

Appendix D: Catechetical Documents

ADULT CATECHESIS IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SOME PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CATECHESIS
EASTER 1990

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The International Council for Catechesis (COINCAT) took as the theme for its sixth plenary session, held in Rome October 23-29, 1988, the "Catechesis of Adults in the Christian Community".

The results of this session have been summarized in this document which, after being reviewed by the Congregation for the Clergy, of which COINCAT is a consultative body, is now being published under the sponsorship of COINCAT.

This document hopes to contribute to the efforts being made in the Christian communities spread throughout the world to promote adult catechesis, in keeping with the new evangelization" so often called for by Pope John Paul II.

With this purpose in mind, the suggestions made here, in keeping with the most important pronouncements of the Magisterium on this question, reflect the expertise of members of the various local Churches throughout the world. This has allowed a great variety of approaches to emerge, but it has also permitted the identification of certain principles and features common to every form of adult catechesis.

This contribution does not intend to be an exhaustive directory for adult catechesis or a practical program ready for implementation. Rather, it simply offers some guidelines which, arranged in a systematic and organic way, reflect a rich world of experiences. These reflections are

presented to pastoral workers and catechists in order to promote a deeper appreciation and implementation of adult catechesis.

In composing this document, the contributions of all the members of COINCAT were utilized, but the actual organization of the material and the writing of the text were the work of the Secretary General, who was assisted in this task by various experts.

May the Lord bless the service rendered by adult catechesis and grant His Church the grace to proclaim the Kingdom of God in ever more incisive ways through adult believers living in adult communities.

Easter 1990
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ABBREVIATIONS

AG Ad Gentes
CD Christus Dominus
Chr.L. Christifideles Laici
CT Catechesi Tradendae
EN Evangelii Nuntiandi
Gen.Cat.Dir. General Catechetical Directory
LG Lumen Gentium

INTRODUCTION

From the Perspective of the Kingdom

1. What comparison shall we use for the reign of God? What image will help to present it? It is like a mustard seed which, when planted in the soil, is

the smallest of all the earth's seeds, yet once it is sown, springs up to become the largest of shrubs, with branches big enough for the birds of the sky to build nests in its shade" (Mk 4, 30-32).

This parable of Jesus sums up nicely for our time the dynamism of faith which is evident among people of all ages. In a particular way, through the proclamation of the Word, which in the beginning is humble and often arduous, adults receive the grace to become a living part of the Kingdom of God, are able to recognize their Lord and Saviour and become witnesses to Him among their brothers and sisters in the world.

This parable therefore captures succinctly the fundamental traits of adult catechesis: its ultimate and radical purpose (the definitive coming of the Kingdom), the completely transcendent power which sustains it, the collaboration to which adults are necessarily called, and its extraordinarily positive impact on adults and on others.

2. Jesus said, 'Only one is your Master and you are all brothers' (Mt 23, 8). We recognize Jesus today as He was in his own time, as one who approaches every kind of person women and men, the small and the great, the good and the evil, the poor and the rich in order to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom with truth, simplicity and love. In Him every adult finds the "Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14, 6). The catechesis of adults, therefore, draws its own inspiration, courage and joy from the Gospel of Jesus.

3. The consciousness of just how complex the world is in which we live requires humility and realism on the part of pastoral workers and leads them to be ever attentive, in the proclamation of the Christian message, to the real conditions in which people live. This sensitivity helps to overcome the distance between Church and society, between faith and culture, which is an important issue in dealing with adults. This means that adult catechesis, in pursuing its goals, must clearly discern the problems and

expectations of people today and be alert to the positive elements in their situation which are emerging. With evangelical forthrightness, It must be able to show why the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus offers light and hope.

In the footsteps of the council

4. The Magisterium of the Church, imbued with the spirit of renewal of the Second Vatican Council (cf. CD 14; AG 14) has constantly affirmed with authority, clarity and insistence, the centrality and importance of the catechesis of adults.

John Paul II states "one of the constant concerns whose urgency is confirmed by present day experience throughout the world, is the catechesis of adults. This is the principal form of catechesis because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibility and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form" (CT 43).

5. It is certainly a gift of the Holy Spirit to witness in these years after the Council the development of initiatives on behalf of a new catechesis of adults in the local Churches throughout the world. This is manifested in pastoral letters, reflections and programs offered by experts and study centers, the implementation of the RCIA (the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) and a wide variety of other pastoral initiatives, all sustained by a truly ecclesial and missionary spirit.

In this spring of the catechesis of adults, the most notable developments in the various local Churches are the growth in the number of lay catechists, both women and men, and the fruitful and original activity of new groups, movements and associations.

In this context of hope, the same Spirit makes us all the more painfully aware of the limits and difficulties with which we are faced: the many adults who are not reached by any kind of

catechesis, Christian communities lacking in missionary spirit, pastoral workers not sufficiently motivated by a sense of pastoral love and patience, an inadequate catechesis which too often is not integrated into broader program of evangelization, and the lack in number and in preparation of catechists.

6. For this reason the Church makes a renewed call to all those most directly involved in the faith education of its members to increase their efforts to find new ways to reach those adults who have not been touched by the message of Christ, or who having been evangelized, have left the Church.

Responding to this call, the International Council for Catechesis, a consultative body of the Congregation for the Clergy, made a special study of adult catechesis during its 1988 session. As a result, the present document was elaborated, based on the experience of its members, clerical, religious, lay men and women, who come from various regions of the world and represent different races and cultures.

The purpose and audience of this document

7. The present document intends to highlight only the most significant aspects of the catechesis of adults. It touches on common issues, common problems and probable solutions, which seem prevalent throughout the world, fully recognizing that inculturation will have to be made in the local Churches.

This document wishes therefore to stimulate a spirit of communion and solidarity with others, by encouraging the sharing of insights and resources necessary for carrying out the catechesis of adults.

8. This document is addressed to the whole People of God, gathered in the diverse Christian communities throughout the world, under the guidance of their Pastors.

In a more direct way it has in mind those lay catechists who are already engaged in the catechesis of adults or who are preparing themselves for this service.

They are living proof of the action of the Spirit who in every community continues to call forth people who make themselves available to accompany their brothers and sisters on their faith journey.

9. Certain elements in the Gospel Parable of the Sower provide a fitting way for articulating the three parts of this document:

- the "different kinds of terrain" on which the seed falls, i.e. the present situation and the signs of the presence and growth of adults in today's Church;
- the "seed" of the Word which is communicated by means of the catechesis of adults, together with the profound reasons which motivate its communication and the principles which govern it;
- the process of "sowing and reaping", in which some guidelines are offered for concrete action.

PART ONE - THE ADULTS TO WHOM CATECHESIS IS DIRECTED

10. To become an adult and to live as an adult is a vocation given by God to human beings, as illustrated in the very first pages of the Bible (cf Gen 1, 27-28 ; 2, 15). This vocation finds its most perfect model in Jesus of Nazareth who "was almost thirty when He began His ministry" (Lk 3, 23) of proclaiming the Kingdom. To grow' into and draw near to Him, the Perfect Man (cf. Eph 4, 13-13) becomes accordingly a grace and a task for every creature.

But how does this actually take place? What "lights" and "shadows", in the world and in the Church, characterize the human and Christian growth of adults?

In the World

11. Our attention is drawn right away to the difficulties and sufferings which weigh heavily on so many adults, including Christians, both men and women. Among these we would like to single out the insufficient and disproportionate means for self-development (humanization): lack of respect for the basic rights to Freedom, 'among which religious freedom occupies a place of primary importance" (EN 39), as well as the right to follow one's own conscience and the right to personal dignity, especially with respect to the poor: and the obstacles to carrying out one's responsibilities to society and the family.

The causes of these evils are multiple and complex, and from time to time must be investigated. Generally speaking, we can point to the enormous disproportion in the distribution of the world's goods, the diminished regard for the family, the insufficient appreciation of women, lack of work, racial discrimination, the lack of access to culture, the incapacity or impossibility on the part of the masses to participate in public decision making.

These distortions gravely deform the image of God which men and women, precisely as adults, are called to reflect and fully enjoy (Gen 1, 26-27).

12. At the same time, we are witnessing an awakening of the individual and collective consciousness with respect to personal dignity, mutual interdependence and communion, and the need to stand in solidarity with the weak and the poor.

Furthermore, respect for and interest in religion and spiritual values are on the rise among adults, who regard religion as a source from which their lives draw new strength. The awareness that the earth is a gift from God, which must be respected and protected from all forms of pollution, is also gaining ground.

Civil institutions, for their part, have in some places made a serious attempt to protect the rights and the freedom of individuals. They help adults to carry out their responsibilities through programs of continuing education, which extend up through old age.

IN THE CHURCH

13. The Church, which lives in the midst of the human family and is engaged like its Founder in the service of people, contributes to humanity by proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God in Jesus the Saviour. In bringing about an ever more just and more fraternal human family, the Good News proclaimed by Jesus is indispensable.

Faithful to this task, the Church, which is always open to the contributions of human experience and science, regards adult catechesis as the path to follow as a disciple of Christ, a path that is incarnate in the concrete situations of life.

Thus, it is necessary at the start to recognize the various conditionings and challenges in the ecclesial communities that have the greatest influence on the growth of adults as Christians.

Conditionings and challenges

14. "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" asked the Lord of the vineyard to the men who had been standing around all day. "No one has hired us," they told him. He answered them, "You go to the vineyard too" (Mt 20, 6-7).

In the parable of Jesus, which expresses the universal invitation to the Kingdom of God, we recognize the positive response of many, but we cannot overlook those—and they are the majority who have not heard the invitation, or have forgotten it, or for various reasons cannot come to terms with it.

This is the actual situation, full of both serious drawbacks and positive opportunities, of accomplishments and expectations, which the Church has to take into account when proposing the Gospel to adults.

15. On the economic-social level, large numbers of believers do not have access to religious formation through catechesis because of a relentless underdevelopment which, in fact, prevents the poor from being evangelized (Lk 4, 18), though this is their sacred right.

One could add here the migrations of whole peoples going on at present. Uprooted and displaced from their homelands, they are deprived of the basic need of security and stability.

16. On the social-cultural level, in light of the determining influence of culture in all its various expressions, a number of important factors which have a decisive impact should be noted:

a) With the growth and expansion of the process of secularization, the very possibility of catechesis is put in crisis, particularly among adults, because of the great changes in culture and customs which have had significant repercussions, at least in the recent past, on the organization of life and the availability of time.

Much has also been said about the spiritual difficulties which adults have to face, such as the absence of human and religious certitudes, the loss of individual and collective identity, and the burden of loneliness.

b) Adults who are fervent in their faith sometimes find themselves in countries where the number of believers is small and resources are lacking, and where, on the other hand, other great religions or value systems exercise the predominant influence, which is not infrequently hostile to Christians. Under these circumstances, catechesis encounters great difficulties in

reconciling an authentic and original faith journey with the legitimate local culture.

It should also be remembered that in certain countries, because of the reigning ideology, religious gatherings are forbidden or prevented and pastoral and catechetical services in public places are seriously obstructed.

c) Everywhere, technological development applied to the problems of life and exacerbated beyond all bounds by the media, poses new problems, particularly for adults, which the Christian faith must address.

This challenge requires a new way of formulating and resolving the perennial problems, such as the meaning and value of life, the destiny of human beings and the world, living together with others, the relationship between faith and the moral life, and the primacy of religious and spiritual values.

17. On the level of the ecclesial communities, it would be an oversight not to acknowledge the vigor of the Gospel seed in the realization of adult catechesis in the context of parishes, families, movements and groups, and in many other situations which will be discussed in Part Three.

Indeed, in taking to heart the invitation of Jesus, "Open your eyes and see! The fields are shining for harvest!" (Jn 4, 35), our attention is focused on what it is possible to accomplish in the catechesis of adults.

There are, in fact, a number of identifiable needs which require a new approach in adult catechesis. These needs can only be met within the context of an adult Christian community.

There is a great need for:

a) a more adequate language of faith, which will be comprehensible to adults at all levels, from those who are illiterate or quasi-literate to those who are highly educated; unless this language is

addressed to them, they will feel alienated from the Church and perceive catechesis as irrelevant;

b) more accessible places where un-churched adults will feel welcomed, and where adults who have gone through their catechumenate or some other form of initiation can continue their faith journey in a Christian community;

c) a wider variety of catechetical models responding to the local and cultural needs of the people;

d) the popular religiosity of the people, both in its content and expression, to be taken seriously; the aspects which reflect the Gospel should be prudently incorporated in catechesis;

e) a more consistent effort to reach out to all adults, especially those who are un-churched, alienated or marginated, responding to their needs, so as to counteract the widespread proselytizing by sects;

f) a more visible expression of sensitivity, availability and openness on the part of clergy and Church institutions toward adults, their problems and their need for catechesis.

18. By way of conclusion to this analysis and with a view to what follows, we can group the adults who need catechesis into the following categories, keeping in mind *Catechesi Tradendae* 44:

- adults in places which have become dechristianized, who have not been able to deepen their knowledge of the Gospel message;

- adults who were catechized beginning in childhood, but who have fallen away from the faith;

- adults who have benefited little from catechesis, either because they absorbed little or were incorrectly catechized;

- adults who were baptized as children but were not subsequently catechized, and who find themselves as adults, to a certain extent, in the situation of catechumens.

PART TWO – MOTIVATIONS, CRITERIA AND OTHER POINTS OF REFERENCE FOR ADULT CATECHESIS

19. "If one of you decides to build a tower, will he not first sit down and calculate the outlay to see if he has enough money to complete the project?" (Lk 14, 28).

In the exhortation of the Master to acquire the evangelical wisdom needed for every undertaking on behalf of the Kingdom of God, we are invited to recognize and state the fundamental reasons for adult catechesis in the Church, all the more so as its importance becomes recognized.

Motivations

20. Theological-pastoral reflection proposes a number of different, complementary motives for catechesis: some in relationship to the faith life of the adult as such; others in relationship to the adult's public role in society and in ecclesial communities; and finally those which outrank the others in importance because they aim at the greater glory of God and the good of the Church.

21. Adults in the Church, that is, all Christians men and women, lay people, priests and religious are people who have a right and an obligation to be catechized, just like everyone else (CT, c. V; can. 217, 774; Chr. L. 34).

This reason does not derive from any kind of service which the adult Christian is called to render. It springs instead directly from the "seed" of faith planted within and which hopes to mature as the adult grows in age and responsibility. "When I was a child I used to talk like a child, think

like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man I put childish ways aside" (1 Cor 13, 11).

Only by becoming an adult in the faith is one able to fulfill his or her adult duties toward others, as is required by the vocation given to each at baptism.

One must admit that in various communities, the formation of adults has been taken for granted or perhaps carried out in connection with certain events, not infrequently in an infantile way. Because certain external or traditional supports are sometimes lacking, a grave imbalance is created insofar as catechesis has devoted considerable attention to children while the same has not happened in the catechesis of young people and adults.

22. The need for personal formation is necessarily bound up with the role which adults assume in public life. They share with all Christians the task of witnessing to the Gospel in words and deeds, but they do this with undeniable authority and in a specifically adult way. This is true in the family context in which many adults, precisely as parents or other relatives, become both by nature and grace the first and indispensable catechists of their children. Adults also serve as role models for young people who need to be confronted with and challenged by the faith of adults.

In the context of society, the role of adults is crucial in the workplace and in the academic, professional, civil, economic, political and cultural spheres, and wherever responsibility and power are exercised. This is the case because the believing adult is so often the only one who can introduce the leaven of the Kingdom, express the novelty and beauty of the Gospel, and demonstrate the will for change and liberation desired by Jesus Christ.

The simple, faith-filled actions by which adults give witness to the Gospel in these situations require a great effort on their part to inwardly

appropriate what they are called to pass on to others in a convincing and credible way.

23. This missionary task assumes greater weight in the context of the Christian community, which is called to acquire an adult faith.

It will be helpful to recall that this necessarily involves the intelligent and harmonious collaboration of all those who make up the Church, from children and young people to adults and the elderly.

In this context of communion, adults are asked in a special way to commit themselves to the catechetical service and, in a broader sense, the pastoral care of their brothers and sisters, both the little ones and grown-ups, always keeping in mind the different situations, problems and difficulties with which they are confronted.

It is not difficult to imagine what level of competence—and hence of previous formation—is required of adults in such a complex world, which is at one and the same time open to and wary of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

24. A number of other motivations of a pedagogical-pastoral nature could be added. The most eminent and radical reason which

socio-religious, psychological and But all motivations converge on is the basis of their validity and meaning. This is the reason which derives from the order of faith: the glory of God, the building of the Kingdom and the good of the Church. Indeed, God is fittingly honoured by the person who is fully alive, and all the more so if the person is a mature adult. The Kingdom of God, like the seed in the field, grows above all through the activity of its adult members.

