

Further Reading for Session 3: Why the New Catechism?

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church for the purpose of the Catechism
APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION
FIDEI DEPOSITUM
ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE
CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
PREPARED FOLLOWING THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
JOHN PAUL, BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD
FOR EVERLASTING MEMORY

To my Venerable Brothers the cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and to all the People of God.

GUARDING THE DEPOSIT OF FAITH IS THE MISSION WHICH THE LORD ENTRUSTED TO HIS CHURCH, and which she fulfills in every age. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which was opened 30 years ago by my predecessor Pope John XXIII, of happy memory, had as its intention and purpose to highlight the Church's apostolic and pastoral mission, and by making the truth of the Gospel shine forth to lead all people to seek and receive Christ's love which surpasses all knowledge (cf. Eph 3:19).

The principal task entrusted to the Council by Pope John XXIII was to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will. For this reason the Council was not first of all to condemn the errors of the time, but above all to strive calmly to show the strength and beauty of the doctrine of the faith. "Illumined by the light of this Council", the Pope said, "the Church. . . will become greater in spiritual riches and gaining the strength of new energies therefrom, she will look to the future without fear. . . Our duty is to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us, thus pursuing the path which the Church has followed for 20 centuries."

With the help of God, the Council Fathers in four years of work were able to produce a considerable number of doctrinal statements and pastoral norms which were presented to the whole Church. There the Pastors and Christian faithful find directives for that "renewal of thought, action, practices and moral virtue, of joy and hope, which was the very purpose of the Council".

After its conclusion, the Council did not cease to inspire the Church's life. In 1985 I was able to assert, "For me, then - who had the special grace of participating in it and actively collaborating in its development - Vatican II has always been, and especially during these years of my Pontificate, the constant reference point of my every pastoral action, in the conscious commitment to implement its directives concretely and faithfully at the level of each Church and the whole Church."

In this spirit, on 25 January 1985, I convoked an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the 20th anniversary of the close of the Council. The purpose of this assembly was to celebrate the graces and spiritual fruits of Vatican II, to study its teaching in greater depth in order that all the Christian faithful might better adhere to it, and to promote knowledge and application of it.

On that occasion the Synod Fathers stated: "Very many have expressed the desire that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed, that it might be, as it were, a point of reference for the catechisms or compendiums that are prepared in various regions. The presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine suited to the present life of Christians." After the Synod ended, I made this desire my own, considering it as "fully responding to a real need of the universal Church and of the particular Churches".

For this reason we thank the Lord whole-heartedly on this day when we can offer the entire Church this "reference text" entitled the Catechism of the Catholic Church, for a catechesis renewed at the living sources of the faith!

Following the renewal of the Liturgy and the new codification of the canon law of the Latin Church and that of the Oriental Catholic Churches, this catechism will make a very important contribution to that work of renewing the whole life of the Church, as desired and begun by the Second Vatican Council.

1. The Process and Spirit of Drafting the Text

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is the result of very extensive collaboration; it was prepared over six years of intense work done in a spirit of complete openness and fervent zeal.

In 1986, I entrusted a commission of twelve Cardinals and Bishops, chaired by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, with the task of preparing a draft of the catechism requested by the Synod Fathers. An editorial committee of seven diocesan Bishops, experts in theology and catechesis, assisted the commission in its work.

The commission, charged with giving directives and with overseeing the course of the work, attentively followed all the stages in editing the nine subsequent drafts. The editorial committee, for its part, assumed responsibility for writing the text, making the emendations requested by the commission and examining the observations of numerous theologians, exegetes and catechists, and above all, of the Bishops of the whole world, in order to produce a better text. In the committee various opinions were compared with great profit, and thus a richer text has resulted whose unity and coherence are assured.

The project was the object of extensive consultation among all Catholic Bishops, their Episcopal Conferences or Synods, and theological and catechetical institutes. As a whole, it received a broadly favorable acceptance on the part of the Episcopate. It can be said that this Catechism is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church, who generously accepted my invitation to share responsibility for an enterprise which directly concerns the life of the Church. This response elicits in me a deep feeling of joy, because the harmony of so many voices truly expresses what could be called the "symphony" of the faith. The achievement of this Catechism thus reflects the collegial nature of the Episcopate; it testifies to the Church's catholicity.

