

Beginning the Conversation About Adult Faith Formation The Six Dimensions of Catechesis

Dimension One: Promoting Knowledge of the Faith

When people form friendships, those friendships go through stages of development, beginning with awareness (i.e.: seeing someone across a room) followed by making contact, and then small talk (superficial information). If we desire to pursue the relationship, we explore one another, revealing ever-deepening levels of information. In other words, we seek knowledge of the other person.

Adult faith formation begins with introducing people to Jesus Christ and inviting them to gradually deepen their relationship with him. Everything we need to know about Jesus has been revealed to the Church and the Church provides this knowledge found in **Sacred Scripture**, **Sacred Tradition**, and in the **Creed** and **doctrinal formulas**. The first task of catechesis, promoting knowledge of the faith, is designed to help Catholics know more about the greatest love of their life: Jesus Christ.

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What is our parish already doing to help adults deepen their knowledge of the faith (Scripture, Tradition, Creed, Doctrinal formulas)?

What can/should our parish be doing to help adults deepen their knowledge of the faith?

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Dimension Two: Deepen Understanding of the Church's Liturgical Life

As people deepen a relationship, they discover ways of expressing their affection for one another: words and gestures that outwardly express inward feelings. Handshakes, hugs, kisses, giving flowers, exchanging gifts, and intimate words and touch are all ways that relationships reach ever-deepening levels.

Adult faith formation seeks to equip people with a way to express our love for God and to recognize how God expresses his love for us using a language of mystery – a sacramental language. The second task of catechesis, deepening an understanding of the Church's liturgical life, is designed to help Catholics enter more deeply into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ through the sacramental life of the Church.

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What is our parish already doing to help adults deepen their understanding of the Church's liturgical life?

What can/should our parish be doing to help adults deepen their understanding of the Church's liturgical life?

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Dimension Three: Promote Moral Formation in Jesus Christ

As people enter more deeply into relationships, they establish boundaries – rules – which guide both parties in the relationship to behave in a way that shows love and respect. “Please don’t call me tootsie in front of my co-workers.” “I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tell your parents that you think I’m overweight.” Such rules enable us to avoid hurting the ones we love and guide us to show them the love we feel for them.

Our relationship with God is intimately entwined with love of our neighbors. In fact, love of God and love of neighbor cannot be separated. God gave us the Ten Commandments to guide us in our relationship with him and with one another. Jesus gave us the Beatitudes and the Great Commandment to show how to love one another selflessly as he did. The third task of catechesis – promoting moral formation in Jesus Christ – is not so much about correct behavior as it is about connected behavior.

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What is our parish already doing to help adults deepen their understanding of the Church’s moral life?

What can/should our parish be doing to help adults deepen their understanding of the Church’s moral life?

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Dimension Four: Develop a Life of Prayer

In order for any relationship to grow, it must rely on communication and closeness. Even when words are not spoken, it is important for people to be in and experience the presence of their beloved. Lack of communication or time together can strain a relationship and allow it to wither. It can also create a vacuum into which another may step in, thus damaging the first relationship.

Our relationship with God is nurtured and fostered by a life of prayer – a life of communication with the Lord and an ever-deepening awareness of God’s presence in every moment of our lives. The fourth task of catechesis – to develop a life of prayer – is the practice by which we raise our minds and hearts to God and seek to be ever aware of his presence in our lives and to respond to his ongoing invitation to be in intimate relationship with him.

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What is our parish already doing to help adults develop a life of prayer?

What can/should our parish be doing to help adults develop a life of prayer?

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Dimension Five: Promote Participation in the Life of the Community

Relationships are life-giving. From the love of a husband and wife comes a family. Love grows outward and seeks to be shared with others. Love compels us to form community where relationships are forged and flourish.

Adult Catholic faith is not a “me and God” experience but a “we and God” experience. A deeper relationship with God is manifested in a deeper participation in the life of the community. The fifth task of catechesis – promoting participation in the life and mission of the community – seeks to foster an outward movement.

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What is our parish already doing to help adults participate in the life and mission of the community?

What can/should our parish be doing to help adults participate in the life and mission of the community?

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Dimension Six: Cultivate a Missionary (evangelizing) Spirit

When we fall in love, get engaged, get married, have a baby, or become a grandparent, we can't wait to tell the whole world! We feel compelled to let others know about the love we have experienced. We want others to meet the new love of our life and to be touched by this love in some small way as we ourselves have been touched by it.

When we experience the love of God, we are compelled to tell others about it and to invite them to experience the same saving grace that we ourselves have experienced. The sixth task of catechesis – to help adults cultivate a missionary (evangelizing) spirit – is to awaken a desire in them to want to share the Good News of Jesus with others and to invite them share in it as well.

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What is our parish already doing to help adults cultivate a missionary spirit?

What can/should our parish be doing to help adults cultivate a missionary spirit?