The Church herself, as well as every form of catechesis, are enriched by the charism of maturity and wisdom which comes from adults, and in this way the Church is helped in the effort

of understanding the truth which is in gestation among the People of God.

A great number of adults, women and men, have offered a brilliant example of the contribution adults make when they collaborate with God in shaping the history of salvation, both in the constitutive period of the Bible and in the time of the Church, which actualizes Christ's salvation in her life.

25. In summary, in order for the Good News of the Kingdom to penetrate all the various layers of the human family, it is crucial that every Christian play an active part in the coming of the Kingdom. The work of each will be coordinated with and complementary to the contribution of everyone else, according to the different degrees of responsibility each one has. All of this naturally requires adults to play a primary role. Hence, it is not only legitimate, but necessary, to acknowledge that a fully Christian community can exist only when a systematic catechesis of all its members takes place and when an effective and well-developed catechesis of adults is regarded as the central task in the catechetical enterprise.

BASIC CRITERIA

In light of the motivations which we have just set forth, it will be possible to identify some criteria which support an effective and valid catechesis of adults.

We will single out five particularly important criteria, whose application in practice will be taken up in Part Three.

26. A catechesis of adults will be acutely sensitive to men and women insofar as they are adults. It will approach them in their adult situation, which is for the most part the lay state, and will be attentive to their problems and experiences. It will make use of their spiritual and cultural resources, always respecting the differences among them. Finally, adult catechesis will stimulate the active

collaboration of adults in the catechesis which involves them.

27. This implies, as a second criterion, that the catechesis of adults is realized with full recognition and appreciation of the "secular character which is proper and peculiar to the laity", which qualifies them "to seek the Reign of God in temporal affairs, putting them into relationship with God" (LG 31).

In this regard, it is worth remembering what the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and later, in the same words, *Christifideles Laici*, described as the responsibilities of the Christian laity: "Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities, which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, and suffering. The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often repressed and buried, the more these realities will be at the service of the Kingdom of God and therefore at the service of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded" (EN 70; Chr. L. 23).

28. One of the most valid criteria in the process of adult catechesis, but which is often overlooked, is the involvement of the community which welcomes and sustains adults. Adults do not grow in faith primarily by learning concepts, but by sharing the life of the Christian community, of which adults are members who both give and receive from the community.

29. The catechesis of adults, therefore, can bear fruit only within the overall pastoral plan of the

local Church communities. It must have its own distinctive place in the whole, since it aims at making adults constructive participants in the life and mission of the community.

This implies two fundamental principles operative in all forms of adult catechesis:

Even considering the autonomy of the process of adult catechesis, we must keep in mind that it must be integrated with liturgical formation and formation in Christian service.

Adult catechesis cannot be conducted to the exclusion or slighting of catechesis for other age groups. When coordinated with them, it becomes the catechesis of Christian maturity and the goal of other kinds of catechesis.

By reason of its special position and the contribution it makes to the growth of the whole community's faith journey, the catechesis of adults must be regarded as a preferential option.

30. Finally, following the example of Jesus, who taught the people "the message in a way they could understand" (Mk 4, 33), the catechesis of adults must recall in a particular way the responsibility of the local Churches, on the one hand, to remain united with the whole People of God, on the basis of the unique Gospel message authentically proclaimed in all its integrity and, on the other hand, to reflect on their own local situations in order to adapt the presentation of the message of salvation to the needs of the people.

The wisdom that is the fruit of experience, prayer and study will guide catechists to maintain a balance between making all the necessary adaptations and being faithful to what constitutes the common heritage of catechesis.

Points of reference

31. Attempting to define adulthood in an univocal way is quite complex, given the number of factors

at play in different, complementary interpretations. The contributions of the psychological, social and pedagogical sciences must all be carefully considered, although always directly in rapport with the specific life context, in which the ethnic, cultural and religious factors peculiar to that environment play a significant role.

Particularly today, it is essential to keep in mind the relationship between the young generation and that of adults, since the two groups influence and condition each other in a wide variety of ways.

To respect the "mystery of adulthood" and to organize well all forms of pastoral service for adults means keeping in mind all these factors and the very diverse ways of speaking about and being an adult.

32. It is not at all easy, from a practical viewpoint, to provide a precise and uniform definition of the catechesis of adults. The reasons and criteria for its significance and necessity have already been pointed out. There are differences over the best way to put adult catechesis into practice, with respect to the scope of the subject matter, the length of time needed, and the most suitable arrangement of the material for a given audience. Here, in light of recent Church documents, we understand catechesis as one moment in the total process of evangelization (EN 17; CT 18).

The specific role of the catechesis of adults consists in an initial deepening of the faith received at baptism, in an elementary, complete and systematic way (CT 21), with a view to helping individuals all life long grow to the full maturity of Christ (cf. Eph 4, 13).

Catechesis per se has to be distinguished therefore from other activities, even though it cannot be separated from them:

- it is different from evangelization, which is the proclamation of the Gospel for the first time to

those who have not heard it, or the re-evangelization of those who have forgotten it;

- it is different from formal religious education, which goes beyond the basic elements of faith in more systematic and specialized courses;

- it is also different from those informal occasions for faith awareness in God's presence, which arise in fragmentary and incidental ways in the daily life of adults.

At the same time, adult catechesis remains closely related to all the above aspects of faith development:

- it makes explicit in the life of adults the reality of God's message (kerygma), taking into consideration concrete human situations, and "translating" it into the cultural language of the people;

- it goes to the core of the doctrinal content of our Catholic faith, presenting the fundamental beliefs of the creed in a way that relates to the life experience of people, instilling in them a faith mentality;

- it calls for a structured and organized, though perhaps very elementary, faith journey, which is expressed and sustained by listening to the Word of God, by celebration (liturgy), by charitable service (diakonia), and by a forthright witness in the various situations in which adults find themselves.

PART THREE GUIDELINES PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

33. The common operative features of adult catechesis are presented here according to the four most important areas:

— the qualities of the adult Christian, which constitute the objective of catechesis and

determine its content as well as certain constant factors in the way it is presented;

— the process involved in adult catechesis, with special reference to its methodological principles, forms and models;

— catechists of adults and their formation;

— those responsible for adult catechesis in the community.

Qualities of the Christian adult in the faith

34. St. Paul admonishes the Christians of Ephesus in a fatherly way "to be children no longer, tossed here and there". As he goes on to explain, this is because it is our vocation to become the "perfect man," worthy of the infinite riches of Christ, who fills the universe (cf. Eph 4, 13-14; 1, 23; 3, 8).

The ultimate and unifying goal of adult catechesis is to help the mature Christian to live as an adult by acquiring certain qualities. These qualities can be grouped around three major goals, which are in turn rooted in a common vision and then articulated in certain objectives and specified in content.

a) Goals

35. Everywhere in the Church, the need to build adult Christian communities has been noticed. These communities must express a clear faith identity and must be centered on a clear proclamation of the Gospel, a meaningful celebration of the liturgy and a courageous witness in charity.

All catechesis must be directed to this goal, beginning with the catechesis of little children. Obviously, in the catechesis of adults the effects are more immediate and incisive.

Only in this way can we create convincing signs and effective conditions for an adherence to the faith which is stable and fruitful.

36. "The Reign of God is at hand. Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel!" (Mk 1, 15).

These words of Jesus establish the first and enduring goal of anyone who wishes to be one of his mature disciples: to acquire an attitude of conversion to the Lord.

The catechesis of adults promotes an openness of the heart to the mystery of the Lord's greatness and grace by encouraging sincere reconciliation with the Lord and with one's brothers and sisters. Adults are led to recognize and accept the Lord's call and His salvific plan by living a life which is pleasing to God and which aims at holiness (cfr. Chr. L. 16-17). Adult catechesis is an invitation to faithfully practice the discipleship of Jesus and to judge all personal, social and spiritual experiences in the light of faith.

37. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2, 42).

The conversion to the Lord at baptism leads to membership in a community whose way of life as disciples of Christ is shared by all. The catechesis of adults aims at bringing to fruition a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through membership in the Christian community. Adults who are mature in the faith understand what it means to be in communion with others and accept their coresponsibility for the community's mission and internal life.

38. "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world. In the same way, your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly father" (Mt 5, 13-16).

Recognizing the strong commitment to the new evangelization to which the Spirit is calling the Church today everywhere in the world, adult catechesis gives a missionary purpose to those tasks for which it is responsible.

Adult catechesis makes one more willing and able to be a Christian disciple in the world in that it helps to differentiate between good and evil, especially in the most significant expressions of one's culture, and to recognize and accept "all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, admirable, decent, virtuous, or worthy of praise" (Phil 4, 8). Adult catechesis also draws others into one's faith-working-in-love (Gal 5, 6), and provides reasons for the hope that one has (1 Pet 3, 15). It knows how to come to terms with the longings for liberation and salvation of people in every age, especially the poor, and then it takes effective steps in favor of the transformation of family, social and professional life in the light of the Gospel.

In this way, a harmonious and vital synthesis of the essential characteristics of the Christian, appropriate for adults, is being brought about. These characteristics are an obedient listening to the Word of God, communion with the faith community, and the service of charity and witness in the world.

b) Objectives

The goals which have been mentioned can be attained through objectives which specify more concretely the catechetical journey.

Recalling that the catechetical apostolate aims at active participation in the life and mission of the Church, including direct participation in the pastoral programs of the Church, we propose the following objectives to be of particular relevance and universal application.

39. A basic understanding of the Church's faith, presented in a sufficiently organic way together with the reasons for believing. It should be drawn

directly from the sources of Revelation; that is, the Bible, the Liturgy, the Fathers, the Magisterium of the Church, other great documents of the Tradition, and the experience of Christian living in the ecclesial communities.

40. An appropriate assimilation of the theological and cultural heritage in which faith is expressed. This implies a knowledge of the major religious signs and symbols of faith, the role and use of the Bible, a grasp of the significance and practice of liturgical and private prayer, and an awareness of the impact of religious belief on culture and its institutions.

41. The capacity of Christian discernment in various situations, particularly regarding ethical principles which bear on human life and dignity and which have to do with respect for justice and the cause of the weak and the poor. Always in a spirit of respect for others, one also needs to develop a critical sense in the face of other religions or ways of life which people find meaningful.

42. Finally, the acquisition of those skills and abilities which allow the adult believer to carry out his Christian witness in the most diverse circumstances, in the community and in society.

c) Contents

The contents of adult catechesis must be as comprehensive and exhaustive as possible. It is important to adapt the didactic methodology employed to the situations and needs of any given audience. Corresponding to the objectives indicated and the major common needs of adult believers today, these are the basic components of adult catechesis:

43. Catechesis has to present in a comprehensive and systematic way the great themes of the Christian religion which involve faith and reasons for believing: the mystery of God and the Trinity, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, human life

and ethical principles, eschatological realities, and other contemporary themes in religion and morality. It will respect the hierarchy of truths and their interrelationship.

44. In the context of a more than ever complex and pluralistic society, particular importance will be attached to a knowledge of the truths of the Gospel, and to the Church's duty to enlighten and educate the moral conscience. Catechesis presents the ethical implications of the Christian vision for major problems which emerge in personal and collective situations, such as the dignity of every person, the inviolable right to life, the transmission and protection of human life, the promotion of social justice, solidarity and peace. as well as concern for the poor, the powerless and the forgotten (Chr. L. 37-4 1).

45. Catechesis must lead to a knowledge and evaluation, in the light of faith, of the socio-cultural order and of the changes that are taking place in the world today and in the life of individuals, affirming what is good but also pointing out what is harmful and contrary to the Gospel. It has to clarify the distinction between action in the temporal order and in the ecclesial order, between political commitment and the commitment to evangelization, while drawing attention to the various ways they can influence one another (Gen. Cat. Dir. 97 Chr. L. 42-43).

46. To help bring adults to completeness and full maturity in their knowledge of the Christian faith, catechesis must include an introduction to the reading and use of Sacred Scripture, both private and communal, as well as the most important expressions of liturgy and prayer. It would also be most useful if catechesis presented the major moments in the history of the Church, both universal and local, as well as the principal documents of the Church's Magisterium, especially regarding social doctrine.

47. "All the people made a great feast for they had understood the meaning of the words they heard"

(Neb 8, 12). These words describe the joy the people experienced when, after returning from exile, they were able to understand the Scriptures. Later, Jesus and the apostles imparted their message in an exemplary way so that the people could understand (Mk 4, 33; 1 Cor 14, 19). Hence, we should consider it the Lord's will that in teaching the faith, we present it in a readily understandable way.

The contents of adult catechesis are offered to men and women of every social and cultural background as the nourishing and satisfying bread of life so that, filled with divine wisdom, they might radiate this wisdom in all areas of life.

These considerations allow us to identify certain principles which govern the presentation of content and which concretize the basic criteria enunciated above (nn. 26-30).

48. In the presentation of the Christian religion, catechesis must deal with the many questions, difficulties and doubts which arise in the human heart. Indeed, these questions should be brought to light when they have been obscured or confused by ignorance or indifference. The faith response to these questions will appear meaningful if it is rooted in the Bible and in concrete historical life, and if it is respectful of reason and attentive to the signs of the times.

49. Precisely because the principal content of adult catechesis is the revelation of the living God who saves human beings and helps them to realize their full potential, this catechesis must be dynamic and relevant so that adults, to their own satisfaction, can become gradually more aware of their value and dignity as human beings, as a result of a careful and stimulating exposition of the great truths of faith.

50. Conscious of how secularized and pluralistic the world of the adult can be, the catechesis of adults seeks to provide solid formation in a spirituality suitable for the Christian laity (cf. n.

27). The special tasks of the Christian lay person in the Church and in society, which vary according to the widely different situations in which adults find themselves, should be given a prominent place in the formation program. Special attention should be reserved for teaching adults how to pray.

51. Catechesis of adults must encourage an ecumenical outlook (CT 32-34). It must be open to confronting and entering into dialogue with the great religions and with those attitudes, theories and practices which constantly seek to attract adults. "The catechesis of adults will be surer of success when it is open to the encounter between faith, culture and science, in which an attempt is made to integrate them with one another while respecting the specific identity of each" (John Paul II, Discourse to the members of COINCAT, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 30 Oct. 1988, p. 4).

Hence, whatever knowledge and methodologies allow a more adequate reading of historical, social and religious phenomena, both in their negative and positive aspects, have a right to a place in adult catechesis. With their help, catechesis will be able to provide a more enlightened Christian interpretation of reality.

52. Since the constructive contribution of adults in giving witness to their faith in the family and in many other areas of life is clearly recognized, catechesis must help adults to learn not only for themselves, but should prepare them to communicate the contents of faith to others. They can make an important contribution in showing other adults what an impact the faith can have on their lives and on the world around them. In a particular way, they have a responsibility for the disadvantaged, especially the poor and marginalized, and all who find themselves in especially trying circumstances.

53. Finally, as an underpinning for the needs just mentioned, the communitarian dimension of the contents of faith will be thoroughly developed. In this way, adults will come to know and experience

the "mystery of the Church", which is incarnate in a particular community and history and which is characterized by particular needs, initiatives and pace of life. Catechesis will help adults see how they can fit in and participate in the life of the Church.

Methodological considerations

54. The widely varying kinds of adults and life circumstances which adult catechesis must take into consideration make it impossible to provide a catalogue of fixed norms applicable to every program of adult catechesis. Nevertheless, the results of our reflection on adult catechesis permit us to identify several reference points which are valid for all situations. These common features apply to the recipients of catechesis, organizational principles, and the forms and models of catechesis.

a) The Recipients of Catechesis

We have repeatedly stressed that the adult formation process has its own particular characteristics. A central feature is the establishment of a friendly and dialogical rapport. This means that the didactic moment must be integrated into a broader and more elaborate faith journey, of which we would like to point out a number of aspects.

55. There are certain special categories which deserve attention because of their intrinsic value, both from a merely human as well as an evangelical perspective. Here we have in mind those whose need for the consolation of the Christian message is all the greater because of the intensity of their isolation and suffering. These include the disabled, the elderly, the sick, and all who find themselves on the fringes of society (refugees, immigrants, nomads and prisoners). The possibility of their involvement in the Christian community is often underestimated and unappreciated. With the solicitude of Christ,

catechesis will also show special concern for those living in irregular situations.

56. Above all, one must begin by accepting adults where they are. To make more explicit what was said in n. 26, it is essential to keep in mind the specific adults with whom one is working, their cultural background, human and religious needs, their expectations, faith experiences, and their potential. It is also important to be attentive to their marital and professional status.