2. Arrangement of the Material

A catechism should faithfully and systematically present the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in the Church and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers, Doctors and saints of the Church, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the People of God. It should take into account the doctrinal statements which down the centuries the Holy Spirit has intimated to his Church. It should also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past.

This catechism will thus contain both the new and the old (cf. Mt 13:52), because the faith is always the same yet the source of ever new light.

To respond to this twofold demand, the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the one hand repeats the "old", traditional order already followed by the Catechism of St. Pius V, arranging the material in four parts: the Creed, the Sacred Liturgy, with pride of place given to the sacraments, the Christian way of life, explained beginning with the Ten Commandments, and finally, Christian prayer. At the same time, however, the contents are often presented in a "new" way in order to respond to the questions of our age.

The four parts are related one to another: the Christian mystery is the object of faith (first part); it is celebrated and communicated in liturgical actions (second part); it is present to enlighten and sustain the children of God in their actions (third part); it is the basis for our prayer, the privileged expression of which is the Our Father, and it represents the object of our supplication, our praise and our intercession (fourth part).

The Liturgy itself is prayer; the confession of faith finds its proper place in the celebration of worship. Grace,

the fruit of the sacraments, is the irreplaceable condition for Christian living, just as participation in the Church's Liturgy requires faith. If faith is not expressed in works, it is dead (cf. Jas 2:14-16) and cannot bear fruit unto eternal life. In reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church we can perceive the wonderful unity of the mystery of God, his saving will, as well as the central place of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, sent by the Father, made man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be our Savior. Having died and risen, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the sacraments; he is the source of our faith, the model of Christian conduct and the Teacher of our prayer.

3. The Doctrinal Value of the Text

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which I approved 25 June last and the publication of which I today order by virtue of my Apostolic Authority, is a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith and thus a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion. May it serve the renewal to which the Holy Spirit ceaselessly calls the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on her pilgrimage to the undiminished light of the Kingdom!

The approval and publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church represent a service which the Successor of Peter wishes to offer to the Holy Catholic Church, to all the particular Churches in peace and communion with the Apostolic See: the service, that is, of supporting and confirming the faith of all the Lord Jesus' disciples (cf. Lk 22:32 as well as of strengthening the bonds of unity in the same apostolic faith.

Therefore, I ask all the Church's Pastors and the Christian faithful to receive this catechism in a spirit of communion and to use it assiduously in fulfilling their mission of proclaiming the faith and calling people to the Gospel life. This catechism is given to them that it may be a sure and authentic reference text for teaching catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms. It is also offered to all the faithful who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation (cf. Eph 3:8). It is meant to support ecumenical efforts that are moved by the holy desire for the unity of all Christians, showing carefully the content and wondrous harmony of the catholic faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, lastly, is offered to every individual who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15) and who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes.

This catechism is not intended to replace the local catechisms duly approved by the ecclesiastical authorities, the diocesan Bishops and the Episcopal Conferences, especially if they have been approved by the Apostolic See. It is meant to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms, which take into account various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to catholic doctrine.

At the conclusion of this document presenting the Catechism of the Catholic Church, I beseech the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word and Mother of the Church, to support with her powerful intercession the catechetical work of the entire Church on every level, at this time when she is called to a new effort of evangelization. May the light of the true faith free humanity from the ignorance and slavery of sin in order to lead it to the only freedom worthy of the name (cf. Jn 8:32): that of life in Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, here below and in the Kingdom of heaven, in the fullness of the blessed vision of God face to face (cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 5:6-8)!

Given 11 October 1992, the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, in the fourteenth year of my Pontificate.

For how to learn from the Catechism and teach the Faith from it
From the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Prologue, 1-25

I. THE LIFE OF MAN - TO KNOW AND LOVE GOD

1 God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

2 So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it."

3 Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer.

II. HANDING ON THE FAITH: CATECHESIS

4 Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ.

5 "Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life."

6 While not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's

pastoral mission which have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or spring from it. They are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching to arouse faith; examination of the reasons for belief; experience of Christian living; celebration of the sacraments; integration into the ecclesial community; and apostolic and missionary witness.

7 "Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase, but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis."

8 Periods of renewal in the Church are also intense moments of catechesis. In the great era of the Fathers of the Church, saintly bishops devoted an important part of their ministry to catechesis. St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and many other Fathers wrote catechetical works that remain models for us.

