- 29 • **Background:** Recognizing the changing cultural landscapes and the challenges and
30 opportunities they bring; the Church saw the need for a renewed directory.
- 31 • **Content:** The latest Directory for Catechesis emphasizes the kerygmatic approach, the
32 primacy of evangelization in catechesis, and the utilization of modern means of
33 communication. It aligns catechesis more closely with the missionary impulse of
34 evangelization and the diverse conditions of contemporary society.

36 **Conclusion:**

37 Each iteration of the *Directory for Catechesis* reflects the Church's effort to respond to the "signs of
38 the times," ensuring that catechesis remains a living, vibrant, and effective means of leading people
39 to a deeper relationship with Christ within the embrace of the Church. The directories collectively
40 underscore the Church's commitment to ongoing renewal and adaptation in its catechetical
41 mission, always with the aim of fostering a transformative encounter with Jesus Christ.

DRAFT

- 1 **ADDENDUM TWO**
- 2
- 3 **SUPPORTING ARTICLES/MATERIALS**
- 4

DRAFT

DRAFT

1 **Five Reasons to Move Confirmation**

2

3 For years, Confirmation has been the ransom paid by young people held captive by faith formation
4 programs that do not engage or inspire. We must work together to change that reality.

5

6 One

7 Young people are leaving the Church at a younger and younger age. The latest study by St. Mary's
8 Press puts the age of **disaffiliation** at 13. If we do not build loving, caring, intimate relationships
9 with our young people, it will not matter what we teach them or how much we pray for them. They
10 will walk away. In our parishes, we must begin to build these communities of faith at a younger age.

11

12 Two

13 The world is a different place than it was 50 years ago – even a few years before the pandemic now
14 seems like a lifetime ago. “Teachers of the faith,” according to Dr. Patrick Manning of Seton Hall
15 Seminary, “can no longer rely on a pervasive Catholic **culture** to form their students. That culture
16 no longer exists.” In our parishes, we must be counter cultural.

17

18 Three

19 Young people are dealing with deeper issues at younger ages. Today's 12-year-olds show more
20 concern about body image, looks, and clothes than ever before. Their focus is on themselves as they
21 waiver back and forth between high expectations and a lack of **self-confidence**. This is the age at
22 which young people develop eating disorders and feel the effects of stress at school and by their
23 peer group. What can we do as a Church to help young people deal with these issues?

24

25 Four

26 Young people do not necessarily feel that they are bound by the limits of a religion's traditional
27 edges. They take what they perceive to be true, just, and good, and integrate it into a **wider**
28 **worldview**. They struggle to identify truth at an early age. How can we be harbingers of Truth,
29 Beauty, and Goodness and help young people connect those realities to their daily lives?

30

31 Five

32 Despite having virtual access to people and places around the world at any time, today's young
33 people are the **loneliest** on record of any generation. At the same time, young people are finding
34 meaning and purpose in places outside of religious institutions. In our parishes, how can we
35 accompany young people by creating a community that is welcoming, where young people are
36 valued and heard?

1

2 **Today's Challenge**

3 Young people leave the Church after Confirmation mostly because parishes do not offer a reason to
4 stay. Many times, our communities treat Confirmation like graduation and so the prophesy is
5 fulfilled when we offer so few opportunities for discipleship in the parish.

6 While many parishes prepare young people effectively for Confirmation, they do so at the exclusion
7 of everything else – faith formation in the traditional sense stops and all eyes turn towards
8 Confirmation as a goal, not a rite of passage into something more.