Individual groups should be as homogeneous as possible so that their participants will benefit from their experience.

57. Of fundamental importance is the dialogical approach which, while recognizing that all are called to the obedience of faith (Rm 1, 5), respects the basic freedom and autonomy of adults and encourages them to engage in an open and cordial dialogue. In this way, they can make known their needs and can participate, as they should, as subjects or agents in their own catechesis and in that of others.

58. On a more practical level, to maintain a good relationship with adults, their catechesis must include a clear witness to the Christian life and must focus on the essential issues, as it seeks to express itself in a solid and convincing way. Moreover, the truths of faith should be presented as certitudes, without taking away from the fact that for pilgrims on their way toward the full revelation of truth and life, the path of research and investigation always remains open.

b) Organizational Principles

59. Practically speaking, under the term "adult catechesis" a variety of programs can be grouped. Some are traditional; others are new. They can be structured or more spontaneous, permanent or temporary, widely used or restricted in number and frequency.

One often has the impression that there is a wealth of initiatives, which however are wasteful of resources and badly organized, and do not match the sort of catechesis outlined so far.

To guarantee an effective catechetical program, the interaction of a number of factors, assisted by God's grace, is necessary: a good pastoral plan, the participation of the Christian community, the creation of positive experiences.

Moreover, in order for this interaction to work, catechesis must have an organic development and cannot be merely episodic. To this end, every program or journey must be systematic and organic, and structured around precise goals. It must ensure continuity in regularly scheduled meetings and must be clear about what is to be accomplished, even in only occasional or one-time programs.

In order to ensure unity in faith and life, when there are a number of different catechetical programs within the same community, all the programs need to contain certain common elements; namely, communion centered on the word, participation in the liturgy, charitable service, and attentiveness to the Church's life.

60. Certain forms of adult catechesis seem particularly suitable because of the impact they have and should therefore not be neglected. Among these are programs aimed at families (parents, couples ...). student groups, parish organizations or other associations, and groups which gather on the occasion of a significant event (preparation for the sacraments, funerals, community celebrations, popular feast days, etc.).

61. The parish has "the essential task of a more personal and immediate formation of the lay faithful" (Chr. L. 61).

Since it is in a position to reach out to individual persons and groups, it is the "privileged place" where "catechesis is realized not only through formal instruction, but also in the liturgy,

sacraments and charitable activity" (John Paul II, Discourse to the members of COINCAT; cf. Chr. L. 26-27; 61). Catechesis allows adults to have "a more direct and concrete perception of the sense of ecclesial communion and responsibility in the Church's mission" (Chr. L. 61).

A typical pattern for adult catechesis is the structuring of programs in certain clearly defined periods of time, particularly during the important seasons of Advent and Lent. In this way, catechesis recognizes the true value of the liturgical year, which is an important element in the Church's educational process.

62. In various places, small communities of adults (basic Christian communities) have emerged. Here the members carry out catechesis through praying and reflecting together on the Word of God. They strive to discover the relevance of the Word for their everyday life and particularly for their society, to whose service they have lovingly and generously dedicated themselves.

Organized by good leaders who are in harmony with the local Church, these communities can be a powerful and effective way by which adults can bring the Gospel to the world, as the leaven of holiness and liberation.

63. As for the kinds of catechesis carried out by the various movements and associations, a plurality of approaches is legitimate. Their programs offer "... the possibility, each with its own method, of offering a formation through a deeply shared experience in the apostolic life ..." (Chr. L. 62). Yet no movement should consider itself the only valid one and, above all, none should forget the principles of ecclesial communion (Chr. L. 30). As an act of the Church, catechesis must everywhere express the fullness of the Christian faith and should be in the service of ecclesial communion. It is important to keep in mind the great majority of the People of God who do not belong to any movement.

In light of the tremendous spiritual and apostolic impact which the movements have had, it is appropriate to inform adults about them and encourage their participation.

64. Undoubtedly a useful instrument for imparting a knowledge of the faith and for maintaining communion in the faith are adult catechisms, approved by the proper ecclesiastical authority (cf. can. 775, §§ 1-2). In conjunction with them, the resources of the sciences of communications and language should be utilized in order to communicate the Christian message with greater facility and effectiveness. We can never recall too often that "the language used must elicit the attention and interest of modern adults. The best forms of communication for reaching them, including signs, gestures and symbols, must be employed" (John Paul II, Discourse to the members of COINCAT).

65. The mass media, when used skillfully, are effective means of adult catechesis. The most prominent means of social communication are the press, radio and television, but videotapes, audiotapes, films, comic books, and other forms of the "minimedia" are also useful.

Professional Catholic lay people should be encouraged by all means to serve in news agencies and production centers, especially when these belong to the Church. They should strive to produce high quality resource materials.

c) Models and Itineraries

In recent times, various models have been proposed for adult catechesis, some of which transcend parish boundaries and may even have an international character. It has been said that the various itineraries are tailored to the spiritual condition of adults.

To assist the implementation of the various models, some clarifications and suggestions are in order.

66. The Synod of 1977 affirmed that "the model of all catechesis" is the catechumenate which culminates in baptism (Synod Message 8; cf. EN 44. Chr. L. 61). According to ancient tradition, every form of catechesis should be inspired by the catechumenal model. Precisely because the catechesis of adults aims at living the Christian life in all its fullness and integrity, the process outlined in the catechumenate seems the most appropriate model and should be encouraged everywhere, though it cannot be considered the exclusive model.

67. In the Church, the classic catechumenal model consists in a number of stages (cf. RCIA). The three which are considered most important are:

— the pre-catechumenate, which concentrates on the conversion of adults by presenting them with the kerygma or first proclamation of the Gospel;

— the catechumenate which forms adults in the basic components of the Catholic faith, summed up in the Creed, the liturgical celebration, and Christian living;

— the mystagogy, through which the neophytes deepen their knowledge of Christian doctrine and build on the basic catechesis already received.

68. The decision as to which itineraries are to be taken will depend on the situation in which adults find themselves. As already pointed out in Part One (n. 18), some need pre-evangelization to stimulate an interest in the faith. Others are ready for evangelization, the "kerygmatic moment" in which the Gospel is proclaimed. Finally, those who are farthest along are ready for catechesis in the strict sense.

In pastoral planning, the specific itinerary needed for a particular group of adults must be identified and the specifically catechetical dimension in programs for adults should be respected.

69. Adult catechesis necessarily aims at making the adult a member of and a participant in the community. This means that adults must not only know the community, but must also actively participate in its various faith expressions and accept some form of responsibility for community life. For this reason, the building of small communities or ecclesial groups is conducive to the strengthening of adult catechesis (cf. CT 24).

Identity/Formation of the Catechist of Adults

70. "The harvest is good but laborers are scarce. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather the harvest" (Mt 9, 37-38).

The harvest is the seed of the Kingdom which has grown to maturity, that is, the crowds which, though "prostrate from exhaustion", are eager for a shepherd who will take pity on them (Mt 9, 35-36; Mk 6, 34). Jesus says that generous harvesters are needed.

In the light of faith, we can see a marvelous response to this invitation at work in the Church today in the emergence of a large number of catechists, particularly from among the laity. They are involved with every age group, including the often challenging category of adults.

The requirements of adult catechesis described above highlight the decisive role of catechists as well as the qualities they must possess. "Forming those who, in turn, will be given the responsibility for the formation of the lay faithful, constitutes a basic requirement of assuring the general and widespread formation of all the lay faithful" (Chr. L. 63).

a) Fundamental Requirements

71. In general, the catechist of adults, whether a priest, religious or lay person, must have an adult faith and be capable of supporting and leading other adults on their journey of growth in the faith. If a catechist is not a natural leader, it will be

necessary for him or her to acquire certain basic leadership skills.

Catechists do not regard themselves as superior or extrinsic to the persons or groups to whom they minister. Rather, in the process of growing in the faith, they feel one with and indebted to everyone, and they know how to recognize everyone and make them agents and participants in the faith journey.

72. Stability and living the Christian faith as a member of the ecclesial community are basic requirements for catechists. They must mature as spiritual persons in the concrete tasks they perform, in such a way that the "first word" they speak is that of personal witness. To this must be added a professional competence, or the ability to sustain a catechetical journey with their brothers and sisters.

73. More precisely, an indispensable quality of catechists is the wise insight which allows them to go beyond the interpretation of texts to a deep grasp of vital issues and contemporary problems, and to be able to critically interpret present day events and the "signs of the times". Other requirements are the ability to listen and dialogue, encourage and reassure, form relationships, work in teams, and build community. There must also be a sense of being sent by the Church and of being accepted by the community, whose journey they share in a fraternal spirit.

In a word, the catechist of adults will be a sufficiently balanced human being, with the flexibility to adapt to different circumstances.

b) Plurality in the Types of Catechists

74. Room should be made for a plurality of types among adult catechists in relationship to the needs of the community and according to the Spirit which each receives. There is a primary need for catechists who know how to work with families, persons or groups with particular needs,

such as the disabled, the poor, the marginated, and those in irregular situations.

75. A true sign of God's love in our time is the emergence of lay catechists of adults, whose growth in number and competence we have identified as one of the most reassuring developments in the Church today (cf. n. 5). Precisely because of the charism of the lay state, they are in a better position than anyone else to accompany adults along their faith journey since they share the same tasks and problems in the family, society and the Church. They can also render a service which is essential in the catechesis of adults: the inculturation of the faith.

76. For all these reasons, the number of lay catechists—women and men, singles and married couples—will have to continue to grow since their number is not yet equal to the demand for them. At times, according to the need, they will require specialized training.

Always and in every way, lay catechists should be recognized, respected and loved by their priests and communities. They should be supported in their formation and encouraged and helped to accomplish a task which is indispensable but far from easy. Theirs is a genuine service through which God in Christ continues His work of mercy and salvation in the world.

c) Formation

77. More than ever we are aware that catechists, and particularly catechists of adults, are not born as such, but become catechists in two stages: the initial formation program followed by continuing education.

The development of a program must take into consideration the particular circumstances of the local Church, the people's needs, the catechists' skills and abilities, and the resources available. In a realistic, well thought out plan, there will be an initial formation program for future catechists,

which lays the foundation for possible specialization. Later on, periodic updating will take place, in which instruction in theory will be supplemented by the insights of experience and a supervised apprenticeship.

78. Since the primary purpose of formation is growth in the faith, the core of the catechists' formation will be identical with that of the adult Christian. This includes a solid theological, anthropological and cultural preparation, carried out with the catechetical mission in mind and, hence, with particular attention to didactic-pedagogical questions.

79. Especially for the lay catechist, formation will be at one and the same time theoretical and practical, intellectual and spiritual. It will insist on the development of interpersonal relationships and a community-oriented attitude, always keeping in mind methods suitable for adult formation. Only in this way can the secular character of the lay catechist's identity and mission be expressed.

80. The formation of catechists must be responsibly directed by the local Church, under the guidance of the bishop and the appropriate offices, commissions and institutes of formation, in accordance with approved principles and programs.

One can be recognized as an adult catechist only after the required introductory formation program, as approved by the local Church, and after receiving a mandate from the bishop.

Those responsible for catechesis in the community

81. The catechesis of adults, as a service of the Church on behalf of the Kingdom of God, is conceived and nurtured in the womb of Mother Church. For this reason, the whole Christian community should be involved in it, all the more so because adults determine the quality of Church

life and guarantee its smooth operation. For this reason, adult catechesis should be carefully planned in the parish, advertised in advance and supervised as it unfolds in its various stages. The community should pray for its success and joyfully offer its encouragement and support.

82. Within the Christian community, the bishop as Teacher of the faith (cf. CT 63), is the chief catechist of adults. He brings to this service the contribution of his own charism and personal witness. He should take a keen interest in the diocesan program of adult catechesis and keep abreast of its activities through meetings with the moderators or directors and with the catechists themselves, whom he should treat as close collaborators. The bishop should also devote care and attention to the formation of adult catechists.

Because of the responsibility he bears, the bishop will also follow, in a spirit of fraternal charity, the various forms of adult catechesis which do not originate within the diocese.

Because of the complexity and importance of adult catechesis, it is recommended that the bishop appoint at least one person to direct and coordinate the various initiatives on behalf of adult catechesis in the diocese.

It is only right to acknowledge that, in some countries, well-trained lay people serve as directors of adult catechesis on the diocesan and parish levels. Their contribution should be encouraged and supported.

83. Wham the bishop assumes responsibility for on the diocesan level, priests assume responsibility for in the local communities. They should be directly involved in the catechesis of adults, and as directors of lay catechists, they should treat them with concern and respect.

Since the role of the priest in the community is irreplaceable, it is essential that candidates for the priesthood have a solid formation in catechetics.

This is particularly true with respect to adult catechesis, for which they need to learn to direct and collaborate with lay catechists.

84. The present document, within the limits it has set for itself, may be a useful instrument for existing national, regional and diocesan programs in the various local Churches, which will naturally adapt the suggestions made here to their own pastoral circumstances.

This is also true for the various groups, movements and associations which offer catechesis for adults. Through close association with the pastors of the Church, a true spirit of ecclesial communion can be created in the various forms of catechesis and so they will be sure that their apostolic endeavors are authentic and constructive.

CONCLUSION

85. Since there are many obstacles to adult catechesis in our times, there must be a willingness to accept even modest success and to exercise utmost courage and patience in the face of the failure of even the finest initiatives. Through repeated efforts and, above all, through an unshakeable faith in God, one is drawn into the Mystery of the Kingdom: a small seed which slowly but surely grows, for the joy and salvation of all.

86. In the light of all these reflections, it is fitting to turn our attention to the Virgin Mary as she is repeatedly described in the Gospels as one who listens attentively and knows how to meditate in the depths of her heart (cf. Lk 1, 29; 2. 19.51 ; Acts 1, 14). We rightly see in Mary the exemplary model of the adult who undertakes the journey of faith. She listens to the Word of God and knows how to discover it in the complex events in which her life is caught up from the beginning. She listens, and as an adult person, she meditates at length; she searches within herself and seeks to

understand the Will of God. Once she knows it, she generously accepts it and puts it into practice.

Later on, with utmost human sensitivity and a true missionary spirit, Mary knows how to interpret and respond to the questions of the various people she encounters, like those of the couple at the wedding feast of Cana. Through her, a catechist as much in deeds as in words, the grace of Christ could reach all these people.

May Mary of Nazareth, the faithful and courageous servant of God and of human beings, whom we see present as the Church begins her mission of evangelization and catechesis, inspire every adult who sets out on the journey of faith. At the same time, may she be the teacher and model of catechisms who, like her, with their store of knowledge and wisdom, cheerfully put themselves at the service of their adult brothers and sisters.

Appendix D: Catechetical Documents

OUR HEARTS WERE BURNING WITHIN US ***A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States***

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
NOVEMBER 17, 1999

Contents	Abbreviations
Abbreviations	AA Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People
Introduction	
A Renewed Commitment to Adult Faith Formation	ACCC Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community: Some Principles and Guidelines
Part I A New Focus on Adult Faith Formation	AN Aetatis Novae: A New Era. Pastoral Instruction on Social Communication
- Opportunities and Potential	
- Challenges and Concerns	
- The Priority of Adult Faith Formation	CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church
	CCEO Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches
	CGTM Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium: Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" and the Fifteenth Anniversary of "Called and Gifted"
Part II Qualities of Mature Faith and Discipleship	CIC Code of Canon Law
- Living Faith	CT Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in Our Time
- Explicit Faith	
- Fruitful Faith	DV Dei Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
Part III A Plan for Ministry—Goals, Principles, Content, Approaches for Adult Faith Formation	EN Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World
- Three Major Goals	
- Principles	GC Guide for Catechists
- Six Dimensions	GCD General Catechetical Directory
- Concrete Approaches	GDC General Directory for Catechesis
Part IV A Plan for Ministry—Organizing for Adult Faith Formation	GS Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on Church in the Modern World
- The Pivotal Importance of the Parish	
- Key Parish Roles of Leadership and Service for Adult Faith Formation	LG Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
- Diocesan Support for Adult Faith Formation	NCD Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States
- A Call to Implementation	
Conclusion	PO Presbyterorum Ordinis: Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
Our Hope for the Future	
Afterword	RCIA Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
Notes	RM Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate

Introduction

"Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32)

A Renewed Commitment to Adult Faith Formation

§ 1 § We are filled with great joy and expectation as the third millennium of Christian history dawns. Before us, in the wonder of God's gracious plan, stretch new opportunities to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to all the world. We are eager to witness and share the word of life about the reign of God faithfully, so that each new generation can hear this word in its own accents and discover Christ as its Savior.

