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SYNOD OF BISHOPS-1977

Fourth General Assembly

Rome

September 30 - October 29, 1977

MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD
AND
INTERVENTIONS OF THE U.S. DELEGATES

1978

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Introduction

The fifth international Synod of Bishops took place September 30 to October 29, 1977 at the Vatican, with 204 participants from all parts of the world. Its theme was "catechetics in our time with special reference to the catechesis of children and young people." The elected delegates of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops were John Cardinal Carberry of St. Louis, Archbishop John Whealon of Hartford (who replaced Cardinal Dearden of Detroit in the delegation), Bishop Raymond Lucker of New Ulm, and myself. Archbishop Stephen Kocisko of Pittsburgh (Byzantine Rite) attended *ex officio*. Timothy Cardinal Manning of Los Angeles and Archbishop Joseph Schmondiuk of Philadelphia (Ukrainian Rite) were appointed members of the Synod by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI.

The Synod began with approximately a week of oral interventions. Each delegate was also entitled to submit as many written interventions as he wished. Ultimately the U.S. delegates presented some 35 interventions, oral and written. The second phase of the Synod was devoted to *circuli minores*, small group discussions, organized on the basis of language. Here the participants were able to engage in spontaneous discussion and formulate tentative conclusions. This was followed by another round of general sessions during which the reports of the *circuli* were synthesized and discussed with an eye toward drawing up final conclusions. The closing days of the Synod were given over to review, amendment, and approval of the final documents, as well as to reports from a number of the congregations of the Holy See and to necessary business such as the election of members of the permanent council of the Synod.

Early in the process the participants decided to follow essentially the same pattern as the Synod of 1974. That is, they would prepare recommendations to the Holy Father and transmit these to him along with the proceedings of the Synod, requesting that he consider this material in composing a magisterial document to be published at a later date. They would also prepare and publish a brief message of their own summarizing the major points of their deliberations. This is in fact what was done.

It would be superfluous to give a detailed summary of the work of the Synod. It has been publicized extensively and is adequately reflected in the "Message to the People of God" issued on October 29. However, it may be helpful to note a few major themes.

1. Evangelization, conversion, catechesis

There is an integral link between the 1974 Synod's theme, evangelization, and the theme of the 1977 Synod, catechesis. Evangelization is the activity of the Church which seeks to foster conversion; and "the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18). Essential as it is, however, conversion is only a kind of starting point. Ideally it is followed by continued growth and maturation in faith. It is this which catechesis seeks to foster.

2. Continuing catechesis

This is why catechesis, as understood by the Synod, includes not only formal religious instruction but every ecclesial activity which seeks to bring about growth in faith. As the Synod's "Message" expresses it, catechesis is "the activity by which God's Word is constantly spread in a living and effective way, leading to a deeper knowledge of the person and the saving message of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through an ordered and progressive education in the faith, it leads to a continual process of maturing in the same faith." (1). And since no one's capacity for maturing in faith is ever exhausted, all members of the Church—bishops, clergy, religious, laity—stand in need of continuing catechesis.

3. Youth catechesis and adult catechesis

While the particular focus of the Synod was catechesis for children and youth, the participants readily agreed that this cannot be considered in isolation from adult catechesis. For one thing adult catechesis is the culmination of the catechetical process. For another, successful catechetical programs for children and young people require the active involvement of committed adults of mature faith. This suggests among other things why spiritual formation must be a central part of the preparation of adult catechesis along with training in content and methodology. It also points to another major concern of the Synod: the need for well developed catechetical programs, in the context of comprehensive family ministry, directed to couples, parents, and families.

4. Catechetical settings: communities of faith

The Synod gave much attention to the settings for catechesis. The family is the first of these; thus, the need for parent and family-oriented catechesis. Catholic schools, CCD, and similar programs are others. (In this connection, the emphasis of the NCCB pastoral, *To Teach As Jesus Did*, upon the 'community' aspect of Catholic education has particular timeliness and relevance.) However, in light of contemporary social and

cultural conditions, it seems necessary to go further and seek new ways of building up small communities of Christians as catechetical settings for the reinforcement of faith and growth in faith. This underlines the need for, among other things, continuing efforts directed at parish renewal.

Reports on the Synod have indicated that it considered catechesis in rather general and abstract terms. So it did, especially in its closing "message." This was inevitable, considering the cultural diversity of the participants. It points to the need for concrete, realistic action at the national and, even more important, diocesan and parish levels if the renewal of catechesis which the Synod encouraged is to be accomplished. There must be efforts to strengthen many different components of the catechetical ministry: Catholic schools and CCD, continuing education of the clergy, campus ministry and ministry to young adults, family ministry, adult catechesis, catechesis adapted to racial, cultural and ethnic groups, use of the media for catechesis as well as catechesis with respect to the religious and moral significance of media in contemporary society, catechesis for the handicapped, etc. There must be continued efforts to develop effective catechetical methodology and materials, and to ensure a faithful, integral presentation of doctrinal content. The Synod has given an impetus to all this and much more; the work of carrying forward the renewal of catechesis in action remains.

I wish to express particular thanks to the *periti* who assisted the United States Synod delegates: Monsignor Wilfrid Paradis and Sister Mariella Frye, at that time Project Director and Assistant Project Director, respectively, for the *National Catechetical Directory*; Father Francis Buckley, S.J., of the University of San Francisco; and Father Lorenzo Albacete of the Archdiocese of Washington; as well as to Mr. Russell Shaw, who acted as our press secretary. Without their diligent, dedicated, and informed labors, our work could hardly have been done.

ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH L. BERNARDIN OF CINCINNATI

MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Synod of Bishops

October 29, 1977

INTRODUCTION

1. Since the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, called together at Rome by our Pope, Paul VI, to discuss *giving catechesis in our time especially to children and young people*, is now approaching an end, we Bishops wish to give a message to you who, entrusted to us by virtue of the pastoral office in various parts of the world, belong to the People of God, and to all who have interest in the Church's activity and responsibility in human society, and by this share with you the principal conclusions of our work.

Examining our world, troubled indeed and filled with crises but at the same time open to the saving powers of grace, after the other synodal assembly had in 1974 given attention to carrying out evangelization in our time, nothing seemed to be more useful to the Church, under the leadership of the Supreme Pontiff, than to continue on the same theme by study of that ecclesial activity which, constantly alive and active, is required for a diffusion of the word of God and for a deeper understanding of the person and of the message of salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and which consists of an ordered and progressive education in the faith, joined with a continuous process of maturation of the same faith, which we call **catechesis**.

It was necessary that we examine, always in the light of God's word, the signs of the times for renewing catechesis and for increasing its importance in pastoral work, and this especially since a certain vital vigor of the Church's whole catechetical effort almost everywhere was strongly felt, with fine fruit for renewal of the total ecclesial community. Known to us moreover were the desire and hunger for spiritual nourishment and formation in the faith especially among the rising generations which, desiring to fulfill their obligations and duty toward building up a just society, seek to enter a deeper knowledge of the mystery of God. We were also challenged in our faith by the various forms of human culture which strongly tend toward a greater perfection of man, though not always in consonance with the Gospel. It is also true that defects were known to us, in that the responsibility of all the faithful in the

maturation of their own faith was sometimes given over to oblivion, or in that revelation was not always, as was right and just, everywhere rightly disseminated. We were not ignorant of the difficulties to which catechesis is subject in certain regions of the world, to the extent that opposing powers place new obstacles in the way of fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ concerning the faith to be announced to all nations.

Concerned about these situations of children and young people who will in the future bear on their shoulders the task of building a new world, and listening to their aspirations, we gave them special attention.

Moreover, the bond of our theme with the question of education in the world of the present time escaped no one's attention. We were convinced that the pedagogy of God, which is noted in the history of salvation, contributes even today to solution of this problem for the good of the whole human race.

After the long and laborious preparation for the Synod, which involved consultation with all the Particular Churches, our studies having been brought to an end and our wish having been expressed to the Supreme Pontiff by special recommendations conveyed to him that he, in his own time, might wish to offer the Universal Church a document on Christian instruction through catechesis as he did after the 1974 Synod with his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, we have agreed, with due approbation, to open our minds to you and to bare our thinking on certain more urgent things.

Part I

The World, Young People, and Catechesis

(A Realistic View of the Situation)

The radical changes in the contemporary world

2. The Synod, as an event of our times, could in no way ignore the real situation in which the world lives. The Bishops are witnesses and sharers of the hope, tensions, and frustrations (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1) with which people of today are moved. In all nations, whatever their social system or cultural tradition, men and women are searching, struggling, and working for the common good and to build a new world. Old systems of values often are no longer accepted, and have even crumbled; human security is brought to crisis by force, oppression, and contempt of the person. Experience shows that the hope founded by some in ideologies and technical skill is insufficient.

Amid the many tumults of the conflict of ideas and systems, a new search for God is again emerging, new signs of divine unrest in man's unquiet heart are being uncovered, and at the same time a new sense of values, which pertain to dignity of the human person, is being perceived.

The problems of young people

3. The rising generations are more aware of themselves. Both by the proportion of their number and by their qualities and the hope which they necessarily show for the future, they signify a role of great importance for the human race. The currents which pervade our society echo with a special vigor among these generations. They strongly show cultural division, the fruit of social change. Children often pay the penalties for the errors and failures of adults. More often they are victims of the machination of false leaders who profit from their generosity and magnanimity.

Educational work should take its beginning from the aspirations of the young for creativity, justice, liberty, and truth. It also should respond to their aspirations for co-responsibility in Church and civil life, as well as to their tendency toward love of God and of neighbor. For catechesis is an ecclesial action for this world, and especially for the rising generations, so that the life of Christ transforms the life of young people and leads them to fulfillment.

The vigor of catechesis and external difficulties

4. The Synodal Fathers have examined many and noteworthy signs of a certain vital vigor of the Church's entire catechetical effort in almost all places, and especially among the rising generations, despite certain anxieties in the giving of catechesis. Indeed, a marvelous variety of undertakings in this field now flourishes almost everywhere, so that in the space of the past ten years in all regions of the world catechesis has now become the primary and fruitful land for renewal of the whole ecclesial community.

The Fathers also considered the difficulties of catechetical activity. Much is required of catechists, and at times in very difficult conditions. It is necessary that in virtue of these conditions, often new, we be imbued with a realistic sense:

- in many nations the evolution of society passes by many religious customs. Very many children and young people scarcely have occasion of finding the Church on their journey. Many times the catechist undergoes indifference and rejection. New ways of thinking and living are very often no longer Christian. There exists also a certain part of the baptized which rarely, even never, has an opportunity of hearing the Gospel message. Although many things are converted into an obstacle,

they are nevertheless at the same time a true *challenge* for catechesis, since in truth catechesis ought to direct itself to these children, young people, and adults who live in this concrete world as it is, and in which the Church has the mission of proclaiming the Word of salvation;

- in many nations this mission of catechizing cannot be exercised *with liberty*; they are nations in which the exercise of fundamental human rights, among which the right to religious freedom is also counted, is in an intolerable way restricted or even totally suppressed. In these nations the declarations about observance of religious freedom are often merely formal, since there does not exist either true liberty as the Church pervades its life with the whole Gospel or a true right for coming together at the same time for catechesis, or for arranging the necessary time and places, or for the necessary books and educational materials, or a right to form catechists.

It is a truly painful situation which ought to be shared by the universal Church. No power on earth has the right to impede anyone from seeking the truth, from freely receiving it and coming to know it in greatest fullness, and from freely and openly professing it. The Church, when it asks for the right to catechize, is defending the fundamental liberty of man.

The complexity of catechetical activity

5. The same realistic sense invites us to consider the complexity of catechetical activity:

- the diversity of *cultures* makes for catechesis a great plurality of situations. As was indicated by the Second General Vatican Council, and as was recalled by Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, it is necessary that the Christian message plant roots in human cultures by taking them over and by transforming them. In this sense one can say that catechesis is a certain instrument of "inculturation." And this signifies that it evolves and at the same time illumines from within the forms of life of those to whom it is directed. The Christian faith must be emplanted by catechesis into those cultures. A true "incarnation" of the faith by catechesis supposes a process not only of "giving" but also of "receiving";

- *new technical skills* produce different series of values and propose them indiscriminately; they profoundly affect and change relations among men. They have a role in the interpenetration of cultures, and they spread a certain way of life and a way of thinking. This is why forms of expression change, as do both language and human conversation. The young themselves constitute a certain place of notable cultural division with respect to preceding generations. Catechesis would lack efficiency in these transformations unless the message committed to it is transmitted in the language of men of our time.

Needs and limitations of today's catechesis

6. A catechesis which corresponds to the needs of our time will be a continuation of the renewal already begun, but it must be sensibly developed. Repetition brought to the point of habit, which resists all change, and an inconsiderate way of acting, which approaches things rashly, are dangerous in the same way. The failures which arise and happen in catechesis often flow from the fact that a sense of realism is lacking, and the absence of a sense of realism is at the same time infidelity to the Gospel and to man; for it is catechesis of *our time* which is at issue. The Synod, therefore, urges Christian communities that our catechesis, which essentially is proclamation of the Gospel, that is, the Good News, be renewed, but always with regard for the realism which brings catechesis to fidelity and true profundity with all its aspects.

Part II

Catechesis As A Manifestation of Salvation in Christ

Catechesis is related to the mystery of Christ as to its center

7. The Church does not cease repeating that it brings the message of salvation, destined for all people. Its task is to proclaim and to bring to effect in the world salvation in Christ. It is, then, a task of evangelization. Catechesis is an aspect of this very task. It is related to the mystery of Christ as to its center. Christ, true God and man, and His saving work carried out in His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, should be the center of the message. Jesus Christ is as the basis of our faith and the source of our life. The whole history of salvation, then, tends toward Christ. In catechesis we try to understand and experience how important He is for our daily lives. Catechesis must proclaim how the Father reconciles us with Himself through His Son Jesus Christ, and how the Holy Spirit guides us. To the extent that it is a transmission of this mystery, catechesis is the living Word, faithful to God and at the same time to man.

In harmony with those things which were published in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Synod calls to mind these aspects which follow. And they are:

- catechesis is word;
- catechesis is memory;
- catechesis is witness.

Catechesis as word

8. This is one of the first aspects of the mission of the Church: for the Church speaks, proclaims, teaches, communicates with others. And these words signify one action, an action, that is, that pertains to making known, in the Spirit, the mystery of God the Savior: "For this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17.3). This knowledge, however, is not just any system of knowing, for it is the knowledge of a mystery, a knowledge full of hope, it is knowing according to the Spirit, an organic comprehension of the mystery of Christ, to which it is related as to its center. It is not a system, an abstraction, or an ideology.

Catechesis arises from a profession of faith, and leads to this profession of faith. It makes it possible for a community of believers to proclaim that Jesus, the Son of God, the Christ, is alive and is the Savior.

For this reason, the example of any catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate, which is the peculiar form by which an adult converted to the faith is brought to the profession of baptismal faith on the paschal vigil. While this preparation is being made, the catechumens receive the Gospel (Sacred Scriptures) and the ecclesial expression of it, which is the Creed of faith.

Catechesis, however, can use many other forms as well (sacred preaching, religious instruction in schools, radio or television broadcasts) which at a certain time or at various times have come into use by means of social communication or by ways of teaching.

Whatever it is, it is necessary to distinguish criteria by which a certain and definite form of the word may be truly catechetical. Not every instruction, even though it treat of religious matter, is of itself ecclesial catechesis. On the other hand, certain words which touch man in his concrete situation and impel him to lead himself to Christ, can become catechumenal words. And these words indeed by their very foundation transmit the essential parts or vital substance of the Gospel message, which can be neither changed nor passed over in silence (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 25).

Certainly the complete vital substance which is transmitted by the Creed of faith hands on the fundamental nucleus of the mystery of the One and Triune God as it was revealed to us through the mystery of God's Son, the Incarnate and Savior, always living in His Church.

But to discern both faithfulness in handing on the whole message of the Gospel and the authentic catechetical form of the words by which faith is transmitted, it is necessary that one reverently attend to the magisterial and pastoral ministry of the Church.

Catechesis as "Memory"

9. This is another primary aspect of the Church's activity, to the extent that it recalls, commemorates, celebrates the sacred in memory of the Lord Jesus, and accomplishes "anamnesis."

Indeed, the word and action of the ecclesial community have an impact only to the extent they are today the word and action which manifest Jesus and bind to Christ. Catechesis thus is connected with the whole sacramental and liturgical action.

Catechesis is the manifestation in our time of the mystery hidden from the ages in God (cf. Col. 1.26). This is why the first language that catechesis uses is Sacred Scripture and the Creed. In this way catechesis is an authentic introduction to "lectio divino," that is, to the reading of Sacred Scripture, but "according to the Spirit" who dwells in the Church, both present in the apostolic ministries and active in the faithful. Sacred Scripture, however, brings it about that Christians use a common language. Customarily, at the time of formation, it happens that certain biblical sentences, taken especially from the New Testament, or certain liturgical formulas with which the sense of these sentences is expressed most clearly, and other common prayers, are committed to memory.

The believing man also takes to himself those expressions of the faith, worked out by the living thought of Christians through the course of centuries, which have been collected in the Creeds and in the principal documents of the Church.

Thus it happens that to be a Christian is the same thing as to enter into a living tradition, which through the history of men shows how, in Jesus Christ, the Word of God assumed human nature. In sum, catechesis is "a transmission of the documents of faith." The themes which it selects and the way it explains them are in agreement with genuine fidelity toward God and toward man in Jesus Christ.

Catechesis as witness

10. The word, resting on a living tradition, is in this way a living word for our time. Expressions, to the extent they are witness, commitment, "inculturation," ecclesial action, spiritual life, personal and liturgical prayer, and holiness, manifest this same thing, that is, witness.

A community of believers is a community of men living today which brings into effect the history of salvation. Salvation, which the community carries within itself, offers to men of this time freedom from sin, violence, injustice, and egoism. Thus the words of Jesus are fulfilled: "The truth will set you free" (John 8.32).

Catechists, therefore, cannot be separated from a studious and active giving in life: "Not those who say, 'Lord, Lord . . .'" (Matt. 7.21). This giving, however, can take on multiple forms, both individual and collegial. It is indeed according to tradition the "following of Christ." Hence it is that teaching of moral doctrine, the "Law of Christ," has its place in catechesis. It should be affirmed without any ambiguity that there are laws and moral principles which catechesis must expound, and that the moral doctrine of the Gospel is equipped in a peculiar way which greatly exceeds the mere demands of natural ethics. Indeed, the law of Christ, or law of love, is inscribed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (cf. Rom. 5.5; John 31.34).

On the other hand, catechesis, to the extent it is witness, at the same time educates a Christian by making it possible that he is fully inserted into the community of the disciples of Jesus Christ, which is the Church, taking to himself the total truth of the state of grace and of sin of this believing people, which is the pilgrim on earth, and receiving all those senses of fraternal solidarity which the Christian ought to preserve by living with all who, believers and nonbelievers, share the same fate of the human family. Thus the ecclesial community in truth constitutes itself as the universal sacrament of salvation.

Yet this moral doctrine is not only "individual," since it at the same time shows the social dimension of the Gospel message.

One of the principal tasks of catechesis today is that it introduce and stimulate new forms of that studious and active giving, especially in the field of justice.

Thus, from the experience of Christians, new ways of evangelical life will spring up. With the helping grace of Christ, they will bring forth new fruits of holiness.

The special characteristic of the pedagogy of faith

11. In all complete catechesis there should be united in an indissoluble way:

- knowledge of the word of God;
- celebration of the faith in sacraments;
- profession of the faith in daily life.

The pedagogy of faith, therefore, has a special characteristic: an encounter with the person of Christ, a conversion of the heart, and experience of the Spirit in ecclesial communion.

Part III

Catechesis is the Work of All in the Church

For a common co-responsibility

12. Catechesis is a task of vital importance for the whole Church. It in truth affects all the faithful, each according to his circumstances of life and his particular gifts or charisms. Certainly all Christians, by virtue of sacred baptism, ratified by sacramental confirmation, are called to transmit the Gospel and to see the faith of their brethren—especially children and young people—in Christ. Yet it sometimes can, for causes quite diverse, bring with it certain tensions and dissensions. The Synod, therefore, urges all the faithful to overcome the difficulties that perhaps arise and thus always to favor a common co-responsibility. In this way aspects are indicated which will afterward be described more accurately.

The Christian community

13. a) The place or setting in which catechesis is normally given is the Christian community. Catechesis is not a merely "individual" task, but it is always carried out in the dimension of the Christian community.

The forms of communities, however, are evolving in our time. Aside from the communities which include the *family*, the first community where a person is educated, or the *parish*, where the Christian assembly is normally at issue, or the *school*, the community destined for education, there are today springing up many other communities, among which are small ecclesial communities, associations, youth groups, and others of this sort.

These new communities indeed offer an opportunity to the Church, for they can be as a leaven in the mass, and a leaven in the world which is being transformed. They contribute to showing more clearly both the variety and the unity of the Church. They ought to show among themselves charity and communion. Catechesis can find in them new places where it can be brought to effect, for there the members of the community are to each other the proclaimers of the mystery of Christ. Certainly catechesis will at the same time present the mystery of the Church, the People of God, that is, and the Mystical Body of Christ, in which many groups of men and communities are united intimately with God and among each other.

The Bishop and the others dedicated to catechesis

14. b) The Bishop in his own local Church should play the primary role in catechetical activity. Aside from those things which belong to him

in coordinating the action of people who in his particular Church dedicate themselves to catechesis, the Bishop should also give himself to the giving of catechesis. Together with him the rest, each in his own way, cooperate in fulfilling the catechetical ministry. The duty of catechizing does not belong to anyone alone, because many energies are needed to carry it out. Each according to his function and charism contributes to carrying out the same mission: bishops together with their priests, the deacons, parents, catechists, leaders, and animators of the Christian communities. To fulfill this task, persons consecrated to God can and should, under indeed many excuses, offer their own inestimable assistance to the Church.

In many nations catechists, together with their priests, share in the duty of directing the Christian communities. In union with their Bishop, they take on responsibility for transmitting the faith.

The Synod confirms to all the importance of this task and hopes that all will find the good will and assistance they need. The Synod asks that catechetical ministries or duties not be assumed unless there is a suitable prior formation, according to the twofold reckoning or dimension of catechesis, that is, fidelity toward God and man. This indeed brings with it a formation pertaining to the sacred disciplines and at the same time notions about man which, necessary according to nations or circumstance, contain notices the sciences offer about man.

Carrying out catechetical action in a pluralistic society

15. c) Today's world is characterized by diversity. For it is composed of people who have quite different concepts of the world, ethical principles, and social and political systems. Even in a religious way of thinking, it is pluralistic.

