

**Further Reading for Session 9: What can we do?**  
***From the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC 139-147)***

**CHAPTER I**

***Pedagogy of God, source and model of the pedagogy of the faith (486)***

**Pedagogy of God**

"God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Heb 12:7) The salvation of the person, which is the ultimate purpose of Revelation, is shown as a fruit of an original and efficacious "pedagogy of God" throughout history. Similar to human usage and according to the cultural categories of time, God in Scripture is seen as a merciful Father, teacher and sage. He assumes the character of the person, the individual and the community according to the conditions in which they are found. He liberates the person from the bonds of evil and attracts him to himself by bonds of love. He causes the person to grow progressively and patiently towards the maturity of a free son, faithful and obedient to his word. To this end, as a creative and insightful teacher, God transforms events in the life of his people into lessons of wisdom, adapting himself to the diverse ages and life situations. Thus he entrusts words of instruction and catechesis which are transmitted from generation to generation. He admonishes with reward and punishment, trials and sufferings, which become a formative influence. Truly, to help a person to encounter God, which is the task of the catechist, means to emphasize above all the relationship that the person has with God so that he can make it his own and allow himself to be guided by God.

**The pedagogy of Christ**

140. When the fullness of time had come God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to humanity. He brought to the world the supreme gift of salvation by accomplishing his redemptive mission in a manner which continued "the pedagogy of God", with the perfection found in the newness of his Person. In his words, signs and works during his brief but intense life, the disciples had direct experience of the fundamental traits of the "pedagogy of Jesus", and recorded them in the Gospels: receiving others, especially the poor, the little ones and sinners, as persons loved and sought out by God; the undiluted proclamation of the Kingdom of God as the good news of the truth and of the consolation of the Father; a kind of delicate and strong love which liberates from evil and promotes life; a pressing invitation to a manner of living sustained by faith in God, by hope in the Kingdom and by charity to one's neighbour; the use of all the resources of interpersonal communication, such as word, silence, metaphor, image, example, and many diverse signs as was the case with the biblical prophets. Inviting his disciples to follow him unreservedly and without regret, Christ passed on to them his pedagogy of faith as a full sharing in his actions and in his destiny.

**The pedagogy of the Church**

141. From her very beginnings the Church, which "in Christ, is in the nature of a Sacrament", has lived her mission as a visible and actual continuation of the pedagogy of the Father and of the Son. She, "as our Mother is also the educator of our faith". These are the profound reasons for which the Christian community is in herself living catechesis. Thus she proclaims, celebrates, works, and remains always a vital,

indispensable and primary *locus* of catechesis.

Throughout the centuries the Church has produced an incomparable treasure of pedagogy in the faith: above all the witness of saints and catechists; a variety of ways of life and original forms of religious communication such as the catechumenate, catechisms, itineraries of the Christian life; a precious patrimony of catechetical teaching of faith culture, of catechetical institutions and services. All of these aspects form part of the history of catechesis and, by right, enter into the memory of the community and the praxis of the catechist.

### **Divine pedagogy, action of the Holy Spirit in every Christian**

142. "Blessed is the man whom thou dost chasten, O Lord, and whom thou dost teach out of thy law" (Ps 94:12). In the school of the word of God, received in the Church, the disciple, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit sent by Christ, grows like his Teacher "in wisdom, stature, and in favour with God and men" (Lk 2,52). He is also assisted in developing in himself "the divine education" received by means of catechesis and by means of knowledge and experience. (494) In this way, by knowing more about the mystery of salvation, by learning to adore God the Father, and "by living in the truth according to charity", the disciple seeks "to grow in all things towards him, who is the Head, Christ" (Eph 4:15). The pedagogy of God can be said to be completed when the disciple shall "become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself" (Eph 4:13). For this reason there cannot be teachers of the faith other than those who are convinced and faithful disciples of Christ and his Church.

### **Divine pedagogy and catechesis**

143. Catechesis, as communication of divine Revelation, is radically inspired by the pedagogy of God, as displayed in Christ and in the Church. Hence, it receives its constitutive characteristics and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it sets out a synthesis to encourage a true experience of faith, and thus a filial encounter with God. In this way, catechesis:

- is a pedagogy which serves and is included in the "dialogue of salvation" between God and the person, while giving due emphasis to the universal end of this salvation; with regard to God it underlines divine initiative, loving motivation, gratuity and respect for our liberty; with regard to man it highlights the dignity of the gift received and the demand to grow continually therein;
- it accepts the principle of the progressiveness of Revelation, the transcendence and the mysterious nature of the word of God and also its adaptation to different persons and cultures;
- it recognizes the centrality of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man, who determines catechesis as "a pedagogy of the incarnation", and through whom the Gospel is to be proposed for the life and in the life of people;
- it values the community experience of faith, which is proper to the people of God, the Church;
- it is rooted in inter-personal relations and makes its own the process of dialogue;
- it conducts a pedagogy of signs, where words and deeds, teaching and experience are interlinked;
- draws its power of truth and its constant task of bearing witness to it, since the love of God is the ultimate reason for his self-revelation, from the inexhaustible

divine love, which is the Holy Spirit.

