

FAMILY CATECHESIS

This resource is offered to support dioceses/eparchies and parishes wishing to implement family catechesis. Included are three videos from dioceses in Eastern Canada that have introduced new models of family catechesis. Each provides a unique perspective on the benefits and challenges they have experienced in their efforts to engage parents more fully in their own faith development and the faith lives of their children. The resource also includes tips for planning family catechesis, templates with sample sessions and links to a variety of websites that offer resources for family catechesis.

INTRODUCTION

The General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) tells us that “catechesis is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways” (105). Catechesis is about much more than passing on information; it is formation which leads to transformation.

Family catechesis occurs in all stages of life. As families live their daily lives and interact with one another, they deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. “Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis” (Catechesi Tradendae 68).

Church documents stress that families can only grow in relationship with Christ with the help of the Christian community. Therefore it is important that the Church tend to the needs of families, and in a particular way, to parents as the first educators in the faith.

Family catechesis ensures the Gospel message is the lived experience of the entire family. As Pope Francis reminds us, “the family is not merely the sum of persons belonging to it, but a ‘community of persons’ (cf. nn. 17-18). And a community is more than the sum total of persons that belong to it. It is the place where one learns to love, it is the natural centre of human life. It is made up of faces, of people who love, dialogue, make self-sacrifices for one another and defend life, especially of the most vulnerable and the weakest” (Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family, 2013).



WHY FAMILY CATECHESIS?

GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS

226. The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect. Children thus perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and of Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that this first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout life. This childhood religious awakening which takes place in the family is irreplaceable (167). It is consolidated when, on the occasion of certain family events and festivities, “care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events” (168). It is deepened all the more when parents comment on the more methodical catechesis which their children later receive in the Christian community and help them to appropriate it. Indeed, **“family catechesis precedes...accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis”** (169).
227. ...As the children grow, exchange of faith becomes mutual and “in a catechetical dialogue of this sort, each individual both receives and gives” (172). It is for this reason that the Christian community must give very special attention to parents. By means of personal contact, meetings, courses and also adult catechesis directed toward parents, the Christian community must help them assume their responsibility—which is particularly delicate today—of educating their children in the faith.
255. Parents are the primary educators in the faith. Together with them, especially in certain cultures, all members of the family play an active part in the education of the younger members. It is thus necessary to determine more concretely the sense in which the Christian family community is a locus of catechesis. The family is defined as a “domestic Church” (247), that is, in every Christian family the different aspects and functions of the life of the entire Church may be reflected: mission; catechesis; witness; prayer, etc. Indeed in the same way as the Church, the family “is a place in which the Gospel is transmitted and from which it extends” (248). The family as a locus of catechesis has a unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values (249). On this human base, Christian initiation is more profound: the awakening of the sense of God; the first steps in prayer; education of the moral conscience; formation in the Christian sense of human love, understood as a reflection of the love of God the Father, the Creator. It is, indeed, a Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more on-going and daily than structured into periods. In this family catechesis, the role of grandparents is of growing importance. Their wisdom and sense of the religious is often times decisive in creating a true Christian climate.

THREE MODELS OF FAMILY CATECHESIS

- Archdiocese of Moncton
 - Video
 - Resources: (a) (b) (c)
- Archdiocese of St. John's
 - Video
 - Resources: (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h) (i) (j)
- Diocese of Corner Brook & Labrador
 - Video
 - Resources: (a) (b) (c)



TIPS FOR PLANNING FAMILY CATECHESIS

- Engage in a discernment process that includes representatives from the entire community – Bishop, pastor, pastoral team, parents and grandparents
- Have knowledge of the audience for whom you are planning
- Understand and respect the unique circumstances and contexts in which families are living
- Give sufficient notice and communicate with the faith community that a new approach is going to be introduced
- Develop a model which includes catechist formation in the following areas:
 - Spirituality of the catechist (Janet Schaeffler)
 - Stages of faith development
 - Adult learning principles
 - Mentorship
 - Group facilitation

STRATEGIES FOR:

ENGAGING PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND GRANDPARENTS

- Introduce the concept of family catechesis before implementing the new model. This can be done by the pastor on Sunday, in bulletins and on parish websites.
- Provide detailed information about the implementation of the new model and how families will be engaged in the process
- Provide hospitality
- Be mindful of the fact that families have busy lives – respect their time and be flexible
- Promote family catechesis as an intentional opportunity for parents and children to engage in meaningful reflection on their faith
- Ensure that activities, reflections and conversations engage parents as well as children in the learning process
- Invite and encourage grandparents to participate in family catechesis
- Encourage the catechist to talk about his or her faith

ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Engage children in learning opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to their lives
- Make use of digital resources – videos, music, games, etc.
- Give the children opportunities to be leaders – in group activities and in conversations with their parents
- Provide community building activities and reflect on them in relation to our call to be disciples: e.g., social justice projects, visits to nursing homes, lend-a-hand to a neighbour

ENGAGING THE BROADER PARISH FAITH COMMUNITY

- Invite members of the community to be catechists
- Include the parish community in ceremonies and celebrations that arise from family catechesis
- Offer opportunities for the community to support those engaged in family catechesis as prayer partners or by providing hospitality



RESOURCE BANK FOR CATECHISTS

CHURCH DOCUMENTS

[Catechesi Tradendae](#) (Catechesis In Our Time)

[General Directory for Catechesis](#)

[Familiaris Consortio](#) (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World)

[Evangelii Nuntiandi](#) (Evangelization in the Modern World)

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

[Evangelii Gaudium](#) (The Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World)

[Amoris Laetitia](#) (Love in the Family)

RESOURCES FOR FAMILY CATECHESIS

[Growing Up Catholic](#) (Family Catechesis Sessions)

[Growing Up Catholic: Whole Family Catechetical Planner](#) (The Pastoral Centre)

[The Pastoral Center](#) (Family Catechesis)

[Loyola Press](#) (Christ Our Life – Family Catechesis Resources)

[Our Sunday Visitor](#) (Lifelong Catechesis)

[Our Sunday Visitor](#) (Involving Families in Catechesis)

[Alive in Christ](#) (Our Sunday Visitor)

[Sadlier](#) (Implementing Alternative Models of Catholic Catechesis)

[Amoris Laetitia: A Reflection Guide](#) (Webcast Series, Office for Evangelization & Catechesis)

[Fashioning Faith](#) (Center for Ministry Development)

[Lifelong Faith](#) (Families at the Centre of Faith Formation)

[Office of Formation for Discipleship](#) (Archdiocese of Toronto)

[Joe Paprocki's Catechist's Journey: Sharing the Journey of Teaching the Catholic Faith](#) (Loyola Press)

[Moving to a Family Catechesis Model](#)

[Family Catechesis, Adult Faith Formation, and Combatting the "Drop-Off" Mentality](#)

[An Agenda for the Future of Faith Formation](#) (John Roberto)

[Team RCIA](#)

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FAMILY LIFE

[Catholic Organization for Life and Family \(COLF\)](#)

[Sunday Prayer for Catechists 2018-2019](#) (CCCB)

[Sunday Prayer for Teens 2018-2019](#) (CCCB)

[Celebrating Sunday for Catholic Families 2018-2019](#) (CCCB)

[Marriage Encounter](#) (Worldwide Marriage Encounter)

[Engaged Encounter](#) (Catholic Engaged Encounter)

[Couples for Christ Canada](#)

[Evango](#)