

Catechesi Tradendae

Catechesis in Our Times: A Study Guide

Module 4: *Catechesi Tradendae* §56-73

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(1) Meditation on the Themes of the Text

In the final section of *Catechesi Tradendae* Pope St John Paul II continues to develop the contrast between the indifference and anxiety of the world with the joy and hope of the Gospel. Far from making catechesis futile, unnecessary or outdated, the opposition to the Gospel so often encountered in contemporary culture makes it all the more urgent to strengthen the Christian identity of the faithful through careful, thorough, and permanent catechesis. This idea is eloquently captured in his assertion that:

The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential, and who are humbly joyful in their faith. Catechesis will teach this to them, and it will itself be the first to benefit from it. (CT, 61)

The more Christians are formed in their faith the more they will live it out in the world, and the more people do this the more the joy of the Gospel will be manifested to all, and the more the disordered and broken elements of the modern world will be corrected naturally.

Here we might recall the often-paraphrased words of another great saint for catechesis, St Catherine of Siena: “Be what you were meant to be and you will set the whole world on fire.” This aphorism has been adopted far and wide by many people who probably have no idea they are the words of a saint, and who may suppose that they mean something like “you do you and everyone will clap.” But surely this is not what St Catherine of Siena meant.

St Catherine was a 14th century mystic and ascetic. She was the youngest of the 25 children of a wealthy wool merchant in Italy, but despite all the material comforts available to her, at a very young age Catherine committed herself to a life of poverty and chastity. Despite living in solitude, almost as a hermit, St Catherine was far from shy and retiring, and she wasn’t afraid to wade in to theological or political disputes. She wrote letters to priests, bishops, and even the pope, to enjoin them to right and just action, and to live their faith with zeal. It is from one of her letters that these stirring words come.

Viewed in her context, we can understand that St Catherine wasn’t talking about self-fulfilment or celebrity. What we are meant to be is whatever God made us for, and it is a fundamental religious truth that He created us for union with Him. Fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who descended in tongues of flame upon the Apostles at Pentecost. In short, what St Catherine is saying to us is that if we live in union with God we will set the world ablaze with the fire of the Holy Spirit, for He will come and make His home in our hearts.

This is the point at which John Paul II arrives in the conclusion of his apostolic exhortation: catechesis is the work of the Holy Spirit, and good catechists are “living, pliant instruments” of the Holy Spirit and learn from Him. We can know this because catechesis is the work of the Church—that is, all the baptised—given to Her in the Great Commission, and without the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit the Church simply would not exist, or would be no more than a club for believers. As it is, when we allow ourselves to be guided by Holy Spirit in all that we do, most especially in our work as catechists, then that same Spirit spreads through the world, inspiring, converting, and forming people in the truth of the Gospel.

(2) Outline

The Joy of Faith in a Troubled World (§56-61)

I. Affirming Christian Identity

- A. In an uncertain world Christians are called to be salt and light
- B. Catechesis strengthens Christian identity
- C. To do this, catechesis must separate itself from the modern atmosphere of hesitations, uncertainty and insipidness

II. In an Indifferent World

- A. The secular world largely ignores God and religious matters as serious topics for dialogue, which results in indifferentism and offenses against human dignity.
- B. Therefore, we need catechesis that resists this culture, and that trains Christians to remain clear and consistent in their faith in Christ so they can be his witnesses.

III. With the Original Pedagogy of Faith

- A. Pedagogy is constantly being adapted in the modern world to be more effective
- B. However, there is a unique pedagogy of faith, because faith is about communicating God's revelation, which is different from human knowledge.
- C. God himself used a pedagogy that should be the model for any pedagogy of faith.
- D. Pedagogical techniques are only valuable in catechesis insofar as they assist in the transmission and learning of the faith.

IV. Language Suited to the Service of the Credo

- A. Modern culture sometimes uses language to mystify, compel conformity, and objectify persons.
- B. In catechesis it is essential to use language suited to the audience.
- C. However, no adaptation of language is justified if it alters the substance of the creed: language is at the service of catechesis, and not the other way around.

V. Research and Certainty of Faith

- A. Some modern philosophical schools of thought think faith is an endless search or assumption that never reaches objective certainty.
- B. There is merit in this way of thinking only inasmuch as it keeps people moving forward on a journey.
- C. However, we must recall that in Scripture we are promised the assurance of hope and the certainty of faith: it is not a blind or aimless journey.
- D. Catechesis can give simple, yet solid, certainties concerning religious truth.

VI. Catechesis and Theology

- A. What happens and is discussed in theology has repercussions in catechesis.
- B. Catechists must be careful not to be unduly influenced by speculative discussions amongst theologians, nor import into catechesis "outlandish theories, useless questions, and unproductive discussions.
- C. Catechesis is a gift to the world when it does not become preoccupied with controversies, but forms Christians who are humbly joyful in their faith.

The Task Concerns Us All

I. Encouragement to All Responsible for Catechesis

- A. May this exhortation set your hearts aflame with the joy of catechising.
- B. May your hearts be filled with courage, hope and enthusiasm.