9 "The ministry of catechesis draws ever fresh energy from the councils. The Council of Trent is a noteworthy example of this. It gave catechesis priority in its constitutions and decrees. It lies at the origin of the Roman Catechism, which is also known by the name of that council and which is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching. . . ." The Council of Trent initiated a remarkable organization of the Church's catechesis. Thanks to the work of holy bishops and theologians such as St. Peter Canisius, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Turibius of Mongrovejo or St. Robert Bellarmine, it occasioned the publication of numerous catechisms.

10 It is therefore no surprise that catechesis in the Church has again attracted attention in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope Paul VI considered the great catechism of modern times. The General Catechetical Directory (1971) the sessions of the Synod of Bishops devoted to evangelization (1974) and catechesis (1977), the apostolic exhortations *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) and *Catechesi tradendae* (1979), attest to this. The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 asked "that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed" The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, made the Synod's wish his own, acknowledging that "this desire wholly corresponds to a real need of the universal Church and of the particular Churches." He set in motion everything needed to carry out the Synod Fathers' wish.

III. THE AIM AND INTENDED READERSHIP OF THE CATECHISM

11 This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church's Magisterium. It is intended to serve "as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries".

12 This work is intended primarily for those responsible for catechesis: first of all the bishops, as teachers of the faith and pastors of the Church. It is offered to them as an instrument in fulfilling their responsibility of teaching the People of God. Through the bishops, it is addressed to redactors of catechisms, to priests, and to catechists. It will also be useful reading for all other Christian faithful.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THIS CATECHISM

13 The plan of this catechism is inspired by the great tradition of catechisms which build catechesis on four pillars: the baptismal profession of faith (the Creed), the sacraments of faith, the life of faith (the Commandments), and the prayer of the believer (the Lord's Prayer).

Part One: The Profession of Faith

14 Those who belong to Christ through faith and Baptism must confess their baptismal faith before men. First therefore the Catechism expounds revelation, by which God addresses and gives himself to man, and the faith by which man responds to God (Section One). The profession of faith summarizes the gifts that God gives man: as the Author of all that is good; as Redeemer; and as Sanctifier. It develops these in the three chapters on our baptismal faith in the one God: the almighty Father, the Creator; his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, in the Holy Church (Section Two).

Part Two: The Sacraments of Faith

15 The second part of the Catechism explains how God's salvation, accomplished once for all through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit, is made present in the sacred actions of the Church's liturgy (Section One), especially in the seven sacraments (Section Two).

Part Three: The Life of Faith

16 The third part of the Catechism deals with the final end of man created in the image of God: beatitude, and the ways of reaching it - through right conduct freely chosen, with the help of God's law and grace (Section One), and through conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity, specified in God's Ten Commandments (Section Two).

Part Four: Prayer in the Life of Faith

17 The last part of the Catechism deals with the meaning and importance of prayer in the life of believers (Section One). It concludes with a brief commentary on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer (Section Two), for indeed we find in these the sum of all the good things which we must hope for, and which our heavenly Father wants to grant us.

V. PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR USING THIS CATECHISM

18 This catechism is conceived as an organic presentation of the Catholic faith in its entirety. It should be seen therefore as a unified whole. Numerous cross-references in the margin of the text (numbers found at the end of a sentence referring to other paragraphs that deal with the same theme), as well as the analytical index at the end of the volume, allow the reader to view each theme in its relationship with the entirety of the faith.

19 The texts of Sacred Scripture are often not quoted word for word but are merely indicated by a reference (cf.). For a deeper understanding of such passages, the reader should refer to the Scriptural texts themselves. Such Biblical references are a valuable working-tool in catechesis.

20 The use of small print in certain passages indicates observations of an historical or apologetic nature, or supplementary doctrinal explanations.

21

The quotations, also in small print, from patristic, liturgical, magisterial or hagiographical sources, are intended to enrich the doctrinal presentations. These texts have often been chosen with a view to direct catechetical use.

22

At the end of each thematic unit, a series of brief texts in small italics sums up the essentials of that unit's teaching in condensed formula. These IN BRIEF summaries may suggest to local catechists brief summary formula that could be memorized.

VI. NECESSARY ADAPTATIONS

23 The Catechism emphasizes the exposition of doctrine. It seeks to help deepen understanding of faith. In this way it is oriented towards the maturing of that faith, its putting down roots in personal life, and its shining forth in personal conduct.

