

# The National Catechetical Directory: Chapter Six

1. Catechesis must relate faith to the quest for mercy and justice as the exercise of gospel love.
2. Catechists must always remember the personal dimension of God's self disclosure.
3. Catechesis should stress the dignity of the person, rooted in likeness to God and the call to communion with Him, pointing out that this sacred dignity carries with it rights and duties flowing directly from human nature.
4. Catechesis proclaims that each person is a co-equal member of the human family and that in relating to each other people can manifest their love of God and achieve human fulfillment and redemption.
5. Catechesis should point out that God wants people to use their human energy and talent to develop the earth.
6. Catechesis must include the Christian's responsibility for the work of justice, i.e., for probing and removing the root causes of injustice.
7. Catechesis must find ways of motivating people to personal deeds of mercy and compassion. It must also include a sense of the contemporary challenge presented by structured injustice and make appropriate prophetic response.
8. Catechesis must include studies in peace and justice.

## Catechetical Criteria and the Christian Message

By DR. PADRAIC O'HARE

Chapter 5 of the present draft of the National Catechetical Directory is entitled "Catechetical Criteria and the Christian Message." It is not a chapter of "catechetical criteria" since such criteria would have to give some sound, strictly educational, advice. But it is a comprehensive recapitulation of what is frequently referred to throughout this draft of the directory as the "deposit of faith." It is not surprising by chapter 5 to notice the authors of the NCD designating as "catechetical criteria," what is, in fact, an outline of content "musts," since the authors seem to belong to a preaching school of religious educators, for whom curriculum and instruction are the same thing.

But I'm ahead of myself; first a synopsis. Chapter 5 gives us a comprehensive review of what ought to be taught. On the way, there are a few catechetical criteria (like: teach with a sensitivity to cultural differences of people, be simple do not down play either sin or forgiveness). Thus, the chapter runs through: fundamental religious themes (Trinity, God, God known in nature, Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ, Creation as an act of love);

a consideration of the Incarnation, and the Holy Spirit; a section on the sacraments; a section of theological anthropology in which "man" alive in the Spirit and "man" truly free are looked at; a section on morality, in which love is preferred to law, sexual morality is designated as a series of "don'ts," and which concludes with a rather good catalogue of the kinds of "involvements" or responsibilities persons professing Christian social morality would have to be concerned with and involved in (just an aside, not really a criticism: the section on sexual morality precedes that on social morality; surely the NCD experts will want to reverse that in the final draft).

The concluding sections are a moderately triumphalist (triumphalism is when people mistake the Church for God) piece on the Church; an objectionable but uninspiring section on Our Blessed Mother, and finally what used to be called "the four last things."

Those who read my essay on Chapter 2 (Courier-Journal—March 5) will know that I am thoroughly bewildered by the tone, the contradictions, and the atheological character of that

chapter, and of the draft itself. If anything, my reaction to Chapter 5 is more of the same. Apart from some specific "bloopers" (both of which occur in the sacraments section) which I'll deal with at the end, the two broad areas for sorting out what is wrong with Chapter 5 are: educational and theological. What's wrong with Chapter 5 is roughly the same thing that was wrong in Chapter 2: a thoroughgoing fuzziness about the nature of faith and Revelation. Jesus is acknowledged as the Revelation, the complete, final, and sufficient Revelation of God. But, we also are told that "faith is total adherence given by persons under the influence of grace to God-revealing himself OR as the content of revelation and of the Christian message. The two elements are inseparable. The important word here is "or." The authors think that acknowledging and adhering to a person, and to a content are the same, or non-contradictory, or equally acceptable. But the point of a great deal of contemporary theology, and the point of a great deal of contemporary Religious educational theory is to distinguish faith in the person of Jesus Christ from faith in the language of doctrine. When the

superiority of commitment to the person of Jesus Christ over commitment to doctrine is acknowledged, then and only then can traditions, whether scriptural or later, be placed in an historical context and given their necessary, important but subsidiary role in both theology and in religious education.

What's wrong educationally with Chapter 5 is everything, by which I mean what's wrong educationally with Chapter 5, is that it isn't educational.

Lacking an over-arching, deeply rooted educational mentality, Chapter 5 is thrown necessarily back onto saying things like "sound educational theory is to be used," and everything is to be presented "according to the age and ability of the learner." There are innumerable tip-offs to the fact that Chapter 5 just doesn't have a truly educative focus; you can read it and find them. But what it comes down to is this: there is a pervasive sense in Chapter 5 that PRESENTATION is EDUCATION. Without rejecting the importance of "verbal learning," which I for one consider a vital ingredient in a definition of the elements which compose the educative event, it is simply not true that

presentation is education. Thus, a homiletic recapitulation of the "truths of our faith" does not comprise Catechetical criteria (I can't resist this one example: "The hearts of the people are to be disposed to hope in the future life . . ." Chapter 5 tells us, assuming either that we don't know that hoping our lives have meaning now and in eternity is central to Christianity — to religion in general — or that saying so constitutes "learning" for the catechist, whether parent or professional).

Finally, the two bloopers. The intent here is not to ridicule, but "bloopers" seem the only descriptions for two rather glaring mistakes in the text of Chapter 5. Both occur in the section on the sacraments.

In the section on Holy Orders, we are told "Holy Orders in a special way conforms certain members of the People of God to Christ the Mediator." And in the next section, on the Eucharist, the topic is handled with no reference whatsoever to the conciliar insights about the real presence of the Christ in the word and in the community. These two sections have been written as though Vatican Council II never took place.

## Church Women to Hear Sister Mary Luke Tobin

Sister Mary Luke Tobin, director of Citizen Action for Church Women United in the U.S.A., will be the speaker at the annual Rochester CWU meeting at Webster United Presbyterian Church, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday, April 11.

Sister Mary Luke, through her active participation in Vatican II, has become recognized as a force for renewal within the Church.

Formerly president of the Sisters of Loretto, Sister Mary Luke was elected in 1964 to serve as national chairman of the Conference of Religious Superiors of Women and was named by Pope Paul VI to be the first woman auditor at the Vatican Council.

In February 1965 she was named to serve on the Vatican Council's subcommission on The Church in the Modern World and on the commission preparing a schema on The Laity.

She served in the erection of the International Union of Superiors General and assisted in the preparation of its first general assembly held in Rome. At the assembly she was one of 15 elected to the Union's Council of the Presidency.

She is a national co-chairwoman of Clergy and Laity Concerned, a member of the Board of Directors of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and chairwoman of the Committee on Peace and Justice of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

In July 1970, she was one of a 10-member fact-finding mission on repression of peace efforts in South Vietnam which visited Saigon. In March 1971, she was a participant in the Citizens' Conference on Ending the War in



SISTER MARY LUKE

Indo-China. In April 1972, she was a member of a small delegation which conferred with the Vietnamese groups in Paris. In January 1973, she and five others visited Church leaders in Europe to ask for their help in appeals for peace to the United States government.

### SPRING CELEBRATION

St. Helen's parish will celebrate the change of seasons with a dinner dance Saturday night, April 12, at the Party House, Beahan Road. Cocktail hour will begin at 6:30 p.m., with dinner at 7:30 and dancing at 9. The sponsoring Altar-Rosary Society will sell tickets after Masses April 5 and 6. Reservations may be made also with Carol Nunes, 247-7387, or Peg Schickler, 247-7448, through April 9.

### FIRST FRIDAY

Father Leonard Kelly of Assumption Church, Fairport, will celebrate Mass for the First Friday Club at 11:45 a.m. April 4 at the Knights of Columbus Home, 513 Monroe. Lunch will follow, with Father Kelly as speaker.

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