Certainly catechesis should equip Christians to be able to develop themselves in these varied and plural circumstances. For this, it ought to educate them in inculcating a sense of specific identity of themselves: they are in truth baptized, believers, and members of the Church. Moreover, it should form them in a sense of understanding which is open to dialogue, which dialogue indeed is respectful of other men and at the same time quite faithful to the truth.

Now ecumenical formation offers Christians who are within the visible folds of the Roman Catholic Church an opportunity for better understanding of those Christians who belong to other Churches or Ecclesial Communities, and for the preparation for dialogue and for the establishment of fraternal relations with them. The institution of "common catechesis," where it may seem necessary according to the criteria of Pastors, should, to remove the dangers of religious indifferentism, always be completed by a full and specific Catholic catechesis.

With regard to other religions, which Christians encounter more every

day on their journeys, catechesis should foster attitudes of reverence and understanding, and should even arouse a state of listening to them and of discerning the "seeds of the Word" lying secret in them. For this, for young people to be able to extract some fruit from the knowledge of non-Christian religions and, more particularly, from notice of the various materialistic concepts, it is necessary that, under the leadership of Pastors, they receive very serious preparation regarding their own Catholic doctrine and be suitably formed for the exercise of prayer and Christian life. Thus prepared, they will be able not only to show due respect to those who do not share with them faith in Christ, but also to hand on witness of this faith.

Christian catechesis with regard to today's materialistic tendencies

16. With regard to the materialistic, secularistic, or atheistic tendencies, and certain totalitarian humanisms which suffocate the truly human dimension of the human person, catechesis should rest on a Christian vision of man and the world. An "apologetic," or certain critical "confrontation" in keeping with today's way of thinking, will be able to show the rational bases of this vision.

Indeed, in the diverse and pluralistic state of affairs, the Christian should not fear: helped by the grace of the Holy Spirit, he can become, according to the Apostle's words, *strong in faith*. An authentic openness of mind, however, both supposes and demands a conscience formed regarding one's proper identity. A Christian identity for its part carries with it witness and mission.

The missionary dimension of catechesis

17. All catechesis is *missionary*, not only because it moves to consideration of other communities living in distinct areas and, by opening minds to the good of the universal Church, arouses missionary vocations, but also because it encourages the showing of respectful attitudes toward all men and, by beginning from a daily more profound building up of the same ecclesial community, stimulates true Christian witness before all men.

CONCLUSION

18. After we have spoken with you about the work we have gone through these days near the Chair of Peter, in union and communion with Peter's successor, Pope Paul VI, we wish to give thanks to God first of all, to God the Supreme Giver from whom all good things come (cf. James 1.17), to God to whom we have dedicated our lives, to God who through the Spirit of His Son was always present to us and enabled us to see, look upon, and touch with our hands (cf. 1 John 1.1) His wonders, to God who, it is our heartfelt desire, may be loved by you above all things.

Then we give thanks to all who with us expend energies in the catechetical ministry. We think of priests, co-workers in our apostolic ministry, joined with us so intimately by virtue of the same sacrament of orders; we think of those who lead lives consecrated to God, whether in religious communities or in the world, affirming again our hope in the great spiritual fruitfulness in the world which life in the spirit of the beatitudes brings (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 42); we think of those whom we call by the particular name of catechists. How many are the men, women, young people, indeed even children who give up their time, often without any reward of this world, in so great a work, to build up the Kingdom of God, filled with true charity since they form Christ Jesus in human hearts and strive to lead them to fullness. We think also of those parents who educate their children from earliest infancy in knowledge of Jesus Christ and in fear and love of God, and keep alive in the hearts of their children the faith received through baptism and ratified by confirmation, by building it up in such a way that they constantly bring forth fruits of eternal life. We think also of so many of our fraternal communities, dedicated to prayer, to the poor, which offer precious witness of life to a world oppressed by individualistic egoism.

Thinking of you all, we Bishops, brought together in this Synod and selected from diverse regions of the world, from Vatican Hill, near the tomb of Peter, before his successor, namely, Pope Paul VI, after we have listened to the Churches of the whole world and have been made aware of the importance of catechesis in our pastoral action so that without any doubt priority is to be given to it, solemnly receive the sweet burden on us, ready to exhaust ourselves with so much energy on this catechetical activity together with evangelization, trusting in the grace of the Holy Spirit who can issue fruits of holiness yet stronger the more your faith arrives at maturity through education. There are very many difficulties which are yet foreseen in the world; but the future time belongs to believers, because hope does not confound (cf. Rom. 5.5).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, unforgetful hearer of the word of God help us, that we may bring our plans to a good end and that the saving faith of Christ may become a leaven, salt, light, and true life for the whole world, she who, ardent disciple of her Son in the faith, "kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2.19).

ORAL AND WRITTEN INTERVENTIONS BY DELEGATES OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The Inner Spirit Of Catechesis

Oral Intervention by

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati

I speak in the name of the episcopal conference of the United States.

In the Catholic Church in the United States motivation to participate in the catechetical ministry is strongest among those who have come to understand their Christian life as the expression and response to their personal experience of Jesus Christ as Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. Here, I believe, is the key to overcoming apathy and stemming the flow of dropouts from catechetical programs.

One of the greatest sources of apathy and confusion among our people today is their inability to relate the requirements of life in the Church to the fundamental evangelical insights upon which they are based. Within the catechetical enterprise itself, much polarization could be overcome by an evangelical synthesis of elements of the mystery of redemption which many have come to fear as incompatible: a Christ-centered catechetics and a Church-centered one; a Church-centered catechetics and one centered on our social responsibilities; a doctrine-centered catechetics and an experiential one; community and individual; Word and Sacrament, Bible and magisterium. One of the important tasks facing us is the development of a catechetics which is at the same time evangelical, ecclesial, and social.

An evangelical catechetics is also important for the following reason. From an ideological point of view much of the world today bears striking

resemblance to the world of the New Testament. It is a time of cultural transition, in which many seek ways to appease or control the powerful, dehumanizing forces of fate through a form of paganism, the way of legalism, or the way of existential heroism. The world of the New Testament was also familiar with these three postures. Against this background the impact of the Christian revelation of God's grace can be appreciated: the announcement of grace freely communicated in Christ Jesus, and apprehended in faith, hope, and love. This similarity of spiritual horizons is one of the reasons why the articulation of our faith in evangelical categories can be fruitful today.

The evangelical principles upon which catechetics should be based include the following:

1. The mystery of justification by grace and not by "law"—understanding that Jesus Christ is our justice, that is, He is what is right about us, the measure of our worth.
2. The mystery of divine election. Christian life is not something which originates in us; it is a divine way of life to which we are called and which we are empowered by grace to sustain.
3. The mystery of life "in Christ." To be a Christian is to be incorporated into "the New Man" which is a reality already created by God and offered to us with Christ Jesus as the basis, measure, and goal. This is the basis of our understanding of what growth and maturity ultimately mean. Furthermore, since life in Christ, one and indivisible, is communicated to all believers, "the New Man" is a corporate reality: it is always lived in community. This helps resolve the tension between a personal, Christ-centered life and an ecclesial, community-oriented life.
4. The relation between Word and event. Revelation occurs when the Word of God intervenes in history. This is the basis for the proper relation between doctrine and life. Doctrine is the divine interpretation of a divine intervention; as such, it is not purely notional nor purely existential.
5. The mystery of life in the Spirit. It is the Spirit of the Father and Son who empowers the believer to live in Christ. This spiritual nature of our life is the ultimate basis for the moral behavior of Christians.

These are examples of the evangelical principles upon which our catechetical mission should be based. Since they are so fundamental, they are applicable to all social, cultural, and psychological situations.

I shall submit in writing a document which develops these thoughts more fully.

The Inner Spirit Of Catechesis

Written Intervention by
Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati

There is an indispensable connection between catechesis and evangelization. The working paper notes this connection in citing the continuity between the Synods of 1974 and 1977; and the matter is of crucial relevance to the catechesis of children and youth, as well as adults. Both catechesis and evangelization have their origin in the activity of the Word of God, and each reinforces the other. Evangelization seeks to "convert, solely through the divine power of the Message (proclaimed by the Church), both the personal and collective consciences of the people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs." (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18) Catechetics should always be based on this fundamental reality of conversion—which, of course, is a continuing process in the life of the believer. From this fundamental event, catechesis draws applications which, adapted to the concrete situation of believers, enable them to respond to the Word of God. It is thus that catechesis seeks "to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart 'of the believer' the essential truths that must impregnate all of life." (*ibid.*, 44)

In the Catholic Church in the United States motivation to participate in the catechetical ministry is strongest among those who have come to understand their Christian life as the expression and response to their personal experience of Jesus Christ as Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. This personal, deeply felt acknowledgment, awakened by evangelization, is strengthened and nourished by catechetics. The most successful catechetical programs are proving to be those based on this connection. Here, I believe, is the key to overcoming apathy and stemming the flow of dropouts from catechetical programs.

It is also true that in our country there has been a recent emphasis on what has been called evangelical Christianity, Christianity based on personal experience of Jesus as Lord and of the divine Word as the source of a life which the world cannot give. Positive as it is in many ways, there is a tendency for such a vision of Christianity to introduce too sharp a division between Revelation and creation and to become too individually-centered at the expense of a sacramental, ecclesial life.

The Catholic tradition allows us to integrate the latter into the fundamental conversion experience. This synthesis is one of the important

and exciting tasks facing us: the development of a catechetics which is at the same time evangelical, ecclesial, and social.

One of the greatest sources of apathy and confusion among our people today is their inability to relate the requirements of life in the Church to the fundamental evangelical insights upon which they are based. Within the catechetical enterprise itself, much of the polarization that threatens its success could be overcome by the evangelical synthesis of components of the mystery of redemption which many have come to fear as incompatible: a Christ-centered catechetics and a Church-centered one; a Church-centered catechetics and one centered on our social responsibilities; a doctrine-centered catechetics and an experiential one; community and individual; Word or Sacrament, Bible or magisterium. All of these find their synthesis through a catechesis that is truly evangelical.

I wish to propose below, by way of example, some of the fundamental evangelical principles upon which such a catechetics should be built. These form an inseparable context for revelation and are so fundamental that they can be shared by men and women in different cultural and sociological circumstances. They also will allow people to survive the confusion brought about by the response of theology to our contemporary period of cultural transformation. Such an approach will also help to remove many of the apparent tensions which threaten to paralyze our catechetical enterprise.

An evangelical catechetics is also important for the following reason. From an ideological point of view, much of the world today bears striking resemblance to the world of the New Testament, though of course there are also striking differences. It is a time of cultural transition. Age-old certainties are challenged, and life is consequently perceived by many as threatening. In the face of this "hostile" destiny, people seek ways to appease or control the powerful, dehumanizing forces of fate. These include:

1. A form of paganism. This is the solution offered by gnostic movements of secret revelations and efficacious rites (such as astrology, non-Christian techniques for meditation and even religious ecstasy, new worldwide syncretistic religions, etc.).
2. The way of legalism. Salvation is sought through a rigid observance of laws and traditions, received without questioning. These protect the religious person by immersing him or her in a sphere of safety which seeks out those forces which he or she cannot understand, and which are perceived as destructive of ancient, proven, and safe values.
3. The way of existentialist heroism. According to this system, salvation exists in "standing up" to the demands of the moment

without any religious crutches and affirming oneself in freedom over and against oppressive forces.

The world of the New Testament was familiar with these three postures: paganism in the mystery religions, legalism among some of the pharisees, and “existentialism” in the forms of Stoic philosophy. Against this background, the impact of the Christian revelation of God’s grace can be appreciated: the announcement of grace *freely* communicated in Christ Jesus, and apprehended in faith, hope and love. This similarity of spiritual horizons is one of the reasons why the articulation of our faith in evangelical categories can be fruitful today. A healthy catechetics, therefore, would help the believer interpret his or her life in terms of those evangelical categories of faith expressed in the earliest Christian expressions of faith.

The evangelical principles upon which catechetics should be based include the following:

1. The mystery of justification by grace and not by “law”—understanding that Jesus Christ is our justice, that is, that He is what is right about us, that He is the measure of our worth. This is the unshakeable basis of human dignity, of the value of those lives threatened by all kinds of competition and haunted by anxiety. It is also the measure of the importance and meaning of our behavior.
2. The mystery of divine election. Christian life is not something which originates in us; it is a divine way of life to which we are called and which we are empowered by grace to sustain. At all times the all-sovereign Word of God is calling us, and nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of our response.
3. The mystery of life “in Christ.” Christian life consists in becoming “one body, one spirit in Christ” (Eucharistic Prayer II), that is, one single reality with the Lord. To be a Christian is to be incorporated into “the New Man” which is a reality already created by God and offered to us with Christ Jesus as the basis, measure, and goal. This unveils a divine psychology which is the basis of our understanding of what growth and maturity ultimately mean. Furthermore, since life in Christ, one and indivisible, is communicated to all believers, “the New Man” is a corporate reality: it is always lived in community. This helps resolve the tension between a personal, Christ-centered life and an ecclesial, community-oriented life. The community of believers is the one subject of faith and mission. Since this subject is inseparable from the Incarnate Word, who is the New Man, every act prompted by grace engages the entire community, and it is at the same time an activity of the Word of God. The community’s responsibility for evangelization and

catechetics is based on this insight. Through such activities, the Church reproduces itself. This of course points to the need for us to examine most seriously the adequacy of current efforts by Church communities, especially perhaps our parishes, with respect to both evangelization and catechesis. It also underlines the importance of liturgy, the worship of the community, in respect to both.

4. The relation between Word and event. Revelation occurs when the Word of God intervenes in history. This is the basis for the proper relation between doctrine and life: doctrine is the divine interpretation of a divine intervention; as such, it is not purely notional nor purely existential.

5. The mystery of life, in the Spirit. The behavior to which the believer is called can be termed spiritual (whether visible or invisible, whether it is the activity of the soul or the body) because it is the Spirit of the Father and Son who empowers the believer to live in Christ. This spiritual nature of our life is the ultimate basis for the moral behavior of Christians.

These are examples of the evangelical principles upon which our catechetical mission should be based. They strengthen its indispensable link to evangelization. Since they are so fundamental, they are applicable to all social, cultural, and psychological situations.

The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary In Catechetics

Oral Intervention by

John Joseph Cardinal Carberry,

Archbishop of St. Louis

Most Holy Father, Venerable Fathers:

I speak in the name of the Conference of the Bishops of the United States and desire to present reflections on Mary's role in catechetics.

Viewing catechetics in its broad sense as the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus in order "to make men's faith become living, conscious and active through the light of instruction" (*Christus Dominus*, 14), Our Lady may be considered as Model and Mother in this evangelical endeavor.

I.

Mary is the Model of the living out of the Good News itself. As stated in *Lumen Gentium*, "Mary unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith" (65). For example, her divine maternity has always been the touchstone of an authentic understanding of the Incarnation of Jesus the Lord; her Immaculate Conception helps us see more clearly the gratuity of God's profound redemptive love; her sinlessness makes us understand better the disastrous effects of man's refusal of God's love; her Assumption clarifies the teachings of the Church on eschatology, by giving us a motive for hope and for the ultimate victory of Jesus as Lord of the universe.

We may say that Mary is a "compendium of catechetics," that she is a "living catechism." More than by abstract teaching, our young people will be formed into a living, conscious and active faith by her vibrant example.

Further, in *Marialis Cultus*, our Holy Father describes Mary as "the first and most perfect of Christ's disciples" (35). Imagine how she can, therefore, be a Model for those of our youth who desire seriously to acquire a deep knowledge of Truth. They see in her openness to God's power; they perceive the results in her of "hearing the Word of God and keeping it" (Lk 11:27-28); they behold her as the Woman of Faith who actively and responsibly surrenders fully to God's love as made known to her by the Angel at the Incarnation. Our youth can see in her someone

of their own age who listens, who spiritually hears and courageously accepts and experiences the goodness of God. In Mary they see a young girl who finds meaning and fulfillment in life by her union with the Lord. Our youth today desire to see faith in action. Here, again, Mary in the mystery of the Visitation, of Cana, of Calvary, is the ideal image for our young people to whom we proclaim the Word of God.

Lumen Gentium, speaking of Mary declares that she "devotes herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the Person and work of her Son" (65). She labors for Jesus to make Him known, loved and served. In this she is the model of the catechists who also must give themselves totally to the Person and work of Christ so that He may be truly known and loved by our youth.

II.

In the process of catechesis, Mary also plays the role of Mother. Her intercession cannot be forgotten without serious detriment to our catechetical endeavors. She reveals this role in her powerful prayers for the catechist, in her intercession on behalf of our youth, so that the message of Jesus will be proclaimed effectively by the catechist and be received with faith, understanding and love by youth. We go to the Mother of God and our own Mother, praying that she will aid us in every aspect of catechetics.

Besides, Mary, as Mother of mankind, exercises a mysterious maternal causality in the entire work of catechesis, of forming our youth into the image of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. The more we are conscious of this maternal influence, the more we praise God for the *fiat* she still utters in our name, how more efficacious will our catechetical work be!

Mary is, in the words of Pope Paul, the "Star of Evangelization ever renewed within the Church" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 82). Because of the inseparable bond between evangelization and catechesis, Mary is equally the Star, the powerful guide in the catechetical mission of the Church. Mary is, therefore, the Model and Mother of the entire Church and of each individual in our catechetical endeavors.

The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary And Popular Devotions in Catechesis

Written Intervention by

John Joseph Cardinal Carberry

Archbishop of St. Louis

The presentation of the faith of the Catholic Church concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary is an indispensable component of our catechesis. Encouragement of devotion to her person is of incalculable value, writes Pope Paul VI: "Because of its ecclesial character devotion to the Blessed Virgin reflects the preoccupations of the Church itself" (*Marialis Cultus*, 32).

At the same time, it is evident that much of the contemporary catechesis has not responded to the opportunities provided by this devotion to our Lady and indeed by popular devotions in general. The Second Vatican Council "warmly commended" such popular devotions, "provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church" and provided that they are "so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, and are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 13). For this reason, another purpose of this presentation is to express the hope that the Synod will encourage those responsible for catechesis to recognize and take advantage of the catechetical value of popular devotions which have been the source of spiritual growth for so many people.

The Blessed Virgin Mary

The Blessed Virgin Mary is a compendium of catechesis. She is a living catechism. The faith of the Church becomes incarnate in her person. In her, abstract teaching becomes a personal commitment and Christian discipleship reaches perfection.

As our Holy Father reminded us in *Marialis Cultus*, Mary is "the first and most perfect of Christ's disciples" (35). She is thus the best model for those who seek to acquire a deeper knowledge and experience of the Word of God. In her they will see the life-giving results of the believer's openness to God's power: the fruit of "hearing the Word of God and keeping it" (Lk 11:27-28). They will see her as the Woman of Faith, who actively surrendered fully to God's love.

Young people today desire to see faith in action. Let them look to Mary at the Annunciation, and they will see someone their own age who is attentive to the Word of God, hears it, and courageously accepts the mission entrusted to her. In the Virgin of the Magnificat they will discover the boundless joy of a young person in solidarity with the poor and the helpless who experiences the vindication of their hopes. The Woman of Cana will be their model and companion at all the joyful moments of their lives, while at Calvary she will show them what it means to be a person of faith in the darkest hours of human existence.

Catechists also will find in Mary the model of those who must give themselves totally to the Person and the work of Christ in order that He may be truly known and loved. Her words at Cana capture entirely the faith and message of the catechist: "His mother instructed those waiting on table, 'Do Whatever he tells you.'" (Jn 2:5).

Catechesis aims to convey precisely what He has told us, and as *Lumen Gentium* teaches us, "Mary unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith." For example, her divine maternity has always been the touchstone of an authentic understanding of the Incarnation; her Immaculate Conception helps us to see more clearly the gratuity and the power of God's redemptive love; her Assumption clarifies the teaching of the Church on eschatology by giving us hope that the ultimate victory of Jesus over death will be shared by our own bodies.

Evangelization is the way in which the community of faith reproduces itself in the heart of believers. Catechesis is a way in which this Messianic community cares for those reborn into the new creation, sustains them, and teaches them how to walk in this new world of the Spirit until they attain that full maturity of which Christ is the measure. Evangelization and catechesis, therefore, demonstrate the Church's fertility and maternal solicitude. For this reason, she who is the "Star of Evangelization ever renewed within the Church" (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 82) is, by the same token, the star and powerful guide of catechesis. For she is the Mother of the Church. The more we are conscious of her maternal influence, the more we praise God for the *fiat* which she still utters in our name, the more efficacious will our catechetical work be for the formation of the believer into the image of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Popular Devotions

Throughout the centuries, the Catholic peoples of the East and of the West have kept close to the Lord and have grown in their understanding of the sacred mysteries of redemption by means of devotional practices in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. One has but to consider the devotion of the Rosary, which, as our Holy Father has reminded us,

is "a gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation . . . a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. . . . The commemoration in the liturgy and the contemplative remembrance proper to the Rosary, although existing on essentially different planes of reality, have as their object the same salvific events wrought by Christ" (*Marialis Cultus*, 46 and 48). There is also the Angelus, which allows contemplation of the mysteries of divine election and contemplation. There is the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, which is so dependent on biblical imagery. Devotion to our Lady of Fatima encourages so many people to receive the Lord in Holy Communion every first Saturday of the month and reminds them of the Lord's rule over the affairs of peoples and nations. Devotion to the Immaculate Conception in Our Lady of Lourdes enables many of the faithful to appreciate the power of grace over sin. Devotion to the miraculous medal and the scapular have kept alive in the hearts of many an appreciation of divine Providence.

The teaching of our Holy Father about popular devotions and evangelization is also applicable to catechesis. Popular piety, he writes, "manifests a thirst for God which only the simple and the poor can know. It makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism. . . . It involves an acute awareness of profound attributes of God. . . . It engenders interior attitudes rarely observed to the same degree elsewhere" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 48). These devotions, which the Holy Father so aptly calls the "religion of the people" are capable of great adaptability to different cultures, sociological conditions, and stages of growth in the Christian life. They thus constitute a powerful means of catechesis.

Unfortunately, contemporary catechesis has not always given to popular piety the attention it deserves. In fact, at times a kind of spiritual imperialism has been practiced: encouragement of certain kinds of devotion and the ridicule of others.

The fundamental catechetical task in this regard is to utilize the devotions to which the people are already attracted by making explicit the mysteries of redemption upon which they are based. Thus will these devotions be oriented to the celebration of these mysteries in the sacred liturgy, as the Second Vatican Council insisted.

Some of the fundamental mysteries of redemption which are the basis for sound popular devotions are the following.

(1) The mystery of divine election. This distinguishes Christian popular piety from mere religiosity. Emphasis has to be given to the initiative and sovereignty of the Word of God. This can be brought out in the devotions to those saints whose life of faith was the outcome of a powerful struggle between God's will and their own inclinations, limited understanding, or radical incapacity to accomplish what was being asked of them. We think of St. Joseph, the just man coping with the mystery

of the Incarnation; of St. Theresa de Lisieux and her struggle to define her vocation within the Church; of St. Thomas More who experienced the apparent collapse of his efforts on behalf of Christian humanism.

