

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.

Chapter Six: The Christian Life of Service

By DR. JOSEPH TORMA

This chapter deals with an area of Christian life that is central but which is treated in our church life as if it were secondary. The chapter affirms the centrality of "the Christian Life of Service" or "The Social Mission of Christians and the Church" and draws out the implications of this for catechesis. There are a great many strengths in this chapter but also some areas that need elaboration and specification. Only the most important areas will be cited here.

THE STRENGTHS

The chapter starts by emphasizing that the social mission (social service and social change) is "a constitutive dimension of the Church's mission" and that, therefore, the church must "announce" this through "evangelization and catechesis." This has obvious far-reaching implications for the way the Church is to assign her education dollars in the future. It is important to point out that this is not a new insight, but in fact, one which was contained in Pope John's encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, in 1961: "We strongly affirm that Christian social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life" (and) "we strongly urge that it be included as an item in the required curriculum in Catholic schools of every kind, particularly in seminaries. It is to be inserted into the religious education programs of parishes and of associations of the lay apostolates" (nos. 222 and 223). In affirming the teaching of Pope John, the chapter grounds itself firmly in the teaching authority of the Church.

The chapter goes on to say that all of our talents and goods are

In the box above is a synopsis of the sixth 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 sixth chapter is analyzed by Dr. Joseph Torma of the Office of Human Development. 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.

gifts from God to be used according to His will as revealed in the quality and direction of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Prayer is seen as that which nourishes this kind of life rather than as an end in itself.

God, as revealed in Jesus, is described as having a "human-centered orientation." This follows logically on the teaching of Matthew 25, "Whoever you do to the least important ones, you do to me." The central focus of man's moral judgment must, then, be "the human person," whom the chapter describes as "a unique creation of God formed in his image (Gn. 1, 26)." With the "person" established as the central focus for human existence, the chapter goes on to list "the rights and duties flowing directly from human nature" and then states that "the protection, fostering, and fulfillment of the human rights of each person in society is the essential task entrusted to public authority in society." This obligation of the social system is linked to "God's intention" regarding the created universe. Since God intends the created world to exist for the development of each and every human person, "when justice and mercy are the rule, sufficient created goods are available for every person." In thus affirming the goodness of God, the chapter lays the blame for obvious, social inequities on the inadequate social systems which man has devised.

the question of authority and the kind of obedience required. Obviously I cannot give answers to all these in this small space (assuming there were simple answers.) But I would like to make several observations which I hope will have the effect of clarifying rather than obscuring.

Infallibility of the Pope was defined by Vatican Council I some 105 years ago. Its limits as defined are relatively narrow. It has been used in that sense (i.e. the Pope speaks officially, ex cathedra, to the universal Church on a doctrine of faith or morals) only once in the 105 years — on Nov. 1, 1950, by Pope Pius XII to define the Assumption of Mary. If it were kept within such limits, it would be a non-issue.

But the trouble seems to me to come from several facts: a. that some leaders in the Church tend to exaggerate the Pope's infallibility and extend it in a "quasi" form to many other lesser pronouncements; in fact, they give the impression that every time the Pope speaks on anything he is infallible. b. there is some confusion between obedience to authority and infallibility. The Pope has a right to make statements about where the Church stands on a certain matter at this point in history, and has a right to expect obedience. But that does not make his statement infallible or irreversible; nor should it preclude prudent study and investigation of the topic by competent theologians, such as Dr. Kueng.

The chapter also draws out the many practical implications of the above including the fact that "if the political authority becomes incapable of functioning appropriately and oppresses its citizens, it is proper for the citizens to defend their rights against any abuses by the governing authority" as well as the fact that "a person in extreme necessity has the right to take from the riches of others what is needed." This should help us grapple with the reality of the necessity of rebellion against "institutionalized violence," the "law and order" that systematically allows certain people to go without basic necessities while others are able to obtain luxuries. This is an extremely important insight at a time when redistribution of resources and power is being thrust upon us not only in the context of the state and the nation, but most especially at the international level.

The chapter is very strong on the essential role of Christians in the social order as regards both mercy and justice, pointing out that this involves concern for "the welfare of the whole human family." This statement guards against the self-centeredness and parochialism that is an ever-present temptation.

Finally, the relation of catechesis to the social mission is dealt with in a rather definite manner. Besides remarking that "aspects of social concern" should have a "central place" in catechesis, the chapter concludes with the thought that catechesis might include "a sense of the contemporary challenge presented by structured injustice and make the appropriate prophetic response."

The chapter backs up its statement well with references to Church documents and the Scripture.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The statements on "stewardship" should make clear that this is an obligation also of social institutions and not just of individuals. The idea of "social sin" must be developed here, so that the Church's call to conversion is seen as applying very strongly to social systems as well as to individuals. This is true because the social order (the "common good") is necessary for individual development.

This whole chapter would have benefited greatly from a connection between the "person" and "the Kingdom." The "Kingdom" is a biblical image symbolizing the final social order that is now in the process of becoming. It stands for that social order that will be when each person has become all he or she can be. The image of the "Kingdom" serves to indicate that the development of the social order and the development of the individual are necessarily connected.

Christians is pointed out but there is no mention of the fact that the institutional Church has the responsibility to initiate more adequate responses to social problems than those presently existing in society. This is "preaching by deed." When society "converts" and is willing to take over, then the Church must initiate other responses. It must always be an avante-garde. It has a religious mission to point the way. It is civil society's "proper" mission to maintain social, economic, and political structures.

Finally, the chapter's treatment of catechesis would have benefited from Mater et Magistra's educational insight that theory and practice must be combined in any religious education program relating to social concerns. The chapter is concerned that religious education find "ways to motivate people both to personal deeds of compassion and works of peace and justice." One possibility provided by Pope John is that "formal instruction (must be) supplemented by activity undertaken for the sake of gaining experience (because) just as, in the words of an old saying, one cannot acquire the correct use of liberty except by using liberty correctly, so one learns how to act as a Christian in social and economic matters only by practical Christian action in these fields" (nos. 231 and 232).

THE OPEN WINDOW



Dear Father Hohman,

I have been reading lately about the trials and tribulations of Father Hans Kueng who has been called on the carpet by the Vatican for teaching against the infallibility of the Pope. We have a study group and some of my friends have already written off the idea of the Pope being infallible. They base this statement upon what they call the "uncontestable fact" that the Pope has been wrong in the past and therefore cannot be infallible. Is he or isn't he?

Puzzled,
P.Q.

Dear P.Q.,

The issue that you bring up has several aspects; there is the question of the Pope's infallibility — whether he is, when he is and to what extent; there is the question of the suppression of Dr. Kueng's theological studies; and there is

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

- QUALITY STANDARDS
- DIGNITY IN SERVICE
- INTEGRITY IN BUSINESS

F. H. McELWEE

Funeral Home, Inc.
Phone 394-2220
Leo M. Bean
Francis H. McElwee

200 Buffalo St., Canandaigua, N.Y.
90 E. Main St., Victor, N.Y.

HARLOFF

586-5948

Funeral Home

ST. JEROME'S PARISH
E. ROCHESTER

BURNS - HANNA

FUNERAL HOME

1795 Ridge Rd. E. 467-5745

Paul W. Harris

FUNERAL HOME INC.
570 Kings Highway South (corner Titus)

SPACIOUS PARKING

Private casket selection room.
544-2041

AIR CONDITIONED