§ 2 § Every disciple of the Lord Jesus shares in this mission. To do their part, adult Catholics must be mature in faith and well equipped to share the Gospel, promoting it in every family circle, in every church gathering, in every place of work, and in every public forum. They must be women and men of prayer whose faith is alive and vital, grounded in a deep commitment to the person and message of Jesus.

§ 3 § The Church's pastoral ministry exists to sustain the work of the Gospel. One way it does this is by nourishing and strengthening lay men and women in their calling and identity as people of faith, as contributors to the life and work of the Church, and as disciples whose mission is to the world. To grow in discipleship throughout life, all believers need and are called to build vibrant parish and diocesan communities of faith and service.

§ 4 § Such communities cannot exist without a strong, complete, and systematic catechesis for all its members. By "complete and systematic" we mean a catechesis that nurtures a profound, lifelong conversion of the whole person and sets forth a comprehensive, contemporary synthesis of the faith,¹ as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This catechesis will help adults

to experience the transforming power of grace and to grasp the integrity and beauty of the truths of faith in their harmonious unity and interconnection—a true symphony of faith.²

§ 5 § Adult faith formation,³ by which people consciously grow in the life of Christ through experience, reflection, prayer, and study, must be "the central task in [this] catechetical enterprise,"⁴ becoming "the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age."⁵ This can be done specifically through developing in adults a better understanding of and participation in the full sacramental life of the Church.

§ 6 § To make this vision a reality, we, as the Catholic bishops of the United States, call the Church in our country to a renewed commitment to adult faith formation, positioning it at the heart of our catechetical vision and practice. We pledge to support adult faith formation without weakening our commitment to our other essential educational ministries. This pastoral plan guides the implementation of this pledge and commitment.

Jesus, the Model Teacher

§ 7 § The Gospels show how Jesus communicated the Good News. In the familiar story of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) we find the model for this pastoral plan.

§ 8 § To be effective ministers of adult faith formation we will first, like Jesus, join people in their daily concerns and walk side by side with them on the pathway of life. We will ask them questions and listen attentively as they speak of their joys, hopes, griefs, and anxieties.

§ 9 § We will share with them the living word of God, which can touch their hearts and minds and unfold the deep meaning of their experience in the light of all that Jesus said and did. We will trust the capacity of prayer and sacrament to open their eyes to the presence and love of Christ. We will

invite them to live and share this Good News in the world.

§ 10 § This is the way for us to acknowledge the life-giving power and evangelizing dynamic of encountering Jesus today—just as the two disciples felt their hearts burn within them and returned in haste to Jerusalem to tell their story of meeting Jesus.

§ 11 § Why were their hearts burning? They were burning because in Jesus the disciples caught a glimpse into the heart of God and found their world made new. They saw for an instant the full scope of the Father's loving plan and its high point in Christ's death and resurrection. In that perspective, the pathway of their lives opened from confusion and despair into conviction and hope, and they began to grasp the height and depth of God's mysterious love. What a profound learning experience that must have been!

§ 12 § The passage offers us a model for our ministry and shows the need we all have for ongoing formation in faith. For in it we see two adult disciples who, encountering the risen Lord, grow stronger in love, knowledge, commitment, and zeal. As then, today, "Those who are already disciples of Jesus Christ . . . [need] to be constantly nourished by the word of God so that they may grow in their Christian life."⁶

§ 13 § Such lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church's catechetical ministry; moreover, it must "be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it."⁷

§ 14 § We are well aware that placing ongoing adult faith formation at the forefront of our catechetical planning and activity will mean real change in emphasis and priorities. In refocusing our catechetical priorities, we will all need to discover new ways of thinking and acting that will vigorously renew the faith and strengthen the

missionary dynamism of the Church. Although the task may seem daunting, we need look back no further than the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults twenty years ago to find a model for success. Today, most parishes participate in the catechumenal process, which has brought the Church in the United States great benefit. We seek similar fruits from adult faith formation.

§ 15 § As bishops, we will walk this journey of discovery with you. We write now to offer encouragement and to guide the reorientation of ministerial priorities and practices that we know this plan entails. At the same time, we rely upon your pastoral creativity and dedication to implement the plan effectively. We must go forward firmly rooted in prayer, open to the mystery of God's love, and in touch with the realities of the world. Our dedication and efforts, then, will bear fruit in God's way and time restoring all things in Christ.

Introducing the Plan

§ 16 § This plan builds upon the work already being done by the Catholic community in adult faith formation. The catechumenate is a blessing for those becoming Catholic and for the entire faith community. Renewal programs touch the lives of millions of adult Catholics. Countless Scripture study groups meet regularly to share the word of God and apply it to their lives. Faith-sharing communities are taking root and flourishing around the country. Lay ministry and catechist formation programs each year form tens of thousands of committed adults for service to the Church's mission to proclaim God's reign. Catholic universities and colleges welcome adults into a variety of programs designed to foster their personal growth and to help them develop ministerial skills. Catholic schools and parish religious education programs have enriched the faith of adults who are parents and catechists. Parents in sacrament preparation programs grow in their appreciation of the sacraments and learn to share their faith with their children. Catholic

media outlets and publishing companies provide a consistent stream of resources that promote spiritual growth. We offer heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed so generously to these and similar efforts of evangelization and catechesis.

§ 17 § Building on the efforts that have taken place, we seek with this plan to make ongoing faith formation more available, attractive, and effective for all adult Catholics.

We seek to form parishes that are vitally alive in faith. These communities will provide a parish climate and an array of activities and resources designed to help adults more fully understand and live their faith.

We seek to form adults who actively cultivate a lively baptismal and eucharistic spirituality with a powerful sense of mission and apostolate. Nourished by word, sacrament, and communal life, they will witness and share the Gospel in their homes, neighborhoods, places of work, and centers of culture.

§ 18 § This plan for adult faith formation takes its place among other initiatives we have offered in recent years. We addressed today's needs for youth ministry and catechesis in *Renewing the Vision* and for young adult ministry in *Sons and Daughters of the Light*. Some other statements clearly related to this present plan include our national plan for evangelization, *Go and Make Disciples*; our reflections on the social mission of the parish, *Communities of Salt and Light*; our statement on the laity, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*; our synthesis of social doctrine in *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*; and our letter *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*. Taken together, these documents offer a body of teaching and a wide-ranging and mutually reinforcing agenda for mission and renewal in the Church in our country. We are convinced that effective adult faith formation will make our efforts in all these initiatives more fruitful.

§ 19 § The plan contains four parts. Fidelity to the Gospel means engagement with the world, and so we begin in Part I with a look at some of the concrete challenges and opportunities that we face. In Part II we describe key elements of mature faith. In Part III we identify three key goals to seek, a number of reliable principles to employ, six content areas to address, and several approaches to follow in providing sound and diversified adult faith formation. In Part IV we focus on the parish as the locus of adult faith formation ministry and identify critical roles of parish leadership and diocesan support.

The Audience for This Plan

§ 20 § We write this plan to all our collaborators who share with us leadership and responsibility for adult faith formation in parishes, dioceses, and other pastoral settings.

§ 21 § We write especially for parish leaders:

Pastors who bear primary responsibility for catechetical formation in their parishes⁸

Parish adult faith formation leaders, both professional staff and active parishioners

Directors of liturgy and music

Other members of parish staffs—clergy, religious, and laity—who share directly or indirectly in responsibility for formation

All parish faith formation ministers who serve in any role or setting (e.g., as catechists, education team members, RCIA ministers, Scripture study facilitators, sacramental preparation leaders, ministry trainers, small church community leaders or facilitators)

Administrators and teachers in Catholic schools who have the opportunity to nurture faith in many different settings—whether in the students, in their parents, in themselves, or in their colleagues

§ 22 § We write for diocesan leaders:

Ourselves as bishops, teachers of the faith who bear chief responsibility for "the overall direction of catechesis" in our dioceses⁹

Our diocesan staffs charged specifically to care for adult faith formation and all their colleagues in diocesan ministry whose work also nurtures adult faith at different stages in the process¹⁰

Other diocesan staff members who work with adults in their ministry (e.g., campus ministry, diocesan newspapers, ecumenical and interfaith affairs, evangelization, family life, hospitals or health care ministry, communications, stewardship, youth and young adult ministry, etc.)

§ 23 § We write for those in other pastoral ministry settings—such as seminaries, houses of religious formation, colleges and universities, social service agencies, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, migrant worker camps, pro-life agencies, retreat houses, monasteries—and for those who work in publishing and communications. If you work with adults, you have the opportunity to help them grow in faith. We offer the vision and principles of this plan to guide and encourage you in this essential ministry.

A Time for Awakening

§ 24 § We intend the vision, initiatives, and timeline of this plan to awaken throughout the Church in our country a passion for renewal in the ministry of adult faith formation. Through fervent prayer and pastoral work—and relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit—our efforts together will help the whole Catholic people advance in authentic discipleship and fulfill their baptismal call and mission to grow to the full maturity of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13).

Part I: A New Focus on Adult Faith Formation

"I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest." (Jn 4:35)

§ 25 § At all times and in every age, the Church faces unique opportunities and challenges as it proclaims the Good News of God's reign. Today is no exception. We offer below a brief overview of some of the opportunities and challenges we see today. This is the context in which adult faith formation must become our chief catechetical priority.

Opportunities and Potential

§ 26 § We live in a diverse multicultural society that offers us a rich experience of how the faith is lived, expressed, and celebrated in our own time. We see in this society a widespread spiritual hunger—a quest for meaning and for a deeply personal experience of God and of community. This hunger helps explain the widespread interest today in new religious movements and in New Age spirituality. In this we see opportunity, for "God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel."¹¹ People are ready to gather in groups to read the Scriptures, study the teachings of the Church, and talk about the importance of Christ in their lives. They seek out these opportunities wherever they can find them, whether in their own parishes, in ecclesial movements or associations, in small communities of faith, or with people of other Christian traditions.

§ 27 § The world is being reshaped by technology. Not only are computers transforming the way we live and work, they enable many adults to pursue lifelong learning to keep pace with the rapidly changing workplace. Communication technology has also made the world smaller through e-mail, global networks, and increased contacts with other cultures. This globalization of society increases our awareness of and interdependence with other peoples and societies. Adults are responding to these changes by self-directed learning, on-the-job training, and enrolling in continuing education courses in large numbers.

§ 28 § Throughout the centuries the Spirit has guided the Church so that the word would be spread to each generation. Today that Spirit is awakening a new evangelization and a new apologetics. This dynamic movement needs our fullest possible collaboration, so that the Good News of the kingdom of God and the person of Jesus may touch the hearts and minds of all who search for fullness of life. Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and our own national plan for evangelization, *Go and Make Disciples*, call for such efforts, and their success will require adult believers who are eager and articulate in sharing a faith they understand, embrace, and live.

§ 29 § We are entering a period of new vitality for the Church, a period in which adult Catholic laity will play a pivotal leadership role in fulfilling the Christian mission of evangelizing and transforming society. For adults to fulfill their roles in this new era of the Church, their faith formation must be lifelong, just as they must continue to learn to keep up in the changing world.

§ 30 § Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation on the laity, *Christifideles Laici*, and our own reflections in *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* envision a laity who are living witnesses to Christ: well-formed in faith, enthusiastic, capable of leadership in the Church and in society, filled with compassion, and working for justice. The power of God's word, regular prayer, a vibrant sacramental life, lay spirituality,¹² the support of the Christian community, and the guidance of the Church's social teaching will enrich and sustain this new era of the laity.

§ 31 § Finally, the gift of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is an indispensable resource in our time for helping adults become stronger in their relationship with God and grow in their knowledge of the faith. It should be in regular use: by bishops, priests, and deacons in their preaching and teaching; by those who write and

those who publish theological, catechetical, liturgical, and spiritual books and resources; by catechists preparing to work with adults; and by adults themselves in personal and family study and prayer.

Challenges and Concerns

§ 32 § The Church also faces many concerns and challenges. Secularism, materialism, atheism, ethical relativism, religious indifference, and tensions rooted in religious or cultural pluralism are prevalent in society. Many of our contemporaries question the validity of objective moral norms and deny the connection of freedom and truth.

§ 33 § The dignity and sanctity of human life are threatened through the acceptance of contraception, abortion, social injustice, racism, violence of all kinds, discrimination against women, fear of the immigrant or the stranger, threats to the environment, the separation of personal integrity from public life and work, and increasing tolerance for capital punishment and assisted suicide. There is widespread ignorance, indifference, or opposition to the dignity of persons and cultures and to the full range of the Church's moral and social teaching.

§ 34 § Families experience great stress, overwhelmed by the influence of mass media and the economic pressures that keep some families in poverty and almost require both parents to work in order to pay the bills. Parents look to the Church for guidance and help to grow closer as couples, stronger as families, and better able to prepare their children morally and spiritually for life in this complex and challenging society.

§ 35 § Many Catholics seem "lukewarm" in faith (cf. Rev 3:14ff.) or have a limited understanding of what the Church believes, teaches, and lives. Others may know about the gospel message but have not personally experienced the risen Christ. Still others are indifferent to the Church's

guidance or see the Church's teaching in a negative light.

§ 36 § For a variety of reasons, people leave the Church. They may seek out or be recruited into non-denominational, evangelical, or fundamentalist churches, or into New Age or other religious movements. Far too often they simply abandon the Christian faith altogether.

§ 37 § We also acknowledge that, together with successes, some of our catechetical efforts have fallen short. It is time to identify and address these shortcomings and build on our strengths so as to forge a more balanced and mature catechetical ministry. Two contemporary resources to help us in this task are the General Directory for Catechesis with its pastoral principles and the doctrinal synthesis of the Catechism. We must faithfully and creatively adapt both resources to meet both the challenges and the opportunities we face in the United States today.

The Priority of Adult Faith Formation

§ 38 § The challenge of responding to these many needs and opportunities creates a vast pastoral agenda for the Catholic Church. Disciples young and old are called by name to go into the vineyard. In responding to this call, adults "have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form."¹³ Their formation in faith is essential for the Church to carry out its mandate to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to the world. Effective adult formation is necessary to "equip the holy ones for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12).

§ 39 § We are convinced that the energy and resources we devote to adult faith formation will strengthen and invigorate all the charisms that adults receive and the activities they undertake, in the Church and in society, to serve the Gospel of Christ and the people of today. Every Church ministry will be energized through a dynamic ministry of adult catechesis.

§ 40 § Adult faith formation also benefits children and youth. An adult community whose faith is well-formed and lively will more effectively pass that faith on to the next generation. Moreover, the witness of adults actively continuing their own formation shows children and youth that growth in faith is lifelong and does not end upon reaching adulthood.¹⁴

§ 41 § In addition, adult faith formation should serve as the point of reference for catechesis for other age groups. It ought to be "the organizing principle, which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular Church."¹⁵ Maturity of faith is the intent of all catechesis from the earliest years. Thus, all catechesis is geared to a lifelong deepening of faith in Christ. How necessary, then, that the catechetical ministry with adults set an example of the highest quality and vitality.

§ 42 § For such reasons as these, the Church wisely and repeatedly insists that adult faith formation is "essential to who we are and what we do as Church"¹⁶ and must be "situated not at the periphery of the Church's educational mission but at its center."¹⁷

§ 43 § Yet despite the consistency and clarity of this message, the Catholic community has not yet fully heard and embraced it. While most Catholic parishes place a high priority on the faith formation of children and youth, far fewer treat adult faith formation as a priority. This choice is made in parish staffing decisions, job descriptions, budgets, and parishioner expectations.

§ 44 § Once again, we praise the outstanding efforts that have been made for so many years to provide quality faith formation for children. This task is a sacred trust and a serious responsibility that we must always fulfill with utmost care and dedication. We do not wish to weaken our commitment to this essential ministry in any way. But to teach as Jesus did means calling and equipping all Christians of every age and stage of

life to fulfill their baptismal call to holiness in family, Church, and society—their mission to evangelize and transform the world into a more caring and just society. Ongoing faith formation is essential to accomplish this mission; it does not end at confirmation or graduation but continues until one's death. Accordingly, we strongly reaffirm that, "without neglecting its commitment to children, catechesis needs to give more attention to adults than it has been accustomed to do."¹⁸ Catholic schools and religious education programs will play a vital role in this plan through the quality faith formation they provide to the parents and families of the children they teach.

Part II: Qualities of Mature Adult Faith and Discipleship

"By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." (Jn 15:8)

§ 45 § At the heart of all we are and do as the Church is a revelation of great Good News: God, who is love, has made us to enjoy divine life in abundance,¹⁹ to share in the very life of God, a communion with the Holy Trinity together with all the saints in the new creation of God's reign.²⁰ Faith, which is a gift from God, is our human response to this divine calling: It is a personal adherence to God and assent to his truth.²¹ Through searching and growth, conversion of mind and heart, repentance and reform of life, we are led by God to turn from the blindness of sin and to accept God's saving grace, liberating truth, and sustaining love for our lives and for all of creation.