24 By design, this Catechism does not set out to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentations and catechetical methods required by the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition among all those to whom it is addressed. Such indispensable adaptations are the responsibility of particular catechisms and, even more, of those who instruct the faithful:

Whoever teaches must become "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:22), to win everyone to Christ. . . . Above all, teachers must not imagine that a single kind of soul has been entrusted to them, and that consequently it is lawful to teach and form equally all the faithful in true piety with one and the same method! Let them realize that some are in Christ as newborn babes, others as adolescents, and still others as adults in full command of their powers. . . . Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must suit their words to

the maturity and understanding of their hearers, as they hand on the teaching of the mysteries of faith and the rules of moral conduct.

Above all - Charity

25 To conclude this Prologue, it is fitting to recall this pastoral principle stated by the Roman Catechism:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.

For how to learn from the Catechism and teach the Faith from it

From the General Directory for Catechesis, Part Two, Chapter Two

CHAPTER II

"This is our faith

this is the faith of the Church"

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2

Thess 2:15).

"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the tradition which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2

Thess 2:15).

119. This chapter reflects on the content of catechesis as presented by the Church in the syntheses of faith which are officially drawn up and presented in her catechisms. The Church has always used formulations of faith which, in short forms, contain the essentials of what she believes and lives: New Testament texts, creeds or professions of faith, liturgical formulas, Eucharistic prayers. At a later period, it was considered useful to provide more ample explications of the faith in organic synthesis, through the catechisms compiled in numerous local Churches in recent centuries. In two historical moments, at the Council of Trent and in our own times, it was considered opportune to furnish a comprehensive presentation of the faith in a catechism of a universal nature, which would serve as a reference point for catechesis throughout the Church. It was with this intention that Pope John Paul II promulgated the Catechism of the Catholic Church on 11 October 1992.

The present chapter seeks to situate these official instruments of the Church, which is what catechisms are, in relation with catechetical activity and praxis.

In the first place, it will reflect on the Catechism of the Catholic Church and seek to clarify its role in the overall catechesis of the Church. It will, then, analyse the need for local catechisms to adapt the content of the faith to different circumstances and cultures. Some directions will be given to assist the preparation of such catechisms. The Church, contemplating the richness of the content of faith, which the Bishops propose to the people of God and which they express like a "symphony" celebrates, lives and proclaims what she believes: "This is our faith, this is the faith of the Church".

The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the General Directory for Catechesis

120. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the General Catechetical Directory are two distinct but complementary

instruments at the service of the Church's catechetical activity.

- The Catechism of the Catholic Church is "a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illuminated by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium.
- The General Directory for Catechesis provides "the basic principles of pastoral theology taken from the Magisterium of the Church, and in a special way from the Second Vatican Council by which pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be more fittingly directed and governed".

Both instruments, each taken in accordance with its specific nature and authority, are mutually complementary. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is an act of the Magisterium of the Pope, by which, in our times, in virtue of Apostolic Authority, he synthesizes normatively the totality of the Catholic faith. He offers the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in the first place, to the Churches as a point of reference for the authentic presentation of the content of the faith. The Catechetical Directory, for its part, carries that authority normally vested by the Holy See in instruments of orientation by approving them and confirming them. It is an official aid for the transmission of the Gospel message and for the whole of catechetical activity. The complementary nature of both of these instruments justifies the fact, as already mentioned in the Preface, that this General Catechetical Directory does not devote a chapter to the presentation of the contents of the faith, as was the case in the 1971 General Catechetical Directory for Catechesis under the title: "The more outstanding elements of the Christian message". Such is explained by the fact that

this Directory, as far as the content of the Christian message is concerned, simply refers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church", which is intended as a methodological norm for its concrete application. The following exposition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church seeks neither to summarize its contents nor to explain this instrument of the Magisterium. It simply seeks to facilitate a better understanding and use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in catechetical practice.

The catechism of the catholic Church

Nature and purpose of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

121. The Prologue to the Catechism of the Catholic Church states its purpose: "This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition". The Magisterium of the Church intends to render an ecclesial service for our times with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, recognizing that it is:

- "a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion": it desires to promote the bond of unity in the faith by helping the disciples of Jesus Christ to make "the profession of one faith received from the Apostles";
- "a sure norm for teaching the faith": the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers a clear response to the legitimate right of all the baptized to know from the Church what she has received and what she believes; it is thus an obligatory point of reference for catechesis and for the other forms of the ministry of the word.
- "a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms": the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in fact, "is not intended to replace the local catechism (duly approved)" but "to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms which take into account various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to Catholic doctrine".