II. Bishops

- A. Bishops have a special mission within the Church: primary responsibility for catechesis.
- B. However complex and overwhelming his duties, bishops must prioritise fostering active and effective catechesis.
- C. This involves personally transmitting the Gospel to the faithful, and managing catechesis, aided by competent assistants.
- D. The main role of the bishop is to maintain and inspire passion for catechesis, but when it is necessary, it is also his grave duty to denounce and correct errors.

III. Priests.

- A. Priests are the immediate assistants of the bishops.
- B. They provide instruction in the faith in parishes, schools, and chaplaincies.
- C. Priests are exhorted not to lack for catechetical zeal, nor leave the faithful without instruction in the faith.

IV. Men and Women Religious

- A. Historically, men and women religious have been deeply committed to the Church's catechetical work, and indeed many religious communities came into being with the purpose of providing religious education to the most needy.
- B. They are exhorted to continue this work with zeal and generosity, according to the charisms and purposes of their communities.

V. Lay Catechists.

- A. The Pope expresses profound gratitude for the ardent, generous work of lay catechists, by which so many are formed in the faith.
- B. Above all, he praises lay catechists working in non-Christian and missionary areas to build up the Church.

VI. The Parish

- A. Because it serves as a reference point for the Christian and non-Christian communities alike, the parish has a particular and preeminent role in catechesis.
- B. Within the parish catechesis can be appropriately and systematically led and organised.

VII. The Family

- A. Family catechesis has a special character that is irreplaceable.
- B. Education in the faith happens through modelling the Christian life, and when significant events (births, bereavements, etc.) occur within the family, explaining them in a Christian context.
- C. Parents should also strive to follow and repeat the systematic catechetical instruction given elsewhere because the love and respect with which these truths can be taught in a family setting can decisively influence the choices children make with respect to their faith.
- D. Parents also benefit from this sort of catechetical dialogue.

- E. Catechesis in the family precedes, accompanies, and enriches all other forms of catechesis.
- F. Christian parents can rightly put unlimited zeal and effort into the catechesis of their children.

VIII. At School

- A. Schools provide valuable opportunities for catechesis.
- B. No matter its other achievements, Catholic schools that neglect catechesis are not worthy of the name “Catholic”.
- C. School catechesis should not be coercive with respect to religious practice, but it should nonetheless convey how God’s call and his law is binding in conscience.
- D. Non-religious and state schools should still enable, allow, and support the spiritual formation of their pupils, with the help of explicitly religious instruction from the Church.
- E. Catechesis must take account of the cultural and moral values naturally instilled in students through schooling.
 - 1. If catechesis is in touch with the other elements of students’ education, then the Gospel will very naturally influence the mentality of their learning.
 - 2. The connection between catechesis and education in general allows students to assimilate and harmonise cultural values in the light of faith.

IX. Within Organisations

- A. Lay associations, movement, and groups are to be commended for their practice of piety, apostolate, charity work, and Christian witness.
- B. They will better accomplish their objectives if they give serious consideration and important place to the religious training of their members.

X. Training Institutes

- A. Attention should be given to the establishment of centres and institutes to train lay catechists and develop their apostolate.
- B. Those who work in the service of the Gospel offered encouragement in a quote from Pope St Paul VI: "As evangelizers, we must offer. . . the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelization is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church. This is a source of responsibility and also of comfort."

Conclusion

I. The Holy Spirit, The Teacher Within

- A. The Holy Spirit is the inspiring principle of all catechesis
 - 1. Christ described the Holy Spirit as a teacher
 - 2. The Holy Spirit guides the Church and each Christian to enflame our hearts and aid our understanding according to our spiritual capacity.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit transforms disciples into witnesses for Christ
- B. Therefore, catechists must become pliant instruments of the Holy Spirit, consciously and deliberately entering into deep communion with Him.
- C. Only entrusting oneself to the Holy Spirit will bring about catechetical renewal.

II. Mary, Mother and Model of the Disciple

- A. Pope St John Paul II commends Mary, under the title the Virgin of Pentecost, to intercede for catechists and obtain by her prayers the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring about renewal and unprecedented enthusiasm for catechetical work.
- B. Mary was the first disciple of Christ, as well as being His mother.
- C. Mary can rightly be described as “a living catechism” and “the mother and model of all catechists.”

(3) Text

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
CATECHESI TRADENDAE
OF POPE
JOHN PAUL II
ON CATECHESIS IN OUR TIME

VIII.

THE JOY OF FAITH IN A TROUBLED WORLD

Affirming Christian Identity

56. We live in a difficult world in which the anguish of seeing the best creations of man slip away from him and turn against him creates a climate of uncertainty.(99) In this world catechesis should help Christians to be, for their own joy and the service of all, "light" and "salt." (100) Undoubtedly this demands that catechesis should strengthen them in their identity and that it should continually separate itself from the surrounding atmosphere of hesitation, uncertainty and insipidity. Among the many difficulties, each of them a challenge for faith, I shall indicate a few in order to assist catechesis in overcoming them.