§ 46 § Christian faith is lived in discipleship to Jesus Christ. As disciples, through the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives become increasingly centered on Jesus and the kingdom he proclaims. By opening ourselves to him we find community with all his faith-filled disciples and by their example come to know Jesus more intimately. By following the example of his self-giving love we

learn to be Christian disciples in our own time, place, and circumstances.

§ 47 § God's call to conversion and discipleship unfolds in our lives with immeasurable potential for maturing and bearing fruit. The calls to holiness, to community, and to service of God and neighbor are "facets of Christian life that come to full expression only by means of development and growth toward Christian maturity."²²

§ 48 § This maturity of Christian faith can blossom at any age. We see it in children like Samuel who hear and respond to God's word (cf. 1 Sm 3:1-18). We see it in young people like Mary who ponder and say "yes" to God's call (cf. Lk 1:26-38). We see it in adults and marvel especially at the beauty of faith in those who have persevered in following the Lord over the full course of a lifetime: "They shall bear fruit even in old age, always vigorous and sturdy" (Ps 92:15).

§ 49 § To provide effective adult faith formation requires first of all "the accurate identification of the typical characteristics of Christian adults."²³ What are these characteristics? What does mature adult faith look like in those who respond generously to God's call? The General Directory for Catechesis says that it is "a living, explicit, and fruitful confession of faith."²⁴ By this, a human being makes a total and free self-commitment to God (DV, no. 7). A full and rich development of these three characteristics is what we aim for in adult catechesis and Christian living.

Living Faith

§ 50 § Faith is both a gift of God and an authentically human response²⁵—a recognition of God's call in one's life and a free decision to follow this call by accepting and living the truth of the Gospel. As such, faith is living and active, sharing many of the qualities of living things: it grows and develops over time; it learns from experience; it adapts to changing conditions while maintaining its essential identity; it goes through seasons,

some apparently dormant, others fruitful, though wherever faith is present the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the disciple.

§ 51 § Like all living things, a living faith needs nourishment, which the mature adult disciple finds above all in union with Christ—"the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). "This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is maintained by the spiritual helps common to all the faithful, chiefly by active participation in the liturgy."²⁶ It is also maintained by

--frequent reading of the word of God, sacred writings of our tradition, and the official documents of the Church

--involvement in the community life and mission of the Church

--personal prayer

--participation in the works of justice and service to the poor

--the fulfillment of our human obligations in family and society through the active practice of love for God and neighbor

§ 52 § A living faith is a searching faith—it "seeks understanding."²⁷ Adults need to question, probe, and critically reflect on the meaning of God's revelation in their unique lives in order to grow closer to God. A searching faith leads to deepening conversion.²⁸ Along the way, it may even experience doubt. Yet the essence of this quality of adult faith is not doubt, but search—a trusting, hopeful, persistent "seeking" or "hunger" for a deeper appropriation of the Gospel and its power to guide, transform, and fulfill our lives.

§ 53 § A living faith is keenly conscious and aware of the power and hold of sin in human life (cf. Heb 12:1, Rom 7:14-25). Like the Church, the person of mature faith is "at once holy and always in need of purification."²⁹ Repentance and renewal, constantly dying to sin and rising by grace to new life—this pattern of the paschal mystery, especially through the sacraments,

shapes the whole existence of the mature disciple (cf. Mk 8:34-38, Jn 12:24-26, Rom 6).

§ 54 § Throughout this mortal life, a living faith longs for the fulfillment of eternal life. Even though we are now on a pilgrimage, with mature faith we "taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below."³⁰ This in turn stirs up a greater commitment "to put into action in this world the energies and means received from the Creator to serve justice and peace"³¹—a central mandate of God's reign.

Explicit Faith

§ 55 § Adult faith is clearly and explicitly rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus lived in the Christian community. "The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps."³² Our understanding of the person and the way of Jesus continues to grow by our meditation on the word of God, by prayer and sacrament, by our efforts to follow Jesus' example, and by the sure guidance of the Church's teaching.³³

§ 56 § Through intimacy with Jesus, a maturing adult faith opens people to a deepening relationship with and an "explicit confession of the Trinity."³⁴ Authentic Christian faith is "radically Trinitarian,"³⁵ and "the whole Christian life is a communion with each of the divine persons."³⁶

§ 57 § Adult faith is explicitly connected to the life, teaching, and mission of the Church. As adults mature, a searching faith leads them to examine their lives, their world, and their faith more profoundly. In this quest, they enter into dialogue with the gospel message as professed by the teaching of the Church and lived by the people of God. Through this dialogical process they come not only to know, but to make the faith their own. They acquire that "ecclesial consciousness, which is ever mindful of what it means to be members of the Church of Jesus

Christ, participants in her mystery of communion and in her dynamism in mission and the apostolate."³⁷

§ 58 § Adult faith is confident because it is founded on the word of God³⁸ and confirmed by the whole Church's supernatural sense of the faith.³⁹ The adult disciple seeks the clarity and knowledge of faith, so as to find and accept it "with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom 15:13). Out of this conviction come the willingness and ability to witness to the Christian faith whenever possible, to explain it whenever necessary, and to be confidently guided by it always.

§ 59 § "The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith."⁴⁰ The more this happens, the more it helps us create a climate of "mutual esteem, reverence, and harmony" in the Church and learn to "acknowledge all legitimate diversity. . . . For the ties which unite the faithful together are stronger than those which separate them: let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything."⁴¹

Fruitful Faith

§ 60 § The adult disciple enjoys the fruits of the Spirit which are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). Mature faith is open to the action and power of God's Spirit and cannot remain idle or unproductive. Where the Spirit is active, faith is fruitful.

§ 61 § Adult faith bears the fruit of justice and compassion through active outreach to those in need. Recognizing also the connection of personal sins and social consequences, they pray and work both for personal conversion and for systemic change and social transformation that will serve the common good and, ultimately, the

realization of God's reign of justice and peace "on earth as in heaven" (Mt 6:10).

§ 62 § Adult faith bears the fruit of evangelization. While fully respecting the religious freedom and choice of others, the adult disciple bears witness in the world to the gift of faith and to the treasure we have found in Jesus and among the community of his disciples. In this process, the witness of the word is essential, but a living witness in the service of love and justice speaks with special power today.

§ 63 § These are some of the characteristics of mature adult faith. But it is essential to remember also that salvation is not the fruit of our innate gifts, our adult competence, or our achievements. Mature faith recognizes that, however great or modest our competence or accomplishments, God's favor is always a gift and a grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8).

Part III: A Plan for Ministry--Goals, Principles, Content, and Approaches for Adult Faith Formation

". . . keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith." (Heb 12:2)

§ 64 § The Church's catechetical mission aims to help the faithful of all ages to grow in both human and Christian maturity,⁴² enriching the whole of life with the leaven of the Gospel. Consequently, appropriate goals and content will embrace all the faith dimensions of an adult life—for example, understanding and communicating the faith, skills needed for personal growth, the experience of family life, relationships, public service, and concern for the common good.

§ 65 § Our adult faith formation ministry must engage the particular needs and interests of the adults in each local community. To be faithful and effective it will offer, over time, a comprehensive and systematic presentation and exploration of

the core elements of Catholic faith and practice—a complete initiation into a Catholic way of life. It will do so in a way that is accessible to adults and relates to their life experiences, helping them to form a Christian conscience and to live their lives in the world as faithful disciples of Jesus.

§ 66 § This integration of actual life experience, diverse adult learning needs, the study of Scripture, and the teaching of the Church's tradition will create a vibrant learning environment. It will also challenge the creativity of those who establish the direction, plan the content, and provide programs of adult faith formation. Meeting the challenge will be both demanding and rewarding. For guidance, we offer the following goals, principles, content, and approaches.

Three Major Goals for Adult Faith Formation

§ 67 § Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, from the Holy See's International Council for Catechesis, stresses that all catechesis should strive to build adult Christian communities that are strong in faith, clearly proclaim the Gospel, celebrate vibrant and reverent liturgy, and give courageous witness in charity.⁴³ This document then specifies the following three goals to guide and direct efforts in adult faith formation.

§ 68 § 1) Invite and Enable Ongoing Conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life. In response to God's call to holiness, our faith and life as adult disciples are grounded in developing a personal relationship with Jesus, "the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:69, Mk 1:24). Accordingly, "'at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. . . .' Catechesis aims at putting 'people . . . in communion . . . with Jesus Christ.'"⁴⁴

§ 69 § As its first goal, faith formation helps adults "to acquire an attitude of conversion to the Lord."⁴⁵ This attitude fosters a baptismal spirituality for adults. It leads them to recognize

and repent of sin in their hearts and lives, to seek reconciliation through the sacraments, and to embrace the invitation and challenge of an ever deepening faith in Jesus. It means putting on the mind of Christ, trusting in the Father's love, obeying God's will, seeking holiness of life, and growing in love for others. Deepening personal prayer is a significant means toward growth in holiness in daily life.

§ 70 § 2) Promote and Support Active Membership in the Christian Community. As adult believers, we learn and live our faith as active members of the Church. Our response to God's call to community "cannot remain abstract and unincarnated," but rather, "reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers . . . a community which itself is a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the Church, the visible sacrament of salvation."⁴⁶ People find this community of faith in the parish and diocese, as well as in their families, small church communities, personal relationships, faith-based associations, and in the communion of saints of all times and places.

§ 71 § Accordingly, faith formation helps adults make "a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through membership in the Christian community," accepting "coresponsibility for the community's mission and internal life."⁴⁷ Adults not only receive the ministries of the Christian community, they also contribute to its life and mission through the generous stewardship of their gifts.

§ 72 § 3) Call and Prepare Adults to Act as Disciples in Mission to the World. The Church and its adult faithful have a mission in and to the world: to share the message of Christ to renew and to transform the social and temporal order. This dual calling to evangelization and justice is integral to the identity of the lay faithful; all are called to it in baptism.

§ 73 § Accordingly, faith formation seeks to help each adult believer become "more willing and able to be a Christian disciple in the world."⁴⁸ As salt of the earth and light for the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16), adult disciples give witness to God's love and caring will so that, in the power of the Spirit, they renew the face of the earth.

Principles

§ 74 § To assist the implementation of these goals, we offer here some basic principles of adult faith formation.

General Principles for Adult Faith Formation

§ 75 § (1) Plan adult faith formation to serve "the glory of God, the building of the Kingdom, and the good of the Church."⁴⁹ Effective adult faith formation calls us to give God glory through our prayers of praise and the lives we lead. It equips us to be people of salt and light who build up God's kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love, and peace.⁵⁰ It leads us to promote the good of the Church, serving its internal life and its dual mission of evangelization and justice.

§ 76 § (2) Orient adult Christian learning toward adult Christian living. Effective adult faith formation efforts join faith and life. They help people in practical ways to live their daily lives by the light and power of the Gospel.

§ 77 § (3) Strengthen the role and mission of the family in Church and society. Adults are eager for resources, guidance, and support that will help them form a community of faith within their families, grow more deeply in love with their spouses, raise children committed to Jesus and the Church, participate as Catholic families in society, and share together in the life and mission of their parish and the wider Church.⁵¹

Principles for Planning Adult Faith Formation

§ 78 § (4) Give adult faith formation the best of our pastoral resources and energies. Within the

whole scope of catechetical ministry, adult catechesis "must be regarded as a preferential option"⁵² in planning and programming. When adult catechesis excels, it can then serve effectively as the point of reference and organizing principle for all catechesis.⁵³

§ 79 § (5) Make adult faith formation essential and integral to the pastoral plan of the parish. Effective adult formation ministry connects with and strengthens all the many ministries and activities of the parish—formatioal, charitable, devotional, social, administrative. This integration of parish life and ministry helps to form the whole community on its lifelong journey of growth in Christian faith and mission.

§ 80 § (6) Design adult faith formation opportunities to serve the needs and interests of the entire faith community. "The Church therefore must maintain an active, listening presence in relation to the world—a kind of presence which both nurtures community and supports people in seeking acceptable solutions to personal and social problems."⁵⁴ Start by listening to adults and let the stories of their lives and the hungers of their hearts inspire pastoral care and inform catechetical programming. Reach out to those whom society often neglects.⁵⁵

Principles for Conducting Adult Faith Formation

§ 81 § (7) Use the catechumenate as an inspiring model for all catechesis.⁵⁶ The baptismal catechumenate provides for an apprenticeship in Christian living and believing. It "seems the most appropriate model" for adult faith formation and, though it cannot be considered the exclusive model, should be encouraged everywhere.⁵⁷ Whatever model is used, adult faith formation should always actively challenge participants to get involved with their own faith journey—passive listening is never enough; the goal is always conversion.

§ 82 § (8) Respect the different learning styles and needs of participants, treating adults like adults, respecting their experience, and actively involving them in the learning process. Effective adult faith formation "must begin by accepting adults where they are"⁵⁸ in their faith, their life situations, their experiences, and their preferred learning styles. Our programs and ministries must be in touch with people's real circumstances and concerns. Just as Jesus did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we must journey with people, listen to them, share our faith, help them to find in the Good News the answer to their hearts' deepest questions, and prepare them to live as Jesus' disciples.

§ 83 § (9) Engage adults actively in the actual life and ministry of the Christian community. "Adults do not grow in faith primarily by learning concepts, but by sharing the life of the Christian community."⁵⁹ Not that concepts are irrelevant; they are foundational. But for most people the truths of faith really come alive and bear fruit when tested and put into practice—in soup kitchens, neighborhoods, small groups, workplaces, community organizations, and family homes. Adult catechesis practitioners need to learn to tap the learning potential of these diverse settings of Christian ministry and daily life.

Principles for Inculturating Adult Faith Formation

§ 84 § (10) "Bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures."⁶⁰ Sometimes this means discerning with participants which aspects of their culture are compatible with the Gospel and then building adult faith formation efforts on those aspects, incorporating the culture's symbols, traditions, and language. At other times it means discerning cultural elements incompatible with the Gospel and working together to purify and transform them. Both are important; neither should be neglected.

§ 85 § (11) Let the gifts of culture enrich the life of the Church. Inculturation is a process of mutual enrichment between the Gospel and culture.⁶¹ While the power of the Gospel transforms and renews each culture that embraces it, the living tradition of each culture gives rise to "original expressions of Christian life, celebration, and thought"⁶² that become gifts for the whole Church. Find ways to emphasize the gifts of ethnic and cultural diversity. We all want and deserve to be respected for who we are, with our personal qualities and cultural characteristics recognized as part of God's creative presence in the world.

§ 86 § (12) Involve the whole people of God in inculturating the faith. "Inculturation must involve the whole people of God, and not just a few experts, since the people reflect the authentic 'sensus fidei' which must never be lost sight of."⁶³ Work directly with people of each racial or ethnic group to find ways to affirm or renew the values expressed in their family traditions, social customs, and popular devotions. Special attention must be paid to those groups that are most easily forgotten: particularly those who are elderly, those who are living with handicapping conditions, those who are alienated from society.

§ 87 § (13) Let adult faith formation programs be centers of service and inculturation. Be conscious of those whose racial, linguistic, or ethnic identity may cause them to feel alienated from the local culture or faith community, to experience overt or subtle discrimination, or to be economically disadvantaged. Make every effort to reach out and welcome them, tactfully offering any needed assistance, and incorporating them in the life and activities of the Church community as full and valued members.

Six Dimensions

§ 88 § Scripture and tradition form the core content of all adult catechesis, for the Church has always considered them the "supreme rule of

faith." Through them we receive "the very word of God," and in them resounds "the voice of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁴ Sacred Scripture provides the starting point for reflecting on the faith, while the Catechism of the Catholic Church serves as the "reference for the authentic presentation of the content of the faith."⁶⁵ Use of Scripture and the Catechism—including the sources from which it draws, those to which it refers, and other catechetical resources based on and consonant with it—will help adults grasp the content of the faith and its practical application in Christian living.

§ 89 § The Catholic faith is like a symphony in which the unity of faith finds expression in richly diverse formulations and manifestations.⁶⁶ As the General Directory for Catechesis states: "The maturation of the Christian life requires that it be cultivated in all its dimensions: knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, belonging to community, missionary spirit. When catechesis omits one of these elements, the Christian faith does not attain full development."⁶⁷

§ 90 § The ongoing development of a living, explicit, and fruitful Christian faith in adulthood requires growth in all six dimensions. Each of them is a fundamental aspect of Christian life and a foundational content area for adult faith formation. The exploration of the six dimensions that follow are presented as content summaries to indicate what adult faith formation programs and opportunities seek to accomplish.