The nature or character proper to this document of the Magisterium consists in the fact that it is a comprehensive synthesis of the faith and thus it is of universal value. In this, it differs from other documents of the Magisterium, which do not set out to present such a synthesis. It differs also from local Catechisms, which, within the context of ecclesial communion, are destined for the service of a particular portion of the people of God.

Structure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

122. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is structured around four fundamental dimensions of the Christian life: the profession of faith; the celebration of the liturgy; the morality of the Gospel; and prayer. These four dimensions spring from a single source, the Christian mystery. This is:

- the object of the faith (Part One);
- celebrated and communicated in liturgical actions (Part Two);

- present to enlighten and sustain the children of God in their actions (Part Three);
- the basis of our prayer, whose supreme expression is the Our Father, and the object of our supplication, praise and intercession (Part Four);

This four part structure develops the essential aspects of the faith:

- belief in the Triune God and in his saving plan;
- sanctification by him in the sacramental life;
- loving him with all one's heart and one's neighbour as oneself;
- prayer while waiting for the coming of his Kingdom and our meeting with him face to face.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church thus refers to the faith as believed, celebrated, lived and prayed. It is a call to integral Christian education. The structure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church derives from the profound unity of the Christian life. It maintains an explicit interrelation between "lex orandi", "lex credendi" and "lex vivendi". "The Liturgy itself is prayer; the confession of faith finds its proper place in the celebration of worship. Grace, the fruit of the sacraments, is the irreplaceable condition for Christian living, just as participation in the Church's Liturgy requires faith. If faith is not expressed in works it is dead and cannot bear fruit into eternal life".

Structured around the four pillars which sustain the transmission of the faith (the Creed, the Sacraments, the Decalogue, the Our Father), the Catechism of the Catholic Church is presented as a doctrinal point of reference for education in the four basic tasks of catechesis, and for the drawing up of local catechisms. It does not, however, impose a predetermined configuration on the one or on the other. "The best structure for catechesis must be one which is suitable to particular concrete circumstances and cannot be established for the entire Church by a common catechism". Perfect fidelity to Catholic doctrine is compatible with a rich diversity of presentation.

The inspiration of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: trinitarian christocentricity and the nobility of the vocation of the human person

123. The axis of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is Jesus Christ, "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14,6).

Centred on him, it is orientated in two directions: toward God and toward the human person.

– The mystery of the Triune God and of his economy of salvation inspires and organizes the internal structure of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in general and in particular. The profession of faith, the liturgy, the morality of the Gospel and prayer in the Catechism of the Catholic Church all have a trinitarian inspiration, which runs through the entire work.

– The mystery of the human person is presented throughout the Catechism of the Catholic Church and specifically in some particularly significant chapters: "Man is capable of God", "The creation of Man", "The Son of God became Man", "The vocation of Man and life in the Spirit"... and others. This doctrine, contemplated in the light of the humanity of Jesus, the perfect man, demonstrates the highest vocation and the ideal of perfection to which every human person is called.

Indeed, the doctrine of the Catechism of the Catholic Church can be distilled into the following remark of the Council: "Jesus Christ, by revealing the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling".

The literary genre of The Catechism of the Catholic Church

124. It is important to understand the literary genre of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in order to foster the role which the Church's authority gives to it in the exercise and renewal of catechetical activity in our time. The principal characteristics of this follow:

- The Catechism of the Catholic Church is above all a catechism; that is to say, an official text of the Church's Magisterium, which authoritatively gathers in a precise form, and in an organic synthesis the events and fundamental salvific truths which express the faith common to the People of God and which constitute the indispensable basic reference for catechesis.
- In virtue of being a catechism, the Catechism of the Catholic Church collects all that is fundamental and common to the Christian life without "presenting as doctrines of the faith special interpretations which are only private opinions

or the views of some theological school".

– The Catechism of the Catholic Church is, moreover, a catechism of a universal nature and is offered to the entire Church. It presents an updated synthesis of the faith which incorporates the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council as well as the religious and moral concerns of our times. However, "by design this Catechism does not set out to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentations and the catechetical methods required by the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity and social and ecclesial condition amongst all those to whom it is addressed. Such indispensable adaptations are the responsibility of particular catechisms and, even more, of those who instruct the faithful".