9 **About Today's Young People**

10 For Gen Z, faith is a conversation, an exploration, just like everything else in the life of a
11 teenager. There is no magic bullet here. They are going to try new things, push back, ask hard
12 questions, challenge you, do things/say things/believe things you wish they wouldn't. The only
13 question is whether we will be there to help influence that exploration or not. We need a
14 comprehensive plan for being in the conversation about faith and religion with a young person for
15 as long as possible. **Confirmation can be a part of that plan, but it cannot be the plan.**

16 **Benefits of Moving Confirmation**

17 Shifting Confirmation to an earlier age offers two opportunities:

18 **Reframe the Question.**

19 We can reshape preparation for the sacrament by reimagining how we connect with the lives of
20 young people. We can help them understand that confirming one's baptismal promise, which was
21 made on their behalf, is an opportunity to choose for themselves to live as a disciple of Christ – even
22 during their struggles and doubts. The grace of the sacrament provides the strength they will need
23 to meet the challenges they face.

24 **Think: Driver's Education**

25 When a child begins to learn to drive, everything else in their life does not stop. Driver's Ed is one
26 more "bubble in the mix" of all that is going on in the life of a young person. It is a means to an end –
27 *I want my license, so I must go to class.* A similar invitation must be extended to those who wish to
28 confirm their baptismal promises – and it will be more effective at an age *before* many young people
29 disaffiliate.

30 When a child earns their license, they do not cease learning about safety, how to maneuver in
31 traffic, or even what happens when there is an accident – in fact, we continue to learn about driving
32 throughout our lives. The same ought to be true for our faith.

33 **New Opportunities**

34 When Confirmation moves, it opens the door for all the opportunities for discipleship that exist in a
35 parish. Or, rather, that should exist in a parish. The Confirmation certificate is no longer a diploma,
36 rather a license for missionary discipleship that gives a child access to more in-depth learning,
37 more meaningful service, smaller group formation, and more family faith opportunities – but only if
38 a parish rises to meet that challenge.

1 Between now and XXXX, parish leaders must make a concerted effort to create opportunities for
2 discipleship that are engaging and inspiring for young people.

3

4 *(The data cited above comes from The State of Religion and Young People (2020) by Springtide Research).*

5

DRAFT

DRAFT

1 **Structures That Impede Evangelization**

2 "Evangelii Gaudium," or "The Joy of the Gospel," is an apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, which
3 emphasizes the need for a Church that is more missionary and open to renewal and transformation. In
4 this document, Pope Francis critiques certain structures within the Church that hinder the process of
5 evangelization.

6 Pope Francis argues that the Church's structures should be more flexible and accommodating to
7 facilitate the spread of the Gospel. He emphasizes the need for the Church to be in a constant state of
8 mission and openness, reaching out to those on the margins of society. He notes that some ecclesial
9 structures may no longer be effective in today's changing society and thus calls for a "conversion of the
10 papacy" and a decentralization of power within the Church to better serve its missionary goal.

11 Pope Francis highlights that while traditions are essential, they shouldn't become an obstacle in the
12 Church's evangelizing mission. He urges the Church to be more attentive to the "signs of the times" and
13 to adapt its methods and expressions to better communicate the unchanging truth of the Gospel in a
14 rapidly changing world.

15 In "Evangelii Gaudium," structures that impede evangelization are challenged to undergo a process of
16 review and renewal to ensure that they serve the Church's missionary outreach and facilitate a personal
17 encounter with Jesus Christ in today's diverse global contexts.

18 26. ...There are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization, yet even good structures
19 are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them. Without new life
20 and an authentic evangelical spirit, without the Church's "fidelity to her own calling", any new structure
21 will soon prove ineffective.

22 33. Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have
23 always done it this way". I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals,
24 structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.

25

26

DRAFT

1 **What is Accompaniment?**

2 Accompaniment requires a compassionate and respectful approach, where individuals,
3 likely catechists, or community members, walk beside others on their faith journey,
4 listening and explaining the Scriptures, fostering initial responses, and facilitating
5 conversion processes.

6 Accompaniment involves a humble willingness to engage with the questions and life
7 situations of others, promoting a sense of unconditional acceptance and openness. It is
8 particularly necessary in the context of adult faith, aiding in navigating through life's
9 challenges and crises, and fostering growth and maturation in spiritual wisdom.

