



## A Synod of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg 2016-2018

Focus Commission on Catechetics and Faith Development

White Paper

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“The disciple is one who is established and anointed in Christ and sent out to the world. We must remember that the one who is sent finds purpose and identity for the mission in the one who sends. The first principle of this identity is found in the disciple’s relationship with Christ.” (Disciples: Established, Anointed and Sent in Christ p.5)

It is necessary to define the tools at the disposal of the Church for evangelization. We recognize the mission of the Church is to bring the Gospel to life. There are different avenues we use in order to reach people. The tools at the disposal of the Church for evangelization are as follows:

- Catechism – focus is the “passing on” through instruction of our Catholic beliefs, values, and morals (i.e. Home life, catechism programs, bible studies, parish and community ministries)
- Education – focus is a systematic presentation and exploration of the core elements of Catholic faith and practice—a complete initiation into a Catholic way of life. (i.e. Schools, institutions, courses)
- Formation – focus is to assist the faithful of all ages to grow in both personal and Christian maturity, enriching the whole of life. It is the integration of catechesis and education and how this changes a person. How it becomes a lived experience integrated into their daily life. (i.e. The Summons, Nathanael, small group faith sharing) (See CCCB “On Good Soil: Pastoral Planning for Evangelization and Catechesis with Adults” 2011)

In so many situations within the Archdiocese of Winnipeg we hear the constant call for catechetics and faith formation to deepen our knowledge and love of Christ; that is, to build a foundation to ensure that the various generations of the people of God within the Archdiocese of Winnipeg are able to live their faith, expand their understanding, and reflect this knowledge and love in word, action and prayer. We can only go forward with this when we are truly and faithfully a disciple of Christ, one who has heard the call and responded to the words “Come, follow me” (Matthew 4:19) As the disciples followed Jesus he taught them about a merciful God, who loves humanity and wants only the best for them, so much so that he sent his Son, so that through whose words, actions and sacred prayer the generations are inspired to hear the call to follow and to respond to it with joy.

Our response calls for a reflection on education: particularly on adult education, on an intergenerational understanding of religious education in parishes and parochial schools, and on intergenerational family-based catechesis. Each aspect of education needs to reflect an awareness of the poor, the homeless, the sick, the broken and the forgotten leading to a greater depth of mercy and compassion.

“Sacred scripture often speaks of the poor as being of particular concern to God. He hears the cry of the poor, and raises them from the dust. Yet, in the Great Tradition, poverty is not just destined for alleviation, but for revelation. The true God-seeker sees the countenance of Christ etched in the faces and the figures of the poor... The great corpus of Catholic social teaching instructs us to see the poor not as mere objects of pity, problems to be solved, or charity to be administered, but the hungry, parched and poor Christ...

...We teach them justice. They are brought up with the cultural wisdom that states that security is everything. Once again wisdom needs reworking, if the hunt is on for the Christ. Jesus is found, alright, but it is in jeopardy that they find him. Here is one exposed to all the dangerous elements that can be mustered by the environment and by the human race. [and we are ] to ensure that



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the fate of all these men and women [in jeopardy] is known to the young, and that their desire to love them as Christ did is known to those whose existence is jeopardized.” (Build Bethlehem Everywhere: A statement on Catholic Education Canadian Catholic School Trustees’ Association 2011. pp 37-38)

It is clear that Christian educators and Parish catechists play a vital part in bringing the Good News. As with any ministry, the concomitant demands and expectations of this role necessitate consistent formation for all who dedicate themselves to it. There is an inequity in how the Archdiocese of Winnipeg forms catechists.

It is a concern and a need that all catechists, be they parish or mission volunteers, or paid professional educators, have a good understanding of the faith and that they are being supported in the programs that they are undertaking.

“Faith begins at home” is a saying that has been part of the foundation of catechetics and faith formation. In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the security of a strictly deductive approach to catechesis shifted to a more inductive method. At times, a parochially based catechism has in ways allowed some tenants of our faith to be left aside in favour of others. A mature, balanced faith requires holding both methods together. If the propositions of faith are not adequately passed on, the faithful miss out on the wealth of Truth contained in the Church’s teaching. A well-rounded catechetics and faith formation equips us with a robust faith, so that with intelligence and graciousness, we may engage creatively with a culture that is often skeptical of the commitments made by the Catholic faith.

Families are the perfect place to start when it comes to intergenerational faith formation. The beauty of this is that it can be an aim for the missionary disciple to reach out in areas of Social Justice and Outreach. Outreach to the 3 communities identified in the Bishops letter.