The Deposit of Faith and the Catechism of the Catholic Church

125. The Second Vatican Council set as one of its principal tasks the "better conservation and presentation of the precious deposit of Christian doctrine so as to render it more accessible to Christ's faithful and to all men of good will". The content of that deposit is the word of God which is safeguarded in the Church. The Magisterium of the Church, having decided to draw up "a reference text" for the teaching of the faith, has chosen from this precious treasure "things new and old" which it considers suitable for accomplishing this task. The Catechism of the Catholic Church thus constitutes a fundamental service by encouraging the proclamation of the Gospel and the teaching of the faith, which both draw their message from Tradition and Sacred Scripture entrusted to the Church, so as to achieve this function with complete authenticity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is not the only source of catechesis, since as an act of the Magisterium, "it is not superior to the word of God but at its service". However it is a particularly authentic act of interpretation of that word, such that the Gospel may be proclaimed and transmitted in all its truth and purity.

126. In the light of this relationship between the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the "deposit of faith", it may be useful to clarify two questions of vital importance for catechesis:

- the relationship between Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church as points of reference for the content of catechesis;
- the relationship between the catechetical tradition of the Fathers of the Church, with its rich content and its profound understanding of the catechetical process, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Sacred Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and Catechesis

127. The Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council emphasizes the fundamental importance of Sacred Scripture in the Church's life. Together with tradition, it is the "supreme rule of faith", since it transmits "the very word of God" and makes "to resound... the voice of the Holy Spirit". For this reason the Church desires that in the ministry of the word, Sacred Scripture should have a pre-eminent position. In concrete terms, catechesis should be "an authentic introduction to *lectio divina*, that is, to a reading of the Sacred Scriptures done in accordance to the Spirit who dwells in the Church". "In this sense, to describe Tradition and Scripture as sources for catechesis means that catechesis must imbibe and permeate itself with biblical and evangelical thought, spirit and attitudes by constant contact with them. It also means that catechesis will be as rich and as effective only to the extent that these texts are read with the mind and heart of the Church". In this ecclesial reading of the Scriptures, done in the light of Tradition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church plays a most important role.

128. Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church are presented as two basic sources of inspiration for all catechetical activity in our time.

– Sacred Scripture as, "the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit", and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as a significant contemporary expression of the living Tradition of the Church and a sure norm for teaching the faith, are called, each in its own way and according to its specific authority, to nourish catechesis in the Church of today.

– Catechesis transmits the content of the word of God according to the two modalities whereby the Church possesses it, interiorizes it and lives it: as a narration of the history of salvation and as an explication of the Creed. Both Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church must inform biblical as well as doctrinal catechesis so

that they become true vehicles of the content of God's word.

– In the ordinary development of catechesis it is important that catechumens and those to be catechized can have trust in both Sacred Scripture and the local catechism. Catechesis, by definition, is nothing other than the living and meaningful transmission of these "documents of faith".

The catechetical tradition of the Fathers and the Catechism of the Catholic Church

129. The whole Tradition of the Church together with Scripture is contained in the "deposit of faith". "The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition, showing how its riches are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and in her prayer". With regard to this doctrinal and pastoral richness, some aspects merit special attention:

– the decisive importance which the fathers attribute to the baptismal catechumenate in the structure of the particular churches;

– the gradual and progressive conception of Christian formation, arranged in stages: The fathers model the catechumenate on the divine pedagogy; in the catechumenal process the catechumen, like the people of Israel, goes through a journey to arrive at the promised land: Baptismal identification with Christ.

– The organization of the content of catechesis in accordance with the stages of that process; in patristic catechesis a primary role is devoted to the narration of the history of salvation; as Lent advanced, the Creed and the Our Father were handed on to the catechumens together with their meaning and moral implications; after the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, mystagogical catechesis helped interiorize them and to savour the experience of configuration to Christ and of communion with him.

130. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, for its part, brings to catechesis "the great tradition of catechisms". In the richness of this tradition the following aspects deserve attention:

– The cognitive or truth dimension of the faith: this is not only living attachment to God but also assent of intellect and will; the catechisms constantly remind the Church of the need for the faithful to have an organic knowledge of the faith, however simple in form;

– An education in the faith, which is well rooted in all its sources, embraces all the different dimensions of faith profession, celebration, life and prayer.