(2) The mystery of the Incarnation. This reminds us that it has pleased God to allow earthly realities, to which the masses of the people are very close, to become expressions of the love of God and vehicles of grace. Scapulars, medals, relics and the sacramentals: the value of all of these depends on this mystery. The Incarnation also demonstrates that powerful human emotions of joy and sorrow are not foreign to God.

(3) The paschal mystery. The sufferings, death and resurrection of the Word Incarnate give meaning to the sufferings and struggles of the people. Performance of what have been called "acts of reparation" and the Stations of the Cross are popular devotions which provide access to this mystery.

(4) The mystery of Christian eschatology. Devotion to the saints reminds the faithful that the ultimate resolution of the human drama lies beyond success in this life. Such devotions are the source of hope and courage to those who know that they will never find on this earth the fulfillment of their thirst for happiness and the vindication of their struggle for justice.

(5) The mystery of the communion of saints. Devotions to the saints also remind us of our solidarity with one another in the family of Jesus, a family which so transcends the limitations of space and time that those with the Lord in heaven can and do support us in our pilgrimage on earth.

One devotion which deserves special mention is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. All modern popes have reminded us of the singular value of this devotion. It involves an unequivocal affirmation of the humanity of the Son of God and of its role as the sacrament of God's saving love. At the same time, it leaves no doubt concerning the divinity of Jesus, for this is the only reason for the adoration of his humanity. The Sacred Heart teaches us about the love of God and our response to it. This wounded symbol of love demonstrates how Christ loved us even unto death. The First Friday devotions instill in us a love for the Mass, for the reception of the Eucharist, and for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

In all of this, the task of the catechist is to begin with the devotions which the people already value, and in making explicit their evangelical base, help them integrate their piety into a growing understanding of the history of salvation revealed in the Bible. This in turn will allow for a better understanding of the liturgy and encourage a fuller participation in that celebration through which we are caught up into this sacred history.

Ministry to Youth

Written Intervention by

Timothy Cardinal Manning

Archbishop of Los Angeles

(Incorporates Text of Oral Intervention)

On December 8, 1965, when the Second Vatican Council was solemnly closed by our Holy Father Pope Paul VI, the Council Fathers addressed the world from the steps of St. Peter's Basilica. Their final message was addressed through Cardinal Gregorio Agagianian to the young men and women of the world. Saying that these young people will form the society of tomorrow with its respect for the dignity, the liberty, and the rights of individuals, these prophetic words were uttered to them: "You will either save yourselves or you will perish with the Society of Tomorrow." The four virtues of generosity, purity, respect, and sincerity, were asked of youth in the invitation to build a better world than their elders had. The Church looked to them with confidence and love, and invited them to look upon the Church and find in her the face of Christ, "the genuine, humble and wise Hero, the Prophet of truth and love, the Companion and friend of youth." On the whole it was a catechesis of love, a ground-plan of action, a program of holiness.

It is necessary to read the signs of the times. The alienation of youth from the institutional Church, their frustrations, hurts, their insecurity, their longing for person-to-person recognition, their desires for some answers to the mystery of life, of their roots and their identity—all these are crying out to us for recognition, response, and healing.

The signs of the times show us young people looking to relationships and a return to the two great commandments of Christ as a God of love and to love their neighbor as themselves, rather than duty or observance only out of discipline. They respond better to the challenge of love than to the imposition of obligation. They are showing a profound hunger for the spiritual.

It must be realized that the catechesis of youth can take place adequately only within the wider concept of ministry to youth. This ministry begins with the adult who must be trained to deal with youth and to transmit authentic values. Adults must live the Gospel message so that young people not only understand it but see it exemplified.

The next recognition is the place for youth-to-youth ministry. The training of natural leaders is vital. Some Protestant churches are ahead

of us in this. Youth has a unique call by Christ to serve in the Church. Youth should be involved in the planning and carrying out of all programs, so that youth ministry is not only to youth but truly by, with, and for youth. Their readiness to commit themselves even on a temporary basis should be encouraged and challenged. Perhaps even a ceremony of commitment would be desirable. The ministry we speak of is five-fold.

- a) The message must be proclaimed. Doctrine and discussion suitable to youth's intellectual needs and questions must be provided. This will include the study of scripture, the Church, the sacraments, and morality.
- b) Community must be established. This gives a sense of security and of being cherished. The family and the parish are the basic models. The elements of smallness, knowing by name, and participation must be present. Week-end prayer, search, encounter, or retreat experiences provide a context for liturgical observance in a communal setting of acceptance and exchange. There must be a follow-up to such experiences, involving contact which is regular, personal, reinforced by a group, and related to the parish. Indeed, building bridges between natural youth communities and parishes is of major importance not only for youth ministers but for all parish priests.
- c) Mission and service opportunities must be given. These must be substantive and adult in their challenges. It would be wise to integrate them with the regular preparation for and follow-through after the Sacrament of Confirmation. Missionary call and activities must also be presented.
- d) Prayer must be an integral component of youth ministry. A Directory for Masses for Youth modeled on the Directory for Masses with Children would be most welcome.

We believe it is the duty of this Synod to read these signs of the times and to show further awareness that these youths are a substantive part of the Church. We believe it of vital importance that the youth of the world be addressed again through a vehicle of communication which is accommodated to their life-style.

Discriminating studies have been made on youth. Experiments with youth ministry are in progress. Experts, especially in our country of the United States, provide us with insights, guidance and motivation. It is to be hoped that in the progress of this Synod written interventions may be received which will enrich the proposals for the catechetical care of our young people.

We who presume to make this oral intervention speak from deep pastoral knowledge and concern. We have dialogues on a progressing plan, with thousands of students.

In their name we appeal that the Church would turn again and renew the guidance and exhortation "to open your hearts to the dimensions of the world, to heed the appeal of your brothers, to place your youthful energies at their service. Fight against all egoism. Refuse to give free course to the instincts of violence and hatred . . . and build in enthusiasm a better world than your elders had."

Catechesis on the Special Problems of Life

Oral Intervention

by Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford

I speak on behalf of the Conference of Bishops of the United States of America. Our nation has certainly one of the largest catechetical programs in the Catholic world, with more than eight million children and youth receiving catechesis from hundreds of thousands of dedicated catechists similar to those described in Canada, Australia, England, and Italy. We know that, in spite of much hard work being done by many, over six million of our children and youth are receiving either no catechesis or partial catechesis, in spite of much hard work by many.

Now I offer some observations about an idea given in our text, in paragraph 21 and particularly paragraph 12: about catechizing according to the problems of human beings rather than according to age. Such a type of catechesis indeed deserves study. Perhaps people of our times are more alike in problems than they are in age or social status or church status. These difficulties begin early in life. Sin—especially the seven capital sins—affects the children of Adam still now. The pressures of the young are the pressures of the adults.

These difficulties come to us in order to make us humble, open to the Word of God. However, is it possible to develop a catechesis which takes into account the problems of the human heart?

In the United States there now exists a very high standard of living. At the same time there exists a very high level of human problems. Our daily national news is a catalogue of disrespect for God, for other humans, for self. Perhaps there does seem to be a certain order of problems which a renewed catechesis might consider as an important theme or emphasis while: it is presenting the entire message.

I mention briefly four such problems.

First, the special problems of children. In the initial years of life there come special instabilities. And in a culture such as ours, in which the father and even the mother are often away from home, in which divorce is common and family strength weakened, the problems of children are magnified. Catechesis at this time should show its own family spirit, should present God as our Father in heaven caring for us,

Jesus as our Lord and Brother and Teacher, and the Lord's own mother Mary as our own adopted Mother. At this time catechesis prepares the child for a sacramental life and for a life of daily prayer in the Spirit.

The catechesis of children can give much and can accomplish much. But such catechesis will be without lasting effect unless the parents themselves are giving the example of prayerful, sacramental Catholic living. In our land there are many parents not yet fully converted to Christ and the Church. Then their children reluctantly receive catechesis, celebrate First Penance and First Communion—and then disappear from religious instruction and from Mass. Their few years of catechesis for the Sacraments of Initiation are simply inadequate for later life. This is in our nation a massive pastoral and catechetical challenge.

Second, the problem of loneliness. As children grow into youth, they often become isolated or they isolate themselves from adults. They join a youth culture whose values come from their peers or television. Catechesis for these lonely ones must take into account the loneliness and competition which these youth are facing. At this time catechesis should teach the dignity and value under God of every single person. Catechesis should present both Christ and the Church, but in a special way Christ in a personal and human fashion. Christ also was alone—"The Word came to his own and his own received him not"—the Apostles did not understand him. And still the Good Shepherd sacrificed his life for his sheep, even for this lost one. In the Person of Jesus Christ catechesis can reach out to the lonely ones of society.

Third, the problem of alienation. At various stages of life people can become frustrated, can become alienated from society, from the Church, even from Christ. In our region, for many people adolescence and alienation mean almost the same thing. Alienation is seen in the Catholics who never attend Mass, or who come only on Christmas and Easter, or who have been divorced and remarried and have given up practicing their faith. To these many alienated ones the Church must extend her arms and must in catechesis present the Church (whose Head is Christ) as a true community of faith and love at the parish level. To these alienated ones catechesis should show in terms both historical and practical the meaning of Christian community as it existed in the first-generation Church and as in ourselves it should exist today. The Church remains the refuge of sinners who recognize themselves as sinners. A sharing in praying, in celebrations and in goods is needed to help overcome alienation.

Fourth, the problems of insecurity, illness, fear of death. These problems, which ordinarily afflict adults, should be faced by catechesis in the light of Christ's sufferings. It is remarkable how the life, suffering and death of Christ, and the grace of prayer and the sacraments

strengthen us humans in the face of life's most serious problems. But we can easily forget this lesson. And so at this time catechesis must be especially active.

A catechesis according to human problems, then, becomes generally speaking a catechesis on the example and the imitation of Jesus Christ. And the ultimate hope of any man or woman facing life's problems is to be placed in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. That Resurrection we celebrate every Lord's Day and we present in all catechesis.

Adult Faith as the Context for the Catechesis of Children and Youth

Oral Intervention

by Bishop Raymond A. Lucker of New Ulm

We are here to reflect on and discuss the catechesis of children and youth. It is my firm conviction that the key issue in the catechesis of children and youth is the catechesis of adults.

Indeed, the most pressing need in the Church is the evangelization and catechesis of adults. As the *General Catechetical Directory* so forcibly reminded us all “catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis” (20).

One could therefore build a strong case for concentrating more of our attention on the evangelization and catechesis of adults as high priority for the Church today. Here I am speaking of the need for adult catechesis in so far as committed, faith-filled adults form the context in which the catechesis of children and youth takes place.

Total commitment is essential

Children and youth look to adults—parents, teachers, the extended family, pastors, the whole Christian community—for models of Christian life and commitment. But so many Catholic adults are inactive in the practice of their faith or simply do not participate any more. Worse, vast numbers, while continuing to attend church services and fulfill minimal observance of church membership, have never really been converted. They have never turned their lives over to the Lord.

A living faith is the response of the total person, under the grace of God, to the living Word of God. It is the surrender of oneself, of one's life, one's heart, one's hands and feet to the Lord Jesus.

Being born again is at the very heart of the Christian life. Jesus said: “No one can see the reign of God unless he is begotten from above” (Jn. 3:3). Again, “I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit” (Jn 3:5).

Peter echoed these words when he told the crowd that had gathered at the first Pentecost: “You must reform and be baptized, each one of

you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

"Born again," "conversion," "reform," "turning our lives over to Jesus the Lord?" When do we see it in the lives of our people? In our own lives? How can children come to Jesus unless they see living witnesses? How can the grace of God touch their lives unless they are immersed in a faith-filled, worshiping, serving community?

The importance of living witnesses

We are all called to spiritual renewal. We need to really believe that Jesus promised before He ascended to the Father: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Children and youth need witnesses.

Growth in faith

There are stages in the process of coming to a mature, adult faith. First, under the grace of God and the witness of other believers, people come to an initial faith. They accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and at least in a general way respond to the good news that God loves us, that through the death and resurrection of Jesus He has shared His divine life with us, and that He calls us to union with Him. We call this evangelization.

Then comes catechesis, which presupposes this initial faith and is concerned with nurturing it, strengthening it, and making it mature.

Theology, a further stage, is faith seeking understanding, the systematic and scientific investigation of the truths of faith.

In the past several generations we have made catechesis chiefly a matter of religious instruction. And we have made religious instruction a kind of cut-down version of a theology course. We have neglected the central goal of catechesis which is to strengthen faith. And we have almost totally ignored the evangelization of Catholic people, presuming that the initial conversion had taken place in a Christian society.

In ages past, faith sharing was done through the parish, through a community which reinforced Christian values and beliefs, and through the family. We need to work toward building up this sort of faith community again.

Therefore, I say that the key to the catechesis of children and youth is the catechesis of adults. Young people need adult witnesses, people

who express their beliefs in their daily lives by what they do and say and love.

(The material which follows was submitted by Bishop Lucker in writing along with the text of the foregoing oral intervention.)

Importance of home, parents and the adult community

A number of scientific surveys conducted in the United States, amply corroborated by pastoral experience, over the past several years have indicated that the home and the parents exercise the strongest influence on the religious values of children and young people. The influence of the home and the parents surpass those of the school, peer groups and the media, although the latter are powerful forces, particularly as the child grows older. There is also strong evidence, from both pastoral experience and professional surveys, that children and young people are also impressed and motivated by the religious atmosphere and practice of the entire community in which they live and mature.

The influences of home, parents, and the adult community point to the fact that adult catechesis is the key to the success of the catechesis of children and young people. Without a vibrant, active, lived-out faith in the home and in the community, the effective catechesis of children and young people is weakened at best and in many cases rendered practically useless.

Need for personal conversion

Large segments of the adult Catholic community in the United States have an imperfect awareness of the foundations of the faith. Many do not accept the teaching of the Church on essential matters of doctrine and morals. Moreover, there has been an alarming decline in Mass attendance, in daily prayer, and in the practice of traditional Church devotions. Many have abandoned their membership in the Church.

A good number of Catholics are Catholics in name only. They appear to have never truly given a personal affirmative response to the invitation and gift of Christ. They have, in brief, never undergone a conversion experience. The faith in these instances appears superficial, the result of cultural influences or neighborhood pressure, rather than a commitment to Christ and to His Church.

In other cases, persons who say that they believe do not follow the Church closely any longer because they claim that they cannot see it as an integral part of their faith lives. They fail to appreciate the fact that faith in Christ is linked to the Church and that the two go hand in hand and support each other.

Therefore, when I speak of the powerful influence of home, parents, and adult community on the religious values and practice of children and young people, I am speaking of those homes, parents and adult communities that are made up of believing, loving, worshiping, and caring persons. One of the major tasks of adult catechesis, as I see it, is to bring about personal conversion and lives deeply dedicated to Christ reflected both in word and in deed.

Importance of adult catechesis

Adult catechesis, as I have indicated, is essential first for the faith of the individuals themselves. Faith grows and matures: it admits of varying degrees both in the response to God's Living Word and in the ability to explain and apply it.¹ It is the adult, under the influence of God's grace, who is capable of mature faith. In speaking of mature, adult faith, however, one must regard it as a journey, not a destination. It is a constant growing experience in which the adult never fully reaches the goal; there is always more room for being more like Christ, the purpose of catechesis.

This is the kind of adult—both in the home as a parent or as a member of the Catholic community—who exercises a strong influence on the religion of children and young people.

It is significant to note that Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as teaching the adults of His time.² His attention to and love for children is both touching and inspiring³ and certainly had a great influence on them. It is to the adult community, however, that He addressed His teaching. This example should be a strong motivating factor in giving priority to adult catechesis, while not neglecting the education in the faith of children and young people.

Aspects of adult catechesis

Adult catechesis takes three major forms: 1. parent catechesis; 2. family catechesis; and 3. adult catechesis *per se*. Each of these deserves a special treatment in its own right. Permit me to say a few words about parent catechesis and family catechesis.

The catechesis of adults as parents in the United States has experienced amazing growth over the past 10 years. From what I understand, the same is true throughout the universal Church. It is presently the most extensive and intensive form of adult catechesis in our

¹ *General Catechetical Directory*, 30.

² Cf. Mt 5:2; 4:23; 7:28; 15:1; 7:10; 13:10f; 11:1; 21:23; 26:55; Lk 5:3; Jn 8:13,19f; 16:29.

³ Cf. Mt 19:13ff; 18:15; Lk 7:32.

country. It is largely concentrated on assisting parents in the sacramental preparation of their children (First Eucharist, First Penance, Confirmation), and on understanding the psychological and spiritual development of the young.

Leaders of the Church are well advised to encourage this form of catechesis which, in addition to providing invaluable assistance to the parents, usually fosters much-needed interaction among parents and their children. In addition, creative new approaches need to be developed, built around other key moments—both religious and secular—in the lives of children and youth.

Family catechesis is among the newest and most promising forms of adult catechesis in our country. It is usually conceived and presented as a part of a total ministry to the family and is concerned with the physical, psychological, recreational, and spiritual well-being of all the members. Family catechesis strengthens the family bond while it attempts to build up the faith of each of its members.

Family catechesis must be realistic and take into account the profound changes that have taken place in the family in many nations. These changes often include dramatic increases in divorce, one-parent families, unwed mothers, working mothers, etc.

It is the hope of the U.S. delegation that the conclusions of this Synod will strongly recommend family catechesis and the development of creative and effective programs to fortify both faith and family, particularly in those parts of the world where family life and values have been weakened.

The catechesis of adults

There are, as we all know, special characteristics to the catechesis of adults. I would like to highlight just a few concerning content, prayer, and methodology.

a) The Christian message

Adulthood provides new opportunities to present the entire Christian message, to internalize it, and to relate it to life. Their catechesis is as comprehensive and diverse as the mission of the Church itself and can touch upon, for example, scripture, tradition, the sacraments, morality, the history and life of the Church, its missionary nature, the signs of the times, rapid change, social justice, the duties of citizenship, and ecumenism. A basic consideration is that it should correspond to the needs which adults identify themselves but also those which, whether they articulate them or not, are basic to the formation of intelligent and active Catholic Christians.

b) Prayer

Adult catechesis should lead to fervent prayer life. For both adults and communities, prayer means a deepening awareness of the covenanted relationship with God, coupled with the effort to live in total harmony with His will. Catechesis encourages private prayer to permeate the daily life of Christians and motivates individuals to enter into communal or public prayer, especially in the official worship of the Church.

From pastoral experience, there is no doubt that the life of prayer of the adult community, especially that of parents, is the most effective means of arousing and strengthening the life of prayer of children and young people.

c) The methods

Adults must play a central role in their own catechesis. Their adult status must be respected. Consequently it is necessary for them not only to identify their needs, but to help plan ways to meet them and to take part in the evaluation of programs and activities.

Respect for their adult status means making use of their experiences, cultural, racial and ethnic heritages, personal skills, religious devotions, and the other resources they bring to catechetical programs. Whenever possible, adults are given the opportunity to teach and learn from each other.

As much effective learning comes from reflecting upon one's personal experiences in the light of faith, adults need to be helped to translate such reflection into practical steps to meet their responsibilities in a Christian manner. Good catechesis attempts to provide, to the extent possible, appropriate experiences that have not been part of a person's life. This suggests the use of discussion techniques, especially in small groups, and the cultivation of communications skills. Other means are all the methods available to sound secular education, as well as specifically religious experiences, such as retreats, prayer meetings, and the like.

Obstacles to adult catechesis

Despite the need for adult catechesis, it has—except for parent education—run into several obstacles in the United States. I shall mention a few.

Perhaps the greatest is the fact that education in the faith is regarded as something for children and to a lesser extent for youth, but certainly not for adults. Changing attitudes from a "child-oriented" catechesis to a lifelong process culminating in adult catechesis has not been an easy process. There is still much to be done before adult catechesis is

recognized as the summit of the catechetical enterprise and a normal part of adult Christian life.

Moreover, in many instances, the parish is not a living, active, and vibrant faith community. Parish renewal, it must be noted, is at the very foundation of successful adult catechesis. Until the parish becomes a true faith community and sufficient emphasis and support is given, adult catechesis will remain little more than an ideal in the minds of some without any concrete existence in much of the Church of the United States.

We are pleased to report, however, that the new *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* has stimulated interest and promises to give considerable impetus to adult catechesis in many areas of our nation.

There is also, as it was mentioned earlier in this presentation, an alienation from the structures of the Church on the part of large numbers of young adults and adults. Many, it is said, see catechesis as a process of "indoctrination," which they resent, rather than one concerned with their spiritual and personal growth or compatible with their intellectual development.

Moreover, the Catholic Church in the United States is affected, as it is in many other parts of the world, generally adversely, by mobility, cultural uprooting, and dramatic shifts in social and moral norms and values. In all but a few pockets of stability, usually in ethnic neighborhoods and in rural areas, coherent Catholic communities have virtually disappeared.

Finally, catechists working with the adult community complain that a spirituality that incorporates the theological insights of the Second Vatican Council and the laity in the Church in contemporary society has not emerged at the popular level.

Motivation for adult catechesis

The obstacles to adult catechesis raise the important question of motivation. How can individuals be persuaded that catechesis is a life-long process, that adult catechesis is the summit of the catechetical enterprise, and that all adults should regularly participate in appropriate catechetical activities? Obviously there is no simple solution to this problem. Here, again, I shall limit myself to a few observations.

It is our conviction that the first and by far the most important step is to bring the adult community to a conversion experience, a genuine, deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to His Body, His Church. Only a believing, loving, praying, caring, and involved Catholic can see the need for continued spiritual and human growth, a growth that can be nourished by catechesis.

Secondly, adult catechesis must respect the adult status of the participants. In addition to what I have mentioned before, the process must be open and honest. Those taking part must be allowed to ask questions, express doubts, extend challenges, and articulate their deepest feelings and thoughts with regard to both faith and life. That is the only way that the teaching of Christ can be brought to bear on the real problems of people and bring them to greater maturity in the faith. In brief, a nexus needs to be established between doctrine and the realities of every day life.

It has been found helpful to seize upon certain "teachable moments" which occur in the life of an individual or community, moments when the ordinary course of life is broken to facilitate reflection on the meaning and purpose of life: marriage, a new home or job, sickness, death of a friend or relative; natural disasters, war, depression, epidemics; the opening of new frontiers in political, social, economic or medical areas; the introduction of new forms of travel and social communication. This expansion of horizons makes it easier to discover the presence of God in all of life, and to respond to Him in faith.