§ 91 §

1) Knowledge of the Faith

(See the Catechism, nos. 26-1065; General Directory for Catechesis, nos. 84-85, 87.)

Recognize communion with Jesus Christ as the definitive aim of all catechesis.

Explore the Scriptures so that adults may be hearers and doers of the word.

Become familiar with the great teachings of Christianity (its creeds and doctrines) and their place in the hierarchy of truths—for example, "the mystery of God and the Trinity, Christ, the Church, the sacraments, human life and ethical principles, eschatological realities, and other contemporary themes in religion and morality."⁶⁸

Study the Church's teaching on the dignity of the human person in its social doctrine, including its respect-life teaching.

Learn the richness of the Church's tradition, explore the theological and cultural heritage in which faith is expressed, and gain perspective on contemporary events and trends through an understanding of church history.

Develop the philosophical and theological foundations of the faith and appreciate expressions of Christian thought and culture.

Learn the meaning and practical relevance of current church teachings as presented by the pope, diocesan bishop, Vatican congregations, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

§ 92 §

2) Liturgical Life

(See the Catechism, nos. 1066-1690; General Directory for Catechesis, nos. 84-85, 87.)

Understand, live, and bear witness to the paschal mystery, celebrated and communicated through the sacramental life of the Church.

Learn and embrace in one's life church doctrine on the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

Acquire the spirituality, skills, and habits of full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy, especially the eucharistic liturgy.

Value the dignity of the baptismal priesthood and of the ordained priesthood and their respective

roles in liturgical celebration and Christian mission.

Appreciate and appropriately participate in the Church's daily prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, and learn to pray the psalms, "an essential and permanent element of the prayer of the Church."⁶⁹

§ 93 §

3) Moral Formation

(See the Catechism, nos. 1691-2557; General Directory for Catechesis, nos. 84-85, 87.)

Understand how the "entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the 'new commandment' of Jesus, to love one another as he has loved us,"⁷⁰ and promote each disciple's formation in the life of the risen Christ.

Study the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the moral catechesis of the apostolic teachings, and live in accord with them.

Appreciate the dignity, destiny, freedom, and responsibility of the human person, together with the reality of sin and the power of God's grace to overcome it.

Learn how to acquire and follow a well-formed conscience in personal and social life, clarifying current religious and moral questions in the light of faith, and cultivating a Christian discernment of the ethical implications of developments in the socio-cultural order.

Recognize, defend, and live by the truth of objective moral norms as taught by the Church's magisterium in its moral and social teaching.

Promote a thorough catechesis on the Gospel of life so that respect for life from conception until natural death is honored in personal behavior, in public policy, and in the expressed values and attitudes of our society.

Live a lifestyle reflecting scriptural values of holiness, simplicity, and compassion.

§ 94 §

4) Prayer

(See the Catechism, nos. 2558-2865; General Directory for Catechesis, nos. 84-85, 87.)

Become familiar with the diverse forms and expressions of Christian prayer, with special attention to "the Our Father, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and which is the model of all Christian prayer."⁷¹

Experience and appreciate the richness of the Catholic ascetical-mystical tradition as it has taken form across the centuries in diverse historical and cultural settings.

Develop a regular pattern of personal prayer and spiritual reflection, recognizing vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer as basic and fruitful practices in the life of a disciple of Jesus.

Engage in shared prayer with others, especially family prayer, as well as at parish meetings and in small communities of faith.

Recognize and encourage practices of popular piety and devotion that help believers express and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ.

§ 95 §

5) Communal Life

(See the General Directory for Catechesis, nos. 84, 86-87.)

Pursue personal and spiritual growth in human and Christian maturity.

Cultivate the human values and Christian virtues that foster growth in interpersonal relationships and in civic responsibility.

Nurture marriage and family life to build up the Church of the home.

Share actively in the life and work of the parish, and foster the potential of small communities to deepen the faith and relationships of members, to strengthen the bonds of communion with the parish, and to serve the Church's mission in society.

Learn the Church's teaching on the nature and mission of the Church, including an understanding of the Church's authority and structures and of the rights and responsibilities of the Christian faithful.

Support the ecumenical movement and promote the unity of God's people as a constitutive dimension of fidelity to the Gospel.

§ 96 §

6) Missionary Spirit

(See the General Directory for Catechesis, nos. 84, 86-87.)

Cultivate an evangelizing spirit among all the faithful as an integral element of their baptismal calling, of the Church's nature and mission, and of a Catholic way of life.

Respond to God's call whether as lay, ordained, or religious, and develop a personal apostolate in family, Church, and society.

Motivate and equip the faithful to speak to others about the Scriptures, the tradition and teachings of the Church, and one's own experience of faith.

Explore and promote the applications of the Church's moral and social teaching in personal, family, professional, cultural, and social life.

Understand the importance of serving those in need, promoting the common good, and working for the transformation of society through personal and social action.

Appreciate the value of interreligious dialogue and contacts, and promote the Church's mission adventures in the local and universal Church.

Concrete Approaches

§ 97 § The scope of catechetical content is cognitive, experiential, and behavioral⁷² and it requires development in "the threefold dimension of word, memory, and witness (doctrine, celebration, and commitment in life)."⁷³ This balanced method fosters growth in both the faith by which we believe and the faith in which we believe. As the General Directory for Catechesis says, "this 'Yes' to Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of revelation of the Father, is twofold: a trustful abandonment to God and a loving assent to all that he has revealed to us."⁷⁴ It takes place "through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living"⁷⁵—both together foster each disciple's growth into the full faith and life of the Gospel. This approach also promotes a natural linkage between the faith we profess and celebrate and the life we live, thus meeting one of the principal challenges of our day.

A Multi-Faceted Approach

§ 98 § Given the broad scope of content, the diverse range of adult interests and responsibilities, and the availability of learning resources, no single approach can meet everyone's needs. Consequently, to adult faith formation is necessary. Parish leaders need to provide a variety of learning activities and resources to meet the diverse needs of parishioners. Inter-parish cooperation is a developing and important dynamic that can increase learning opportunities for parishioners, especially (but not only) for smaller parishes.

§ 99 § Ongoing faith formation can be "accomplished through a great variety of forms: 'systematic and occasional, individual and community, organized and spontaneous.'"⁷⁶ Learn to see and take advantage of every opportunity to help adults appreciate and grow in their faith. The following five approaches can be

used in some way in any Catholic community, and are to be adapted as appropriate to parish size and need.

§ 100 §

1) Liturgy

Each Sunday, the majority of our Catholic adults gather as a community of faith to celebrate the Eucharist in praise of God, in joyful faith, and in a deepening discipleship with the Lord Jesus. Sunday Eucharist remains the center of the Church's life.⁷⁷ Indeed, active participation in the liturgy "is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit"⁷⁸ and deepen their conversion to God.

§ 101 § Liturgy fosters this ongoing conversion, uniting us in Christ and with one another, uplifting our spirits in thankful, joyful praise, and renewing our hearts in love for God, turning us to love of neighbor. Each aspect of worship—the homily, the physical environment, hospitality, liturgical ministries, congregational participation, appropriate music, the Sunday bulletin with inclusions—has the potential to foster adult faith, bringing people into a more intimate relationship with Christ and with one another.⁷⁹ Daily Mass and other communal prayer experiences provide additional formative opportunities.

§ 102 §

2) Family- or Home-Centered Activities

There may be no place more significant for catechesis than the family. "Family catechesis precedes . . . accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis"⁸⁰—and this applies in any structure or stage of family life.

§ 103 § Catechetical opportunities situated in family settings foster both adult and family faith growth, while also addressing one of the major reasons adults give for not participating in adult education: time away from their families. Maximize opportunities for adult faith formation to

fit into the rhythms of family life and not to pull families apart.

§ 104 § Diocesan newspapers (frequently overlooked for their potential), Catholic magazines, seasonal booklets, monthly calendars, newsletters, periodic mailings, pastoral visits, family prayer and Scripture sharing, home blessings, family-to-family ministry, videos that promote family faith sharing, Catholic websites, and a home-based component in programs of catechesis for children and youth can all provide adults and their families with meaningful faith formation experiences. "The means of social communication are used to complement the established ways of teaching. They also give opportunities for further education to adolescents and adults."⁸¹

§ 105 §

3) Small Groups

Many Catholic adults already meet regularly in a variety of small groups for encouragement to better live their faith in the world and to build community. In their various forms these groups provide genuine support to people in living their faith in daily life. "As basic units of the parish, they serve to increase the corporate life and mission of the parish by sharing in its life generously with their talents and support."⁸²

§ 106 § Small communities are powerful vehicles for adult faith formation, providing opportunities for learning, prayer, mutual support, and the shared experience of Christian living and service to Church and society. Ecclesial movements and associations that are part of the vibrant life of the Church make great contributions here. We welcome this phenomenon as "a sign of the 'Church's vitality,'"⁸³ and have offered guidelines for authentic small faith community development in *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium* and in *Communion and Mission*.

§ 107 §

4) Large Groups

Some adults prefer to learn in large group settings. It can be effective and efficient to take advantage of times when adults are already present, as when their children's catechetical sessions are scheduled. Other settings may include lectures, panel presentations and discussions, group service projects, social events (e.g., Lenten suppers) with a prayer or learning component, ecumenical activities during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, participation in the March for Life on January 22, and working together to provide housing for low-income families or to build or repair parish facilities. We encourage parishes to provide a variety of regular larger group opportunities for adult faith formation.

§ 108 §

5) Individual Activities

Adults also spend time alone—commuting or traveling, doing yard work or household chores, keeping a "holy hour," or finding a few minutes in the morning or at night for reflection and prayer. Some adults, especially the sick or homebound, spend much time alone. With the right resources and assistance, this time alone can lead to a growing relationship with Jesus.

§ 109 § Materials for personal prayer, study, and reflection are available in print, on audio or videotape, and on the Internet. We need creative ways to make these items more widely known and easily accessible through the use of media. For example, parish bulletins or diocesan newspapers can publicize books or websites, and parish lending libraries or book/tape sales can provide resources to adults. Parishes and dioceses can develop their own web pages or chat rooms, which people can access at any time to engage in a discussion with other people of faith, or find religious news or information about prayer, the Catholic tradition, or current events.

§ 110 § We encourage all Catholics to spend some time alone with God each day, whether they meditate on Scripture, use printed or memorized prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, the rosary,

meditation and contemplative prayer, or simply dwell in wordless praise in God's loving presence. Even five minutes a day devoted to one's relationship with the Lord can lead to a deepened faith and a more active Christian witness.

Implementing These Approaches

§ 111 § Because of their differences in size and resources, each parish will have to determine its own array of faith formation opportunities from each of the five preceding areas. But the basic principle remains valid in all cases: "the local Church must . . . provide diversified programs of permanent catechesis for Christian adults."⁸⁴

§ 112 § We encourage new and creative initiatives in every Catholic community. But we also encourage making the most of existing parish activities and services. In fact, every aspect and event in parish life can be intentionally fashioned as an occasion for adult faith formation. For example, every parish meeting can begin with a reading of the upcoming Sunday's Gospel, followed by a time of reflection and faith sharing. Being intentional about catechetical opportunities can significantly enhance adult faith formation in every community. Whatever approach is used, each parish needs to consider seriously how it will make the lifelong faith formation of its adult members its chief catechetical concern.

Part IV: A Plan for Ministry -- Organizing for Adult Faith Formation

And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

§ 113 § Making adult faith formation a vibrant and fruitful reality in parish life will require the support of a solid infrastructure of ministry in local

faith communities. In Part IV we identify key elements of this organizational support. We begin with reflections on the parish; it is where much adult faith formation takes place, and it is the chief ministerial agent of such formation within and beyond the parish. We then focus on the people needed for this ministry, for "the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel."#85

The Pivotal Importance of the Parish

§ 114 § For most Catholics, the parish is their primary experience of the Church. It is where they gather for weekly worship, celebrate their most joyous occasions, and mourn their deepest losses. There they are called to repentance and renewal, finding and celebrating God's forgiveness and reconciliation. Embracing the dying and rising of Jesus in their lives, they are challenged to holiness and strengthened for self-giving love and Christian service.

§ 115 § At the same time, not everyone who seeks to live a Catholic life does so through regular parish membership. We are challenged to find effective ways to walk the journey of life with all Catholics—including those without a strong parish connection—and to enrich that shared journey with the gifts of the faith community. Even as we walk with these non-parish Catholics, we seek ways to bring them back again to active parish life.

§ 116 § The ministerial personnel and infrastructure to meet this challenge will be found chiefly in the parish and diocesan community, as described below. And yet this responsibility belongs fundamentally to the whole parish, which is called to be "a visible place of faith-witness" and "the living and permanent environment for growth in the faith."#86

§ 117 § The parish, then, provides the place, persons, and means to summon and sustain

adults in lifelong conversion of heart, mind, and life. It is, "without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed."#87

§ 118 §

1) The Parish Is the Curriculum

While this pastoral plan is concerned primarily with intentional adult faith formation programs, the success of such efforts rests very much on the quality and total fabric of parish life. This includes, for example, "the quality of the liturgies, the extent of shared decision making, the priorities in the parish budget, the degree of commitment to social justice, the quality of the other catechetical programs."#88

§ 119 § Parishioners' personal involvement in ministry is also formative. They learn as they prepare for ministry and as they engage in it; they learn from those with whom they serve and from those whom they serve; and by their witness, they show others the life-giving power of faith.

§ 120 § The homily holds powerful potential for fostering the faith of adults.#89 It "takes up again the journey of faith put forward by catechesis, and brings it to its natural fulfillment. At the same time, it encourages the Lord's disciples to begin anew each day their spiritual journey in truth, adoration and thanksgiving."#90

§ 121 § When these various elements of parish life are weak or lacking, formal programs for adults typically do not flourish; when they are vibrant and strong, they create an overall climate of active participation and living faith that can only benefit the parish's intentional formation efforts with adults. Thus, while the parish may have an adult faith formation program, it is no less true that the parish is an adult faith formation program.

§ 122 §

2) Shaping Parish Culture

To foster this living climate of faith, pastors and those with whom they collaborate in pastoral leadership will want to assess and intentionally

shape the culture and procedures of the parish, using questions such as: How are people encouraged to examine their basic assumptions about life and its ultimate meaning? How do they acquire the perspective and skills for an intelligent appropriation of Catholic Christian tradition and an honest, informed assessment of contemporary culture? How is the Christian message lived, communicated, and explored? How do people experience Christian community in family, parish, small groups, and ecumenical encounters? How do they actively participate in liturgical, small group, family, and personal prayer? How are they involved in assessing local needs and discerning pastoral priorities? How is Christian stewardship in parish and society called forth and welcomed? How do they personally serve the "least ones" (Mt 25:45)? How are they involved in shaping public policy and making society more just? In short, how is learning in faith already happening through the ordinary experience of parish life and mission?

§ 123 § A 1990 study of Protestant congregations identified two factors as having the strongest positive influence on the faith maturity and loyalty of adults: lifelong involvement in Christian education (during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) and lifelong involvement in the life of the Church.⁹¹ This data is affirmed in the study conducted by James Davidson et al. that stresses the importance of personal attributes, upbringing, life course experiences, and commitment in relationship to one's beliefs and practices.⁹² Whatever we can do in Catholic parishes and dioceses to encourage lifelong involvement in church life and faith formation will bear fruit in strengthened Christian community and mission.

Key Parish Roles of Leadership and Service for Adult Faith Formation

§ 124 § To make adult faith formation ministry most effective, certain roles of leadership and corresponding pastoral structures are critical. These roles constitute a ministerial infrastructure

that we believe is necessary to sustain a healthy parish practice of adult faith formation.

§ 125 § The following objectives highlight four key roles: (1) the pastor and other pastoral leaders; (2) the adult faith formation leader who becomes the lead agent in promoting and supporting this ministry in the parish; (3) the adult faith formation team who collaborate with the leader in planning and providing learning opportunities; and (4) catechists of adults.

§ 126 § While the whole parish is responsible for catechetical ministry, these four leadership roles are critical lead agents. In this section we describe these roles, introduce objectives to be accomplished, and propose indicators to help in assessing attainment of the objectives. Objectives and indicators are based upon successful pastoral practice. They are meant as guides for enhancing and expanding effective adult faith formation, and they can be adapted to local needs and circumstances.

The Pastor and Other Pastoral Leaders

§ 127 § Objective One:

The pastor and other pastoral leaders will demonstrate a clear commitment to the vision and practice of lifelong growth in Christian faith.