The wealth of the patristic tradition and the tradition of catechisms comes together in the actual catechesis of the Church, enriching her in her own concept of catechesis and of its contents. These traditions bring to catechesis the seven basic elements which characterize it: the three phases in the narration of the history of salvation (the Old Testament, the life of Jesus Christ and the history of the Church) and the four pillars of its exposition (the Creed, the Sacraments, the Decalogue and the Our Father). With these seven foundation stones, both of initiatory catechesis and of continuing Christian development, various schemes and styles may be devised, in accordance with the different cultural situations of those to whom catechesis is addressed.

Catechisms in the local Churches

Local Catechisms: their necessity

131. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is given to all the faithful and to those who wish to know what the Catholic

Church believes. It is "meant to encourage and assist in the writing of new local catechisms, which take into account various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of faith and Catholic doctrine".

Local catechisms, prepared or approved by diocesan Bishops or by Episcopal Conferences, are invaluable instruments for catechesis which are "called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures". For this reason Pope John Paul II has offered a warm encouragement "to the Episcopal Conferences of the whole world to undertake, patiently but resolutely, the considerable work to be accomplished, in agreement with the Apostolic See, in order to prepare genuine catechisms which will be faithful to the essential content of Revelation and up to date in method, and which will be capable of educating the Christian generations of the future to a sturdy faith".

By means of local catechisms, the Church actualizes the "divine pedagogy" used by God himself in Revelation, adapting his language to our nature with thoughtful concern. In local catechisms, the Church communicates the Gospel in a manner accessible to the human person so that it may be really perceived as the "Good News" of salvation. Local catechisms are palpable expressions of the wonderful "condescension" of God and of his "ineffable" love for the world.

The literary genre of the local catechism

132. Three principal traits characterize every catechism adopted by a local Church: its official character, its organic and fundamental synthesis of the faith, and the fact that, along with Sacred Scripture, it is offered as a reference point for catechesis.

– The local catechism is an official text of the Church. In a certain sense, it makes visible the "handing on of the Creed" and the "handing on of the Our Father" to catechumens and those to be baptized. For this reason, it is an act of tradition. The official character of local catechisms establishes a qualitative difference from other instruments which may be useful for catechetical pedagogy (didactic texts, non-official catechisms, catechetical guides etc.)

– Moreover, every catechism is a synthetic and basic text, in which the events and fundamental truths of the Christian mystery are presented in an organic way and with regard to the "hierarchy of truths". The local catechism presents, in its organic structure, "an ensemble of the documents of Revelation and Christian Tradition", made available in the rich diversity of "languages" in which the word of God is expressed.

– The local catechism, finally, is given as a reference point to inform catechesis. The Sacred Scriptures and the catechism are the two basic doctrinal texts for the process of catechesis and must always be to hand. While both of these texts are of the greatest importance, they are not the only texts available. Indeed, other more immediate aids are necessary. It is, therefore, a valid question to ask if an official catechism should contain pedagogical elements or, on the contrary, should be limited to giving a doctrinal synthesis and a presentation of sources.

In any case, the catechism, being an instrument of catechetical activity, which is an act of communication, always reflects a certain pedagogical inspiration and must always make apparent, in its own way, the divine pedagogy.

More purely methodological questions are obviously more appropriate to other instruments.

Aspects of adaptation in a local catechism

133. The Catechism of the Catholic Church indicates those aspects which must be taken into account when adapting or

contextualizing the organic synthesis of the faith which every local catechism must offer. This synthesis of the faith must exhibit the adaptations which are required by "the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial conditions among all those to whom it is addressed". The Second Vatican Council also emphatically affirms the need for adapting the Gospel Message: "Indeed, this kind of adaptation and preaching of the revealed word must ever be the law of all evangelization". Hence:

– The local catechism must present the synthesis of the faith with reference to the particular culture in which catechumens and those to be catechized are immersed. It will, however, incorporate all those "original expressions of life, of celebrations and of thought which are Christian", proper to a particular cultural tradition and are the fruits of the work and inculturation of the local Church.

– The local catechism, "faithful to the message and to the human person", presents the Christian message in a meaningful way and is close to the psychology and mentality of those for whom it is intended. Consequently, it will refer clearly to the fundamental experiences of their lives.