One cannot overstress the total environment of the parish as a motivating factor in adult catechesis. Adults will be stimulated and disposed by the excellence of the liturgies and homilies, the extent of shared decision-making, the priorities in the parish budget, the degree of commitment to social justice, and the quality of the other catechetical programs. A community of faith is the essential context of catechesis. People must feel that they make important contributions to the life of the community by their active participation in word and action, so that they feel appreciated, wanted, and needed.

It goes without saying that the quality of the programs, a comfortable environment, and good publicity are all basic ingredients to attract adults and to persuade them to make a commitment to lifelong catechesis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, adult catechesis needs to be a priority in the Church, both in the present and in the future. Adult catechesis is first of all important for the individuals themselves, to bring them to ever deepening maturity of faith. Because of the secular environment in the United States, adult catechesis needs to be preceded by a conversion experience, a real loving commitment to Christ.

In this context, the link between adult catechesis and the catechesis of children and young people becomes obvious. The catechesis of children and young people can hardly be successful if it is not supported by the words and deeds of committed Catholic parents and the example of a believing, worshipping, caring community.

Bishops and Theologians

Oral Intervention by

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati

In light of comments made earlier by Cardinal Munoz Vega, I wish to add to what the Italian group stated about catechesis and theology. I agree with what was said but I believe that the practical implications of this relationship need to be stressed more.

Both catechesis and theology presume faith. Both search for understanding and seek to enrich faith. Both are *ecclesial* tasks aimed at building up the Church. Catechesis must not be confused with theology as if its goal were limited to intellectual understanding; much less is it a mere branch of theology. Rather, theology is at the service of catechesis and must be in fruitful dialogue with it. Theology, when well done, is a hymn of praise to the Father through the Son in the Spirit, a hymn in which the rest of the community of believers can join. Even if they do not understand all the words, they should at least be able to hum the same tune.

Both theology and catechesis must be encouraged, therefore, to play their unique and complementary roles in building up the assent of faith in the Church, a faith that is a response to revelation and is lived in communion with the whole People of God under the leadership of the bishops.

Theologians must be allowed freedom to do necessary research and to enrich catechists with new insights and better formulations to express the Christian message. Catechists must be faithful to the authentic teaching of the Church, putting this into understandable "languages."

Given this relationship, the dialogue between bishops and theologians is of crucial importance. Because of their writings and their teaching positions, theologians *de facto* often exercise more influence than the bishops. Needless conflicts have had a divisive effect. We must recognize this and take the initiative, as pastors, in promoting fraternal dialogue, not to silence theologians but to challenge them to develop their sense of pastoral responsibility.

We are all members of the one Catholic Church. Theologians are not merely members of an academic community with a primary loyalty to that community. Theological talent is a charism given by God to help

nourish faith by finding ways to deepen our understanding of the mysteries of revelation. Bishops, too, are given a charism: that of discerning whether theological opinions accurately reflect the faith of the Church and will truly enrich the faith of the people.

Fraternal dialogue between bishops and theologians would solve many of the problems in catechesis today. It would serve to bring into clearer focus for all concerned the specific natures of the magisterium and the theological enterprise which are indeed different but complementary. It would also help to bring about greater understanding on the particular doctrinal issues which often confront us. I urge that such dialogue be encouraged at all levels by the Synod.

The Content of Catechesis

Oral Intervention by

Bishop Raymond A. Lucker of New Ulm

I wish to speak on the content of catechesis.

At this Synod we have reached agreement on many points: that Jesus Christ is the center of catechesis; that its aim is a mature, living faith; that catechesis best takes place within the context of a community of believers.

A major problem still faces us. That is the content of catechesis. Some of our priests and people are confused, upset, and polarized. We must ensure that theologians, catechetical writers, and all catechists (including those who are involved in the rapidly spreading charismatic renewal) present the Christian message in its integrity, while expressing it according to the age, culture, and disposition of the hearers.

The solution, as it seems to me, is not a universal catechism nor even a new source book for catechesis. We have these already—the *General Catechetical Directory*, National Catechetical Directories, the Credo of the People of God, the documents of Vatican II, and pastoral letters of bishops. All of these are excellent, but they have not ended the confusion and polarization.

I suggest a different approach.

Who are the people who are *not* upset, whose faith is *not* shaken by the speculations of theologians?

They are those who do not merely know about God but who know God; people who do not merely say prayers, but who in prayer come into contact with the living God. They listen to the teaching Church because of their unwavering commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to His Church through which He speaks today. They know the difference between faith and theologies. They are not tossed around by the winds of foolish doctrines. They are rooted and grounded in the love of Christ (Eph 3:17; 4:14). They build on rock because they hear Christ's words and put them into practice (Mt 7:24-25).

This has been my experience. I studied graduate theology 15 years after ordination. During this period, I had a really deep experience of faith. I came to see my faith as something very simple, rooted in God's love and in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Because of this, theological speculations do not disturb my faith.

I think that like me people accept the teaching of the magisterium not just because of intellectual arguments but because they accept God who loves us and revealed Himself to us. Because they accept God and His incarnate Word, they accept all that He teaches us through His Church.

Therefore, the most effective solution to the problem of confusion about the content of catechesis will be found in efforts to deepen the faith and prayer of our people.

Catechesis on the Diversity of Discipline Within the Church

Oral Intervention by

Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko

Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh

Byzantine Rite

The *circuli minores* have discussed the necessity of unity of faith and doctrine within the Catholic Church. Yet very little has been said about the diversity of discipline. Discipline has changed, is changing, and will continue to change to correspond to the needs of the times.

In the past there were times when catechists not only taught the unity of the Catholic Church in doctrine but also gave the impression that the Church was one and unchanging in discipline. As a result, when the Church changes discipline some people are confused: they feel that the doctrine of the Church itself is changing.

This Synod should insist that catechists know and teach the unity of Catholic faith and the legitimacy of diversity in discipline.

Catechetical Value of the Homily

Oral Intervention by

John Joseph Cardinal Carberry

Archbishop of St. Louis

Most Holy Father, Venerable Brothers:

I speak in the name of the delegates from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America.

Some of the reports of the small group discussions mention the relation that exists between catechesis and the liturgy. In this connection, the catechetical value of the homily has been the subject of some discussion.

It is true that the primary purpose of the liturgy is worship, and also that the integrity of the Lectionary should be respected. Adherence to the Lectionary acknowledges the freedom of the Word of God to confront us with realities, questions, and concerns which may have been overlooked by particular Christian communities. At the same time, respect for the integrity of the Lectionary is a way of reminding us of the universality of the Church, since believers throughout the world are united by reflecting on the same readings from the Sacred Scriptures.

Nevertheless, a special point I wish to raise is that often a large number of believers have no other opportunity than the celebration of the Sunday liturgy to be acquainted with, or reminded of the ways in which the Church has articulated its faith throughout the centuries, or the ways in which the Church has reflected on the apostolic kerygma and given an account of her reasons for entrusting herself entirely to the will of the Lord.

It is hoped that the Synod in the spirit of St. Pope Pius X will encourage bishops, pastors, priests, deacons, and those who assist them in their pastoral duties—especially catechists—to work closely together in preparing themes for the liturgical celebrations which, based on the Lectionary, will be developed in such a way that over a period of time the faithful will be exposed to a balanced presentation of the teachings of the Church. For many, especially adults, the period of the homily at Sunday Mass is the only opportunity they have of hearing an exposition on the faith in fuller and systematic presentation.

Already homiletical aides exist which may be of some help in preparing such programs, provided the catechetical needs of the local Church or community are indeed met by long-range planning.

Homilies and Adult Catechesis

Oral Intervention of

Archbishop John Whealon of Hartford

I wish to express a few thoughts concerning the catechesis of adults and the problem of homilies.

Three of the small groups said they are in favor of an adult catechesis, according to the pattern of the catechumenate.

Indeed the continuing catechesis of adults is an idea that well deserves implementation. However, we must keep this truth in mind: for the greatest number of Catholic adults catechesis will be given—or it will not be given—in church, by the priest or deacon, through homilies. Now and for the future it will be necessary for homilies to bring to the faithful both formation and information in the Way of Jesus Christ.

In our churches there is now a considerable problem about homilies. This problem is not caused by the Lectionary. We do not need a new Lectionary. But we do need a program of homilies so that our priests can in systematic fashion truly form the faithful in Catholic faith.

At this time the priest or deacon, preparing a homily, has no guide. He reads the three scripture lessons. He then selects one text as basis for a homily. He is like a sailor on the ocean, adrift because his boat has no rudder. And it is to be questioned whether that which is given is a true homily.

And now for several years our faithful have received no homily concerning post-biblical doctrines or liturgy or Catholic practices and devotions. Homilies, generally speaking, are now based on scripture alone and not on Catholic tradition. In our nation an analytical study of this question was made. Its conclusion: of all homilies only 2% are catechetical.

I hope that this Synod will bear in mind the *Pastoral Directory of Bishops*. I hope that this Synod will make a statement about the need for a program or programs of homilies. Such homilies should respect as much as possible both the scriptural texts and the major doctrines and practices of the Catholic faith.

Indeed it is important that we have a continuing catechesis of adults. And it is important that such a continuing catechesis of adults be presented primarily through programmed homilies.

Youth in Special Circumstances

Written Intervention by

Timothy Cardinal Manning

Archbishop of Los Angeles

I hope that the Synod in its final document will make mention of three groups of youth in special circumstances.

- 1) Those in detention homes. In one large metropolitan area some 50,000 are kept in custody for offenses they have committed. Many who work with them believe that there is no hope for most of them in society again. Catechesis for them has been ineffective. Much encouragement for them and those who work with them is needed.
- 2) The handicapped, but especially the mentally retarded. In addition to all that has been said about them elsewhere, praise and recognition are due to their loving parents and to those who specialize in the care of them.
- 3) Those young people who are attracted to the priesthood and religious life. Interest must be shown in them. They should be encouraged to follow Christ wherever He leads them.

Catechetics and the Eastern Catholic Churches

Written Intervention by

Archbishop Stephen J. Kocisko

Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh, Byzantine Rite

Several decades ago many clergy and faithful of the Eastern Catholic Churches from Eastern Europe left their homelands to come to the U.S.A. With them they brought their spiritual heritage of their Catholic faith and their Eastern rites.

The Eastern rites were strange and new to Catholics already living in the U.S.A. As a result they had a very difficult time to be accepted as Catholics. Their customs and traditions were not fully understood. Differences and dissensions arose, as a result of which the Eastern rite Catholic Churches in the U.S.A. suffered great losses.

To remedy this and similar situations Vatican Council II in the *Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches* directs that: "As a part of their catechetical education the laity, too, should be taught about these rites and their rules."

Today the Catechetical Directory being issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops acknowledges the existence of both the Western and Eastern rite Churches. It also gives information about the contribution of Eastern Churches to the Catholic Church. We are hopeful that the directions of the Catechetical Directory will be observed and that their observance will help to promote continued peace and harmony among the various rites in the U.S.A.

We feel that this Synod of Bishops should also give directives to the catechists to teach not only the unity of the Catholic Church in doctrine but also to teach of the existence of the various rites of the Catholic Church and the legitimacy of the customs and traditions of all the rites.

The Nature of Catechesis

Written Intervention by

Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, U.S.A.

1. Essential Elements

The four major elements in catechesis must be kept clearly in mind:

- a) deepening of *prayerful union with God*;
- b) initiation into a *community*;
- c) training for *service*;
- d) proclamation of the *message*.

There are serious pastoral problems involving each of these elements touched upon in the working paper and deserving of extended consideration in order to further the catechesis of children and youth, as well as that of all members of the faith community.

a) **Prayer**

The purpose of the Church and of all pastoral ministries in the Church is to unite humankind to God through Jesus Christ. Prayer, as the realization of this purpose, must pervade catechesis from beginning to end.

God speaks His Word in order to call us to praise and thank Him for His gifts and to encourage us to ask His help and pardon. God sends His Spirit to enable us to pray in a way beyond our human capacities, to call God "Abba," Father, with sighs too deep for words.

Prayer must never be reduced to an artificial appendage at the end of a catechetical instruction; still less, to a device for quieting a group or getting attention. Prayer is an experience of God's presence to us. As such, it is the basis upon which catechesis is built as well as the apex toward which the entire catechetical enterprise grows. Prayer, both personal and communal, is the foretaste of that union with God which we shall enjoy together for all eternity. Hence, prayer carries within it the motivation for all our growth in knowledge and love of the Lord.

b) **Community**

Since catechesis fosters initiation into a community, we must take care that there really is a community which welcomes those being catechized, a community recognized and valued as a true Christian

community, with all this implies. Otherwise, we build false hopes, and the end result will be alienation from the Church. This is seen in the case of young people who experience community in their schools but not in contemporary parish life. As a result, they may withdraw, partially or fully, from participation in the life of the Church.

“Community” is a particularly acute problem in very large parishes and in areas affected by the anonymity and alienation so characteristic of urban and technological cultures. Family life, too, is threatened by contemporary phenomena, such as mobility and indiscriminate use of mass media.

For proper Christian formation it is absolutely necessary to provide an environment of community life in which each person is known, cherished, and needed. This begins in families but is also to be found in a striking way in the basic ecclesial communities so well described in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, par. 58. Intimate and frequent contact with clergy is required for such communities to flourish.

Christian community life is not due solely to human efforts. It is a gift of God. We are born into the family of God at baptism. The Holy Spirit makes us members of the body of Christ and continues to work within us, making us more Christlike and summoning us to closer union with God and one another.

c) **Service**

Since we rightly expect Christians to put principles into practice and so build up the community, catechesis must provide the motivation and skills necessary for service of the Church and the world. Actual service projects, doing the truth in love, are necessary for this purpose. Some catechesis in the past has been too theoretical, too removed from life. Action is an integral part of catechesis.

Young people especially must experience for themselves the reality that the Church carries on the work of Christ the servant. The Church serves them and their needs. It also challenges them to become sensitive to injustice and to collaborate in working against it.

Structures must be designed to ensure that the principles of subsidiarity, shared responsibility, and accountability are applied at all levels of church life. As people share more in the decisions which affect their lives and learn from the results of those decisions, the credibility and effectiveness of the Church will grow.

d) **Message**

What has been said thus far refers to catechesis in the wide sense. Prayer, community, and service are key elements in the entire process

of bringing Christian faith, love, and responsibility to maturity. They are the matrix and fruit of catechesis in the narrow sense, i.e., instruction given to those who already believe.

One of the major pastoral problems in the Church today is the very legitimate and proper concern of some parents, priests, and bishops lest adequate and accurate instruction in the faith be neglected as prayer, community, and service receive more emphasis than before in catechesis of children and youth. Unfortunately, some identify instruction in the faith with the memorization of words used to express and communicate faith. Verbal formulas of course are valuable, indeed necessary. But they are not enough. Human communication is much richer than words.

Since the living Word of God is addressed to the whole person and seeks to bring about an ever more profound conversion of mind, heart, will, emotions, attitudes, and values, catechesis must not be reduced merely to transmitting information. Catechesis is a form of pastoral ministry of the Word. It is meant to help us recognize and respond to God's revelation. It is to serve as a basis for deeper spirituality, enabling the whole person to respond more fully to God in faith.

First and foremost faith is acceptance of God. Because we accept God, we accept whatever He tells us. Fidelity to the content of Jesus' revelation takes its fundamental importance from the fact that it is the measure of our fidelity to Him. This priority must be respected in catechesis.

Practical faith, i.e., the whole structure of our lives as believers, including our prayerful response to His saving Word, rests on what we believe and to a very significant extent on our willingness to search out and absorb into our lives and thinking what Jesus teaches us through the Church. Learning the Christian message is not so much an obligation as it is the central adventure of Christian life. And catechesis must present it this way.

2. Catechesis and theology

Both catechesis and theology presume an initial faith. Both search for understanding. Both try to enrich faith.

Yet catechesis must be distinguished from theological research, which uses rigorous scientific analysis and synthesis and employs philosophy, history, linguistics, and other disciplines to come to fuller understanding and better expression of Christian truth.

Catechesis is more inclusive. Through catechesis the Holy Spirit moves faith beyond the first general acceptance of God to a critically

reflective sense of wonder in the presence of the divine mystery. This mystery will always lie beyond total human comprehension but calls for continual search on our part. Catechesis aims at mature faith in its fullest sense, calling for a continual conversion, entering more and more into the mystery of Christ. For this to take place, catechesis must include commitment as well as understanding, love as well as clear ideas. It is not enough to know intellectually what God has revealed and what the Church teaches. We must embrace that truth and live it. Catechesis looks for the total response of the total person.

Therefore, catechesis must not be confused with theology as if its goal were primarily understanding; much less is it a mere branch of theology. That is too narrow a view of the catechetical task. Rather, theology itself is at the service of catechesis and must be in fruitful dialogue with it.

3. Catholic doctrine

An important part of catechesis is the clear and forceful, attractive and well-balanced presentation of the authoritative teaching of the Church. This has value from the innate attraction of truth and the deep yearnings for meaning which fill the human heart. It is important that, as people become more literate in other fields, they not remain religiously illiterate, with an immature understanding of the teachings of the Church.

Furthermore, in a turbulent and complex world, people want to know that the Church has clear and certain convictions, insights into the divine mystery and norms for human life, solidly rooted in the Gospel and the centuries of Christian experience of living the Gospel message. Christ has entrusted Himself and His message to the Church to be handed on faithfully to future generations. Though all else may shift and change, God is utterly reliable; Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church He founded.

The Church is the indispensable guide to the richness of the Christian message. It is infallibly certain of the central elements of the divine mystery, elements articulated and confirmed by the living magisterium. If this were not possible, if no one could be sure whether God had spoken or not, nor of the meaning of His Word, then His self-revelation would have been in vain. But, in fact, God speaks to His people and expects our assent. He gives His Holy Spirit to the Church to lead His people into an understanding of all that Christ said and did. This process of growth and understanding has been going on for centuries and will continue to the end of time.

4. Dialogue

a) Both theology and catechetics must be allowed to play their unique and complementary roles in building up the assent of faith in the Church, a faith that accepts revelation and lives it in communion with the whole People of God under the leadership of the hierarchy.

Theologians must be allowed freedom to do necessary research and to enrich catechists with new insights and better formulations to express the Christian message.

Catechists must be faithful to the authentic teaching of the Church, putting this into understandable "languages." Beyond the language of words, there are languages of symbols, of music, of architecture, and bodily gesture which touch the heart as well as the intellect and provide the motivation for action.

While theologians search out "objective truth" and attempt to communicate this universally, catechists must translate this into a language which speaks to individual persons, adapting it to the needs and interests of each one. They must be sensitive to a pluralism not only of races and cultures, but also to a pluralism of backgrounds, feelings, and situations within a diocese, parish, classroom, and home, and a legitimate pluralism of values.

b) There are four groups which ought to be in constant catechetical dialogue: bishops, theologians, catechists, and faithful. These categories overlap. All must be practicing believers. Some bishops are theologians and all should be catechists. But within the believing community, special types of conversation are needed. Catechists have a special responsibility to listen carefully to the spoken and unspoken yearnings and visions of the people so that they may articulate this as a source of theological reflection and as aid to episcopal direction. Catechists must speak and listen to theologians and bishops, and the bishops and theologians must speak and listen to the catechists. Bishops and theologians must speak and listen to each other.

The dialogue of bishops and theologians is of special importance. Because of their teaching positions in colleges, universities, and seminaries, theologians *de facto* often exercise more influence than the bishops in today's catechetical scene. Church unity has suffered from needless open conflicts and disagreements. Bishops should recognize this and take the initiative in opening fraternal dialogue, not to silence theologians but to challenge them to develop their sense of pastoral responsibility. As the International Theological Commission pointed out, "The scientific character of their work does not free theologians from pastoral and missionary responsibility, especially given the publicity which modern communications media so quickly give to even scientific

matters. Besides, theology, as a vital function in and for the People of God, must have a pastoral and missionary intent and effect." (*Theses on the Relationship Between the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology*. Thesis three, June 6, 1976.)

We are all members of the one Catholic Church. Theological talent is a charism given by God to build the Church up, not tear it down. Theologians should ask themselves whether in exercising their charism they are serving the Church of God or themselves. Bishops should ask themselves whether they show sufficient respect for the competence of theologians, their love of truth, and their loyalty to the Church. Every effort should be made to bridge the communication gap between theologians and bishops. If this happens, many of the other problems will take care of themselves.

Revelation is addressed to all four categories or groups, for the Holy Spirit is given to the entire Church and enables all believers to know the one true God and Jesus, the Messiah, whom He sent. But the responsibility to teach and the mode of communication differ on each level. The experiences of bishops and faithful and the "languages" at their disposal often differ so greatly that special efforts are needed to ensure full union of minds and hearts.

Catechesis for Children and Youth In a World of Religious Pluralism

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

In initiating children and youth into a community of faith, catechesis should give them a clear sense of their Christian identity. This includes the firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God, strong loyalty to Christ's Church, and a clear recognition that His Church, "constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor" (*Lumen Gentium*, 8).

The Church has a responsibility to prepare children and youth to live in a world where many people have different beliefs or no belief at all. It should also help them recognize and encourage the development of the spiritual truths and values which are the seeds of God's Word planted everywhere in human hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 15).

All people, believers and non-believers alike, are created in God's image and likeness and therefore worthy of the deepest respect and esteem. The Catholic Church champions the dignity of the human vocation and holds out hope to those who do not know about anything higher than earthly existence. In supporting and working for human rights and freedom, the Church is confident that its message is in harmony with the most authentic and profound desires of the human heart. Further, the Church invites all to see Christ as the perfect human being and Son of God, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). Catholics must strive to understand and collaborate with all persons of good will in promoting human values common to all.

God's Word gives "light to every man" (Jn 1:9). Most religions everywhere strive to answer the restless searchings of the human heart through teachings, rules of life, and sacred ceremonies. Millions of people around the globe follow traditional religions, handed down from time immemorial, whose rites and mores generate among them a sense of solidarity. We should learn about these religions in order to aid the missionary endeavor of the Church, which seeks to reach these people and, with respect for their cultural and political autonomy, to offer them the witness of worship, belief, and life for the sake of Christ Jesus,

while redeeming those elements of their religious and cultural traditions which can become part of ecclesial life. It is essential that the missionary work of the Church not compel others to express Christian truth in Western clothing.

The Catholic Church regards the positive and enriching aspects of these religions with honor and reverence. This interest should spur catechists to:

- 1) Present an accurate account of the essential elements of other religious beliefs, as perceived by their adherents in the light of their own religious experience. Catechists should avoid words, judgments, and actions which misrepresent the beliefs and practices of others.
- 2) Develop an appreciation of the insights and contributions made to humanity by other religious groups.
- 3) Promote joint projects in the cause of justice and peace.
- 4) Communicate effectively the values which Catholics share with others.
- 5) Encourage dialogue and prayer in common.

