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Introduction

So, you are starting a new year of catechesis! Many experiences await you to help both you and your learners grow as disciples of Christ. Whether you are a brand-new catechist or teacher or have already taught for a few years, we hope you will learn from and enjoy the material in *The Catechist's Formation Workbook*.

The Catechist's Formation Workbook is rooted in Scripture, liturgy, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and is based on both the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC).

Each of the ten sessions in this volume begins with prayerful reflection. These brief reflections invite you to begin your time of study by considering your own experience of God's love. A reflection question and space for you to record your thoughts lead to a time of prayer.

Tools for Teaching is the formal teaching section, providing the connecting link between spiritual growth, content of the faith, and instructional strategies needed to do excellent catechesis.

Step one sets the tone with an introductory story or exercise.

Step two helps you reflect on the significance of the topic for catechesis.

The three sections of material that follow guide you in implementing the objectives, using theory, practical commentary, and examples, plus strategies for different age levels. Also included are questions for personal use and group discussion to help you integrate what you have learned.

You may be invited to attend a group session in which you will discuss the material and share with other catechists. These gatherings will help you grow both spiritually and professionally. Instructions are provided throughout on how to make the most of the various elements, whether you are studying alone or with a group. Read the appropriate section in *Tools for Teaching* and reflect on the questions as you study or before each large group session. Keep this volume close by while you are teaching, as well as while you are studying. It is not meant to sit on your shelf!

Remember: you are a very important figure for your learners. You are a living witness of the faith you seek to share with them. Your example speaks volumes. You never know when, through you, the Spirit will touch the hearts of your learners. God's grace works in mysterious ways. Even when you think a lesson may seem to be a complete failure, your kindness, your enthusi-

asm, your willingness to speak the truth, any or all of these, may make an impression on one or more of those you teach.

So we hope you will make the most of this book and all it contains. It has been prepared with much care, research, and prayer. May your basic catechetical skills and attitudes continue to grow by leaps and bounds!

Liturgy *as a* teaching moment



The goal of this session is to help you connect liturgy with catechesis.

YOUR OBJECTIVES ARE:

to learn how to break open the word of God together with your learners

to learn how to effectively integrate the liturgy into the formation session

to learn how to use the period of post-baptismal catechesis, or mystagoga, as a time to grow in the understanding of the liturgy

SKILL: Live the liturgy so it will also be an important element of your teaching

BEGINNING THIS SESSION

Before you begin to develop your skills in connecting liturgy with catechesis, take a few moments for reflection and prayer.

Beauty opens the way

Some have said that the experience of beauty is the forgotten key to opening the soul to God. As catechists, we will often focus our efforts on imparting those truths of doctrine and those teachings of Christ that are central to our faith. While these may be important, they don't always lead our students to an experience of God. God remains at most a fascinating idea or a reasonable truth. One can talk forever about God, but until someone experiences the presence of God, they do not really "know" God.

Beauty is like a window into the divine. Just as the soul of any artist is revealed in the art they create, so too the soul of God, the Great Artist, is revealed in the world that is the work of his hands. If we take the time to see the beauty of this world with new eyes, we will be drawn into the heart of the Holy One.

Treasures of great beauty surround us, sometimes forgotten or overlooked as we hurry about our lives. They can be found in physical beauty, in the vitality of youth and the wisdom of age, in the mysteries of science, in acts of justice and forgiveness, in moments of love and intimacy, and even in intense grief. Beauty is not always pretty. While it can be seen in the harmonious lines of a Michelangelo sculpture, it can also be found in the deep furrowed wrinkles of an old woman.

Take a moment to reflect

**Ask yourself: How and where do I experience beauty?
Do I allow beauty to be a part of my life?**

TOOLS FOR TEACHING

The time of prayer

Close your eyes and for a few moments picture something beautiful that you saw today. Stay with that image and take its goodness into your soul. You don't need to say anything. Just allow your heart to be moved to adoration of the Creator.

When you're ready, continue with the following prayer, or with a prayer in your own words. Speak to God as the child of God that you are, with your heart fully open.