Thus catechesis takes the form of a process or a journey of following the Christ of the Gospel in the Spirit towards the Father. It is undertaken to reach the maturity of the faith "given as Christ allotted it" (Eph 4,7) and according to the possibilities and the needs of everyone.

### **The original pedagogy of faith (498)**

144. Catechesis, which is therefore active pedagogy in the faith, in accomplishing its tasks, cannot allow itself to be inspired by ideological considerations or purely human interests. It does not confuse the salvific action of God, which is pure grace, with the pedagogical action of man. Neither, however, does it oppose them and separate them. The wonderful dialogue that God undertakes with every person becomes its inspiration and norm. "Catechesis becomes an untiring echo" of this. It continually seeks dialogue with people in accordance with the directions offered by the Magisterium of the Church. (500) The precise objects which inspire its methodological choices are:

- to promote a progressive and coherent synthesis between full adherence of man to God (*fides qua*) and the content of the Christian message (*fides quae*);
- to develop all the dimensions of faith through which it conveys faith which is known, celebrated, lived and prayed;
- to move the person to abandon himself "completely and freely to God": intelligence, will, heart and memory;
- to help the person to discern the vocation to which the Lord calls him.

Catechesis therefore carries out a complete work of initiation, education and teaching.

### **Fidelity to God and to the person**

145. Jesus Christ is the living and perfect relationship of God with man and of man with God. From him the pedagogy of the faith receives "a law which is fundamental for the whole of the Church's life", and therefore for catechesis: "the law of fidelity to God and of fidelity to man in a single, loving attitude".

Genuine catechesis therefore is that catechesis which helps to perceive the action of God throughout the formative journey. It encourages a climate of listening, of thanksgiving and of prayer. It looks to the free response of persons and it promotes active participation among those to be catechized.

### **The "condescension" of God, a school for the person**

146. God, wishing to speak to men as friends, manifests in a special way his pedagogy by adapting what he has to say by solicitous providence for our earthly condition.

This implies for catechesis the never-ending task of finding a language capable of communicating the word of God and the creed of the Church, which is its development, in the various circumstances of those who hear it. At the same time, it maintains the certainty that, by the grace of God, this can be done and that the Holy Spirit will give us the joy of doing it. Therefore pedagogical instructions adequate for catechesis are those which permit the communication of the whole word of God in the concrete existence of people.

### **Evangelize by educating and educate by evangelizing**

147. Being inspired by the pedagogy of faith, catechesis presents its service as a designated educative journey in that, on the one hand it assists the person to open

himself to the religious dimension of life, while on the other, it proposes the Gospel to him. It does so in such a manner as to penetrate and transform the processes of intelligence, conscience, liberty and action making of existence a gift after the example of Jesus Christ. Thus the catechist knows and avails of the contribution of the sciences of education, understood always in a Christian sense.

***From the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 425-429)***

425 The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ in order to lead others to faith in him. From the beginning, the first disciples burned with the desire to proclaim Christ: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." It and they invite people of every era to enter into the joy of their communion with Christ:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. and we are writing this that our joy may be complete.

At the heart of catechesis: Christ

426 "At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father. . . who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever." To catechize is "to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfilment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him." Catechesis aims at putting "people . . . in communion . . . with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity."

427 In catechesis "Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God,. . . is taught - everything else is taught with reference to him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. . . Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.'"

428 Whoever is called "to teach Christ" must first seek "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus"; he must suffer "the loss of all things. . ." in order to "gain Christ and be found in him", and "to know him and the power of his resurrection, and (to) share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible (he) may attain the resurrection from the dead".

429 From this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to "evangelize", and to lead others to the "yes" of faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith better makes itself felt. To this end, following the order of the Creed, Jesus' principal titles - "Christ", "Son of God", and "Lord" (article 2) - will be presented. the Creed next confesses the chief mysteries of his life - those of his Incarnation (article 3), Paschal mystery (articles 4 and 5) and glorification (articles 6 and 7).

***From the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of Pope John Paul II on Catechesis in Our Time (CT 5-9)***

**WE HAVE BUT ONE TEACHER, JESUS CHRIST**

***Putting Into Communion With the Person of Christ***

5. The fourth general assembly of the synod of Bishops often stressed the Christocentricity of all authentic catechesis. We can here use the word "Christocentricity" in both its meanings, which are not opposed to each other or mutually exclusive, but each of which rather demands and completes the other. In the first place, it is intended to stress that at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, "the only Son from the Father...full of grace and truth," who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. It is Jesus who is "the way, and the truth, and the life," and Christian living consists in following Christ, the sequela Christi.