Catechetical textbooks should conform to the guidelines found in the various documents of the Church¹ while also taking into account the age and readiness of learners. When circumstances seem to call for teaching religion to children and youth in an ecumenical setting, this should be done only with the knowledge and guidance of the local Ordinary.

Gratitude for Christ's revelation and joy in the faith should lead to a desire to share with others the truth God has revealed to us.

Awe and reverence for the immensity of the divine mystery should lead to openness, to an appreciation of the truths and values others have discovered, in the confidence that they will help us to appreciate all the more what God has said to us through His Son. For Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word of God, the fullness of God's revelation.

¹ Cf. also *Directory Concerning Ecumenical Matters: Part One*, May 14, 1967; *Part Two: Ecumenism in Higher Education*, April 16, 1970; *Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity; Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions*, 2-4; *Guidelines on Religious Relations with the Jews* (4), December 1, 1974, *Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews; Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of 'Nostra Aetate'* (4), November 20, 1975, *National Conference of Catholic Bishops*.

Respect for the dignity of the human conscience, the freedom of the act of faith, and the plan of the Holy Spirit should lead to patience in waiting for the right moment to speak, to delicacy and sensitivity toward the feelings of others, and to a firm refusal to engage in any form of violation of conscience, which would be unworthy of the mission entrusted by Christ to His Church.

Catechesis for Racial, Cultural, and Ethnic Groups

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Many nations are composed of various racial, cultural, and ethnic groups. In some cases, this is the result of the history of the nation's formation; in others, it has been brought about by wars or other catastrophes in the recent past, or by migrations arising from the desire for greater freedom and opportunities for development.

In the United States, all of these factors have combined to produce a populace composed of racial, cultural, and ethnic groups. (The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States has published a statement on the migrations of people which discusses this topic in depth.)

In recent times members of these various minorities have become increasingly aware of their historical roots and of the richness of their traditions. They wish to be faithful to their heritage, to make the entire society aware of their rights and needs, and to make their unique contribution to the life of the nation.

This situation challenges the society to respond in ways which affirm the dignity of all persons and which care for the needs of minorities, respecting their customs and traditions and promoting their contribution to the welfare of the community. In this intervention, however, we will address ourselves to the challenge and opportunities which such a situation presents to the Church's catechetical mission of deepening the faith of believers.

Catechesis has an important role in this response by promoting what is good in this situation, by adopting catechetical methods and approaches that take this pluralism into account, and by promoting the fundamental unity that must exist in the midst of this diversity.

This phenomenon presents a good opportunity for a catechesis on the mystery of the local Church as the incarnation of the entire People of God.

Fundamental evangelical insights must underlie this catechesis. Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, is the Messiah who has come to bring together men and women of every background into the one family of God. By shedding His blood, Jesus has leveled the barriers which sin

had erected to keep people apart; to all who believe in Him He offers citizenship in the City of God. This forging of a unity which transcends all human divisions is thus a sign of the continuing activity of the Risen Lord. He accomplishes this purpose through the Church, which is a "kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity," as well as the "instrument for the achievement of such union and unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1).

The Church of Jesus Christ is thus universal. Christians belong "to a large community which neither space nor time can limit . . . a universal Church without boundaries or frontiers except, alas, those of the heart and mind of sinful man" (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 61). This universal family, gathered by Jesus the Messiah, united by one faith and one baptism, living by one Holy Spirit, and having one Father of all, incorporates into its common life all the different characteristics of the peoples of the world: those "aspirations, riches and limitations, ways of praying, of loving, of looking at life and the world which distinguish this or that human gathering" (*ibid.*, 63). Indeed by bringing about this unity, the universal Church demonstrates the power of the Gospel to fulfill all the noble aspirations of the human heart.

Each local church is like a kind of sacrament of the universal Church. The local church is not a member of a federation of essentially different churches; rather, it is an incarnation of the universal Church. Accordingly, within its own boundaries, united by the ministry of the bishop, the local church is called to witness to the universality of God's people. For this reason, the existence in the midst of the local church of racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity is not to be seen as a burden to be overcome, but as a blessing—an opportunity to demonstrate that God's universal family has indeed become incarnate in the local church.

This is the evangelical foundation for a catechesis responsive to a situation of social diversity.

The first task of such a catechesis is to raise the consciousness of all the faithful of the local church: to make them aware of their opportunity to manifest that universality which is a sign—and indeed the test—of its authenticity as the people gathered by Jesus Christ. On the other hand, tension often exists, not only between minorities and the larger community, but between minorities themselves, even between Catholic minorities. Catechesis should insist that injustice, prejudice, and discrimination are not only inconsistent with human dignity, but also signify a serious ignorance of the nature of life in the Spirit, an opposition to the work of Jesus Christ, a scandalous offense against the Church.

It is important that catechesis also take into account the diversity that exists even among members of the same generic racial, cultural,

or ethnic group. For example, in the United States the Spanish-speaking, while sharing a common language and many traditions, include Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, Cubans, and others with distinct customs and needs. The same is true of the various tribes and nations of Native Americans, Afro-Americans, and others.

In all of this, catechesis should utilize the different languages, not just its vocabulary, but its thought patterns, cultural idioms, customs, and symbols. Attention to these is important in relation to liturgical expression, devotional life, theological formulation, secondary ecclesial structures, and ministries. Catechetical materials prepared especially for this purpose are to be preferred to the translation of materials prepared for others.

Fidelity to the plan of Jesus Christ should inspire the entire local church to assist those communities in developing their own resources and to help them provide for their own catechetical needs. Obviously this will require a realistic and prudent allocation of resources, which are often very limited. Parochial, regional, and national leadership and coordination are important. Condescension and patronizing attitudes must be avoided.

The preparation of catechists attentive to this challenge is extremely important. Generally speaking, the most effective catechists will themselves be members of the group being catechized. Thus the selection and training of such persons is very important. At the same time, exemplary work is often done by those who, although not members of these groups, still love and empathize with those whom they seek to serve.

Even in culturally homogeneous areas and parishes, catechesis should promote knowledge of other cultural, racial, and ethnic groups, and should foster respect for them. Attention to their human rights and needs is an essential part of catechesis on behalf of justice and peace. The participation of minority group members in religious and social functions requiring mutual planning and efforts should be encouraged.

At all times it must be borne in mind that there is no such thing as a national, racial, or ethnic church. There is only one Catholic Church, taking root in a diversity of cultural and sociological conditions. Union with the bishop of the local church is the definite assurance that the various communities are in communion with the one Catholic Church; just as communion with the bishop and the Church of Rome is the assurance that the local church is indeed the full manifestation of the universal People of God. The bishop, who is "the visible source and foundation of unity" in the local church, has the "obligation of fostering and safeguarding the unity of the faith and of upholding the discipline which is common to the whole Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, 23).

Catechesis for Prayer

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

In a technological age prayer becomes more necessary as well as more difficult. We live in a world of noise. Valuable as they are, radio and television, newspapers and billboards constantly bombard us with messages shrewdly calculated to capture our attention. We hide our inner loneliness with songs and slogans which give us a sense of solidarity, however superficial. In such an environment silence can seem threatening. People may tend to grow restless even during the short silences set aside in the liturgy of the Eucharist.

At the same time there is a deep yearning for closer union with God. People are searching out new ways to pray. Vocations to contemplative life increase. Religious communities set aside houses of prayer. The charismatic renewal appeals to more and more Christians. Many of the faithful meditate regularly on the Word of God. Many young people especially are experimenting with methods of prayer, including even the sound values expressed in ancient religious traditions of the East. They are learning to accept the need for discipline in order to discover interior silence and listen to God's voice.

Those who pray, whether soldiers on a battlefield or children at meals, give a valuable witness to their faith in God and often awaken in others a reverence, even a hunger, for prayer.

Indeed, Christian life is inconceivable without prayer. Why? Because salvation consists in union with God and familiarity with Him—in entering into the interior dialogue of the Trinity itself, so that we can speak intimately to God and cry out with Jesus: "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15). All strivings in prayer, communal or individual, are efforts to associate ourselves as consciously and consistently as possible with the constant activity of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. He calls us to be open to His inspirations, to cooperate with His initiatives, to remove all obstacles to our becoming other Christs.

The Spirit enables us to share the loving prayer of God's Son, who is alive and active, constantly making intercession for us (Rom 8:34). Our prayer is but an echo of the great Amen of Jesus (2 Cor 1:19-20). He sums up in Himself the response that the Father asks from the whole of humanity.

Hence, free self-surrender to the unutterable mystery of God is at the very heart of Christian life. Prayer is not a mere part of Christian life—it is Christian life. For both individuals and communities, prayer means a deepening awareness of covenanted relationship with God, coupled with the effort to live in total harmony with His will. Private prayer should permeate the daily life of the Christian. It helps the individual enter into communal or public prayer. St. Paul tells us “Pray without ceasing” (Eph 6:18). Many have found aspirations very helpful in doing so.

How can catechesis respond to the need of people of our day for initiation into the Christian life of prayer?

Building upon the sense of wonder, catechesis leads people to a sense of the sacred and to recognition of God's presence and action in their lives. This is the source of all prayer.

Catechesis for prayer begins very early in childhood, in the experience of hearing others pray; even small children can learn to call upon the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. In time, the child will become familiar with the various prayers and prayer forms of the Church and make them part of his or her life. Catechesis encourages daily prayer, family prayer, and prayer on other occasions, such as before and after meals. Very often adults who pray today do so because they first prayed at home with their parents.

Because it leads individuals and communities to deeper faith, all catechesis is oriented to prayer and worship. The deepening of faith strengthens the covenant relationship with God and calls Christians to respond in worship and ritual.

Liturgical worship “is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the source from which all her power flows” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). It is the foretaste of that heavenly liturgy in which we shall rejoice with God's family forever. Catechesis promotes active, conscious participation in the liturgy. It reminds us that, whether at times we feel like praying or not, liturgical prayer, like all prayer, is as necessary for spiritual life as are water and bread for physical life.

By the nature of their ministry catechists are called to teach others to pray and lead them in prayer. To do this the catechist must be a prayerful person. This means not only praying alone faithfully, which is essential, but also praying with other catechists, especially those engaged in the same catechetical program, to deepen and express their sense of community with one another and with Christ. To lead others to pray is to share most intimately in the mission of the Word of God.

The Role of the Human Sciences In Catechesis

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

The role of the human sciences

The Church encourages the use of the biological, social and psychological sciences in pastoral care.¹ This is also true of catechesis: "Because of the rapid development in present-day culture, the catechetical movement will in no way be able to advance without scientific study."² Manuals for catechesis should take into account psychological and pedagogical insights, as well as suggestions about methods.³ The use of the human sciences is necessary for good catechesis. Even while one recognizes their limitations and shortcomings, one should not regard them as merely tolerated by the Church.

The human sciences cause neither faith nor growth in faith. Faith is from God: "This is not your doing, it is God's gift" (Eph 2,8). The nature of this free gift and the need for a wholehearted response must be basic in catechesis.

However, the human sciences do help us understand how people grow in their human capacity for responding in faith to God's grace. Thus they can make a significant contribution to catechesis. For example, psychology clarifies the way children and youth learn; sociology provides a better understanding of the environment in which catechesis takes place; pedagogy improves the methods of teaching; anthropology gives assistance in appreciating and dealing with the numerous racial, cultural, and ethnic groups within the universal Church.

Catechists should not be uncritical in their approach. New discoveries are constantly being made in the human sciences, while old theories are frequently discarded. There are different schools of thought which do not agree in all respects; nor are all developments of equal merit. Catechists should not imagine that any one school or theory has all the answers. Finally, human sciences do not supply the doctrinal and moral content of catechetical programs, nor are they the source of ultimate values. Their discoveries and developments must receive constant and

¹ For the use of the social and psychological sciences in pastoral care, cf. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 52, 62.

² *General Catechetical Directory*, 131; *Declaration on Christian Education*, 1.

³ *General Catechetical Directory*, 121.

careful evaluation by competent persons before being incorporated into catechetics.

In addition, one's understanding of catechesis must not be linked exclusively to a single explanation of the stages of human development and its implications for growth in faith.

In promoting human development, moreover, one must be extremely careful not to infer or to give the impression that only those who are considered 'normal' by society can have a meaningful relationship with God or that He ignores such persons as the uneducated and the mentally retarded. God gives His gifts in abundance and in many ways that are mysterious to human beings and confound our human expectations and categories. He also favors the poor of this earth and calls all of us to change and become like little children if we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:3). The human sciences are by no means the ultimate norm for judging a person's relationship with God.

The development character of the life of faith

Jesus' words "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn 15:14) point to the fact that the life of faith involves a relationship—a friendship—between persons. As the quality of a friendship between human beings is affected by such things as their maturity and freedom, their knowledge of each other, and the manner and frequency of their communication, so the quality of a friendship with God is affected by the characteristics of the human party. Because people are capable of continual development, so are their relationships with God. Essentially, development in faith is the process by which one's relationship with the Father becomes more like Jesus' (cf. Jn 14:6 ff.): it means becoming more Christlike. This is not just a matter of subjective, psychological change; rather, it involves establishing and nurturing a real relationship to Jesus and the Father in the Holy Spirit, through prayer, study, and serving others.

The relationship of growth in faith to human development

Because the life of faith is related to human development, it passes through stages or levels; furthermore, people differ in the intensity with which they accept and experience particular aspects of faith. This is true, for example, of the comprehensiveness and intensity with which God's word is accepted, of the ability to explain it, and of the ability to apply it to life.⁴

Catechesis is meant to help at each stage of human development and to lead ultimately to full identification with Jesus. The human sciences can be valuable tools in achieving this goal.

⁴ Cf. *General Catechetical Directory*, 30, 38.

Catechesis for Respect of Human Life

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). In His actions He showed His followers that life is precious; that a Christian must strive to foster life, preserve it, do all in one's power to enable others to come to the fullness of life. Jesus applied this to the lame, the blind, the oppressed, the children, the poor, the sick, the lowly, the sinner. Life is so precious that Jesus gave as the greatest sign of human love the sacrifice of one's life for others. "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, the Church strives to call persons of all ages, children, youth or adults, in all circumstances, to realize and appreciate the dignity of each and every person. "In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord: 'As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me' (Mt 25:40)" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 25).

Christians must treat human life, in all forms from the unborn child to the elderly, with the respect and concern that is due all who are created in the image and likeness of God, destined to live with Him forever. The psalmists in the Old Testament and the evangelists of the New reflect the biblical belief that the person is the pinnacle of God's visible creation, made to His image and likeness, set apart from and over the rest of the created order.

In today's world such catechesis is imperative in the face of the decline in respect for human life. This is evident in the massive increase in the number of abortions in many nations and the growing approval of euthanasia and life-taking forms of fetal experimentation. In some cases, the lack of respect extends to the destruction of lives deemed defective because of mental, physical, or social handicaps. In other cases the taking of life is justified simply because it is an inconvenience to others. In some parts of the world there is genocide and the torture and murder of persons deemed to be political enemies.

Respect for human life should motivate Christians to do all in their power to extol the value of life and to prevent such violations of human rights which are prevalent in many nations. It should prompt the follower of Christ to reach out to the downtrodden, the alcoholic, the drug addict, to heal them and convince them through their witness of their value and worth as God's own.

Anything which endangers human life such as wars, defense policies, neutron bombs, behavioral control through surgery and drugs, genetic engineering, and certain forms of population control should be the concern of one who professes Jesus as Lord. Capital punishment is also a matter which requires special attention.

All persons of conscience must respect human life in every way in their own personal lives. They are to bring about, to the extent that they can, changes in the attitudes and conditions of society that are detrimental to respect for human life. World hunger, sub-standard living or working conditions, the plight of the elderly, or whatever violates the integrity of the human person cannot be ignored. In many cases these will require participation in the political processes for the purpose of bringing into existence legislation that protects and respects the life of every human being from conception to natural death.

Catechesis, adapted to individuals and cultures, needs to emphasize the human dignity and sacredness of life. Convinced of this, the Catholic Christian will do whatever is possible to create conditions for the spiritual, psychological, and physical development of each human being. St. Paul exhorts us to "owe no man anything except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law. For 'Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet'; and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Love does no evil to a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law" (Rom 13:8-10).

Principles Underlying the Doctrinal Elements of Catechesis For Young Children

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

The need for substantial content

Modern catechetical renewal calls for clear and integral presentation of doctrinal content in the early years of childhood, between ages 6 to 12, when the children are open to learn and appreciate the truths, values, and behavioral norms of Christianity. The thrust of catechesis today is to have substantial content, accurate and complete in catechetical programs. Without passing judgment on all programs and texts, our purpose is to take care that there be solid substance, and expressed in the language of today, so that children are not forced to cope with terms beyond their comprehension. Some people may not recognize this content because it is expressed in terms other than those with which they are familiar.

In our country we have set up guidelines to ensure adequate and comprehensive content.¹

This clear and integral presentation of doctrine facilitates memorization, which is an important component of all education. When properly integrated into a catechetical program, memorization gives children a sense of accomplishment and mastery, enables them to feel part of the adult community as they participate in family and parish prayer, intensifies their Catholic identity, and provides a useful store of material which can be recalled with value and joy in later years.

What follows is not a summary of the essential doctrines of the Church but rather principles intended to be of service to those who have the responsibility to select and present religious content in catechesis for children from ages 6 to 12.

Children in the early grades must be prepared for the faith crisis which so many of them will face around age 13-14, and which in the

past has led many to leave the Church. As the age of critical decision drops, catechesis must change to meet the challenge.

Presentation

The doctrinal content must be put into language which can be readily understood by children even if there is no background of religious practice in the home. This is particularly important since so many parents of young children today have either dropped out of the Church or are suffering serious problems of faith.

The doctrinal content must relate clearly to the children's most important experiences, good or bad, and must respond to their fundamental human needs, clarifying how religious trust and values pervade the whole of life. As Christians we believe that God is present everywhere, always manifesting Himself to us, and that His revelation as expressed in Christian tradition sheds light on life.

Because doctrinal content is valuable, we should assist children to perceive its value, helping them to appreciate the goodness in themselves and others, helping them to cope with evil, giving meaning to life, and strengthening hope in God and building fidelity to the Church. The value of catechetical programs should be so powerful that the children will be motivated to come voluntarily—and to invite their friends. Christianity originally spread not by force or social pressure but by its attraction to the human heart. It can continue to do so.

The doctrinal content must be adapted to the children's level of development. This involves several points.

We must arouse curiosity and promote the joy of discovery, not presenting everything in each year, over and over, so that eventually they say "We heard all that before."

We must present them with material within their capacity, not elements they are bound to misunderstand so that the same material will have to be "untaught" later.

We must strive to open to them the joy and hope of the Gospel, not intensify their feelings of guilt, which so often are based on mistaken perceptions of responsibility. While not minimizing the seriousness of sin, we must free them from false guilt by helping them to distinguish sins from mistakes, by making them familiar with the many ways—in addition to the Sacrament of Penance, the ordinary way—in which real sins can be forgiven, and by giving them sufficient preparation so that they are truly free and attracted to receive God's sign of pardon and reconciliation in the sacrament of forgiveness.

Elements to be included

The doctrinal content must provide understanding and appreciation of the following elements.

- a) Catholic doctrine about the dignity and destiny of each person in relationship to God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and other religious communities in the world. In the formative years from 6 to 12 particular emphasis should be put on our relationship with Jesus and the need to grow in that relationship.
- b) The language and thought of the Bible. By the age of 12 they should have learned reverence for the Bible as the Word of God. They should have learned how to understand it as the Church does and have been introduced to the diversity, purpose, and meaning of various literary forms. Not everything in the Bible is meant to be interpreted in the same way. To recognize this is not impoverishing but enriching.
- c) The language and symbolism of the liturgy and the liturgical year. Catholics have a rich heritage of ritual which appeals to the sense and feelings as well as to the mind: the special meanings of light, water, incense, bread, wine; the special seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.
- d) The religious behaviors and practices traditional in the Catholic Church: liturgical and personal prayer, the Way of the Cross and the Rosary, devotion to the Sacred Heart, to Mary, and to the saints, sacramentals.
- e) The role and value of the commandments and Church law in forming and guiding moral decisions. They are not an imposition but a gift, meant not to destroy freedom but to channel and intensify it so that we can put our talents at the service of others in imitation of God our Father and Jesus our Brother.

Catechesis in sexuality in the context of religious values is necessary for all children and young people. "As they advance in years, they should be given positive and prudent sexual education" (*Gravissimum Educationis* #1). This should include all dimensions: moral, spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical, helping them to understand, accept, and reverence their sexuality as a gift of God.

Balance

The doctrinal content must be well-balanced: containing intellectual, emotional, and moral elements in each year; clarifying the hierarchy of doctrines by concentrating on the most central truths and values, and

showing how these shed light on others; reflecting the teachings of the Church, as known from the Bible, the documents of Vatican II, the encyclicals and other writings of the popes, and the pastoral letters of the bishops; distinguishing essentials from accidentals; developing both personal and liturgical modes of prayer, as expressions of intimacy and participation; integrating whenever possible religious teachings and values with those of the culture, such as science, technology, pragmatism, freedom, autonomy, and individual self-fulfillment.

All human beings have strong needs for security, affection, acceptance, integration, and growth. These will be reflected not only in the general culture but also in sub-cultures of age, sex, class, race, and ethnic background.

Goals

The doctrinal content must lead effectively to the goals of catechesis: not just to knowledge but to faith; not just to internal assent but to external behavior; not just to a temporary but a lasting effect; not just to individual fulfillment but to communal responsibility; not just to conformity but to freedom; i.e., not forming authoritarian personalities but thoughtful, free persons; not just focused on the present but incorporating past traditions and open to the future; not making them satisfied with the status quo but arousing enthusiasm to construct a new world, with a specifically Christian understanding and motivation; being relatively complete at different points where large numbers of children drop out of formal catechetical programs.

In short, the goal is to build mature faith and a deep love for God, the Church, and all persons, to touch all the dimensions of the personality, and integrate them through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Integration with adult education

That same doctrinal content must be presented to the teachers and parents who are involved in varying degrees in the catechetical process, so that they are enriched in their understanding and appreciation of God's self-revelation—and helped in their efforts to share their discoveries with their children.

The doctrinal content must be integrated also with that of other parish catechetical programs: the liturgy on Sundays and feasts, which includes the cycles of readings from scripture on Sundays and weekdays and homilies on these readings; adult religious programs to train teachers for Catholic schools and other religious programs for children; adult catechetical programs for parents—whether in connection with their children's ongoing religious education in formal programs or as special preparation for various sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Pen-

ance, Anointing of the Sick, Confirmation, Matrimony; catechetical programs for adults generally—adult discussion groups using scripture or Church documents as a base; movements such as marriage encounter, cursillo, charismatic renewal; preparation for parish activities—lectors, singers, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist; training candidates for confirmation; welcoming newcomers to the parish; social service projects such as visiting the sick and elderly, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, even bazaars and picnics.