In an Indifferent World

57. A few years ago, there was much talk of the secularized world, the post-Christian era. Fashion changes, but a profound reality remains. Christians today must be formed to live in a world which largely ignores God or which, in religious matters, in place of an exacting and fraternal dialogue, stimulating for all, too often flounders in a debasing indifferentism, if it does not remain in a scornful attitude of "suspicion" in the name of the progress it has made in the field of scientific "explanations." To "hold on" in this world, to offer to all a "dialogue of salvation" (101) in which each person feels respected in his or her most basic dignity, the dignity of one who is seeking God, we need a catechesis which trains the young people and adults of our communities to remain clear and consistent in their faith, to affirm serenely their Christian and Catholic identity, to "see him who is invisible" (102) and to adhere so firmly to the absoluteness of God that they can be witnesses to Him in a materialistic civilization that denies Him.

With the Original Pedagogy of the Faith

58. The irreducible originality of Christian identity has for corollary and condition no less original a pedagogy of the faith. Among the many prestigious sciences of man that are nowadays making immense advances, pedagogy is certainly one of the most important. The attainments of the other sciences - biology, psychology, sociology - are providing it with valuable elements. The science of

education and the art of teaching are continually being subjected to review, with a view to making them better adapted or more effective, with varying degrees of success.

There is also a pedagogy of faith, and the good that it can do for catechesis cannot be overstated. In fact, it is natural that techniques perfected and tested for education in general should be adapted for the service of education in the faith. However, account must always be taken of the absolute originality of faith. Pedagogy of faith is not a question of transmitting human knowledge, even of the highest kind; it is a question of communicating God's revelation in its entirety. Throughout sacred history, especially in the Gospel, God Himself used a pedagogy that must continue to be a model for the pedagogy of faith. A technique is of value in catechesis only to the extent that it serves the faith that is to be transmitted and learned; otherwise it is of no value.

Language Suited to the Service of the Credo

59. A problem very close to the preceding one is that of language. This is obviously a burning question today. It is paradoxical to see that, while modern studies, for instance in the field of communication, semantics and symbology, attribute extraordinary importance to language, nevertheless language is being misused today for ideological mystification, for mass conformity in thought and for reducing man to the level of an object.

All this has extensive influence in the field of catechesis. For catechesis has a pressing obligation to speak a language suited to today's children and young people in general and to many other categories of people—the language of students, intellectuals and scientists; the language of the illiterate or of people of simple culture; the language of the handicapped, and so on. St. Augustine encountered this same problem and contributed to its solution for his own time with his wellknown work *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. In catechesis as in theology, there is no doubt that the question of language is of the first order. But there is good reason for recalling here that catechesis cannot admit any language that would result in altering the substance of the content of the Creed, under any pretext whatever, even a pretended scientific one. Deceitful or beguiling language is no better. On the contrary, the supreme rule is that the great advances in the science of language must be capable of being placed at the service of catechesis so as to enable it really to "tell" or "communicate" to the child, the adolescent, the young people and adults of today the whole content of doctrine without distortion.

Research and Certainty of Faith

60. A more subtle challenge occasionally comes from the very way of conceiving faith. Certain contemporary philosophical schools, which seem to be exercising a strong influence on some theological currents and, through them, on pastoral practice, like to emphasize that the fundamental human attitude is that of seeking the infinite, a seeking that never attains its object. In theology, this view of things will state very categorically that faith is not certainty but questioning, not clarity but a leap in the dark.

These currents of thought certainly have the advantage of reminding us that faith concerns things not yet in our possession, since they are hoped for; that as yet we see only "in a mirror dimly" (103); and that God dwells always in inaccessible light. (104) They help us to make the Christian faith not the attitude of one who has already arrived, but a journey forward as with Abraham. For all the more reason one must avoid presenting as certain things which are not.

However, we must not fall into the opposite extreme, as too often happens. The Letter to the Hebrews says that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Although we are not in full possession, we do have an assurance and a conviction. When educating children, adolescents and young people, let us not give them too negative an idea of faith - as if it were absolute non-knowing, a kind of blindness, a world of darkness - but let us show them that the humble yet courageous seeking of the believer, far from having its starting point in nothingness, in plain self-deception, in fallible opinions or in uncertainty, is based on the Word of God who cannot deceive or be deceived, and is unceasingly built on the immovable rock of this Word. It is the search of the Magi under the guidance of a star,⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ the search of which Pascal, taking up a phrase of St. Augustine, wrote so profoundly: "You would not be searching for me, if you had not found me."⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

It is also one of the aims of catechesis to give young catechumens the simple but solid certainties that will help them to seek to know the Lord more and better.

Catechesis and Theology

61. In this context, it seems important to me that the connection between catechesis and theology should be well understood.

Obviously this connection is profound and vital for those who understand the irreplaceable mission of theology in the service of Faith. Thus it is no surprise that every stirring in the field of theology also has repercussions in that of catechesis. In this period immediately after the Council, the Church is living through an important but hazardous time of theological research. The same must be said of hermeneutics with respect to exegesis.

Synod fathers from all continents dealt with this question in very frank terms: they spoke of the danger of an "unstable balance" passing from theology to catechesis and they stressed the need to do something about this difficulty. Pope Paul VI himself had dealt with the problem in no less frank terms in the introduction to his Solemn Profession of Faith⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ and in the apostolic exhortation marking the fifth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

This point must again be insisted on. Aware of the influence that their research and their statements have on catechetical instruction, theologians and exegetes have a duty to take great care that people do not take for a certainty what on the contrary belongs to the area of questions of opinion or of discussion among experts. Catechists for their part must have the wisdom to pick from the field of theological research those points that can provide light for their own reflection and their teaching, drawing, like the theologians, from the true sources, in the light of the magisterium. They must refuse to trouble the minds of the children and young people, at this stage of their catechesis, with outlandish theories, useless questions and unproductive discussions, things that St. Paul often condemned in his pastoral letters.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith. Catechesis will teach this to them, and it will itself be the first to benefit from it: "The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly - and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being - must come to Christ with his unrest and uncertainty, and even his weakness and sinfulness, his life and death. He

must, so to speak, enter into Christ with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' Christ and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and redemption in order to find himself."(111)

IX.

