

The National Catechetical Directory: Chapter Three

1. A principal task of catechesis is to present the Church as an instrument for the achievement of intimate union with God and the unity of all mankind.

2. Catechesis must present both the outward reality and the inner mystery of the Church as Sacrament.

3. The structure of the whole content of catechesis must be theocentric and trinitarian.

4. The seven sacraments must be presented in the context of the Church as the prime sacrament and Body of Christ.

5. Catechesis must emphasize the unity and the catholicity of the Church, taking into account the diversity within.

6. By constant reference to the authentic Scriptures known and interpreted in Tradition, the Church perseveres in the teaching of the apostles, in fraternal communion, in the breaking of the bread and prayer.

7. It is the task of catechesis to keep alive the awareness of baptism and its meaning for the individual, Christian and the community at large. This must be seen in relation to the Passover and Exodus of Israel.

8. In Christian community common beliefs, experiences, ideals and values are shared.

9. Catechesis must move men to build community in all areas of life, with the Eucharist as its basis and center.

10. At the parish level catechesis is simultaneously a way of assimilating members into the Christian Community, a thorough grounding in the faith and even a way of life.

11. Catechesis must develop an awareness of the Church's mission to all people. Christians must be motivated, according to their age and capacity, to participate in this mission.

12. Catechesis should make clear the positive relationship of the Church to world religions and to those who profess no religion.

13. Catechists should foster unity among Christians, and present accurate views of the practices and beliefs of other Christian Churches.

14. Aware that New Testament faith grows out of the Jewish Covenant, catechists should develop an understanding of the rich covenant traditions, belief and practices of the Jewish community.

15. Since there can be no community if there is no concern to serve the neediest first, and to notice where the neediest are, catechesis must foster positive attitudes in this regard.

16. The work of catechetics and the task of Christian community are mutually dependent on each other.

17. In building community the Church has several tasks: to articulate the message, to train competent heralds of that message, to celebrate the message in liturgy, to implement belief in a call to service, and to organize so that belief and hope and love will be widely shared.

'The Catholic Church and the Invitation to Community'

By FR. DOUGLAS C. HOFFMAN

How should a catechist understand the Church today? What is central? On what pegs can we hang the insights into faith that the teacher of religion wishes to share? These questions have stalked religion teachers for the last ten years since the older definitions of Church and sacraments have been set aside.

Chapter Three of the Directory attempts to answer these questions for the American Church. The sweep of the chapter is simple: Jesus Christ is the ground for the unity of the Church; the Church is called to be community; she has a mission in the world; the Church functions as herald, celebrator, servant and organizer.

Where the Chapter Succeeds

At this hour of religious education in the Church, we all welcome direct answers to questions of curriculum and substance for our programs. The importance of this chapter for adults as well as children, for professionals as well as volunteer leaders and teachers, cannot be overestimated. This chapter will be inspiring for them; it is inspiring for us all.

It raises our vision to the farthest reaches of the Church, and at the same time plunges us deeply into her origins in the mystery of the life of Jesus. It does make us see deeply and far off.

The first section of the chapter affirms the fact that, where the Church is present and active, Christ is present and active. He is the source of the unity of the Church, a unity in which diversity can also flourish. He makes the Church apostolic. He found the new People of God a people signed by baptism in water and the Spirit.

The second section confirms the fact that the Church is continuous outreach — to other Christian traditions, to wherever religious traditions, to wherever

St. Vincent's Has A First

Churchville — St. Vincent De Paul Parish, for the first time in its history, held a St. Joseph's Day celebration at all the Masses on Sunday March 16. Bread was blessed by Father Louis J. Hohman, pastor, and symbolic offerings of bread and fruit were carried in the offertory procession.

At the close of the Mass, the blessed bread was distributed to the congregation. The committee who developed the celebration included Mr. and Mrs. Edward Ciuffini, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph De Palma and family, and Thomas Dermody, chairman of the parish council. The project was held under the auspices of the parish liturgy committee.

In the box above is a synopsis of the third chapter of the proposed National Catechetical Directory as prepared by the directory staff. Diocesan officials will give a critique of each of the nine chapters of the directory weekly in the Courier-Journal. The third chapter is analyzed by Father Douglas Hoffman, diocesan director of Pastoral Ministry. Extra copies of the directory are available from the Office of Religious Education, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Any comments, suggestions or criticism also should be sent to that office.

men and women and children suffer. The tone is one of sharing our spiritual treasures and of openness to receiving in return what is of worth that others wish to share with us.

The third section explores in a preliminary fashion the embodiment of the Church over time in community. The finest sentence in this chapter appears as a description of the center of the parish: "The Eucharist is the heartbeat of the local Christian community which is the parish."

The final section is the increasingly familiar statement of the purposes of the Church in every one of the forums in which she moves. We often speak of word, worship, witness and administration. These are helpful foci for lessons and themes that can be developed in liturgies, lectures, workshops and classrooms. It is not so much that something new is said here but that we find we are close together in the description of the roles the Church plays in the world.

In a fairly extensive self-consciousness about our roles and our job descriptions and what our constitutions ought to say about ourselves and our purposes, and at a time when it is becoming increasingly necessary to plan and set goals and objectives, this chapter on the nature and mission of the Church is very much needed.

Where the Chapter Fails

In my opinion, the chapter struggles with but does not succeed in finding a single organizing principle for the chapter. That short-coming perhaps reflects the tendency of contemporary ecclesiology offer a set of models of a handful of biblical metaphors as conceptual tools. The chapter begins by suggesting the use of the imagery of St. Paul (the "Body of Christ"), but then moves on to use or allude to at least ten other images. There is a richness in this, but for teachers and others

seeking a handle for the subject matter, it is a serious weakness.

The second re-write will have to deal with the lack of organization of the material throughout the document. One has to skip around to find piecemeal comments about religious education and the parish, and each time (cf. for example No. 214 in Chapter Nine) the language used varies.

Undoubtedly, this can be attributed to the fact that 32,000 people had a hand in writing this document. Every section is bulging with different or slightly different concepts without any overall consistency (one is reminded of the description of a camel as a horse designed by a committee!). In fact, one yearns for a glossary of terms (dare I say definitions?) to pin down such slippery concepts as "community", "mission", "transcendent", and even "catechesis."

Nor is it an easy chapter to read. The style is reminiscent of the documents of Vatican II, which speak so very much of our beliefs and ideals, but speak sparingly of our shortcomings and of some of the harsher realities of life. Take, for example, this statement from No. 43: "The members of Christ's body are knit together in perfect unity." There is a certain unreality to that statement. The atmosphere

created in this chapter lacks a certain earthiness — it has no body odor!

Conclusion

The chapter will be a great help to pastors, religious education coordinators, religion teachers, all those involved in communicating our faith through religious education ministry.

It will help others as well. Those who serve on parish councils, belong to prayer groups,

participate in one or other of the renewal groups (Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, Charismatic Renewal), those who belong to traditional spiritual formation groups (Legion of Mary, Rosary Guild, St. Gerard Society, etc.), those in the various forms of parish pastoral ministry will all find insight and inspiration in the reflections which this chapter contains.

One hopes that those who have read this chapter will both critique it as requested and share it with co-workers in the vineyard.

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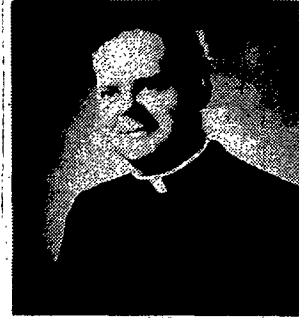
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