10 Before one can accompany another, there exists a necessity for catechists themselves to
11 experience being accompanied, enhancing their discipleship, and enabling them to better
12 accompany others in their spiritual journeys.

13 179. The accompaniment of a person on a journey of growth and conversion is
14 necessarily marked by gradualness, in that the act of believing implies a progressive
15 discovery of the mystery of God and an openness and entrustment to him that grows
16 over time.

17 371. Only a catechesis that proceeds from religious information to accompaniment
18 and to the experience of God will be capable of offering meaning. The transmission
19 of the faith is based on authentic experiences, which must not be confused with
20 experiments: experience transforms life and provides keys for its interpretation,
21 while the experiment is reproduced only in an identical manner. Catechesis is called
22 to find adequate means for addressing the big questions on the meaning of life,
23 corporeality, affectivity, gender identity, justice and peace, which in the digital era
24 are given a different treatment.

25 Though the idea of accompaniment is not new, Pope Francis brought it to the forefront in
26 his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

27 *Evangelii Gaudium* emphasizes the concept of spiritual accompaniment as a crucial aspect
28 of evangelization and spiritual growth.

- 29 1. **Spiritual Accompaniment in Evangelization:** Spiritual accompaniment is essential in
30 the journey of evangelization. It involves a respectful and compassionate approach,
31 guiding individuals closer to God. Accompaniment is not merely a therapy
32 supporting self-absorption but is a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father (EG 170).
- 33 2. **Listening and Openness:** Accompaniment involves the art of listening, which is more
34 than merely hearing. It requires an openness of heart, enabling a genuine spiritual
35 encounter. Listening fosters closeness, understanding, and respect, allowing for true
36 growth and a yearning for the Christian ideal (EG 171).

1 3. Guidance and Protection: Those who accompany others should be familiar with
2 processes that require prudence, understanding, patience, and docility to the Spirit.
3 They should be capable of protecting individuals from influences that could hinder
4 their spiritual journey, guiding them towards true freedom in God (EG 171).

5 4. Pace of Accompaniment: The pace of accompaniment should be steady and
6 reassuring, reflecting closeness and a compassionate gaze. It should encourage
7 growth in the Christian life, leading individuals ever closer to God, where true
8 freedom is attained (EG 170).

9

10

DRAFT

1 **Role of the Parents**

2 The *Directory for Catechesis* outlines the role of parents in faith formation in several sections,
3 emphasizing their pivotal position in educating their children in the faith.

4 1. Parents are seen as **active participants in catechesis**, with their mission to educate being
5 rooted in their participation in God’s creating activity and further specified by the
6 sacrament of marriage. Parents are entrusted with the mission to educate their children in
7 the Christian faith, making them the first and most effective conveyors of faith to their
8 children. (DC 124)

9
10 2. The community, represented by catechists, is advised to **welcome, listen to, and**
11 **understand** the reasons behind parents’ requests for their children’s baptism. An
12 appropriate pathway should be provided to parents to reawaken the grace of the gift of faith
13 they have received. (DC 141)

14
15 3. The document emphasizes the importance of the early childhood phase as a crucial time for
16 the discovery of religious reality. Parents, along with the living environment, play a role in
17 instilling either an attitude of **openness and acceptance** or aversion and exclusion towards
18 God in their children. (DC 239)

19
20 4. Parents, through their daily life examples, are described as having the **most effective**
21 **capacity** to transmit the beauty of the Christian faith to their children. The document
22 encourages parents to overcome the mentality of delegation, where faith education is left to
23 specialists in religious education, urging parents to become the first catechists of their own
24 children. (DC 81)

25
26 5. The document also discusses the role of **godparents as co-workers with parents**,
27 supporting the educational efforts of parents in the faith formation of their children.
28 Godparents are tasked with showing the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal
29 and social life, sustaining them in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, and guiding their
30 progress in the baptismal life. (DC 125)

31
32