THE TASK CONCERNS US ALL

Encouragement to All Responsible for Catechesis

62. Now, beloved brothers and sons and daughters, I would like my words, which are intended as a serious and heartfelt exhortation from me in my ministry as pastor of the universal Church, to set your hearts aflame, like the letters of St. Paul to his companions in the Gospel, Titus and Timothy, or like St. Augustine writing for the deacon Deogratias, when the latter lost heart before his task as a catechist, a real little treatise on the joy of catechizing.(112) Yes, I wish to sow courage, hope and enthusiasm abundantly in the hearts of all those many diverse people who are in charge of religious instruction and training for life in keeping with the Gospel.

Bishops

63. To begin with, I turn to my brother Bishops: The Second Vatican Council has already explicitly reminded you of your task in the catechetical area,(113) and the fathers of the fourth general assembly of the synod have also strongly underlined it.

Dearly beloved brothers, you have here a special mission within your Churches: You are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence. Together with the Pope, in the spirit of episcopal collegiality, you too have charge of catechesis throughout the Church. Accept therefore what I say to you from my heart.

I know that your ministry as Bishops is growing daily more complex and overwhelming. A thousand duties call you: from the training of new priests to being actively present within the lay communities, from the living, worthy celebration of the sacraments and acts of worship to concern for human advancement and the defense of human rights. But let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis yield to no other care whatever in any way. This concern will lead you to transmit personally to your faithful the doctrine of life. But it should also lead you to take on in your diocese, in accordance with the plans of the episcopal conference to which you belong, the chief management of catechesis, while at the same time surrounding yourselves with competent and trustworthy assistants. Your principal role will be to bring about and maintain in your Churches a real passion for catechesis, a passion embodied in a pertinent and effective organization, putting into operation the necessary personnel, means and equipment, and also financial resources. You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do. And needless to say, although your zeal must sometimes impose upon you the thankless task of denouncing deviations and correcting errors, it will much more often win for you the joy and consolation of seeing your Churches flourishing because catechesis is given in them as the Lord wishes.

Priests

64. For your part, priests, here you have a field in which you are the immediate assistants of your Bishops. The Council has called you "instructors in the faith"(114); there is no better way for you to be such instructors than by devoting your best efforts to the growth of your communities in the faith. Whether you are in charge of a parish, or are chaplains to primary or secondary schools or universities, or have responsibility for pastoral activity at any level, or are leaders of large or small communities, especially youth groups, the Church expects you to neglect nothing with a view to a well-organized and well-oriented catechetical effort. The deacons and other ministers that you may have the good fortune to have with you are your natural assistants in this. All believers have a right to catechesis; all pastors have the duty to provide it. I shall always ask civil leaders to respect the freedom of catechetical teaching; but with all my strength I beg you, ministers of Jesus Christ: Do not, for lack of zeal or because of some unfortunate preconceived idea, leave the faithful without catechesis. Let it not be said that "the children beg for food, but no one gives to them."(115)

Men and Women Religious

65. Many religious institutes for men and women came into being for the purpose of giving Christian education to children and young people, especially the most abandoned. Throughout history, men and women religious have been deeply committed to the Church's catechetical activity, doing particularly apposite and effective work. At a time when it is desired that the links between religious and pastors should be accentuated and consequently the active presence of religious communities and their members in the pastoral projects of the local Churches, I wholeheartedly exhort you, whose religious consecration should make you even more readily available for the Church's service, to prepare as well as possible for the task of catechesis according to the differing vocations of your institutes and the missions entrusted to you, and to carry this concern everywhere. Let the communities dedicate as much as possible of what ability and means they have to the specific work of catechesis.

Lay Catechists

66. I am anxious to give thanks in the Church's name to all of you, lay teachers of catechesis in the parishes, the men and the still more numerous women throughout the world who are devoting yourselves to the religious education of many generations. Your work is often lowly and hidden but it is carried out with ardent and generous zeal, and it is an eminent form of the lay apostolate, a form that is particularly important where for various reasons children and young people do not receive suitable religious training in the home. How many of us have received from people like you our first notions of catechism and our preparation for the sacrament of Penance, for our first Communion and Confirmation! The fourth general assembly of the synod did not forget you. I join with it in encouraging you to continue your collaboration for the life of the Church.

But the term "catechists" belongs above all to the catechists in mission lands. Born of families that are already Christian or converted at some time to Christianity and instructed by missionaries or by another catechist, they then consecrate their lives, year after year, to catechizing children and adults in their own country. Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up without them. I rejoice at the efforts made by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples to improve more and more the training of these catechists. I gratefully recall the memory of those whom the Lord has already called to Himself. I beg the intercession of those whom my predecessors have raised to the glory of the altars. I wholeheartedly encourage those engaged in

the work. I express the wish that many others may succeed them and that they may increase in numbers for a task so necessary for the missions.