- The community of disciples who already participate- “providing a place to “encourage personal conversion fervent worship and full participation in the Apostolates”
- The baptized who are no longer active in the church- intergenerational faith formation provided an opening for those to enter back into the church and gives witness to the relevance God can have in their daily lives.
- Those who do not know Jesus Christ- a social intergenerational setting that can welcome all even those who do not know Jesus.
- There is identified a fourth group which are those who are in between the first two groups, involved in a limited way - for example those who may bounce in and out of the life of the church or only participate in one area like catechism but do not partake regularly in the liturgical life of the church and are not fully fed through the reception of the Eucharist or reconciliation.

Vatican II’s Declaration on Christian Education (1965) (*Gravissimum Educationis*) reaffirms the Church's commitment to provide a Catholic education for children at every level (from primary school to universities). It argues that every person has a right to an education, including a religious one, and that the Church has a responsibility to educate in both religious and secular terms. The declaration also states that it is the responsibility of the parents to educate and create an atmosphere of learning about their faith and to live as a church in the modern world.



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Vatican II presciently anticipated our increasingly globalized world; so it expected that Catholic Education would become more culturally sensitive. Indeed, in many places in the Global South, faith and culture have reciprocally strengthened each other, while the so-called Old World see dwindling levels of church attendance. Now with the movements of peoples to new countries and societies, there has been a shift into a narrower vision of Church and Catechesis. New citizens bring not only their culture to their new homes, but their piety and catechetical system. In itself, this is very laudable. However, one of the means of the New Evangelization is that we are to reach out to the uncatechized baptized. This may not be attainable if there are constructs of popular pieties applied as catechesis in a culture different from that in which it initially took root. Our call to serve, our desire to live our vocation can only be heard and lived out when faith can be expressed in one's own culture. In order for people to practice their faith according to the words "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord," this can only be done by knowing the Good News, so the Gospel must always find expression through the cultural milieu of those who bring the Word to life through their very lives.

We cannot, however, forget the transcendence of the Gospel in relation to all human cultures in which the Christian faith has the vocation to root itself and come to fruition according to all its potentialities. However great the respect should be for what is true and holy in the cultural heritage of a people, this attitude does not demand that one should lend an absolute character to this cultural heritage<sup>14</sup>. No one can forget that, from the beginning, the Gospel was a "scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the pagans".<sup>61</sup>(International Theological Commission, Faith and Inculturation, (1988))

Catholic education exists for one reason, and that is to plant in each child of God the invitation to "Come and see..." This is most perfectly given to us as we gather on the day of the Lord to celebrate Eucharist. This is an act of fidelity, of piety, of prayer and of being transformed and sent. Father Ron Rolheiser OMI says in his book on the Eucharist, *Our One Great Act of Fidelity*, "[The Eucharist] is meant to be an intensification of our unity within the Body of Christ. It is not just bread and wine that is meant to change and become the body and blood of Christ. There is a famous saying in the writing of the great church Father, Saint Augustine. Whenever he would give communion to someone for the first time, instead of saying 'the Body of Christ,' he would hold it up and say, 'Receive what you are.' The Eucharist tries, first of all, to change us so that we can become what we receive, one body, one community, one heart and one spirit." (Pp. 37-8) It is when we have changed and become one community, with Eucharist at the centre of our lives, then we will see the full impact of Christian education.

*We must ask the Lord for the grace to have "the ability which gives us the spirit" to "understand the signs of the times."  
Pope Francis, November 29, 2013 Domus Sanctae Marthae*



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### Recommendations

1. The Archdiocese of Winnipeg is invited to form a vision and a strategy of the education of adults that invites seekers to participate and benefit from the expertise of the many gifted people who are our resources within the Archdiocese. This invitation could be carried out through many opportunities, situations and media, and in the four corners of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg through:
  - a. Panel discussions, current topics, theological topics, sacramental topics, pastoral topics, moral topics and many other subjects.
  - b. Adequate access to a Pastoral Centre based data base of resources, materials and people that would ensure that said resources are accessible.
  - c. The establishment of an Office of Adult Faith Formation in the Archdiocese that will facilitate the needs of adults to grow and mature in their faith.
2. The need to create a sustainable program that is to be used to form the different streams of catechists and educators, both in our parochial schools and in our parishes. This would enable those enquirers to have their faith bolstered, lead them to service and care for the poor and help the formators to grow in faith and knowledge.
3. The need to integrate the faith formations that families receive from their parish and from their schools. Through the collaboration between catholic schools and colleges, the parishes, the office of catechetics, the office of catholic schools, the office of youth and young adult ministry. This will equip families to discover the call of discipleship and pass on the faith to the next generation of the faithful.
4. In the Archdiocese of Winnipeg we have the privilege of having 11 Catholic schools. These schools are a jewel of the church and daily form thousands of children. It is necessary to have a more concentrated focus and effort from the Archdiocese to have these schools supported in prayer, in resources and in formation. This will enable our schools to teach Christians who will become educators, influencing communities and will bring the good news to the classrooms the playground and the unchurched.

Presented this day, the Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, April 25, 2017, by,

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