– It shall pay attention in a special way to the concrete manner in which religion is lived in a given society. It is not, for example, the same thing to prepare a catechism for a society permeated by religious indifference as it is for a profoundly religious context. The relationship between belief and science must be treated with great care in every catechism.

– Problems arising from social conditions, especially those arising from its more profound structural elements (economics, politics, family) are a factor in the contextualization of a catechism. Drawing inspiration from the social

teaching of the Church, the Catechism will offer criteria, motivations and modes of action to highlight the Christian presence in these critical situations.

– Finally, the concrete ecclesial situation lived by a particular Church shall provide the context to which a catechism must make reference. Obviously one does not refer hereby to contingent situations, which are addressed by other magisterial documents, but to the more permanent situation which demands a more specific and appropriate evangelization.

The creativity of local Churches in the elaboration of catechesis

134. Local Churches, in fulfilling the task of adapting, contextualizing and inculturating the Gospel message by means of catechisms, for different ages, situations and cultures must exercise a mature creativity. From the depositum fidei entrusted to the Church, local Churches select, structure and express, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their inner Master, all those elements which transmit the Gospel in its complete authenticity in a given situation.

For this difficult task, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is a "point of reference" to guarantee the unity of the faith. This present General Catechetical Directory, for its part, offers the basic criteria which govern the presentation of the Christian message.

135. In elaborating local catechisms it will be useful to remember the following points:

– it is a question, above all, of elaborating genuine catechisms, adapted and inculturated: in this sense, a distinction must be drawn between a catechism which adapts the Christian message to different ages, situations and cultures, and one which is a mere summary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and serves as an introduction to its study. These are two different types.

– Local catechisms may be diocesan, regional or national in character.

– with regard to the structuring of contents, different Episcopates publish catechisms of various structures and configurations; as has been said, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is proposed as a point of doctrinal reference, but, does not impose on the entire Church a determined structure on other catechisms: there are catechisms with a trinitarian structure; others are planned according to the stages of salvation; others again are organized along a biblical or theological theme (Covenant, Kingdom of God, etc.); some are structured around an aspect of the faith, while others again follow the liturgical year;

– with regard to the manner of expressing the Gospel message, the creativity of a catechism will have a bearing on its formulation and content, evidently a catechism must be faithful to the deposit of faith in its method of expressing the doctrinal substance of the Christian message: "The individual churches—which are involved not only with men but also with their aspirations, their wealth and their poverty, with their manner of praying and living and their outlook on the world—must make their own the substance of the evangelical message. Without any sacrifice of the essential truths they must transpose this message into an idiom which will be understood by the people they serve and those who proclaim it";

The principle to be followed in this delicate task is indicated by the Second Vatican Council: "to seek out more efficient ways—provided the meaning and understanding of them is safeguarded—of presenting their teaching to modern man: for the deposit of faith is one thing, the manner of expressing it is quite another".

The Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms: the symphony of faith

136. The Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms, each, with its own specific authority, naturally, form a unity. They are a concrete expression of the "unity of the same apostolic faith", and, at the same time, of the rich diversity of formulations of the same faith. To those who contemplate this harmony, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms together express a "symphony" of faith, a symphony inherent above all in the Catechism of the Catholic Church which has been drawn up with the collaboration of the entire Episcopate of the Catholic Church, a symphony harmonized with this and manifested in local catechisms. This symphony, this "chorus of voices of the universal Church", heard in the local catechisms and faithful to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, has a very important theological significance.

– It manifests the Catholicity of the Church: the cultural riches of the peoples is incorporated into the expression of

the faith of the one Church.

– The Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms make manifest to the ecclesial communion of which "the profession of the one faith" is one of the visible links, "in which and formed out of which the one and unique visible Church of Christ exists". The particular Churches, "parts of the one Church of Christ", form with the whole, the universal Church, "a peculiar relationship of mutual interiority" The unity which thus exists between the Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms makes visible this communion.

– The Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms equally express, clearly, the reality of episcopal collegiality. The Bishops, each in his own diocese and together as a college, in communion with the Successor of Peter, have the greatest responsibility for catechesis in the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church and local catechisms, by their profound unity and rich diversity, are called to be a renewing leaven of catechesis in the Church. Contemplating them with her Catholic and universal gaze, the Church, that is, the entire community of the disciples of Christ, can say in truth: "This is our faith, this is the faith of the Church".