In the Parish

67. I now wish to speak of the actual setting in which all these catechists normally work. I am returning this time, taking a more overall view, to the "places" for catechesis, some of which have already been mentioned in chapter VI: the parish, the family, the school, organizations.

It is true that catechesis can be given anywhere, but I wish to stress, in accordance with the desire of very many Bishops, that the parish community must continue to be the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis. Admittedly, in many countries the parish has been as it were shaken by the phenomenon of urbanization. Perhaps some have too easily accepted that the parish should be considered old-fashioned, if not doomed to disappear, in favor of more pertinent and effective small communities. Whatever one may think, the parish is still a major point of reference for the Christian people, even for the non-practicing. Accordingly, realism and wisdom demand that we continue along the path aiming to restore to the parish, as needed, more adequate structures and, above all a new impetus through the increasing integration into it of qualified, responsible and generous members. This being said and taking into account the necessary diversity of places for catechesis (the parish as such, families taking in children and adolescents, chaplaincies for State schools, Catholic educational establishments, apostolic movements that give periods of catechesis, clubs open to youth in general, spiritual formation weekends, etc.), it is supremely important that all these catechetical channels should really converge on the same confession of faith, on the same membership of the Church, and on commitments in society lived in the same Gospel spirit: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father."⁽¹¹⁶⁾ That is why every big parish or every group of parishes with small numbers has the serious duty to train people completely dedicated to providing catechetical leadership (priests, men and women religious, and lay people), to provide the equipment needed for catechesis under all aspects, to increase and adapt the places for catechesis to the extent that it is possible and useful to do so, and to be watchful about the quality of the religious formation of the various groups and their integration into the ecclesial community.

In short, without monopolizing or enforcing uniformity, the parish remains, as I have said, the pre-eminent place for catechesis. It must rediscover its vocation, which is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have been baptized and confirmed become aware of forming the People of God. In that home, the bread of good doctrine and the Eucharistic Bread are broken for them in abundance, in the setting of the one act of worship⁽¹¹⁷⁾; from that home they are sent out day by day to their apostolic mission in all the centers of activity of the life of the world.

In the Family

68. The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable. This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age,⁽¹¹⁹⁾ is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. This catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events (such as the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of great liturgical feasts, the birth of a child, a bereavement) care is taken to explain in

the home the Christian or religious content of these events. But that is not enough: Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.

Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Furthermore, in places where anti-religious legislation endeavors even to prevent education in the faith, and in places where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism makes real religious growth practically impossible, "the church of the home"⁽¹²⁰⁾ remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis. Thus there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children's catechists and to carry it out with tireless zeal. Encouragement must also be given to the individuals or institutions that, through person-to-person contacts, through meetings, and through all kinds of pedagogical means, help parents to perform their task: The service they are doing to catechesis is beyond price.

At School

69. Together with and in connection with the family, the school provides catechesis with possibilities that are not to be neglected. In the unfortunately decreasing number of countries in which it is possible to give education in the faith within the school framework, the Church has the duty to do so as well as possible. This of course concerns first and foremost the Catholic school: it would no longer deserve this title if, no matter how much it shone for its high level of teaching in non-religious matters, there were justification for reproaching it for negligence or deviation in strictly religious education. Let it not be said that such education will always be given implicitly and indirectly. The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils. While Catholic establishments should respect freedom of conscience, that is to say, avoid burdening consciences from without by exerting physical or moral pressure, especially in the case of the religious activity of adolescents, they still have a grave duty to offer a religious training suited to the often widely varying religious situations of the pupils. They also have a duty to make them understand that, although God's call to serve Him in spirit and truth, in accordance with the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, does not apply constraint, it is nevertheless binding in conscience.

But I am also thinking of non-confessional and public schools. I express the fervent wish that, in response to a very clear right of the human person and of the family, and out of respect for everyone's religious freedom, all Catholic pupils may be enabled to advance in their spiritual formation with the aid of a religious instruction dependent on the Church, but which, according to the circumstances of different countries, can be offered either by the school or in the setting of the school, or again within the framework of an agreement with the public authorities regarding school timetables, if catechesis takes place only in the parish or in another pastoral center. In fact, even in places where objective difficulties exist, it should be possible to arrange school timetables in such a way as to enable the Catholics to deepen their faith and religious experience, with qualified teachers, whether priests or lay people.

Admittedly, apart from the school, many other elements of life help in influencing the mentality of the young, for instance, recreation, social background and work surroundings. But those who study are bound to bear the stamp of their studies, to be introduced to cultural or moral values within the atmosphere of the establishment in which they are taught, and to be faced with many ideas met with in school. It is important for catechesis to take full account of this effect of the school on the pupils, if it is to keep in touch with the other elements of the pupil's knowledge and education; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the pupils in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith. Accordingly, I give encouragement to the priests, religious and lay people who are devoting themselves to sustaining these pupils' faith. This is moreover an occasion for me to reaffirm my firm conviction that to show respect for the Catholic faith of the young to the extent of facilitating its education, its implantation, its consolidation, its free profession and practice would certainly be to the honor of any government, whatever be the system on which it is based or the ideology from which it draws its inspiration.