*Great and wonderful God,
I stand here in awe before this
beauty you have created.
It is just one reflection of the goodness
and beauty that is yours.
I ask for the grace to open my soul to
the beauty that surrounds me,
often hiding beneath the surface
of things, sometimes missed
because I am moving so fast.
There is so much brutality and
ugliness in this world
and I need to be reminded
that there is goodness and beauty here too.*

From personal reflection to sharing faith

As a catechist, you have the opportunity to share the goodness and beauty of God with your learners. In this session, you will develop skill in liturgy as a teaching moment in order to create an environment in which your learners may open their minds and hearts to this incredible love of God for us.

Liturgical catechesis prepares for the sacraments by promoting a deeper understanding and experience of the liturgy. GDC 71

Setting the tone

Read and reflect on this passage from St. Cyril's Jerusalem Catechesis: "You were brought to the baptismal font just as Christ was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb. Each of you was asked, 'Do you believe in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?' You made the profession of faith that brings salvation; then you were immersed in the water and three times rose again. This is a symbol of the three days Christ spent in the tomb. When you were immersed in the water, it was as though night had fallen and you could not see in the darkness. But when you came out of the water, it was like coming into the light of day. At that moment you died and were born again. This is an amazing thing! We did not actually die and rise; we only did this symbolically. But we have truly been saved. We share in Christ's passion through symbols and gain salvation in reality. How boundless is Christ's love!"³

The Importance of this session

Part two outlines ways of linking liturgy and catechesis.

³ Mystagogy V, from St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechesis (Jerusalem Catechesis).

- How do you assist learners in understanding the nature of the liturgy and how it unfolds in the church?
- Break open the word of God together with your learners.
- Find ways to integrate the liturgy into your formation sessions.
- Use mystagogy as a model for your catechesis.

In the liturgy we celebrate the paschal mystery of Christ. When we participate in the liturgy, we take part in the act of worship, but we also commit ourselves to living as the body of Christ, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus and living a life of love. Through the action of the Spirit, liturgy shapes our lives as Christians.

Catechesis and liturgy are closely linked. We can't just "learn about" the mystery of Christ and our faith; we also have to experience it; and we do this in the celebrations of the liturgy.

Step one: *break open the word*

This section presents Mary as the model for contemplating and applying the word to her life. It describes how you can break open the word with your learners.

"While Mary contemplated everything she had read and heard, she grew even more in faith, wisdom, and charity. The mysteries of God were opened up to her, and joy filled her heart. Her mind was entirely blessed because, through the presence and action of the Spirit, she was always open to the power of God's word. Do as Mary did. Look deep into your heart so you can be cleansed from your sins."⁴

Jesus said, "But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty" (Mt 13:23). Breaking open the word with your learners entails these steps:

⁴ St. Lawrence Justinian, Sermon on the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

- Read the Scripture passage together prayerfully, using a Bible adapted to their age.
- Ask your learners to listen with their hearts.
- Help the learners search for God's word for them and for the community of believers that they can apply to their lives. This is the key to the whole prayerful process.
- If necessary, guide them in reaching a decision to act on what they have shared.

Step two: link liturgy and catechesis

Catechesis and liturgy are intimately connected. Catechesis is not just about learning truths; it's about experiencing the mystery of Christ, especially in the ritual activities of the church. We call these rituals the liturgy.

Catechesis prepares persons for the liturgy: Prepare the learners for full, conscious, and active participation in the mystery of the lit-

urgy⁵ by teaching them the meaning of the rites and symbols.

Catechesis flows naturally from good liturgy:

- Emphasize the worship and honor of God.
- Help the learners engage the meaning of the rites and rituals of the liturgy.
- Help the learners reflect on their experience of the sacraments and the Sunday liturgy.
- Guide the learners in applying the meaning of the liturgy to their own lives, especially in the call to serve others.
- Liturgy done well is itself living catechesis.
- Review the whole history of salvation as it is celebrated in the sacraments, especially in the Sunday Eucharist through the cycle of the liturgical year. In

⁵ cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 14.