In this way all of the catechetical programs of the parish will provide mutual clarification and enrichment. The faithful will learn from experience the value of continuing their growth in faith throughout the whole of life.

Family Catechesis

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Importance of family in catechesis

There are many communities which influence and contribute to the development of faith in children and youth, but no community is more critical in the transmission of religious beliefs and values in many countries than the family. While other factors are involved, such as age, sex, size of community, etc., the impact of the parents is primary among the human factors which influence growth in faith. While we realize that "family" is not universal, that in some countries the tribe is the crucial unit, we would like to make a strong plea for family ministry.

This vital influence of parents on the social and religious development of their children must be more widely recognized. Family life needs to be strengthened so that children and youth will derive their values from the home, rather than from potentially undesirable sources outside the home. The Church, especially through the parish, should intensify a support system for family life.

In the past quarter-century the family, in many parts of the world, has experienced progressive fragmentation and isolation, along with changes in its structure and child-bearing role. Catholic families have been affected along with the rest. These changes have been more rapid among younger families with young children, increase with economic deprivation and industrialization, and reach a peak among low-income families living in the central core of larger cities.

These problems include increases in divorce, one-parent families and unwed mothers; decrease in family size; and postponement or abandonment of marriage. A substantial number of men and women are living together without marriage and, generally, without having children.

Moreover, interaction between parents and children in all spheres has decreased significantly in many nations. The segregation of children begins in the first years of life and continues through pre-school, elementary school, high school, and college. As adults give less time to parenting, young people respond by creating a youth culture, whose values and attitudes are dictated largely by television and peers instead of parents and teachers.

It needs also to be noted that the number of religiously indifferent parents seems to be growing in many places in recent years.

Family ministry

No one approach or program can be brought to the remedy of these serious and complex problems affecting the family. A wide variety of catechetical activities, including family ministry, will be required, along with much needed research and experimentation.

One approach that is relatively new which offers much promise is family ministry.

Total family ministry involves announcing the good news to family members and calling them to conversion. They in turn should be aware of the Christian family's authentic mission to evangelize the wider community. "In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. And such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part."¹

As the Church in miniature the family is called to serve the needs of its own members, other persons and families, and the larger community. In it evangelization, worship, catechesis, and Christian service are vitally present.

Many parishes offer family-centered catechetical programs. These are intended to bring families together—to learn, experience, and celebrate some aspect of Catholic belief or living—and help them carry out their responsibilities in and to the Church's catechetical mission.

Perhaps the most successful programs for parents in the United States are those which involve them in the sacramental preparation of their children. Programs preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation are effective means of catechizing the parents themselves and opportunities to strengthen family life. The programs should be strengthened and strong efforts should be made to include both parents in them.

Some family programs center around the liturgy, using themes of the liturgical year as the basis for learning. Participants separate according to age (pre-school, primary, intermediate, junior and senior high school, and adult levels) to discuss the theme and then come back together for a common activity and celebration. Suggestions for

¹ *On Evangelization in the Modern World, An Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, December 8, 1975, 71.*

home activities may also be given. Other programs, such as "family evenings," focus on the family in the home setting. Each family examines the designated theme in relation to its own situation, in order to understand better and carry out its mission in the world. Some family programs have a more elaborate design and aim at total catechesis; these require a planned curriculum.

Some programs focus on the task of parents in relation to particular moments or issues in the child's religious life, such as sacramental preparation and moral development. They also seek to familiarize parents with the stages in children's growth and their relevance to catechesis.

When they participate formally in the catechesis of their children, parents must be mindful of the pre-eminent right of the Church to specify the content of authentic catechesis. They always have an obligation to catechize according to the teaching authority of the Church (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 24).

While family-centered catechesis is to be encouraged, peer group catechetical experience should also be part of a total catechetical program. This becomes particularly important during the middle and upper years of school, when children and youth form many of their attitudes and values through contact with their peers. The natural tendency of youth to seek their own identity by adopting other ideals and behaviors than those of their parents offers the opportunity to challenge youth with the noble example and teaching of Jesus and the saints. Parents should be prepared for this so that they do not resist but rather encourage this quest for identity through Christian idealism.

Within families there is need and opportunity for spouses to catechize each other and parents to catechize children. There are several possibilities: e.g., 1. parents can catechize their children directly, which is the ideal; 2. they can participate in parish catechetical programs which serve their children; 3. spouses can catechize each other by sharing their insights concerning the Gospel's application to their lives in trusting and open dialogue.

Since the Christian family is a "domestic Church," prayer and worship are central to it. Christian family life involves prayerful celebration within the family, as well as liturgical celebration in the parish community of which the family is an integral, active part.

Authentic family ministry also includes Christlike service, making it an important goal of family catechesis. Sensitized by Christian love and justice to others' needs, the individual family seeks, according to its ability and opportunities, to minister to the spiritual, psychological, and physical needs of the whole human family.

Family ministry is a vital source of strength for the catechetical process in the home and in the parish. To prepare couples for Christian family living it is urged that pre-marriage programs such as pre-Cana encounter, etc., be fostered and strengthened. At the same time each parish and diocese should develop more effective forms of home- and family-oriented catechesis.

Catechesis for Social Justice, Mercy, and Peace

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Purpose of this intervention

Many people, particularly in affluent countries, do not understand the causes of injustice and poverty in many parts of the world. There is a tendency to think that the poor are poor simply because of their own fault, either because they lack initiative or for some other reason. Moreover, many, having never had personal contact with real deprivation, cannot appreciate the ways in which it demeans the dignity of human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

Faced with this situation, the Church must effectively convey the fact that we are all tenants on an earth that belongs to God, and that the poor are the “collection agents” of what is owed to Him. It must also make clear that those who enjoy God’s material blessings cannot but experience solidarity with the helpless and desire to assist them in a Christlike manner.

This paper addresses the relationship between the ministry for social justice and peace and the mission and nature of the Church. Its purpose is to highlight the place of work for justice and peace in the life of the Church and to draw attention to the relationship of the document *Justice in the World* of the III Synod to this Synod on catechetics.

Bases in scripture, moral doctrine, and the mission of the Church

Catholic social teaching is based upon scripture, upon the development of moral doctrine in light of scripture, upon the centuries-old tradition of social teaching and practice, and upon efforts to work out the relationship of social ministry to the Church’s overall mission. Catholic social teaching has also been enriched by the contributions of philosophers and thinkers of all ages, including some who predate Christianity itself. With regard to social ministry the words of the Second Vatican Council should always be kept in mind: “While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the Church has a single intention: that God’s kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass.”¹

¹ *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 45.

The Church and justice in the world

The document *Justice in the World* of the III Synod (1971) analyzed a series of social justice issues of national and international interest. Its most significant impact, however, was not in the moral order but in its ecclesiological content. The ecclesiological significance of *Justice in the World* lies in its linking of work for justice and peace to the very nature of the Church. This link was crystallized in a now famous sentence.

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.²

Action on behalf of justice is a significant criterion of the Church's fidelity to its mission. It is not optional, nor is it the work of only a few in the Church. It is something to which all Christians are called according to their vocations, talents, and situations in life.

The present Synod can make a significant contribution to implementing the ecclesiological teaching of *Justice in the World*. While the clear statement of principle found in the III Synod is of fundamental importance, it is equally important that it be translated into practice in the life of the Church.

Justice within the Church

Any body or institution which ventures to speak to others about justice must itself be just and must be seen as such. The Church must therefore subject its own policies, programs, and manner of life to continuing review. For example, faith demands a certain sparingness in the use of temporal possessions, and the Church is obliged to live and to administer its own goods in such a way that it can authentically proclaim the Gospel to the poor. Yet the plight of the many millions of hungry people in our world today calls seriously into question the morality of life-styles and patterns of consumption which are typical of an affluent society.³ All bishops, priests, religious, and laity are called to an ongoing examination of conscience on such matters.

The concern for justice and mercy within the Church as a complement to Christian concern for justice in society is an area which should be specifically treated in the catechetical ministry of the Catholic Church.

² *Justice in the World*, Introduction.

³ Cf. *Justice in the World*, III, The Practice of Justice, The Church's Witness.

Catechetical guidelines for justice, mercy and peace

Catechesis concerning justice, mercy, and peace should be part of the catechetical process, and should include efforts to motivate people to act on behalf of these values.

1) Catechesis recognizes that the root causes of social injustice, selfishness, and violence reside within the human person; the imbalances in the modern world are linked to a more basic imbalance in the human heart.⁴ Injustice, lack of mercy, violence, and war are social consequences of sin. Unjust structures cannot be changed by hearts still pervaded by selfishness. Rather, one form of oppression will be substituted for another.

2) Catechesis for justice, mercy, and peace calls for a renewal of heart based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations.⁵ It seeks to bring people to recognize their individual and collective obligations, to strive to overcome the grave injustices in the world, as well as their inability to do so by their own strength. It points out that all must listen with humble and open hearts to God's word calling attention to new paths of action on behalf of justice, mercy, and peace.

3) Catechesis explains the relationship of personal morality to social morality. It makes clear that the Church provides principles which Christians have a duty to apply carefully to particular situations. Catechists must be careful not to confuse their personal opinions with the explicit teaching of the Church on social issues.

4) Catechesis strives to awaken a critical sense, leading to reflection on society and its values, and to the assessment of the social structures and economic systems which shape human lives.

5) Each Catholic has a responsibility for social action according to his or her circumstances. Because social and economic questions are generally decided in the political order, Catholics should play a responsible role in politics, including fulfilling the duties of informed citizenship and seeking public office.

Members of the Church also need to realize that they are not alone responsible for justice and peace in the world and that they are to cooperate with all persons of good will in achieving these goals.

6) Effective catechesis is based on the sources of the Church's social teaching. Rooted in the Old and New Testaments and uniquely expressed in the ministry of Jesus, social teaching has developed throughout the Church's history. Papal, conciliar, and episcopal docu-

⁴ *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 10.

⁵ *Justice in the World*, III, The Practice of Justice, Educating for Justice.

ments should be consulted and made part of the content of catechesis, as should the "signs of the times," including manifestations of the interdependence of the world community. Effective catechesis takes into account sound study of sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, and other human sciences which can shed light on the human condition.

Catechesis also points out that the effectiveness of the Church's social ministry depends largely on the witness given to justice, mercy, and peace in the relationships among its members, as well as in its corporate and institutional life.

It must also be realized that, in the practical order, not all persons have the competence to deal with specific problems and that there are frequently no easy solutions in some situations.

7) The concept underlying the social teaching of the Church is the dignity of the person, which is rooted in likeness to God and the call to communion with Him. Human rights and the value of human life, from conception to natural death, are emphasized in catechesis. Respect for human life includes appropriate concern not only for the existence and preservation of life, but for its abundance. In describing His mission, the Lord said of Himself: "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

8) Catechesis speaks of the works of charity performed by the Church and its individual members throughout history. It stresses that these works are essential and motivate people—beginning with the very young, according to their level of understanding—to give of their time, talents, and earthly goods, even to the point of sacrifice.

9) Catechesis seeks to move people to live justly, mercifully, and peacefully as individuals, to act as the leaven of the Gospel in family, school, work, social, and civic life, and to work for appropriate social change.

10) Catechesis includes activities (involving vital contact with the reality of injustice)⁶ which empower people to exercise more control over their destinies and bring into being communities in which human values are fully respected and fostered.

11) Catechesis for justice, mercy, and peace is a continuing process⁷ which concerns every person and every age. It first occurs in the family by word and by example. It is continued in a systematic way by Church institutions, parishes, schools, trade unions, political parties, and the like. This catechesis is an integral part of the curriculum and environ-

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

ment in Catholic schools. It is desirable that courses for children and youth be complemented by programs for parents.

12) The Church and its institutions should seek out and listen to different points of view on complex social situations. Disagreements should not bring about separation or alienation. Catechetical materials can reflect different perspectives with respect to justice and peace, and should show how these perspectives agree with or differ from the teaching of the Church.

13) Adult catechesis on social justice is much needed and should be given priority.

14) Social ministry should be identified as a valid and necessary ministry in the Church and proposed as a possible vocation to those being catechized. Conscious efforts are required to develop leadership in this ministry.

15) Men and women working for justice and peace should not become discouraged by apparent lack of success. Confident that they are acting for and with Christ, they know that they, like Christ, may face opposition and failure.

16) Catechists should point out the harm which can be done to children's values, attitudes, and behavior by toys and games which make war and its weapons seem glamorous. They should call attention to the damage which can be done to children and adults by excessive exposure to violence and immorality in the mass media, especially television.

In short, catechesis seeks to promote human liberation by calling for ever deeper and more profound conversion of hearts and structures.

Catechesis and Campus Ministry

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Introduction

In some nations college students now make up close to half of the age group 18 to 21. In other countries the number of post-secondary students is increasing with technological advances and growing material affluence.

As these young adults differ significantly in many respects—including religious attitudes and practices—from those who do not attend college and frequently live in a different environment for several years, a special ministry has been created and developed to meet their needs, including those for catechesis. This ministry is called campus ministry.

Campus ministry

Campus ministry is the Church's presence on the college and university campus. It views the milieu of post-secondary education as a creative center of society, where ideas germinate and are tested, leadership is formed, and the future of society is often determined.

Campus ministry involves pastoral service to the entire campus community: students, administrators, faculty, and staff. In every institution, regardless of size and character, campus ministry confronts a range of concerns which reflect in microcosm the catechetical concerns facing the entire Church.

Especially on the non-sectarian, non-Catholic campus, today's student often receives uncritical exposure to modern ideologies and philosophies, to crucial questions concerning faith, ethical behavior, and human life, and to a multiplicity of cults and new religious movements. Campus ministry must create, in an atmosphere of freedom and reverence, an alternating forum for theological and philosophical inquiry. This includes classes on Catholic thought, scripture seminars, opportunities for different forms of prayer, workshops or lectures in social justice, opportunities to share on various levels with other recognized religious groups. Formal and informal counselling relating to spiritual, social, and psychological concerns should also be offered to help people integrate the Gospel into their lives.

Campus ministers should encourage Catholic students and faculty to give an effective witness of their faith and life to the rest of the university community.

Pastoral service on the campus emphasizes worship, community, and tradition through the development of a community of faith. It should offer enriching exposure to modern and traditional liturgical forms, not only at the liturgy but through paraliturgical services emphasizing the communal aspects of sacramental life.

Finally, campus ministry seeks to serve the university institution itself. It works for responsible governance on the part of the academic institution, the maintenance of high standards and values. Campus ministers must be concerned with the institution's programs, policies, and research, and with how these promote or hinder human development. This affords them opportunities to deepen understanding of social justice and be of service to the broader community.

Since these various modes of service are expanding and becoming more complex, campus ministry must have adequate personnel. The ministry staff today is comprised not only of priests, but increasingly of religious and lay persons, faculty and graduate students, each with special areas of concern, and often working as a team to develop a community of faith.

Campus ministry should also be carried on in cooperation with the diocese and local parish community. This may be done in several ways.

- 1) Inviting priests from the neighboring parishes to collaborate with the campus ministry team, so that the students may get to know them as counsellors, teachers, and friends.

- 2) Encouraging the students to collaborate with the neighboring parishes in planning and celebrating liturgies, assisting with catechetical programs for children and youth, and taking part in the preparation and support of candidates for Confirmation.

- 3) Encouraging the university faculty to serve as role-models to the students by taking part themselves in parish service projects.

In some places, it may be advantageous to set up the university as a separate parish.

The Qualities of Catechists

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Introduction

The term catechist is used to designate anyone who participates formally or informally in catechetical ministry. In a sense all members of a community of believers are called to share in this ministry by being witnesses to the faith. Some, however, are called to more specific catechetical roles. Parents, teachers, and principals in Catholic schools, parish catechists, coordinators or directors of religious education, those who work in diocesan and national catechetical offices, deacons, priests, and bishops—all are catechists with distinct roles. Here we shall describe ideal qualities, for which all catechists—laity, religious, and clergy—should strive.

IDEAL QUALITIES OF CATECHISTS

An ideal and a challenge

Because it points to an ideal, what follows is meant to be a challenge as well as a guide to catechists. This ideal should not discourage present or prospective catechists. On the contrary, participation in the catechetical ministry will help them intensify their Christian lives and grow in the qualities needed for successful ministry to others. These human and Christian qualities of catechists are ultimately more significant than their methods and tools.

Response to a call

While a catechist must understand clearly the teaching of Christ and His Church, this is not enough. He or she must also receive and respond to a ministerial call, which comes from the Lord and is mediated in the local Church by the bishop. The response includes willingness to give time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one's own continued growth in learning and faith.

Witness to the Gospel

For catechists to bear fruit by the power of the Holy Spirit, faith must be shared with conviction, joy, love, enthusiasm, and hope. "The summit and center of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and

ability to communicate the Gospel message.”¹ This is possible only when the catechist believes in the Gospel and its power to transform lives. To give witness to the Gospel, the catechist must establish a living, ever-deepening relationship with the Lord. He or she must be a person of prayer, who frequently reflects on the scriptures and whose Christlike living testifies to deep faith. Only people of faith can share faith with others. They prepare the setting within which people can respond in faith to God’s grace.

Commitment to the Church

One who exercises the ministry of the Word represents the Church, to which the Word has been entrusted. The catechist must believe in the Church and be aware that, as a pilgrim people, it is in constant need of renewal. Committed to this visible community, the catechist strives to be an instrument of the Lord’s power and a sign of the Spirit’s presence.

The catechist realizes that it is Christ’s message which he or she is called to proclaim. To insure fidelity to that message, the catechist tests and validates his or her understanding and insights in the light of the Gospel message as presented by the teaching authority of the Church.

Sharer in community

The community of which we speak here is first of all the community called together by Jesus the Messiah. Living in the hearts of believers, it is this community to which particular communities of believers give witness. The catechist is called to proclaim this mystery as one who has “learned the meaning of community by experiencing it.”² Community is formed in many ways. Beginning with acceptance of individual strengths and weaknesses, it progresses to relationships based on shared goals and values. It grows through discussion, recreation, cooperation on projects, and the like.

Yet it does not always grow easily; patience and skill are frequently required. Even conflict, if creatively handled, can be growth-producing, and Christian reconciliation is an effective means of fostering community. Many people have had little experience of parish community and must be gradually prepared for it.

Christian community is fostered especially by the Eucharist, “which is at once sign of community and cause of its growth.”³ The catechist

¹ *General Catechetical Directory*, 111.

² *To Teach as Jesus Did*, a Pastoral Message on Catholic Education. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November, 1972, 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 24.

needs to experience this unity by frequently joining in the celebration of the Eucharist with other catechists and with those being catechized. Awareness of membership in a Christian community leads to awareness of the many other communities in the world which stand in need of service. The catechist seeks to cooperate with other parish leaders in making the parish a focus of community in the Church.

Servant of the community

Authentic experience of Christian community leads one to the service of others. The catechist is committed to serving the Christian community, particularly in the parish, and the community at large. Such service means not only responding to needs when asked, but taking the initiative to search out the needs of individuals and communities, and encouraging students to do the same.

Sensitive to the community's efforts to find solutions "to a host of complex problems such as war, poverty, racism, and environmental pollution, which undermine community within and among nations,"⁴ the catechist educates to peace and justice, and supports social action when appropriate. The Church often becomes involved in efforts to solve global problems through missionaries, who also carry out in a special way its mission of universal evangelization. The catechist should show how support for missionary endeavors is not only required by the missionary nature of the Church but is an expression of solidarity within the human community.

Knowledge, skills, and abilities

Although even the best preparation for catechetical ministry will have little or no effect without the action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of catechists and those being catechized, catechists should accept the challenge to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for effective communication of the Gospel message. They need to have a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship; familiarity with scripture; communication skills; the ability to use various methodologies; understanding of how people grow and mature and of how persons of different ages and circumstances learn.

Parish catechists

Parish catechists, many of whom are volunteers, may be engaged in the catechesis of adults, young people, children, or those with special needs. Theirs is a particular way of carrying out the promise made by the Church at every Baptism: to support, pray for, instruct, and foster growth in faith on the part of the baptized.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

Parish and diocesan personnel and others involved in catechetical ministry should help catechists develop the qualities outlined here. Because catechists approach their task with varying degrees of competence, programs should be designed to help individuals acquire the particular knowledge and skills they need. Catechists typically participate in a variety of teaching and learning programs, liturgical experiences, classes, retreats, service programs, study clubs, and similar activities. They carry out their responsibilities in parish catechetical programs, Catholic schools, and other settings. Their training should equip them to make effective use of the resources available for catechesis and to adapt materials to the age, capacity, and culture of those they seek to reach.

Men and women from all walks of life volunteer for parish catechetical programs. Parish and diocesan programs for volunteers should include the following elements.

1. Catechists who are deeply committed to Christ and His Church.
2. Basic orientation and preparation, including instruction in theology, scripture, psychology, and catechetical techniques. They should be shown how to identify goals and achieve them in their particular circumstances.
3. Opportunities for liturgical celebrations, prayer, retreats, and other experiences of Christian community with others engaged in this ministry.
4. Continuing in-service educational opportunities.
5. Regular assistance, from more experienced persons, in planning and in evaluating their performance.
6. Opportunities to evaluate not only themselves but the program in which they are involved.
7. More specialized training for those who will work with physically or mentally handicapped persons.
8. Cultivation of a sense of community among the catechists during the entire formation process.
9. Some form of commissioning ceremony, in which the faith community's call and the catechists' dedicated response are recognized.

Women and Catechesis

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops

By virtue of their Baptism, Christians are called to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of the Lord. All Christians, therefore, regardless of age, sex, or condition, are called to share in the catechetical ministry of the Church, especially by giving witness to the faith that is in them.

Some persons, however, are called to specific catechetical roles. Parents, teachers, and principals of Catholic schools, parish catechists, coordinators or directors, both lay and religious, at parish, diocesan or national levels, deacons, priests, and bishops are catechists with distinct roles.

Without minimizing the active participation of men in the catechetical ministry, we would like to give special recognition to the contributions which women, in particular, have made and are making in the catechetical ministry of the Church.

During Our Lord's life women had a notable share in proclaiming the Good News. Mary, of course, was associated in a most intimate way with the work of salvation and the revelation of Jesus from the Annunciation to Pentecost.¹

The Samaritan woman learned of the gift of inner life which the Lord had brought, became converted, and the Lord declared Himself the Messiah to her. It is evident that the woman proclaimed Him, for "many Samaritans from that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's word of testimony" (Jn 4:39).²

When Jesus was teaching the crowds it was a woman who cried out, "Blest is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you"; which elicited from Christ the response: "Rather . . . blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk 11:27-28).

It was the women who first learned of the resurrection. They were given the task of proclaiming the resurrection and instructing the disciples to go to Galilee to meet the Lord (Cf. Mt 28:7).