Within Organizations

70. Lastly, encouragement must be given to the lay associations, movements and groups, whether their aim is the practice of piety, the direct apostolate, charity and relief work, or a Christian presence in temporal matters. They will all accomplish their objectives better, and serve the Church better, if they give an important place in their internal organization and their method of action to the serious religious training of their members. In this way every association of the faithful in the Church has by definition the duty to educate in the faith.

This makes more evident the role given to the laity in catechesis today, always under the pastoral direction of their Bishops, as the propositions left by the synod stressed several times.

Training Institutes

71. We must be grateful to the Lord for this contribution by the laity, but it is also a challenge to our responsibility as pastors, since these lay catechists must be carefully prepared for what is, if not a formally instituted ministry, at the very least a function of great importance in the Church. Their preparation calls on us to organize special centers and institutes, which are to be given assiduous attention by the Bishops. This is a field in which diocesan, interdiocesan or national cooperation proves fertile and fruitful. Here also the material aid provided by the richer Churches to their poor sisters can show the greatest effectiveness, for what better assistance can one Church give to another than to help it to grow as a Church with its own strength?

I would like to recall to all those who are working generously in the service of the Gospel, and to whom I have expressed here my lively encouragement, the instruction given by my venerated predecessor Paul VI: "As evangelizers, we must offer. . . the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelization is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church. This is a source of responsibility and also of comfort."(121)

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit, the Teacher Within

72. At the end of this apostolic exhortation, the gaze of my heart turns to Him who is the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work-the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit.

In describing the mission that this Spirit would have in the Church, Christ used the significant words: "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (122) And He added: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...he will declare to you the things that are to come." (123)

The Spirit is thus promised to the Church and to each Christian as a teacher within, who, in the secret of the conscience and the heart, makes one understand what one has heard but was not capable of grasping: "Even now the Holy Spirit teaches the faithful," said St. Augustine in this regard, "in accordance with each one's spiritual capacity. And he sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him love what he already knows and desire what he has yet to know." (124)

Furthermore, the Spirit's mission is also to transform the disciples into witnesses to Christ: "He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses." (125)

But this is not all. For St. Paul, who on this matter synthesizes a theology that is latent throughout the New Testament, it is the whole of one's "being a Christian," the whole of the Christian life, the new life of the children of God, that constitutes a life in accordance with the Spirit. (126) Only the Spirit enables us to say to God: "Abba, Father." (127) Without the Spirit we cannot say: "Jesus is Lord." (128) From the Spirit come all the charisms that build up the Church, the community of Christians. (129)

In keeping with this, St. Paul gives each disciple of Christ the instruction: "Be filled with the Spirit." (130) St. Augustine is very explicit: "Both (our believing and our doing good) are ours because of the choice of our will, and yet both are gifts from the Spirit of faith and charity." (131)

Catechesis, which is growth in faith and the maturing of Christian life towards its fullness, is consequently a work of the Holy Spirit, a work that He alone can initiate and sustain in the Church.

This realization, based on the text quoted above and on many other passages of the New Testament, convinces us of two things.

To begin with, it is clear that, when carrying out her mission of giving catechesis, the Church-and also every individual Christian devoting himself to that mission within the Church and in her name-must be very much aware of acting as a living, pliant instrument of the Holy Spirit. To invoke this Spirit constantly, to be in communion with Him, to endeavor to know His authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every catechist.

Secondly, the deep desire to understand better the Spirit's action and to entrust oneself to Him more fully - at a time when "in the Church we are living an exceptionally favorable season of the

Spirit," as my predecessor Paul VI remarked in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*(132) - must bring about a catechetical awakening. For "renewal in the Spirit" will be authentic and will have real fruitfulness in the Church, not so much according as it gives rise to extraordinary charisms, but according as it leads the greatest possible number of the faithful, as they travel their daily paths, to make a humble, patient and persevering effort to know the mystery of Christ better and better, and to bear witness to it .

I invoke on the catechizing Church this Spirit of the Father and the Son, and I beg Him to renew catechetical dynamism in the Church.

Mary, Mother and Model of the Disciple

73. May the Virgin of Pentecost obtain this for us through her intercession. By a unique vocation, she saw her Son Jesus "increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor."(133) As He sat on her lap and later as He listened to her throughout the hidden life at Nazareth, this Son, who was "the only Son from the Father," "full of grace and truth," was formed by her in human knowledge of the Scriptures and of the history of God's plan for His people, and in adoration of the Father.(134) She in turn was the first of His disciples. She was the first in time, because even when she found her adolescent Son in the temple she received from Him lessons that she kept in her heart.(135) She was the first disciple above all else because no one has been "taught by God"(136) to such depth. She was "both mother and disciple," as St. Augustine said of her, venturing to add that her discipleship was more important for her than her motherhood.(137) There are good grounds for the statement made in the synod hall that Mary is "a living catechism" and "the mother and model of catechists."