The pastor bears the pastoral and spiritual responsibility, as reflected in the code of canon law, for catechesis in the parish and for ensuring an authentic presentation of the faith to adults.⁹³ He personally models mature adult faith and is its principal advocate in the parish. He sees to it that adults of all ages have opportunities to learn and grow in faith throughout their lives. To equip them for these tasks, seminarians, priests, and deacons are to study catechetical methodology, especially the principles and practices of adult faith formation.⁹⁴ "Experience bears out that the quality of catechesis in a community depends very largely on the presence and activity of the priest."⁹⁵

§ 128 § In parishes with additional pastoral staff, the pastor ensures that all staff members promote adult faith formation as a parish priority. In communities without a resident pastor, the pastoral administrator ensures that adult faith formation opportunities are provided.

Indicators

§ 129 § The pastor establishes parish policies and procedures that give priority to the vision and practice of adult faith formation. Personally, the pastor promotes the vision of mature faith in the normal course of his ministry—through working with the pastoral council and parish committees, in supervision of the parish staff, in his homilies, and by encouraging everyone's active participation in the mission of the parish and in the Church's ministry of the word. In keeping with their charisms and inclinations they are responsible for teaching adults, for priests are "educators of the faith" by virtue of ordination.⁹⁶ They assure that the parish budget funds staffing, training, and resourcing for adult faith formation to the fullest extent possible. The pastor charges the adult faith formation leader and team to provide "multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith,"⁹⁷ well suited to the diverse needs of the parish. He fosters their work through clear and enthusiastic endorsements of adult faith formation opportunities. He encourages networking and collaboration across parish boundaries and with regional and diocesan initiatives.

§ 130 § Other parish staff members promote and support the faith formation of adults, and they encourage parish adults to participate in basic and continuous education in the faith. All staff members promote ongoing adult faith formation and help to shape and support the policies and priorities that guide it. They work with the pastoral council and other parish leaders to make this ministry integral to parish identity and mission and a source of support for all the other ministries.

§ 131 § The parish places adult catechesis at the center of its stated mission and goals, and it promotes the importance of adult faith formation at every opportunity. The vision of faith formation as a lifelong journey coupled with opportunities to promote that journey hold a prominent place in strategic planning efforts, in the formulation of mission statements, and in the determination of annual goals. In addition, the parish pastoral council and other leadership bodies accept, support, promote, and participate in this vision in their work of leading and serving the parish.

§ 132 § The parish gives adult faith formation a priority in the allocation of financial resources, in providing learning space, and in parish scheduling. Because of its pivotal importance, parishes make a serious investment in the faith formation of adults. This includes providing facilities well adapted for adults—warm, hospitable surroundings where adults can comfortably gather, socialize, and learn together in small and large groups—whether at the parish or in the larger community (i.e., local community center). Adult faith formation is given due priority when parish facilities are scheduled and the parish calendar is drawn up. It also means providing funds for equipment—VCRs, TVs, computers—whose use will enhance adult growth.

§ 133 § The parish helps to provide access to various available learning resources and opportunities for adults. Parishes make available adult catechetical resources whose content is in conformity with the Scriptures and the Catechism, and whose approaches are consistent with the General Directory for Catechesis. These include print, audio, and video resources, along with training in the use of modern educational resources using computer technology.⁹⁸ A parish library is a great asset for this purpose.

§ 134 § Parishes connect parishioners to the resources of the wider community, especially diocesan conferences for catechists and pastoral leaders, programs presented in neighboring parishes or elsewhere in the diocese, and

formation opportunities provided by "the various groups, movements and associations which offer catechesis for adults."⁹⁹ Appropriate programs provided by Catholic or secular colleges, night schools, adult or continuing education programs, and distance learning programs are made known to parishioners.

The Adult Faith Formation Leader

§ 135 § Objective Two:

Each parish will designate an adult faith formation leader—authorized by the pastor and personally involved in ongoing formation—to assume primary responsibility for implementing the ministry of adult faith formation.

Each parish needs a lead agent to take hands-on responsibility "for effectively establishing the overall adult learning context and programming in the diocese/parish."¹⁰⁰ This person may be a member of the parish staff or a parishioner prepared for leadership in this ministry. While the position may be full-time salaried, it could just as well be filled by a person who donates his or her time for a few hours a week. What is important is that the person have or acquire an adult catechetical vision and competency, be formed by the word of God, and be well versed in and comfortable with current catechetical documents, especially the Catechism and the General Directory for Catechesis. This leader will possess the time, energy, and commitment to drive the adult learning agenda of the parish.

§ 136 § If the designated leader is the parish director of religious education or another staff person, adjustments may be needed in job descriptions so as not to shortchange the amount and quality of time and energy they can devote to adult faith formation. Otherwise their many responsibilities may prevent them from devoting sufficient time to this essential priority. We acknowledge gratefully the valuable work over the years of so many parish staff members, especially directors of religious education, who have often

taken the lead in providing for adult catechesis in their places of ministry.

§ 137 § If the adult faith formation leader is not a staff member, he or she reports to the parish staff member most directly responsible for catechesis, so as to assure a cohesive parish catechetical ministry.

Indicators

§ 138 § The parish designates a staff person or qualified lay parishioner as the adult faith formation leader. The designated leader helps to shape and implement the parish's vision for lifelong growth in faith. The parish makes every effort to provide the leader suitable formation in theology, pastoral and educational skills, and spiritual development.

§ 139 § The leader advocates for the primacy of adult faith formation in the parish. With the guidance and support of the pastor and the parish staff, the leader directs and coordinates a comprehensive approach to parish adult faith formation.

§ 140 § The leader promotes the development of an effective adult faith formation team. In consultation with pastor and staff, the leader recruits and prepares an adult faith formation team. The leader helps the team find, select, and use quality resources for their own formation and for parish programs. The leader acts as a bridge connecting the team, the parish staff, other parish and diocesan groups, agencies, and service organizations.

§ 141 § The leader works with other parish ministers to promote cohesive, effective adult faith formation programming. The leader helps every parish ministry, program, and activity realize its full adult faith formation potential. The leader does this in a way that promotes cooperation and not competition among parish ministries.

The Adult Faith Formation Team

§ 142 § Objective Three:

The parish will have a core team of parishioners committed to and responsible for implementing the parish vision and plan for adult faith formation.

Providing effective, diverse adult faith formation opportunities is a demanding responsibility requiring the collaborative efforts of a well-trained, coordinated team of parishioners, "a nucleus of mature Christians, initiated into the faith."¹⁰¹ Clearly, no person acting alone can adequately meet the needs and fulfill the potential of parish adult faith formation ministry. The value of a team approach has been clearly shown in the success of the RCIA, youth ministry, and pro-life activities in parishes throughout the country.

§ 143 § Working with the adult faith formation leader, the team is responsible for "coordinating the establishment of a context for adult learning, and planning activities for specific programs."¹⁰² Its role is consultation, planning, and program implementation for adult faith formation in the parish. Typically comprising three to ten members, teams include qualified representatives of all the major parish demographic and cultural groups. This representative team will recognize the gifts and talents of each group and address the varied learning needs and interests of the multi-cultural and generational community more effectively. The adult faith formation team is encouraged to coordinate its efforts with those of other parish ministries engaged in formation (e.g., children and youth catechesis, young adult ministry, family life, pro-life, liturgy, social action, and ecumenism) in order to weave diverse parish efforts into a more cohesive approach.

Indicators

§ 144 § The parish has a functioning adult faith formation team that is formally recognized in the parish leadership structure. The team, authorized by the pastor, has clear operating procedures and

lines of accountability. Until a well-prepared team is in place, the adult faith formation leader arranges for programs and services.

§ 145 § The parish team, working with the pastor and parish staff, formulates a vision of adult faith formation for the parish. The team works collaboratively to identify the principal spiritual and human needs of adult parishioners, discern the learning possibilities inherent in those needs, and develop a vision and plan for parish adult faith formation. In this process the team works with the pastor and staff, draws upon its knowledge of the parish and its history and culture, and studies relevant church documents and available research on the parish and on adult catechesis.

§ 146 § The team identifies elements of parish life that foster adult growth in faith, assesses their impact, and if necessary, offers recommendations to enhance their effectiveness. The parish touches the lives of adults in countless ways that shape their faith. The team becomes conscious and intentional about these aspects of parish life, evaluates their effectiveness, and offers to the staff or to the other ministry teams suggestions and assistance to make them more effective.

§ 147 § The team provides a diverse range of quality programming for parish adult faith formation. The team plans, promotes, implements, and evaluates suitable adult learning programs and opportunities for spiritual growth, human development, and Christian service for all members of the community.

§ 148 § The team receives both initial and ongoing formation to prepare it to accomplish its mission effectively. Providing quality adult catechesis requires specialized knowledge and skills. The adult faith formation leader sees that the team receives both initial orientation and ongoing formation, so that they grow in personal spirituality, love for Christ, and knowledge of the

principles and methods of effective adult catechesis.

The Catechist of Adults

§ 149 § Objective Four:

Each parish will have access to trained catechists to serve the diverse adult faith formation efforts of the parish or region.

The catechist of adults, the person "who actually engages the learners . . . is responsible for either directly presenting some facet of the Christian faith, or [for] serving as a catalyst or guide to the learners as they seek to deepen their faith."¹⁰³ All aspects of the formation of catechists must be thoroughly centered on Jesus Christ, be permeated by the Church's understanding of the Gospel, and help them learn to communicate the Good News faithfully and effectively.¹⁰⁴

§ 150 § Catechists of adults need to be people of faith with an evangelizing spirit, a zeal for God's kingdom, and a commitment to lifelong formation. They have a sound grasp of Catholic doctrine and theology, an ability to access the various sources of the word of God,¹⁰⁵ and an understanding of how to communicate this knowledge effectively to adults, drawing appropriately upon psychology and the social sciences as needed. They are first people of prayer who recognize their own need to grow in faith.

§ 151 § It is not enough for catechists to know their subjects. They also need the competence to animate a shared journey with other adults, the ability to relate authentic Catholic faith to real-life circumstances, the ability to guide them in prayer and through spiritual experiences, and the craft to integrate divergent tendencies into the full faith and life of the Church. It is essential that catechists witness in their own lives the truth of the faith they are communicating. This will require a love for people, a passion for catechesis, effective interpersonal and community-building skills, respect for different adult learning styles,

the ability to communicate and explore the Gospel with others using active and engaging methods appropriate to the learners and to the content, and the flexibility to adapt to ever-changing circumstances.

Indicators

§ 152 § Each parish has access to various types of well-prepared catechists for adult faith formation.¹⁰⁶ Qualified catechists are available to work with adults in all parishes. Diocesan offices provide assistance in the formation of adult catechists and in helping parishes share qualified catechists of adults. Adult catechists are enrolled in or have completed the formation programs and requirements as determined by the local Church.

§ 153 § Parishes provide recognition for their catechists of adults and funding assistance for their formation. "Always and in every way, lay catechists should be recognized, respected and loved by their priests and communities. They should be supported in their formation and encouraged and helped to accomplish a task which is indispensable but far from easy."¹⁰⁷ Diocesan Support for Adult Faith Formation

§ 154 § While the parish is the place of front-line ministry in adult faith formation, the bishop has primary responsibility for the general welfare of the local Church, and as teacher of the faith, he is the chief catechist of adults.¹⁰⁸ To assist the bishop in carrying out this role, the task of supporting parish adult faith formation ministers is exercised normally by diocesan administrative offices, chiefly the diocesan catechetical office.¹⁰⁹

The Diocesan Vision of Adult Faith Formation

§ 155 § Objective Five:

The diocese will have a clearly stated vision of lifelong learning in parishes that promotes adult faith formation as the chief form of catechesis.¹¹⁰

When adult faith formation is clearly at the heart of the bishop's diocesan vision for catechesis, this guides and orients all ministry agencies within the diocese toward faithful implementation of the Church's contemporary understanding of catechetical ministry.

Indicators

§ 156 § The bishop is known as a consistent advocate for the centrality of adult faith formation and as a teacher of adults. By clearly affirming and consistently promoting adult formation, the bishop sets the tone throughout the diocese. He does this by "putting into operation the necessary personnel, means, and equipment, and also the financial resources" to promote and sustain in his diocese a real passion for adult catechesis. He is "vigilant with regard to the authenticity of the faith,"¹¹¹ formation for catechists of adults, and the quality of adult catechetical materials. He is also zealous in his responsibility to "transmit personally to [the] faithful the doctrine of life"¹¹² in his role as preacher and teacher.

§ 157 § The diocese gives clear priority to the formation of mature disciples of Jesus. The diocese highlights adult faith formation and affirms its centrality in the ministry of the word.

§ 158 § The diocese has in place a pastoral plan for adult faith formation that has been formed in consultation with diocesan and parish leaders. A specific diocesan plan for adult faith formation, created in consultation with pastors and other parish leaders throughout the diocese, guides diocesan activities.

§ 159 § Diocesan offices work collaboratively to advocate for a comprehensive integrated ministry of adult faith formation at the parish and inter-parish level. All diocesan offices and agencies are concerned in their own way with fostering mature adult faith. By coordinating their plans and objectives and collaborating together, offices

avoid duplicating services and unhealthy competition.

The Diocesan Plan and Strategy for Adult Faith Formation

§ 160 § Objective Six:

The diocese will have a clear strategy for developing parish adult faith formation leaders, teams, and catechists.

The primary role of the diocese is to affirm the priority of adult faith formation and to provide leadership, personnel, services, and resources to assist parishes in developing this ministry. While the specifics of strategies will vary from diocese to diocese, it is crucial that parishes have reliable assistance from their diocesan offices in forming parish leadership, teams, and catechists for adult faith formation.

Indicators

§ 161 § The diocese builds community and connections among parish adult faith formation leaders, and it provides for their ongoing formation and support. Diocesan leaders take great care to nourish the faith and the skills of parish adult faith formation leaders. A network of such leaders is established across the diocese for their mutual support and enrichment.

§ 162 § The diocese supports parish adult faith formation teams in various ways. The diocese regularly promotes the growth of parish adult faith formation teams, advocates for them, consults with them, and offers ongoing resourcing and training.

§ 163 § The diocese offers formation opportunities for catechists of adults. "The formation of catechists is responsibly directed by the local Church, under the guidance of the bishop and the appropriate offices, commissions and institutes of formation, in accordance with approved principles and programs."¹¹³

Diocesan Support for Adult Faith Formation

§ 164 § Objective Seven:

The diocese will allocate adequate personnel and resources for carrying out the mission of adult faith formation in the diocese.

If dioceses expect parishes to invest in adult faith formation as a priority, then dioceses must do the same.

Indicators

§ 165 § The diocese has a staff person whose primary responsibility is to provide for the training and resourcing of parish adult faith formation leaders, teams, and catechists.¹¹⁴ Depending on the size and needs of the diocese, all or a significant portion of at least one designated staff person's responsibilities includes advocacy, consultation, networking, communicating, resourcing, research, and training for effective adult faith formation ministry in the diocese. Working with a diocesan commission, advisory committee, or resource network, this person directs and coordinates the various diocesan adult faith formation initiatives.

§ 166 § The diocese has an adult faith formation commission, advisory committee, or resource network. Members of this commission serve as a diocesan advisory body in the ministry of adult faith formation. As such, they support and assist the diocesan staff person and the parishes in various projects: the assessment of current needs; the development of a diocesan adult faith formation plan; formation for leaders, teams, and catechists; consultation with parish catechetical leaders; networking or mentoring arrangements; and reviewing and recommending materials. This commission serves as a sounding board and think tank on issues and trends. Membership is drawn from clergy, religious, and laity and from parish leadership, diocesan staff, and others with expertise in this ministry. This commission is representative of the cultural and linguistic

diversity of the diocese, and it is informed about relevant church documents that address faith formation within specific cultural and ethnic Catholic communities.

§ 167 § The diocese maintains current faith formation resources and makes them available for parish review and use. Parishes have direct access to adult faith formation resources through publishers, bookstores, libraries, conferences, and the Internet. The diocese maintains a resource center where materials can be previewed, purchased, or borrowed.¹¹⁵ The resource center also helps adult faith formation leaders and catechists learn to use media effectively with adults. All parishes—no matter what their financial situation—have access to quality materials and effective programs.

A Call to Implementation

§ 168 § The implementation of this pastoral plan can bring about profound transformation and renewal in our nation, our dioceses, and our parishes. But the plan needs to be embraced first by diocesan and parish leaders, embodied in pastoral structures and services, and put into practice by well-prepared ministers. Here are steps to take to begin this process of implementation.