¹ *Women's Role and Evangelization*, Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Origins*, April 22, 1976, Vol. 5, No. 44, p. 703.

² Cf. Elizabeth Carroll, "Women and Ministry," in *Woman: New Dimensions*, edited by Walter Burghardt, S.J. New York, Paulist Press, 1977.

From the Acts of the Apostles it is evident that in the early Church women were very much involved in the preaching of the Word. St. Paul "refers again and again to the assistance given to the preachers and the preaching of the Gospel by women like Priscilla, each according to her own charism."³ Phoebe was looked upon by Paul as co-worker and *prostasis* (one who has authority) in the Church.⁴

It is not the purpose of this paper, however, to trace the history of women in catechetical ministry down through the centuries. Rather its purpose is to give recognition to the valuable contributions made in the recent past and those being made today.

Parents have been and are the primary catechists of their children. In most families the task of "handing on the faith" has fallen primarily to mothers. We cannot emphasize enough how necessary it is that both father and mother give witness to the Lord in their families. Frequently, however, the task of initiating, instructing, and forming young children in the faith is done by women. Often this is true also as children grow and develop.

The history of religious communities, founded by women, attests to the total dedication to and participation of women in the catechetical ministry of the Word. Many such foundresses have been canonized by the Church for their selfless dedication to the work of the Lord and lives lived in union with Him.

The history of the active communities of religious women who have been catechetical ministers of the Word in schools, parish catechetical programs, hospitals, prisons, etc., as well as those who have been active in the missionary effort of the Church, is well known. Often these ministeries have been performed without the recognition that women were truly participating in the ministry of the Word.

Leadership has been exercised by women in the field of education for centuries. Many schools, colleges, and universities have been founded and administered by women. Religious institutes to train persons for the catechetical ministry have been founded and operated by women. In fact, the catechetical movement in the United States has been strongly influenced and strengthened by the ministry of dedicated women.

In the United States since Vatican Council II, it has been recognized that women should assume roles of leadership. More and more women are serving on parish boards, assuming responsibility for directing and coordinating catechetical programs on parish, diocesan, and

³ *Women's Role and Evangelization, op. cit.*

⁴ Burghardt, *op. cit.*

national levels, and participating in the decision-making process. This is a development which should be encouraged.

Today, as both religious and lay women are moving out into various forms of ministry to children, young people, adults, the elderly, we recommend that recognition be given to women's participation in the catechetical ministry of the Church. It is also recommended that parishes, dioceses, and national conferences recognize and utilize, to the greatest degree possible, the special gifts of women on all levels of catechetical ministry; and that women be given equal consideration for positions of leadership according to their talents, abilities, and training.

Catechesis for The Scientific Community

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Contemporary culture in many parts of the world is characterized, among other things, by a scientific and technological revolution which evangelization and catechesis must take into account (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 54). Part of the Church's response to the opportunities and challenges posed by this cultural situation should be directed at those men and women responsible for scientific research and the application of its discoveries. If the Gospel is indeed to penetrate "into all the strata of humanity" and bring about a transformation of humanity's "criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18, 19), the world of science and technology cannot be ignored.

Of particular urgency today are the questions posed by advances in the so-called life-sciences. These appear to make possible the identification, dismantling, rearrangement, and reassembly of the basic components of living organisms, including deliberately modifying the human organism. Humanity stands at the threshold of being able to direct its own biological future consciously and deliberately. Nor is it only a question of biological technology; it is also a matter of a kind of biological industrialization, that is, the integration of such fields as solid-state physics, genetics and neurophysiology. For example, scientists are talking about joining electronic circuitry to human brain function. These and other developments and possibilities raise serious questions about personal human integrity which are of enormous import to humanity and therefore to the Church, which shares "the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1).

Moreover, the scientific community is very far from monolithic in its opinions concerning the significance of these discoveries. There is at present a real—and, we would say, providential—opportunity for the Church to offer to these scientists the guidance of the wisdom entrusted to it concerning the dignity and vocation of the human person and to collaborate with them in evaluating the impact which these discoveries have on human life. The Catholic Church has now a providential opportunity to demonstrate to scientists its willingness to work with them

in a partnership for the benefit of humanity. It is opportune to recall the closing message addressed by the Second Vatican Council to the men and women of thought and science: "Our paths could not fail to cross. Your road is ours. Your paths are never foreign to ours. We are the friends of your vocation as searchers, companions in your fatigues, admirers of your successes, and, if necessary, consolers in your discouragement and your failures. . . . Without troubling your efforts, without dazzling brilliance, we come to offer you the light of our mysterious lamp which is faith. . . . Never perhaps, thank God, has there been so clear a possibility as today of a deep understanding between real science and real faith, mutual servants of one another in the one truth. Do not stand in the way of this important meeting."

Admittedly this effort involves a very precise and specialized form of catechesis, but it is one which cannot be ignored. Some of the fundamental components of such a catechesis are the following:

1. The recognition of the rightful independence of science. The faith of the Church is not threatened by scientific discoveries. "If methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith. For earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed, whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind is, if even unawares, being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence and gives them their identity" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 36).

2. The most important area of dialogue between the Church and the scientific community does not concern the discoveries of science as such, but the uses to which these discoveries are put. It is precisely in this area that the most important concerns and questions raised by recent discoveries in the life-sciences lie. The fundamental conviction which the Catholic Church offers to the scientific community is this: all problems regarding human life are "to be considered—beyond partial perspectives—whether of the biological or psychological, demographic or sociological order—in the light of an integral vision of Man and of his vocation, not only his natural and earthly, but also his supernatural and eternal vocation" (*Humanae Vitae*, 7).

The new biological technology, for example, requires the direct, immediate, and systematic intervention into the human composite. This means that for biomedical procedures to be used successfully in order to create new norms of physical, intellectual, and psychological health, they must produce results which are both predictable and repeatable. Such considerations, however, are proper only to a controlled or closed system. Therefore they cannot provide the ultimate criteria for the construction of a society that is truly human. They represent a threat to human spontaneity. They can only result in a society

which is essentially static. Creativity is thus threatened. The human spirit, which is always open to a transcendent dimension which cannot be controlled, is stifled. Unless the values of human integrity and a respect for human freedom motivate scientific research and technological practice, we will arrive at a world in which nothing is independent, nothing is moved by its own vitality, a society in which even our children are not our progeny, but our creation. Partisans of large-scale eugenics planning are often motivated by noble humanitarian sentiments. Yet it cannot be the values of science which alone determine what human life ought to be like.

The Catholic Church believes that salvation cannot be obtained without the grace of God which is a gift. Human self-fulfillment, therefore, will not be brought about entirely by human planning. The ultimate resolution of the drama of human life lies in a divine intervention which transcends the limitations of space and time: the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Hence the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: "The independence of human affairs . . . [cannot] be taken to mean that created things do not depend on God and that man can use them without any reference to their creator" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 36).

3. Admittedly, it is not easy to speak of God the Creator and of the Lordship of Jesus Christ to those scientists who are agnostics or atheists. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church has never despaired of the capacity of the human mind and the human heart to respond to the secret impulses of Divine Providence, even if their origin is not explicitly recognized. Moreover, many scientists today recognize the precise limitations of their methodology. They have become aware that dogmatism and ideology have not been absent from the history of scientific research itself. The uses of the secret of the atom in weapons capable of massive destruction has been a humbling experience for them. In this connection, evangelization and catechesis by scientists who are men and women of faith are extremely important. They should be encouraged by the Church. They constitute one of those small groups which will be responsible for so much of the mission of the Church in the years to come. Scientists who acknowledge the reign of God should be encouraged to form communities where they may grow in their own understanding, experience, and response to their Catholic faith, and where they show their insights into how the mysteries of redemption can be presented to their brothers and sisters who are seeking answers to the dilemmas posed by their scientific research.

4. Catholic institutions of higher learning should be encouraged to promote programs of this kind, especially since they are equipped to offer the opportunity for an interdisciplinary dialogue in which theology and philosophy can make an invaluable contribution (cf. *Gravissimum Educationis*, 10).

5. Finally, all the faithful should be made aware of the implications to the faith of what is taking place in these scientific investigations. They should be helped to become more familiar with the teaching of the Church concerning the proper role of scientific research; the limitations of scientific discoveries; the positive and negative aspects of technological progress; the sanctity of life; the respect due to the human person regardless of physical, intellectual, or psychological characteristics; the supremacy of grace and the need to respond to unwarranted use of scientific discoveries with a resistance which may sometimes have to be heroic.

Catechesis and The Parish School of Religion

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Every parish, in its fidelity to Christ, needs a coherent, well-integrated catechetical plan which provides opportunities for all parish members to hear the Gospel message in all its fullness and to respond by fostering community, praying and worshiping, and giving service. Under the leadership of the bishop, it provides an atmosphere that allows the Holy Spirit to make all grow in love of God and humankind.

A major and essential element in any such parish catechetical plan is that part devoted to children and youth who are not in Catholic schools but participate in parish catechetical programs or parish schools of religion (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine). These catechetical programs or schools of religion are of the utmost importance; in the United States they are directed to over 70% of the elementary level children and to more than 80% of Catholics of high school age.

Either directly or indirectly, the United States delegates have addressed themselves to the catechetical needs of these children and youth in virtually all of their oral and written interventions at the IV Synod of Bishops. Some examples are: "Ministry to Youth"; Catechesis for Children and Youth in a World of Religious Pluralism"; "Principles Underlying the Doctrinal Elements of Catechesis for Young Children"; "Adult Faith as the Context for the Catechesis of Children and Youth"; "Family Catechesis"; "Catechesis and the Special Problems of Life"; "Catechesis for Racial, Cultural and Ethnic Groups"; and "The Qualities of Catechists."

We, the U.S. delegates to the Synod, wish to express the profound gratitude of all the bishops of our country, to all laity, religious, and clergy who build up the Kingdom of God by catechizing children and young people. In this ministry they carry out in a special way the promise made at every baptism: to support, pray for, instruct, and foster growth on the part of all those who are united to Jesus Christ in baptism.

Catechetical Preparation For the Sacraments

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

A major development in catechesis is a "catechumenate" or preparation period for all the sacraments, to enable the candidates to participate more maturely and to enable the family, school, and entire parish to become involved by praying with them, instructing them, evaluating their progress, and encouraging them. This contributes to the Christian growth of both the individual and the community. Many dioceses have excellent norms and guidelines concerning the preparation for the various sacraments.

a. In the sacraments generally as in all elements of Church life, it will be more effective with children and youth to *stress attraction rather than obligation*. Preparation for the sacraments should explain any obligation where it exists in an unambiguous, positive way. Reverential fear of the Lord and obedience to His law is the beginning of wisdom (cf. Prov 1:7; Ps. 19:8-11).

The act of faith, which is central to all sacraments, must be free and mature. God wants His people to know Him and choose Him freely, not out of servile fear or social conformity.

This issue becomes even more sharply defined in modern, pluralistic societies, where faith is frequently called into question. Christians, even young Christians, must be ready to give the reasons for the hope they have (1 Pet 3:15) and be aware that they live sacramental lives because they want to, not because they are forced.

b. Programs of preparation of children for the first reception of Reconciliation and the Eucharist have traditionally received much interest from parents. As the primary religious educators of their children, parents shape their attitudes and values by their own Christian life, especially their own prayer and reception of the sacraments. They also are encouraged to participate actively in preparing their children for these sacraments. It is a precious opportunity to clarify misunderstandings the parents may have about God, Church, grace, and sin, and to deepen their appreciation of the sacramental life. Many of the alienated have returned to the sacraments themselves as a result of this form of adult catechesis.

c. Preparation for the reception of the sacrament of *Reconciliation* should precede preparation for first Communion according to the directives from the Holy See. It should be done in such a way that children look forward eagerly to receiving this sign of God's loving forgiveness of their faults and sins, whatever they may have been.

Relative to the sequence of the sacraments, Cardinals James Knox and John Wright wrote with the approval of Pope Paul VI to all the bishops of the world: "When he arrives at the age of discretion, the child has the right, in the Church, to receive both sacraments. It would be an absurd and unjust discrimination and a violation of his conscience if he were prepared for and admitted only to Holy Communion. It is not enough to say that children have the right to go to confession if this right remains practically ignored.

"When children are sufficiently instructed and are aware of the special nature of these two sacraments, it will not be difficult for them to go first to the sacrament of Reconciliation which—in a simple but fundamental way—arouses in them the awareness of moral good and evil and aids them to bring a more mature disposition to their happy meeting with Christ.

"Many fine pastors have learned from their catechetical and ministerial experience the great usefulness and saving power which their first confession has in the life of children if it is carefully prepared, properly adapted to their age and capacity to perceive spiritual things and carefully administered" (Letter of March 31, 1977).

Children can exercise their right to receive this sacrament of Reconciliation only if they know about the sacrament and become familiar with the way to participate.

Therefore, catechesis concerning the sacrament should begin when the children are aware that their wrongdoings affect their relationship with God and with their community, are sorry for their sins, and resolve to do better. While catechists should stress that forgiveness for sin is available in many ways, such as acts of sorrow, reception of the Eucharist, and acts of kindness toward others, they should also encourage the children to experience the different ways in which the sacrament of Reconciliation may be received: face-to-face, with a curtain between oneself and the priest, and in the context of a communal celebration. Young children are just beginning to acquire a sense of the relationship between their actions and the Christian community and of the need for reconciliation in a liturgical setting.

Catechists should teach children when confession is necessary and explain the many values of frequent confession: the habit of examination of conscience, a better formation of conscience so that it becomes more alert to real faults and free from false guilt, a deeper sense of

responsibility for both sins of commission and omission, a fuller awareness of the welcome and support of the Church, a more lively appreciation of God's loving mercy and His willingness and power to forgive, and a readiness to correct bad habits and make up for the damage done to the body of Christ by sin. In this way the children will come to love and avail themselves often of this sacrament established by Christ to draw sinners to Himself for healing and reconciliation.

Pope Pius XII expressed this beautifully in his encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ.

It is true that venial sins may be expiated in many ways which are to be highly commended. But to hasten daily progress along the path of virtue we wish the pious practice of frequent Confession to be earnestly advocated. Not without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was this practice introduced into the Church. By it a genuine self-knowledge is increased, Christian humility is developed, bad habits are corrected, spiritual neglect and tepidity are countered, the conscience is purified, the will is strengthened, salutary self-control is obtained, and an increase of grace is secured by the very fact that the sacrament is received (*Mystici Corporis* #88).

All of this should be explained in a way that children can understand.

The priest who will celebrate this sacrament should be intimately involved in the children's preparation so that he becomes familiar with the vocabulary they have learned and so that they get to know and love him as a friend and feel comfortable in his presence. He is encouraged to take full advantage of the flexibility of the new Rite of Reconciliation in order to make this a prayerful experience of God's tenderness and concern.

The future reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation can be affected by the children's first experience of it. Every effort should be made to ensure that the celebration focus on God's love and the joy of being forgiven rather than intensify feelings of fear and guilt. Since young children cannot easily recall their sins or express details of sin and sorrow in words, they may legitimately express their sense of guilt and sorrow by gestures. They should, however, learn a simple act of contrition.

d. Remote preparation for the *Eucharist* begins in the family through the mutual love, sharing, and self-sacrifice which characterize wholesome family life. Parents have a right to be intimately involved as well in the more immediate preparation of the first Communion of their children. Parents do so most effectively by attending Mass with their children, explaining the meaning of the eucharistic liturgy, and giving

them an example of their own reverence and hunger for the Bread of Life.

Young children tend to think concretely. Experiences such as sharing, listening, eating, giving, thanking, and celebrating open them to explanations of the Eucharist adapted to their intellectual capacity and enable them to participate more meaningfully in the eucharistic action.

Catechesis for first Communion is conducted separately from introductory catechesis for the sacrament of Reconciliation, because each sacrament deserves its own concentrated preparation.

e. There is a difference of theological opinion about the most suitable age for reception of the sacrament of *Confirmation*. Some stress its nature as a sacrament of initiation and prefer to place it after Baptism before the reception of first Communion. Others stress its nature as a sacrament of commitment and consider it more prudent to confirm after the crisis of faith has passed and the candidate has made a personal and permanent commitment to Christ and the Church. Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Constitution *Divinae Consortium* accompanying the new Rite of Confirmation, has compared the coming of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation to His coming to the adult Christ at His baptism and to the apostles on Pentecost—to enable them to carry out their mission of witness before the world.

The Rite of Confirmation #11 states: “For pastoral reasons, especially to strengthen the faithful in complete obedience to Christ the Lord and in loyal testimony to him, episcopal conferences may choose an age which seems more appropriate, so that the sacrament is given at a more mature age after appropriate formation.”

While our own episcopal conference has not yet officially resolved this question, Confirmation is more and more frequently being postponed until adolescence, even to the end of adolescence in many parts of Europe, North and Central America, Africa, and Asia.

Experience has shown that preparation for Confirmation has been very successful when:

1. It is postponed until the recipient has sufficient maturity of faith to assume the responsibility to bear witness to Christ because of a permanent and personal commitment to Christ and the Church.
2. It includes a letter of request for Confirmation; a formal rite of admission to “catechumenate”; formal instruction on the Creed for two years; participation in a Bible study group or prayer group for several months; service to the parish with guidance and evaluation for several months; special participation in the liturgy for over one year; a retreat; a special visit

to the cathedral and the bishop; encouragement and participation by the parents; testimony by the sponsor that the candidate is capable and ready to assume responsibility in the parish.

3. Those confirmed receive new roles of responsibility and service in the Church: e.g., supervision of new candidates for Confirmation, becoming catechists themselves, becoming lectors or ushers at Mass, etc.

f. The Christian community wants to help engaged couples prepare well for the holy, lifelong covenant of *marriage*, which is a symbol of the unbreakable union between Christ and His Church.

A preparation period of several months has been found to be useful to help these couples form a proper appreciation of this sacramental state of life. It provides time to fulfill the canonical requirements and offers an opportunity to prepare them for life in a culture in which divorce is becoming more common.

An excellent form of catechesis on marriage has been developed by "engaged encounters" in which engaged couples meet in groups to share and strengthen their faith and commitment to each other.

Preparation for marriage should include dialogue with a priest, a medical doctor and psychologist, a home economist, and a good Catholic couple to make the engaged persons familiar with the full riches of the Church's teaching and experience about sexuality, married and family life, and the proper education of children.

The parish community should let the couple know that it shares in their joys and hopes and looks forward to their assuming a new role and responsibility in the community after marriage.

g. Preparation for the birth and *baptism* of a child should start during pregnancy, and if possible include several couples and the godparents. This catechesis should lead to a deeper appreciation and joy in being Christians, so that they reaffirm with their whole hearts their commitment to the Lord and His Body, the Church, when they renew their baptismal promises at the baptism of their child. After the baptism they should continue to meet regularly for discussion and support until the child begins school.

h. The basic Christian community or parish should be involved in preparation for *ordination*, participating in the formation process of candidates for the priesthood or permanent diaconate who are sent to gain experience in the parish. While diocesan priests are ordained for the entire diocese, it is desirable that candidates be ordained in and for a community where they are known and needed since the Rite of Ordination calls for the people to consent to the ordination. The com-

munity should pray for vocations to the ordained ministry and support candidates in their efforts to be faithful to the Lord's call.

i. A catechumenate preceding *anointing of the sick* should be had in parishes and particularly in nursing homes. The sick should be helped to examine the meaning of sickness, healing, suffering and death in the light of revelation and to receive the coming of Jesus in the sacrament with faith and hope. Those who care for the sick should be taught the meaning and purpose of anointing. The entire parish should express love and concern for the sick and aged by visiting them, ministering to their needs, praying with them, and asking for their prayers, confident in the power of their prayers because of their union with the sufferings of Christ.

j. A new ministry is growing to bring Communion to the sick and *Viaticum* to the dying. Catechesis for those in danger of death makes it clear that *Viaticum* is the sacrament for the dying, the food that the Lord lovingly provides for those about to begin their final journey to meet Him face to face.

Catechesis for Persons With Handicapping Conditions

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Persons incorporated into the paschal mystery, through the waters of Baptism, have the right to grow in knowledge of the Christian message, to be incorporated more fully into the community of faith, and to serve and be served by that community, as well as the larger community of humankind. While all have that right, we wish to focus this paper on persons with handicapping conditions and their right to catechesis.

Jesus came for all people for all time. In the Gospels we see Jesus curing the sick, giving sight to the blind, restoring the hearing of the deaf-mute. No one was excluded from His ministry. Rather, Jesus is especially concerned about the poor, the oppressed, the handicapped.

We all are limited in some way by our culture, personality, talents, prejudices, and habits; but special attention should be given to persons with handicapping conditions, including the mentally retarded, those with learning disabilities, the emotionally disturbed, the physically handicapped, the deaf or hearing-impaired, the blind or visually impaired. One child in six has a disability of some kind (International Catholic Child Bureau).

The Church must be concerned about and find ways of providing special catechesis for persons with special needs. Many of these persons are in isolating conditions which tend to cut them off from learning and participating in the worship and other celebrations of the community.

Catechesis for certain groups (e.g., the deaf, the blind, the mentally retarded) requires specialized materials, training, and skills. Persons trained in each specialty are needed at local, diocesan, and national levels. It may be that parishes and dioceses can best meet the needs of handicapped persons by sharing resources and personnel, and collaborating in the preparation and sponsoring of programs.

The parish community should be informed about the needs of its handicapped members and encouraged to support them with love and concern. Parishioners can grow in their understanding and appreciation

of faith by witnessing its expression in the lives of handicapped persons. They remind us of God's love which is given without being limited by our response. Their presence can sanctify parents, neighbors, and all members of the community. As members of the Body of Christ, handicapped persons have special gifts, and contribute to building up the Church in a special way. They should not be isolated from the rest of the parish community but be made to feel a part of it, receiving the sacraments with others, participating in worship, etc.

It is particularly important for the families of handicapped persons to be involved in their catechesis. Their participation is supportive for the individuals and helps them understand and cope with the handicap better. At the same time, care and concern should be expressed by the faith community for the families of those who are handicapped, and it should support them in every way possible.

Eucharistic liturgies (and other sacramental celebrations) for handicapped persons require special adaptations. Each handicapping condition requires a different approach. For example, many mentally handicapped persons respond profoundly to concrete visual symbols and gestures. Their liturgical celebrations should use color, art, and music with less emphasis on verbal expressions of faith. Generally, abstract symbols should be avoided. For people who are deaf or have severe hearing disabilities provision should be made for Masses and other sacramental celebrations in sign language. The use of amplification, good lighting for effective speechreading, and audiovisuals, all in accordance with the specific needs of hearing-impaired persons, should be encouraged.

While there is a need for specialized liturgies, they should never entirely replace the integration of handicapped persons into the larger worshipping community.