May the presence of the Holy Spirit, through the prayers of Mary, grant the Church unprecedented enthusiasm in the catechetical work that is essential for her. Thus will she effectively carry out, at this moment of grace, her inalienable and universal mission, the mission given her by her Teacher: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."(138)

With my apostolic blessing.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on October 16, 1979, the second year of my pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II

Endnotes:

99. Cf. Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, 15-16: AAS 71 (1979), pp. 286-295.

100. Cf. Mt. 5:13-16.

101. Cf. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, Part Three, AAS 56 (1964), pp. 637-659.

102. Cf. Heb. 11:27.

103. 1 Cor. 13:12.
104. Cf. 1 Tm. 6:16.
105. Heb. 11: 1.
106. Cf. Mt. 2: 1ff.
107. Blaise Pascal, *Le mystere de Jesus: Pensees* 553.
108. Pope Paul VI, *Sollemnis Professio Fidei*, 4: AAS 60 (1968), p. 434.
109. Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Quinque Iam Anni*: AAS 63 (1971), p. 99.
110. Cf. 1 Tm. 1:3ff.; 4:1ff.; 2 Tm. 2:14ff.; 4:1-5; Tit. 1:10-12; cf. also *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 78: AAS 68 (1976), p. 70.
111. *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis*, 10: AAS 71 (1979), p. 274.
112. *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, PL 40, 310-347.
113. Cf. *Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church Christus Dominus*, 14: AAS 58 (1966), p. 679.
114. *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6: AAS 58 (1966), p. 999.
115. Lam. 4:4.
116. Eph. 4:5-6.
117. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 35, 52: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 109, 114; cf. also *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, promulgated by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on April 6, 1969, 33, and what has been said above in Chapter VI concerning the homily.
118. Since the High Middle Ages, provincial councils have insisted on the responsibility of parents in regard to education in the faith: cf. Sixth Council of Arles (813), Canon 19, Council of Mainz (813), Canons 45, 47; Sixth Council of Paris (829), Book 1, Chapter 7: Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, XIV, 62, 74, 542. Among the more recent documents of the Magisterium, note the *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri* of Pius XI December 31, 1929: AAS 22 (1930), pp. 49-86; the many discourses and messages of Pius XII; and above all the texts of the Second Vatican Council: the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 11, 35: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 15, 40; the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11, 30: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 847, 860; the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, n. 52: AAS 58 (1966) p. 1073; and especially the *Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum Educationis*, 3: AAS 58 (1966), p. 731.
119. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum Educationis*, 3: AAS 58 (1966), p. 731.
120. Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 11: AAS 57 (1965), p. 16; cf. *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11: AAS 58 (1966), p. 848.

- 121. Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, 77: AAS 68 (1976), p. 69.
- 122. Jn. 14:26.
- 123. Jn. 16:13.
- 124. In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus, 97, 1: PL 35, 1877.
- 125. Jn. 15:26-27.
- 126. Cf. Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6.
- 127. Rom. 8:15
- 128. 1 Cor 12:3.
- 129. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11.
- 130. Eph. 5:18.
- 131. Retractationum Liber I, 23, 2: PL 32, 621.
- 132. 75: AAS 68 (1976), p. 66.
- 133. Cf. Lk. 2:52.
- 134. Cf. Jn. 1:14; Heb. 10:5; S. Th., III, Q. 12, a. 2; a. 3, ad 3.
- 135. Cf. Lk. 2:51.
- 136. Cf. Jn. 6:45.
- 137. Cf. Sermo 25, 7: PL 46, 937-938.
- 138. Mt. 28:19.

(4) Summary Questions

*These questions are to allow you to do a self-assessment on how well you have understood the key points of the text. You may find it helpful to write out the answers, but this is not required. When you have a good grasp of the content of the text you will find it easier and more fruitful to contemplate the meaning and implications of Catechesi Tradendae. **Answers direct you to sections in the text outline, and this will give you an indication of where in the text to look for a fuller account.***

1. Why must catechesis resist following the Spirit of the modern age?

Answer: The Joy of Faith in a Troubled World I.A, II.A-B

2. What must pedagogy achieve in order to be suitable for catechesis?

Answer: The Joy of Faith in a Troubled World III.D

3. Why must catechists be aware of the language they use?

Answer: The Joy of Faith in a Troubled World IV.A-C

4. How does the true journey of faith differ from the modern idea of endless seeking?

Answer: The Joy of Faith in a Troubled World V.A-D

5. What gift or benefit does catechesis offer to the world?

Answer: The Joy of Faith in a Troubled World VI.C

6. What is the role of the bishop in catechesis?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All II.A-D

7. What is the role of priests in catechesis?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All III.A-C

8. What is the role of men and women religious in catechesis?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All IV.A-B

9. In what context are lay catechists *particularly* important?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All V.B

10. What is the place of the parish in catechesis?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All VI.A-B

11. Why is catechesis within the family distinct and irreplaceable?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All VII.A-B, D

12. How is catechesis within the family related to catechesis as a whole?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All VII.C-E

13. How is catechesis related to learning and education more generally?

Answer: The Task Concerns Us All VIII.E

14. Why is the Holy Spirit essential for catechetical renewal?

Answer: Conclusion I.A

15. How can catechists renew and strengthen their apostolate?

Answer: Conclusion I.B-C

16. Under what title does Pope Saint John Paul II invoke the intercession of Mary?

Answer: Conclusion II.A

17. Why is Mary rightly called “a living catechism”?

Answer: Conclusion II.B-C

(5) Lectio Divina

All of these scriptural passages are referenced in the text you just read, meaning that these are some of the verses John Paul II was thinking about when he wrote Catechesi Tradendae. One insight he offers is that “catechesis will be all the richer and more effective for reading the texts [i.e. Scripture] with the intelligence and heart of the Church” (§27). The practice that the Church has long recommended for this kind of deep reading is lectio divina, which simply means ‘divine reading’. If you have never done lectio divina before, or would like a refresher on how to get started, please refer to the section on ‘Lectio Divina’ in the general information and guidance provided with this study guide (page 19).

