

Tasks of Catechesis

Education and formation require attention to the whole person. Faith formation must stretch beyond just the transmitting of information. We must seek to engage each person in their journey of discovering who Jesus Christ is and God's plan for their life. Assisting them to develop a habit of practicing the Faith and living it authentically is also important. The *General Directory for Catechesis* specifies the six tasks of catechesis:

1. **Promoting knowledge of the faith**
 - transmission of the Gospel message
 - experience of the Christian life
 - understanding of tradition and Creed
 - awareness of a personal relationship with God
2. **Liturgical education**
 - knowledge of the meaning of liturgy and sacraments
 - education in prayer
 - active participation in the Christian lifestyle
 - experience of different forms of celebration
3. **Moral formation**
 - conversion and interior transformation
 - Ten Commandments and Beatitudes
 - cultivation of Christian attitudes and values
 - social consequences of the Gospel
4. **Teaching to pray**
 - assuming an attitude of prayer and contemplation
 - the Our Father as the model of Christian prayer
5. **Education for community life**
 - attitude of simplicity, humility, forgiveness, and care for the poor and alienated
 - desire for Christian unity
 - ecumenical dimension of catechesis
6. **Missionary initiation**
 - Christian witness in society
 - service
 - vocation, especially to priesthood and consecrated life
 - interreligious dialogue

All of these tasks are interdependent and are necessary for the complete religious education and faith formation of the adolescent. When catechesis omits one of

these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development. (*General Directory for Catechesis* #87)

Outcomes for Adolescent Faith Formation*

The effectiveness of parish, school and family efforts in adolescent faith formation are hard to measure. Passing a test or increased mass attendance stops short of truly measuring the depth of one's faith. They are indicators, but they do not tell the whole story.

What, then are our goals in adolescent faith formation? How can we effectively measure whether what we are doing is effective? We can provide pre-tests and post-tests to measure if information was learned and we can integrate a variety of Christian practices into programs to introduce them to the young people and begin a habit of prayer, mass attendance, service, etc. However, when we see witnessing faith communities alive with young people who demonstrate their love for God and their Catholic faith we know that a commitment to the journey of discipleship is at work. We know something about the effectiveness of parish efforts in adolescent catechesis when young person's love for God is demonstrated by how they:

1. Sustain a personal relationship with Jesus Christ supported through regular prayer, faith sharing and scripture reading.
2. Share the Good News through words and actions, through Christian stewardship and working for peace, justice and human dignity.
3. Participate fully, consciously, actively and regularly in the celebrations of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church.
4. Articulate the fundamental teachings of the Catholic faith and demonstrating a commitment to learning and growing in this faith.
5. Apply Catholic ethics, virtues, principles, values and social teaching to moral decision- making, life situations, and in interactions with the larger culture.
6. Discern and use their gifts to actively belong to and participate in the life and mission of the parish, school, and larger community.
7. Celebrate cultural/racial and ethnic diversity as a gift from God, and pursuing the development of Christian community across cultural/racial and ethnic backgrounds in their parishes, schools, and broader communities.
8. Explore God's call to vocation through prayer, reflection, and discernment.

It should be these outcomes that we keep in mind when planning our programs. We must also keep the long-term in mind. Adolescence is but one of several stages of life along each Christian's journey of faith and we are one of many signposts along that path.

(*National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis www.adolescentcatechesis.org)