Catechesis is not just about learning truths; it's about experiencing the mystery of Christ, especially in the ritual activities of the church.



the liturgy, we come to know the living God.

- Discover how the truths of faith proclaimed in the Scriptures and the Creed shape your own faith and that of the learners.
- Discuss how the liturgy forms us in a life that is communal, always sending us out in service of our sisters and brothers.
- Employ the music used during the liturgy as another means of catechesis.

THE LITURGICAL YEAR

The essential way in which we as Catholics link liturgy and catechesis is the celebration of the liturgical year. The liturgical year expresses and shapes our Christian identity. It is the celebration of Christ's life throughout the year.

- Follow the ministry, life, passion, death, and resurrection of Christ with the learners as we are immersed in them during the seasons of the church year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, the

Triduum, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary Time.

- On the feast days, holy days, and solemnities, celebrate the mysteries of Jesus and the witness of persons who lived out the paschal mystery.
- Linking liturgy and catechesis is about faith formation and transformation, conversion and discipleship.

Step three: engage in the mystagogical process in catechesis

This section discusses mystagogy and its place in catechesis. "Mystagogy" means "guiding into mystery." The word most often refers to the final period of the process of Christian initiation for neophytes, those newly baptized at the Easter Vigil. During the Easter season they and the whole community enter more deeply into the mystery of God's love for us in Christ. Meditation on the Sunday readings and on their experience of the liturgy are two of the principal ways in which neophytes relate the Easter message and mystery to their lives and to their own stories of conversion and transformation. In turn, the neophytes

and the community grow in their awareness that as disciples of Jesus we are all called to proclaim God's kingdom.

The process of Christian initiation and, in particular, the time of mystagogy, emphasizes the need for lifelong catechesis. Because we are all in a sense continuing the time of mystagogy (that is post-baptismal catechesis), the elements of mystagogy that serve as a model for catechesis include:

- meditation on the Sunday gospel, especially through faith sharing;
- celebration of the Sunday Eucharist with the community;
- reflection on the experience of the sacraments;
- growth in communion with the members of the faith community;
- the study of Scripture and the liturgy;
- study of the social teachings of the church;

- growth in prayer and acts of charity, especially in works of justice.

STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT AGE LEVELS

According to their age level, help learners enter into mystery and understand it at least a little. Teach them about the liturgical year and what each season teaches us about Jesus and about God's love for us.

- Young learners absorb material well through movement, handling objects, singing, and so on. Involve primary-age children in processions, such as one leading to placing the Bible on the prayer table before breaking open the word. Use Bible stories, symbolic objects, liturgical music, gestures, and visuals to help them enter into the mystery of Jesus. Involve them in simple, hands-on, seasonal activities.
- Intermediate-age children like to explore. After obtaining the necessary permissions, take the learners for a tour of the parish church. Help them become familiar and comfortable with each space. Or have them experience a

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liturgy, and later revisit it by pointing out the various elements of the experience. Discuss the symbolism of the various liturgical colors.

- Middle school learners like to work in small groups and to do research. For example, they might prepare banners for your parish church or teaching space. They can look up the history of feasts, seasons, and traditions, as well as the development of the liturgy. Let them choose a project they are interested in.
- Invite youth, high school students, adults, and the participants in intergenerational gatherings to form groups as families and individuals. You might have them take part in faith sharing based on the Sunday gospel. Celebrate with them the holy days, solemnities, and particularly the Triduum in meaningful ways. Have them prepare prayer services or rituals for the various seasons. Arrange learning centers with liturgical themes.

As you end this session

As you go through the week, carry the message of the Sunday gospel in your heart and reflect on it.

In the broader sense, mystagogy represents the Christian's lifelong education and formation in the faith.

NDC 35D

Catechism connection

In forming your learners for the liturgy and leading them to be formed by the liturgy, you create an environment in which they may encounter God's love. Read and reflect on articles 1066–1209 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to explore this in greater depth.