The norms for the reception of the sacraments should be flexible enough so that the sacraments are accessible to those with handicapping conditions. For example, the "use of reason" as a norm for the reception of the sacraments should not be judged in terms of age, but should be interpreted in the widest sense possible for a mentally retarded child.

Within the norms of the Church the Rite of Reconciliation should be adapted, with utmost sensitivity, to accommodate the needs of mentally retarded children who cannot confess individually.

The goal of the faith community should be to present Christ's teaching and love to each handicapped person in as full and rich a manner as he or she can assimilate.

The Role of the Parish Priest In Catechesis

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Priests exercise a uniquely important role in the catechetical ministry and have a special responsibility for its success. As specially called disciples of Christ, priests model themselves on the ministry of the One who proclaimed the Good News and instructed all who would listen to Him. Inspired by the love of the Good Shepherd, they guide and nourish God's people, to the extent of giving their lives for them (Jn. 10:1-18; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 13). They look for understanding and encouragement from their bishop, for they recognize that they make the bishop present in the local parish community and that as his co-workers they have as their primary duty the preaching of the Gospel to all (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4).

A major element of the preaching of the Gospel is carried out through the catechetical ministry. As the bishop is the first catechist of the diocese, so the priest is the primary catechist in the parish. The bishop exercises his catechetical responsibilities largely through the diocesan office of religious education, and priests in parishes and other institutes coordinate their efforts with the diocese which is the local church. Priests appreciate the fact that catechesis occupies a central place among parish ministries. They also recognize the importance of having all parish members work together and the need to involve laity and religious in the catechetical ministry.

Priests provide leadership and extend cooperation to all involved in this service of the Church. As leaders in developing a faith community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they perform indispensable catechetical functions. These include encouraging catechists and affirming their ministry; praying with them, teaching them, and learning with and from them; supporting them; participating in establishing goals, by planning and by evaluation; providing well-planned liturgical celebrations for classes and groups which evoke full participation, interest, and concern.

Priests are mindful that catechesis demands the witness of personal faith from all catechists and from the ecclesial community. This witness is joined to an authentic example of Christian life and to a readiness to sacrifice (*General Catechetical Directory*, 15).

The pastor is primarily responsible for seeing that the catechetical needs, goals, and priorities of the parish are identified, articulated, and met. In planning and carrying out the catechetical ministry, he works with his priest associates, religious, parish council, board of education or analogous body, catechetical directors or coordinators, principals, teachers, parents, and others. He respects sound organizational principles and is responsive to the requirements of shared responsibility.

Their position gives parish priests enormous influence over catechetical programs—either to promote and coordinate the efforts of parents and all involved in this ministry, or to discourage energies and enthusiasm by personal attitudes and behavior.

The priest's liturgical ministry is also a central factor in the catechesis of the Christian community. His manner of celebrating all the sacraments facilitates or hinders the religious experience of the community and its awareness of God's loving presence. The doctrinal, catechetical, and pastoral content of his homilies can help people advance in love of Christ and the Church or hold them back. His participation in adult catechesis will often be the key to the success of these programs.

Church leaders regard the formation of all catechists as a task of the greatest importance (*General Catechetical Directory*, 115). This means that a thorough catechetical preparation, including practice teaching, is to be given in seminaries and scholasticates to those who will receive the sacrament of Orders and who will act in the image of the Eternal High Priest (*ibid.*).

Besides seeing to the continuing formation of all their co-workers (*ibid.*, 110), it is essential that priests continue their own education after ordination. This can be done to some degree through reading, participating in discussions, and attending lectures. Much can also be gained through group study and exchange of views and experiences among the clergy. In addition, dioceses, in collaboration with colleges, universities, and seminaries, should provide ongoing clergy education programs in theology, scripture, educational methods, and other subjects according to need. This is particularly important because of the rapid changes in society and in many fields of knowledge. By study, reading, and prayer a priest enriches his ministry and also encourages parishioners to take seriously their own obligation to grow in faith.

Although priests may feel discouragement at times in the face of problems in the catechetical ministry, they can sustain their courage and enthusiasm and arouse and maintain similar animation in their co-workers by recalling that the Divine Teacher is always with them (Mt 28:20) and that, like St. Paul and Apollos, they plant and water but God makes it grow (I Cor 3:8).

Catechesis and the Catholic School

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Catholic schools are unique expressions of the Church's effort to achieve the purposes of Catholic Education among the young. They "are the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people."¹

The Catholic school arises out of the faith of the community, and the community is responsible for the life of faith in the school. The school continues, extends, and complements the work of the parents, who are the primary religious educators of their children. It is supported by the parishioners at great sacrifice—often taking a major share of the parish budget—and in turn supports the parish by enlivening it with the joy and hope of future generations.

Through a carefully planned process, the entire school community—parents, students, faculty, administrators, pastors, and others—needs to be involved in the development of its goals, philosophy, and programs.

Catholic schools may be part of the parish structure, or they may be inter-parochial or regional, diocesan or private. But each school is a community within the wider community. The parish school contributes to the parish upon which it depends and is integrated into its life. Private schools also should share in parish and diocesan life. Integration and interdependence are major matters of parish concern; each program in a total catechetical effort should complement the others.² The pastor is responsible to see that this be done.

Similarly, regional, diocesan, and private schools should work in close collaboration with neighboring parishes. The experience of community in the schools can benefit and be benefited by the parishes. It will be strengthened if the priests from the parishes involved frequently visit the schools to take part in catechetical instruction, become familiar with the children, and become known and loved by them.

It is desirable that Catholic high schools in a diocese work together to share resources, provide opportunities for teacher training and development, and cooperate in establishing program guidelines.

¹ *To Teach as Jesus Did*, A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 1972.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 92.

Teachers in Catholic schools are expected to accept and live the Christian message and instill the Christian spirit. As catechists, they will meet standards equivalent to those set for other disciplines and possess the qualities described in our written statement, "The Qualities of Catechists."

Recognizing that all faculty members share in catechetical ministry, principals recruit teachers with appropriate qualifications in view of the Catholic school's apostolic goals and character. They provide opportunities for ongoing catechesis for faculty members to help them deepen their faith and grow in ability to integrate in their teaching the dimensions of Catholic education: message, community, worship, and service. In collaboration with the faculty, principals see to it that the entire curriculum reflects these dimensions.

The school, whether elementary or secondary, should have a set religion curriculum, with established goals and objectives, open to review and evaluation by parish boards or diocesan supervisory teams. The content of the curriculum should reflect those principles set forth in our written statement "Principles underlying the Doctrinal Elements of Catechesis for Young Children," with appropriate adaptations to the secondary level. It is recommended that an integrated curriculum provide options for catechists and students above the elementary level by offering electives along with the core curriculum.

The school's principal and faculty are responsible for making clear the importance of religion not just as an academic discipline but as affecting the whole of life. The quality of the catechetical experience in the school and the importance attached to religious instruction, including the amount of time spent on it, can cause students to perceive religion either as highly important or of little importance.

Catholic parents and students have a right to expect the school to maintain a Catholic atmosphere of faith and to present Catholic teaching in its integrity. When non-Catholic students wish to enter a Catholic school, they are to participate in that atmosphere and become familiar with Church doctrine.

Its nature as a Christian educational community, the scope of its teaching, and the effort to integrate all learning with faith distinguish the Catholic school from other forms of the Church's educational ministry to youth and give it special impact. In Catholic schools children and young people "can experience learning and living fully integrated in the light of faith,"³ because such schools strive "to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the life of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life and

³ *Ibid.*, 103.

of mankind.”⁴ Cooperative teaching which cuts across the lines of particular disciplines, interdisciplinary curricula, team teaching, and the like help to foster these goals of Catholic education.

“Building and living community must be prime, explicit goals of the contemporary Catholic school.”⁵ Much progress has been made in making Catholic schools examples of the basic ecclesial communities of faith which Pope Paul VI described in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #58. Principal and faculty have a responsibility to help foster “community” among themselves and the students. The more the faculty and staff form themselves into a community of believers who pray, work and communicate freely with each other, the more they will develop a sense of community among the students. A fuller development of this may be found in our pastoral letter *To Teach as Jesus Did* and in our *National Catechetical Directory*.

An essential characteristic of the Catholic school as a community of faith is its openness to students of all racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. The school provides an opportunity to bear witness to the common brotherhood of all in Christ. Further development of this may be seen in our written statement, “Catechesis for Racial, Cultural, and Ethnic Groups.”

The principal and faculty will also understand the Catholic school as part of larger communities, religious and secular. They collaborate with parish, area, or diocesan personnel in planning and implementing programs for a total, integrated approach to catechesis. They also establish norms and procedures of accountability and evaluation within the school, and in relation to the larger community.

Catholic school students should be introduced gradually to the idea and practice of Christian service. In early years, efforts to instill a sense of mission and concern for others, and study of the lives of the saints and outstanding contemporaries help lay a foundation for later service projects.

Programs should foster a social conscience sensitive to the needs of all. Opportunities for field and community experiences are highly desirable. Teachers, administrators, pastors, parents, and students should be involved in planning service projects. One measure of a school’s success is its ability to foster a sense of vocation, of eagerness to live out the basic baptismal commitment to service, whether this is done as a lay person, religious, deacon, or priest.

All Christians are responsible for the missionary activity of the Church; their love for God and others makes them want to share with

⁴ *Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)*, 8.

⁵ *To Teach as Jesus Did*, 108.

everyone the spiritual goods of this life and the life to come. Catholic schools provide opportunities for participation in missionary projects and encourage students to use the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them for this ministry.

The overall tone and spirit of the school will be deeply affected by creative sacramental celebrations and paraliturgies especially the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, by days of recollection and graduation retreats, and by the presence of a chapel where students can make visits to the Blessed Sacrament. School chaplains can contribute much to the spiritual dimensions of school life. All Catholic high schools should have a chaplain.

Prayer in a Catholic school should not be limited to a few moments at the beginning and end of class but should permeate the entire atmosphere, making it easier for the students to become sensitive to God's presence and to grow in intimacy with Him. In this way the Holy Spirit will draw the students toward the goal of all catechesis, mature faith.

Communications Media and Catechesis

Written Intervention by the Delegates of the
National Conference of Catholic Bishops

From the very beginning, the Church has used the arts to communicate Christ's message and fix it in people's minds and hearts. Biblical stories, saints' lives, and religious themes of all sorts have been depicted in stained glass, mosaics, painting, and sculpture. Music, poetry, dance, drama, architecture, and other art forms have also served catechetical purposes. Contemporary media such as television, films, photography, filmstrips, slides, and tapes do so today. They are means with which the Church, like the farmer in the parable, broadcasts the seed in all directions (cf. Mk 4:3ff). Thus is the Gospel "proclaimed from the house-tops" (cf. Mt. 10:27). The collaboration of catechesis and the arts and media, therefore, deserves close attention and encouragement.

Impact of communications media in catechesis

The communications revolution has had a profound impact on our world, with implications as great for religion as for any other area of life. Contemporary media offer marvelous new opportunities for catechesis, but also present serious challenges and problems. They can unite people, foster the sharing of ideas, promote mutual help, justice, and peace, and carry the Gospel to those who otherwise might never hear it.

There are at least three different ways of thinking of the communications media in relation to catechesis: as shaper of the environment in which it takes place; as useful catechetical tools; and as appropriate subject matter. Not all catechists can or need to be media specialists, but all should have some understanding of the implications of media for their work. Communications media are relevant to every level of catechesis; they are pertinent to human development, to growth in theological understanding and to faith experience itself.

Although media are instruments for transmitting messages, they also possess inherent capabilities and potentialities.¹ Every medium has its own integrity and special genius requiring specific skills of interpretation on the part of both communicators and audiences. There is an intrinsic

¹ Cf. *Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communications*. Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, January 29, 1971, 14; *On Evangelization* (Paul VI, 1975), 45.

connection between medium and message, between the 'how' and 'what' of communication. In using and evaluating media, catechists should be aware that a concept concretized in a medium is no longer simply an abstract idea, but an event. Communication is not just the delivering of messages, but an experience of sharing among human beings.

Communications

The impact of the communications revolution, especially television, is very powerful in many countries. The influx of information from all forms of media is overwhelming. A person living in the United States today is said to be exposed to more information in a week than his or her counterpart of two centuries ago was in a year.

Many persons find that they are given more information than they can assimilate or evaluate. People need to acquire 'literacy' in relation to the new media, that is, to grow in their ability to evaluate television and other contemporary media by critical standards which include Gospel values.

Particular attention should be paid to the damage which can be done to children and adults by excessive exposure to television violence and especially to all forms of immorality in the mass media.

Furthermore, how children understand reality still depends largely on their relationships with other people. But "other people" now include a much larger community than the immediate family, notably the community to which children are exposed through media, particularly television which occupies so much of most children's time. TV is important not only for the behavior it may encourage but that which it prevents—for instance, conversations, games, family celebrations, and other activities which foster learning and character development.

Instruments of catechesis

Broadcast media present special opportunities and challenges to the creativity of catechists. Radio and television can be direct instruments of catechesis. Catechists who plan to use them for this purpose should either acquire specialized media training or collaborate with others experienced in broadcast production. It may be appropriate for them to seek positions as consultants or advisors to producers of programs dealing with religious matters within their competence.

Accountability of broadcast media

The broadcast media should be encouraged and supported when they promote human values, and called to task when they air unworthy and

degrading presentations. This points to the need to make people familiar with the criteria and procedures which local television and radio stations are required to observe in order to obtain and keep their operating licenses. Individuals should be made aware of their right and duty to state their views to broadcasters.

Audience

Knowledge of the audience is as important to successful broadcast production as familiarity with media technology. Producers must understand people's attitudes and values. Religious and catechetical programming should be professionally excellent, and responsive to the interest and needs of viewers and listeners.

Broadcast media can be particularly helpful in meeting special catechetical needs and problems. They can, for instance, be the most effective means of communicating with people in isolated and rural areas, as well as with such groups as the aged and shut-ins. Radio and television also offer opportunities for ecumenical collaboration and so, potentially, for reaching larger audiences. More pooling of local, diocesan, and national talent and funds is essential to upgrade the amount and quality of religious and catechetical programming.

On-going technological developments

People concerned with the religious and catechetical potential of media should be alert to significant changes in technology, organizational structure, and policy now occurring or anticipated in the broadcasting industry.

Catholic press

Despite the emergence of electronic media, print media of many different kinds reach daily into virtually every home and place of work.

The Catholic press has long been central to the Church's communication effort. It deserves the support of the Catholic people. The Catholic press is the least expensive way of regularly bringing comprehensive religious news and instructional features to a large number of Catholics. It helps foster the sense of Christian community in its readers. It serves as a forum for the members of this community, providing opportunities for discussion and the exchange of ideas.

Catholic newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, and parish bulletins can be useful catechetical tools, especially in adult programs. Editors and publishers should provide appealing publications which help contemporary Catholics evaluate their experience in the light of Christian values, foster their growth in faith, and promote community among them.

In particular, they should pay close attention to the requirements of justice and charity in reporting the news. Minority cultural, racial, and ethnic groups should have access to and make use of Catholic publications which are in their languages and reflect their special cultural values and concerns.

There is need for continuing dialogue and cooperation between catechetical leaders and the editors and publishers of Catholic publications at the diocesan and national levels. The aim should be to develop ways of exchanging ideas and information about catechetical needs and about the effective use of the Catholic press for catechetical purposes. Catechists and catechetical offices at all levels should provide the Catholic press with news releases and photographs reflecting newsworthy aspects of catechists—trends, programs, meetings, personalities. They should also offer suggestions for interpretive features and columns of a catechetical nature, and be prepared to supply these when asked. As opportunities arise, they should collaborate with the Catholic press as planners, consultants, and writers.

Secular press

The secular press also offers opportunities to catechists, although it would generally be unrealistic to consider it a vehicle for direct catechesis.

Through a diocesan (or other) communications office or directly, catechists should provide secular publications with accurate and interesting information on catechetical matters. Typically, this is done by news releases. Catechists should be prepared to respond to press inquiries and to spend time when necessary discussing questions and issues with journalists. Secular publications are generally willing to entertain suggestions for articles and features on catechetical topics, provided these are of general interest. Opportunities exist in relation to publications ranging from community-oriented newspapers to national publications. In their approaches to the secular press on the latter levels in particular, catechists are advised to work with diocesan or national communications offices.

Training media producers

All who use the communications media in their work “have a duty in conscience to make themselves competent in the art of social communication”;² and this applies in particular to people with educational responsibilities, including catechists. Theory, technique, and research should be part of media training. In line with what has been said above, catechists should learn how to take media into account as a crucial part

² *Pastoral Instruction*, 15.

of the cultural background and experience of those being catechized; how to use media in catechesis; and how to help their students understand and evaluate media in the light of religious values. They should also learn the proper use of advertising, which is such an influential means of communications today.

Training media users

Catechetical instruction concerning media should help people become knowledgeable viewers, listeners, and readers. Such training is necessary for them "to benefit to the full from what the instruments of social communications have to offer."³ It is also required if they are to seek to improve the quality of media, either by advocacy directed at professional communicators, or by pursuing careers in media.

Because television occupies so much of the time of so many people, catechesis should seek to foster critical understanding of this medium in particular. Viewers need to know, for example, how programs are planned and produced; techniques used by advertisers and others to influence and persuade; whether and to what degree TV gives a true picture of life or distorts reality; and the role of profit motives in determining policy in commercial television. Communication techniques suited to print media (for example, the logical patterning of a typical news story) are inappropriate in the electronic media, which require other modes suited to themselves. Understanding the 'language'—techniques, principles, symbols, etc.—is essential to both sender and receiver. Otherwise communication is impeded.

Because people grow in maturity and because there are frequent changes in the media, continuing education is necessary to keep the critical faculty well-honed. Finally, the Church is grateful to those in the media who produce and present programs of benefit to the spiritual development of humanity.

³ *Ibid.*, 65.

After the Synod

Statement Presented to a News Conference October 20, 1977

By Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati

Although the Synod has more than a week to run, I believe the general outlines of its likely consensus are beginning to emerge. These will be apparent to you from the briefings and bulletins you receive, so that I feel no need in these remarks either to anticipate in detail the Synod's outcome or to repeat information which you already have.

Instead I would like to reflect on a very practical question. What happens after the Synod? The sense of accomplishment, even of euphoria, which we experience when a meeting goes well, as this one has, should not blind us to the fact that everything that has been said will amount to very little unless things happen as a result.

We came to the Synod against the background of what can without exaggeration be called a catechetical crisis for the Church in many parts of the world. Notice that I use the word "crisis," not "disaster" or "collapse." A crisis suggests a turning-point, when things can become either better or worse. There are tensions and problems; there are also challenges and opportunities.

The nature of the catechetical crisis has been discussed at length during the Synod. I shall not repeat what has been said. Approaches and solutions are now evolving through the synodal process. Their outlines are becoming clear. But it is obvious that, when the Synod ends next week, the crisis will remain, and our suggested solutions will be no more than words on paper. Does this mean that the Synod will have failed? Not at all. It means that the real work of the Synod—or rather, the work the Synod has helped to identify for the Church as a whole—will have just begun.

Allow me to be personal for a moment. I doubt that large numbers of Catholics in my Archdiocese of Cincinnati are keenly aware of the Synod or deeply concerned about its outcome. Some are, but not most. I suspect this is true for most of the other bishops here. Frankly, while I might wish it were otherwise, I do not find this either surprising or especially disturbing in itself. It is difficult for people to become strongly interested in a distant meeting conducted in abstract and unfamiliar terminology, even if it is highly worthwhile for those who take part in it. In any case, what concerns me is not whether the Catholics of Cincinnati are intensely interested in the Synod as such, but whether they are

intensely interested in bringing about the renewal of catechesis which the Synod has been laboring to promote. And I for one shall measure the results of the Synod, not so much by what it says, but to a great degree by what happens—or fails to happen—in Cincinnati and everywhere else in the Church in the months and years to come. I believe any other bishop at this gathering would say much the same.

Now, how might things begin to happen after the Synod? One thing is clear. Nothing will happen by itself. If the present crisis in catechesis is to lead to a catechetical renewal, a great deal of hard work will have to be done by many different people, even though ultimately the success of that work is up to God.

In the United States, I am happy to say, we have already—well before the Synod—begun to take some of the necessary steps. One example. Next month, when our bishops gather in Washington for their semiannual general meeting, a principal item on their agenda will be the proposed *National Catechetical Directory* for the Catholic Church in the United States. A number of other national hierarchies have already adopted such directories in response to the *General Catechetical Directory*. These documents, you will understand, are not catechisms or religion texts or pious exhortations. Our *Directory*, which has been under development for nearly five years, is a comprehensive, practical statement of policy and guidelines governing the content and methods of catechesis in all forms and at all levels.

The value of such a project will be clear to anyone familiar with the catechetical scene in recent years. There has been a great deal of confusion, controversy, and tension over catechesis since Vatican II. I believe this has done as much as anything to undermine effective catechesis. With 'liberals' fighting 'conservatives,' 'content' people arguing with 'methodology' people, advocates of an inductive approach disputing supporters of a deductive approach, parents questioning teachers, and teachers complaining that parents do not understand—it is no wonder that catechesis itself has suffered. So without either turning back the clock in a reactionary manner or leaping blindly into an unknown future, the intent of the *Directory* is to codify the best of responsible, tested catechetical thought and practice, in light of the Church's teaching and traditional wisdom, and so serve as a normative guidepost as well as an incentive for catechetical endeavors.

But just as the Synod by itself cannot accomplish what is needed for the renewal of catechesis, so a *Directory* can provide only part of what is required. More important still is what happens in our individual dioceses and parishes, in schools and catechetical programs, in families and small communities. The emphasis of the Synod upon family and adult catechesis as crucial to the catechesis of children and young

people, upon the importance of continuing education for the clergy, upon the need for sound doctrine and good methodology, upon the role of communities of faith as catechetical settings—these and all the other valuable insights simply will not be translated into practice without the concerted, collaborative efforts of many different people: priests, deacons, religious, and laity, parents, teachers, and administrators, workers in youth ministry, campus ministry, and adult education. Without their response there will be no renewal of catechesis.

A final word. It is not simply a question of us—the bishops—telling them—everybody else in the Church—what they should do to bring about catechetical renewal. A bishop has a serious duty to foster the ministry of the Word in his diocese. Ultimately, he must take responsibility for what does or does not happen in catechesis. It is his task to give leadership and support and encouragement to catechetical renewal: by prudent planning and administration, by clear, unambiguous and effective teaching, by prayer and dialogue with others, including theologians and other scholars, by his own readiness to listen, to learn, to experience continuing catechesis himself, and to participate actively in the ministry of the Word. So in the final analysis the Synod is a challenge to us, the bishops, to strive for the renewal of catechesis which the present crisis requires and makes possible. The results of the Synod will be as practical and positive as we bishops help make them.