The primary and essential object of catechesis is, to use an expression dear to St. Paul and also to contemporary theology, "the mystery of Christ." Catechizing is in a way to lead a person to study this mystery in all its dimensions: "to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery...comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth ...know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge...(and be filled) with all the fullness of God." It is therefore to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by Him, for they simultaneously hide and reveal His mystery. Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.

***Transmitting Christ's Teaching***

6. Christocentricity in catechesis also means the intention to transmit not one's own teaching or that of some other master, but the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Truth that He communicates or, to put it more precisely, the Truth that He is. We must therefore say that in catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught - everything else is taught with reference to Him - and it is Christ alone who teaches - anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. Whatever be the level of his responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus. He will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinions and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechizing. Above all, he will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ's teaching and the lessons of His life. Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me." St. Paul did this when he was dealing with a question of prime importance: "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you." What assiduous study of the word of God transmitted by the Church's magisterium, what profound familiarity with Christ

and with the Father, what a spirit of prayer, what detachment from self must a catechist have in order that he can say: "My teaching is not mine!"

### ***Christ the Teacher***

7. This teaching is not a body of abstract truths. It is the communication of the living mystery of God. The Person teaching it in the Gospel is altogether superior in excellence to the "masters" in Israel, and the nature of His doctrine surpasses theirs in every way because of the unique link between what He says, what He does and what He is. Nevertheless, the Gospels clearly relate occasions when Jesus "taught." "Jesus began to do and teach" - with these two verbs, placed at the beginning of the book of the Acts, St. Luke links and at the same time distinguishes two poles in Christ's mission.

Jesus taught. It is the witness that He gives of Himself: "Day after day I sat in the temple teaching." It is the admiring observation of the evangelists, surprised to see Him teaching everywhere and at all times, teaching in a manner and with an authority previously unknown: "Crowds gathered to him again; and again, as his custom was, he taught them "; "and they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority." It is also what His enemies note for the purpose of drawing from it grounds for accusation and condemnation: "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judaea, from Galilee even to this place."

### ***The One "Teacher"***

8. One who teaches in this way has a unique title to the name of "Teacher."

Throughout the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, how many times is He given this title of Teacher! Of course the Twelve, the other disciples, and the crowds of listeners call Him "Teacher" in tones of admiration, trust and tenderness. Even the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the doctors of the law, and the Jews in general do not refuse Him the title: "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you"; "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But above all, Jesus Himself at particularly solemn and highly significant moments calls Himself Teacher: "You call me teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am"; and He proclaims the singularity, the uniqueness of His character as teacher: "You have one teacher," the Christ. One can understand why people of every kind, race and nation have for 2,000 years in all the languages of the earth given Him this title with veneration, repeating in their own ways the exclamation of Nicodemus: "We know that you are a teacher come from God."

This image of Christ the Teacher is at once majestic and familiar, impressive and reassuring. It comes from the pen of the evangelists and it has often been evoked subsequently in iconography since earliest Christian times, so captivating is it. And I am pleased to evoke it in my turn at the beginning of these considerations on catechesis in the modern world.

### ***Teaching Through His Life as a Whole***

9. In doing so, I am not forgetful that the majesty of Christ the Teacher and the unique consistency and persuasiveness of His teaching can only be explained by the fact that His words, His parables and His arguments are never separable from His life and His very being. Accordingly, the whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: His silences, His miracles, His gestures, His prayer, His love for people, His special affection for the little and the poor, His acceptance of the total sacrifice on the cross for the redemption of the world, and His resurrection are the actualization of His

word and the fulfillment of revelation. Hence for Christians the crucifix is one of the most sublime and popular images of Christ the Teacher.

These considerations follow in the wake of the great traditions of the Church and they all strengthen our fervor with regard to Christ, the Teacher who reveals God to man and man to himself, the Teacher who saves, sanctifies and guides, who lives, who speaks, rouses, moves, redresses, judges, forgives, and goes with us day by day on the path of history, the Teacher who comes and will come in glory.

Only in deep communion with Him will catechists find light and strength for an authentic, desirable renewal of catechesis.

***From the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of Pope John Paul II on Catechesis in Our Time (CT 22)***

***Catechesis and Life Experience***

22. It is useless to play off orthopraxis against orthodoxy: Christianity is inseparably both. Firm and well-thought-out convictions lead to courageous and upright action, the endeavor to educate the faithful to live as disciples of Christ today calls for and facilitates a discovery in depth of the mystery of Christ in the history of salvation.

It is also quite useless to campaign for the abandonment of serious and orderly study of the message of Christ in the name of a method concentrating on life experience.

"No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience, that is to say, without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ, who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (Jn. 14:6)."

Nor is any opposition to be set up between a catechesis taking life as its point of departure and a traditional doctrinal and systematic catechesis. Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of Himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living, active tradition. This revelation is not however isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it. It is concerned with the ultimate meaning of life and it illumines the whole of life with the light of the Gospel, to inspire it or to question it.

That is why we can apply to catechists an expression used by the Second Vatican Council with special reference to priests: "Instructors (of the human being and his life) in the faith."