§ 169 §

1) Study the plan, pray about it, and discuss it with others. Take time to explore its vision and initiatives. Discover how you can support the plan and how the plan can support you and others in your various ministries. Commit yourself to its implementation.

§ 170 §

2) Analyze the situation in which adults actually live in Church and society. Carefully research and assess the current state of affairs in adult faith formation and pastoral life in both parish and diocese. Consider how socio-cultural and economic factors, local needs and resources, the

formulation of options, and existing priorities influence the implementation of this plan.¹¹⁶

§ 171 §

3) Develop action steps for implementing the plan.

As dioceses and parishes determine their prioritized goals, objectives, and strategies for adult faith formation—flowing from the mission of the Church and the analysis of the local situation—an effective plan of action will emerge. The implementation of this plan will be characterized by its realism, simplicity, conciseness, and clarity. Such a plan will set a course for action that will generate enthusiasm within the local Church.¹¹⁷

§ 172 § The plan will address the needs of the whole community, for "the true subject of catechesis is the Church."¹¹⁸ It will do this especially by attending to the various relational networks and populations in the parish. Ultimately, it will reach to the heart and mind of the individual adult and his or her need for primary proclamation, basic catechesis, or continuing education in the faith. When individuals and small communities seek out the formation they need—and when parishes have oriented their ministries to provide it—then adult faith formation will be a true priority.

§ 173 §

4) Prepare your leaders. Identify, invite, train, and support people to serve as lead agents in fulfilling the plan. All who serve in this ministry, whether full-time professionals, active parishioners, or outside speakers and consultants, need adequate formation.

§ 174 § Dioceses are encouraged to develop certification programs for adult faith formation ministry that offer well-planned, comprehensive, and practical training to meet the diverse needs of adults. It is essential that adult faith formation principles be incorporated into the training of future clergy, religious, and lay ministers and into all continuing formation for clergy and religious.

Theology and religious studies programs that prepare persons for ministry are challenged to develop in their students competencies for working with adults and an understanding of the adult life cycle.

§ 175 § We ask that all ministry preparation and formation programs—whether under parish, inter-parish, or diocesan auspices, in seminaries, novitiates, or Catholic colleges and universities—address the importance of adult faith formation ministry and conduct their programs in accord with its principles.

§ 176 § We give thanks for all of the resources we have at our disposal. The Catholic publishing community is strong and willing to develop quality catechetical materials for adults. Their contribution to the vitality of catechetical ministry in our country with children deserves our recognition. We need and welcome their ongoing contribution to this revitalization of faith formation ministry with adults.

§ 177 § Catholic institutions of higher education and Catholic campus ministry at secular institutions are a great blessing. They have always served the Church well by educating and forming young adult Catholics. We turn to them now to help us develop creative ways of implementing this plan at parish and diocesan levels.

§ 178 §

5) Make a commitment of financial resources. It is not enough to talk about the need for adult faith formation; actions are also essential. Budgets and personnel decisions will need to be reconsidered in light of this plan. The challenge will be to provide resources to build adult faith without undermining other educational activities already engaged.

A Time to Plan, a Time to Act

§ 179 § We recognize that this plan cannot be implemented all at once. Time must be taken to

understand the plan, carefully analyze local situations, and prepare diocesan and parish action steps. It will take at least one year before local plans can be put into effect.

§ 180 § Once the plan has been implemented in dioceses and parishes across the country, it will take several years before our labors begin to bear fruit. Five years after this plan is implemented, let us analyze our progress in making adult faith formation a true priority, assess the impact of this reorientation on the vitality of parish life and mission, and celebrate the good that has been accomplished, revising plans as needed. Every five years thereafter, let us continue to assess the situation, update plans, and renew our commitment to ongoing adult faith formation.

Conclusion

So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them. . . . Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Lk 24:33-35)

Our Hope for the Future

§ 181 § Before meeting the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus, the disciples were discouraged by all that had happened. We too, at times, may feel discouraged when our efforts do not achieve the fruitfulness for which we hope and pray. There are many obstacles to adult catechesis, many challenges to overcome to bring the living word of God to the adults in our faith communities. But just like the disciples after Jesus revealed himself to them, our hearts burn within us to proclaim the Good News of the reign of God. We are committed to this plan and are willing "to exercise utmost courage and patience"¹¹⁹ as we implement it.

§ 182 § We move ahead full of hope, knowing this vision of adult faith formation can become reality. Jesus the Risen One is still with us,

meeting us on the pathways of our lives, sharing our concerns, enlightening us with his word, strengthening us with his presence, nourishing us in the breaking of the bread, and sending us forth to be his witnesses. In the providence of God the Father, the action of the Holy Spirit will rekindle the fire of love in the hearts of the faithful and renew the catechetical dynamism of the Church.¹²⁰

§ 183 § Awakened and energized by the Spirit, let us strengthen our commitment and intensify our efforts to help the adults in our communities be touched and transformed by the life-giving message of Jesus, to explore its meaning, experience its power, and live in its light as faithful adult disciples today. Let us do our part with creativity and vigor, our hearts aflame with love to empower adults to know and live the message of Jesus. This is the Lord's work. In the power of the Spirit it will not fail but will bear lasting fruit for the life of the world.

Afterword

§ 184 § Readers of church documents and the professional literature will find different terms used to name the ministry: for example, adult catechesis, adult religious education, adult Christian education, and adult faith formation. Sometimes these terms are used more or less interchangeably, sometimes in distinction to one another.

§ 185 § We recognize that the term "catechesis" has a long history in Christian usage, and "has undergone a semantic evolution during the twenty centuries of the Church's history."¹²¹ In most recent church documents, catechesis is understood as a moment in the process of evangelization.¹²² Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community (1990) summarizes the usage of John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979) by stating: "The specific role of the catechesis of adults consists in an initial deepening of the faith received at baptism, in an elementary, complete and systematic way (CT,

no. 21), with a view to helping individuals all life long grow to the full maturity of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13)."¹²³

§ 186 § The text continues: "Catechesis per se has to be distinguished therefore from other activities, even though it cannot be separated from them:—it is different from evangelization, which is the proclamation of the Gospel for the first time to those who have not heard it, or the re-evangelization of those who have forgotten it;—it is different from formal religious education, which goes beyond the basic elements of faith in more systematic and specialized courses;—it is also different from those informal occasions for faith awareness in God's presence, which arise in fragmentary and incidental ways in the daily life of adults."¹²⁴

§ 187 § More recently, the General Directory for Catechesis (1997) speaks of "the primary proclamation" that is addressed to nonbelievers, marginal Christians, non-Christians, and the children of Christian families; "initiatory catechesis" (also called "basic catechesis") for catechumens, candidates completing their initiation, returning Catholics, Catholic children and youth, as well as Christian education in families and religious instruction in schools; and "continuous education in the faith" ("permanent catechesis" or "continuing catechesis") for all Christians "who need constantly to nourish and deepen their faith throughout their lives." These latter two may also be called "pre- and post-baptismal catechesis." There is also a liturgical form and a theological form of the ministry of the word, and the "religious instruction" that takes place in schools.¹²⁵

§ 188 § These various distinctions and usages are not consistently observed in all church documents, nor are they consistently used in pastoral planning and practice in our country. A clear consensus on precise contemporary terminology and usage has not yet developed,

and at this time we do not wish to foreclose this natural and gradual process of development.

§ 189 § Consequently, in the present document we do not attempt to use the various distinctions with strict consistency. Rather, we have generally used the phrase "adult faith formation" to designate the whole field without further specific distinctions (i.e., catechesis, religious education, initiatory or basic catechesis, permanent catechesis or continuous education in the faith, and perfective catechesis).

§ 190 § At the same time we also acknowledge the usefulness of knowing these various distinctions. They can assist planners to be aware of the many different faith needs and circumstances of adults in their community and to offer them a wide and relevant range of programming and services suited to their particular faith itinerary.

§ 191 § We encourage further reflection on this issue, with the aim of helping practitioners better name their multiform ministry and better identify and serve the unique circumstances and diverse needs of the individuals and groups on whose behalf they are charged to minister God's word.

Notes

1. Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), nos. 121, 124 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998).
2. Cf. GDC, no. 136.
3. On the term "adult faith formation," please see the Afterword.
4. International Council for Catechesis, *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community: Some Principles and Guidelines* (ACCC), no. 25 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1992).
5. GDC, no. 275; cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD), no. 20 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1971).
6. GDC, no. 50; cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World* (EN), nos. 42-45, 54, 57 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1975).
7. GDC, no. 59, citing GCD, no. 20; John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in Our Time* (CT), no. 43 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1979), cf. Part 4, Chapter 2.

8. Cf. GDC, nos. 224-225; Code of Canon Law (CIC), nos. 773, 776-777 (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1983); Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) (1990), nos. 617, 619, 624; CT, no. 64; United States Catholic Conference, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (NCD)*, no. 217 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1979); Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis: Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (PO)*, no. 6. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992).
9. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (LG)*, no. 25. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992); CT, no. 63; GDC, nos. 222-223.
10. Cf. ACCC, no. 82; GDC, nos. 265-267.
11. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (RM)*, no. 3 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1991).
12. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (AA)*, no. 4. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992).
13. CT, no. 43.
14. *Ibid.*
15. GDC, nos. 59, 171, 275.
16. United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education, *Serving Life and Faith: Adult Religious Education and the American Catholic Community*, no. 157 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986).
17. U.S. Catholic Bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education*, no. 43 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1972).
18. NCD, no. 40.
19. Cf. Jn 10:10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, no. 1996ff. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000).
20. Cf. CCC, nos. 1023ff., 1042ff.
21. Cf. CCC, no. 150.
22. U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium: Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" and the Fifteenth Anniversary of "Called and Gifted" (CGTM)*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1995), p. 20; cf. GDC, nos. 53-57.
23. GDC, no. 173.
24. GDC, no. 82; cf. GDC, nos. 56c, 66; CIC, no. 773; CCEO, no. 617; Second Vatican Council, *Christus Dominus: Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church*, no. 14. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992).
25. Cf. CCC, nos. 153-154.
26. AA, no. 4; cf. GDC, nos. 51, 85; CCC, nos. 1074, 1123.
27. CCC, no. 158, citing St. Anselm, *Prosl. prooem.* In *Patrologia Latina*, nos. 153, 225a, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: 1841-1855).
28. Cf. GDC, no. 56a-b.
29. LG, no. 8.
30. CCC, no. 163.
31. CCC, no. 2820; cf. CCC, nos. 1049, 2818; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS)*, nos. 21, 34, 39, 43, 57, 72. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992).
32. GDC, no. 53; cf. CT, no. 5b; cf. CCC, nos. 422-429.
33. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (DV)*, no. 8. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992); CCC, no. 94.
34. GDC, no. 82.
35. GDC, no. 99.
36. CCC, no. 259; cf. CT, no. 5.
37. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici: The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*, no. 64 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988).
38. CCC, no. 157; cf. 1 Thes 2:13.
39. LG, no. 12.
40. CT, no. 61.
41. GS, no. 92; cf. John Paul II, "Eighth Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States during Their Ad Limina Visits," *Ad Limina Addresses: The Addresses of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States during Their Ad Limina Visits: March 5–December 9, 1988* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988); John XXIII, *Ad Petri Cathedram (On Truth, Unity and Peace)*, 1959.
42. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis: Declaration on Christian Education*, no. 2. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992); CIC, no. 217; CCEO, no. 20.
43. ACCC, no. 35.
44. CCC, no. 426, citing CT, no. 5; cf. GDC, nos. 36-43.
45. ACCC, no. 36.
46. EN, no. 23.
47. ACCC, no. 37.
48. ACCC, no. 38.
49. ACCC, no. 24.
50. Cf. GS, no. 39.
51. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio: On the Family, Part 3* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1982); U.S. Catholic Bishops' *Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage and Family Life, A Family Perspective in Church and Society: A Manual for All Pastoral Leaders, Chapter 4* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988); cf. GDC, nos. 226-227, 255.
52. ACCC, no. 29.

53. Cf. GDC, nos. 59, 275.
54. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Aetatis Novae: A New Era. Pastoral Instruction on Social Communication (AN)*, no. 8 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1992).
55. Cf. GDC, nos. 189-190.
56. Cf. GDC, nos. 59, 68, 88-91.
57. ACCC, no. 66; cf. GDC, no. 68.
58. ACCC, no. 56.
59. ACCC, no. 28.
60. CT, no. 53; GDC, nos. 109, 202.
61. The use of the word "culture" here is broader than ethnicity. There are many types of cultures present in the United States including those of various regions, economic classes, religions, and age groupings.
62. Cf. CT, no. 53.
63. RM, no. 54; GDC, no. 206, cf. no. 109.
64. GDC, no. 127, citing DV, no. 21.
65. GDC, no. 120.
66. Cf. GDC, no. 136.
67. GDC, no. 87, cf. nos. 84-86.
68. ACCC, no. 43.
69. CCC, no. 2597.
70. CCC, no. 1970; cf. Jn 15:12, 13:34.
71. GDC, no. 85.
72. GDC, no. 35; cf. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Study Edition (RCIA)*, no. 78 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988).
73. GDC, no. 262a.
74. GDC, no. 54; CCC, no. 177; NCD, no. 56; GCD, no. 36.
75. CIC, no. 773; CCEO, no. 617; GDC, no. 87.
76. GDC, no. 51, citing GCD, no. 19d.
77. CCC, no. 1343.
78. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 14. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: New Revised Edition*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1992).
79. GDC, no. 207.
80. GDC, no. 226, citing CT, no. 68; cf. GDC, nos. 226-227; NCD, no. 221a.
81. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Communio et Progressio: Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication*, no. 48 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1971).
82. CGTM, p. 11.
83. GDC, no. 263; RM, no. 51; cf. GDC, nos. 258c, 264.
84. GDC, no. 275, cf. no. 56d.
85. GDC, no. 234.
86. GDC, no. 158.
87. GDC, no. 257, cf. no. 158.
88. NCD, no. 189.
89. Cf. GDC, nos. 51, 57.
90. CT, no. 48; cf. GDC, no. 70.
91. Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Eklin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Search Institute, 1990).
92. James Davidson et al., *The Search for Common Ground* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1997).
93. CIC, nos. 519, 528.1, 776-777; CCEO, nos. 282, 289, 619, 624; cf. GDC, nos. 224-225, 232.
94. GDC, no. 234; cf. ACCC, no. 83.
95. GDC, no. 225.
96. GDC, no. 224, citing PO, no. 6b.
97. GDC, no. 56d.
98. AN, nos. 11, 18; cf. ACCC, no. 65.
99. ACCC, no. 84.
100. *Ministering to Adult Learners: A Skills Workbook for Christian Educational Leaders*, ed. Jane Wolford Hughes (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1981), p. 29.
101. GDC, no. 258c.
102. *Ministering to Adult Learners*, p. 23.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
104. GDC, nos. 235-236.
105. Cf. GDC, nos. 95-96; CCC, no. 11; ACCC, no. 39; NCD, no. 41; GCD, no. 45; CIC, no. 760; CCEO, no. 615.
106. Cf. GDC, nos. 176, 232; ACCC, nos. 74, 77.
107. ACCC, no. 76; cf. *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Guide for Catechists (GC)*, no. 27 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1993).
108. ACCC, no. 82; cf. CT, no. 63.
109. Cf. GDC, nos. 265-267; NCD, nos. 218b, 238c; *Those Who Hear You Hear Me: A Resource for Bishops and Diocesan Educational/Catechetical Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1995).
110. Cf. GDC, no. 59.
111. GDC, no. 223.
112. CT, no. 63.
113. ACCC, no. 80; cf. GDC, no. 234; NCD, no. 218b5-6.
114. Cf. ACCC, no. 82.
115. Cf. GC, no. 30.
116. GDC, no. 279; cf. GDC, nos. 266a, 279-280; GCD, nos. 98.1, 99-102.
117. GDC, no. 281; cf. GDC, nos. 266b, 103-107.
118. GDC, no. 78; cf. GDC, nos. 51, 57, 60ff.
119. ACCC, no. 85.
120. Cf. CT, no. 72.
121. GDC, no. 35.
122. Cf. CT, no. 18; GDC, no. 63.
123. ACCC, no. 32.
124. *Ibid.*
125. GDC, nos. 51-76; cf. ACCC, corresponding to "evangelization."

The text of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* was developed at the recommendation of the National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education under the direction of the Committee on Education of the United States Catholic Conference. The process included consultation with dioceses through their Offices of Religious Education. The final draft was presented by the Committee on Education of the United States Catholic Conference to the plenary assembly of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference at their general meeting in November 1999. It was approved on November 17, 1999, and is hereby authorized for publication by the undersigned.

Monsignor Dennis M. Schnurr, General Secretary, NCCB/USCC