Hebrews 11:1-3

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Lamentations 4:1-4

How the gold has grown dim,
how the pure gold is changed!
The holy stones lie scattered
at the head of every street.
The precious sons of Zion,
worth their weight in fine gold,
how they are regarded as earthen pots,
the work of a potter's hands!

Even jackals offer the breast;
they nurse their young,
but the daughter of my people has become
cruel,
like the ostriches in the wilderness.
The tongue of the nursing infant sticks
to the roof of its mouth for thirst;
the children beg for food,
but no one gives to them.

John 16:13-14

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Romans 8:15-16

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

(6) Journaling or Private Meditation Prompts

Use the following prompts to consider the themes of the text in connection to your own life and experience. It may be helpful to write down your thoughts, or you may prefer simply to contemplate. You do not need to use all the prompts, but don't shy away from a question that is difficult to answer at first. You will find prayers for before and after private study in the general information and guidance provided with this study guide (page 4, as well as some tips for journaling (page 21).

1. Pope St John Paul II writes about the importance of Christian identity. Think about your own identity as a Christian: how does it shape how you view the world? Have you experienced the atmosphere of “hesitation, uncertainty and insipidity” that John Paul II mentions? If so, how has it impacted your Christian identity? Is there any way in which your Christian identity has impacted the world, even in a small way?
2. John Paul II writes about the modern idea that faith is an endless search for something not truly known. Yet the Bible talks about the certainty of faith. Does your own faith give you certainty about religious truth? Why or why not? How has the catechesis you have received contributed to this certainty (or lack thereof)? How do you lead those you catechise to find certainty in their own faith?
3. John Paul II writes that “Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches all other forms of catechesis.” How has your family environment shaped your faith (whether as a child or an adult)? Do you have any experience of deeply catechetical family life? If so, what gave it that character; if not, what was missing? How could it be brought about?
4. Is there a particular passage from this module's reading that particularly caught your attention? What is it and why did it jump out at you? What does it mean? Why is it important? If you are writing down your answers you may want to copy out the passage at the top of the page and write about its meaning and why you find it significant underneath.

(7) Discussion Questions

Use the following questions to guide your discussion, tailoring them to the make-up of your group; or if you are using this guide for private study these questions can continue your journaling or private reflection. If you would like some suggestions concerning how to run a productive discussion session, please see the general information and guidance provided along with this study guide (page 22).

1. *There is also a pedagogy of faith, and the good that it can do for catechesis cannot be overstated. In fact, it is natural that techniques perfected and tested for education in general should be adapted for the service of education in the faith. However, account must always be taken of the absolute originality of faith. Pedagogy of faith is not a question of transmitting human knowledge, even of the highest kind; it is a question of communicating God's revelation in its entirety. Throughout sacred history, especially in the Gospel, God Himself used a pedagogy that must continue to be a model for the pedagogy of faith. A technique is of value in catechesis only to the extent that it serves the faith that is to be transmitted and learned; otherwise it is of no value. (CT, 58)*

How is teaching about the Gospel different from teaching about any other topic? How does this impact how you catechise? Using your knowledge of the Bible and Salvation History, what can you observe about God as a teacher? How can catechists use this divine pedagogy in their work?

2. *When educating children, adolescents and young people, let us not give them too negative an idea of faith - as if it were absolute non-knowing, a kind of blindness, a world of darkness - but let us show them that the humble yet courageous seeking of the believer, far from having its starting point in nothingness, in plain self-deception, in fallible opinions or in uncertainty, is based on the Word of God who cannot deceive or be deceived, and is unceasingly built on the immovable rock of this Word. It is the search of the Magi under the guidance of a star, the search of which Pascal, taking up a phrase of St. Augustine, wrote so profoundly: "You would not be searching for me, if you had not found me." (CT, 60)*

This passage very eloquently expresses the Church's belief that faith has an objectively true object that each person can find through their own journey: there are many ways of seeking, but ultimately a single destination—Christ. When you are giving catechesis do you present the faith as the living and true word of God? How do you address common misconceptions like the incompatibility of faith and reason, or the belief that faith can never be more than an uncertain subjective understanding of the world?

3. *The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith. Catechesis will teach this to them. (CT, 61)*

How does catechesis prepare Christians not only for life in a secular world, but to transform that world through their witness? How, as catechists, can you help those you instruct to find the humble joy that John Paul II talks about?

4. Finally, think back on your experience of reading *Catechesi Tradendae* and using this study guide. Has it helped you to deepen your thought about the vocation of catechists in the Church? Why or why not? What has been most helpful to you? Are there any themes you think are particularly important? How might you continue to study them and incorporate them into your work as a catechist? What is next for you in this vital catechetical mission of the Church?