

# *The Purpose of Catechesis*

*Seeking the  
Living God*

*communion and intimacy with Christ*

*To offer an opportunity for reflection on the aim and purpose of catechesis centred on GDC 80-1; 84-5 through:*

*reflection on what 'communion and intimacy' with Christ might mean and its implications for our catechesis;*

*consideration of the various tasks of catechesis and the relationship between them.*

*To create the space to share faith as people involved in catechetical ministry .*

*Reflection on and evaluation of current parish practice and resources in the light of the above.*



A series of resources for RCIA teams prepared by the RCIA Network of England and Wales © 2010 RCIA Network.

[www.rcia.org.uk/Resources/Seeking.html](http://www.rcia.org.uk/Resources/Seeking.html)

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## Listen to Scripture

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

Mark 8:27-29



# Read & Reflect I

## GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS

The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ". All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ. Starting with the "initial" conversion of a person to the Lord, moved by the Holy Spirit through the primary proclamation of the Gospel, catechesis seeks to solidify and mature this first adherence. It proposes to help those who have just converted "to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know his 'mystery,' the kingdom of God proclaimed by him, the requirements and comments contained in his Gospel message, and the paths that he has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow him". Baptism, the sacrament by which "we are configured to Christ", sustains this work of catechesis with the help of its grace.

GDC 80

## For Discussion

- How do you experience 'communion and intimacy with Christ' in your life?
- Is there a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus? How would you describe this difference?
- As a catechist, how would you help others to know Jesus better? How would you create the space for other people to 'encounter' Jesus?

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# Read & Reflect II

## GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS

The object of catechesis is realized by diverse, interrelated tasks... In virtue of its own internal dynamic, the faith demands to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer. Catechesis must cultivate each of these dimensions...

- Promoting knowledge of the faith
- Teaching to pray
- Liturgical education
- Moral formation
- Community living
- Formation for mission

The tasks of catechesis, consequently, constitute a totality, rich and varied in aspect... "All of these tasks are necessary. As the vitality of the human body depends on the proper function of all of its organs, so also 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.

GDC 84, 85, 87

## Activity

- Visit the six flipchart 'stations' around the room. Write on each sheet what that task of catechesis means to you.

## Act

- Looking at our answers/current practice, where do we place the emphasis?
- Do we have a good balance between the varied tasks of catechesis?
- What areas might we need to develop? What might we need to do to develop this area? Who could help?

## Prayer

Our faith is a gift from you.  
Help us by the power of your Spirit  
to grow in love, so that we may be

Faithful to our baptism  
Alert to the needs of our world  
Inspired to proclaim your Word  
Tireless in upholding justice  
Hopeful in forming the future.

By handing on our faith as a gift,  
may we share the hope given us by Jesus your Son.  
Amen.

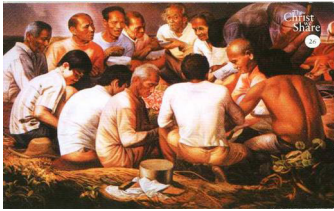
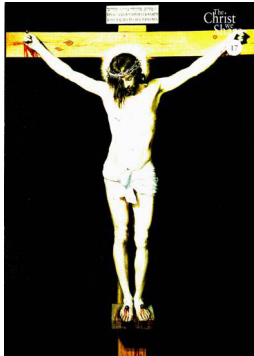
Nottingham Diocese

## Further Reading & Resources

- Joseph O'Hanlon *The Jesus Who Was, The Jesus Who Is*
- Albert Nolan OP *Jesus Today*
- *The Christ We Share* – resource pack available from:
  - [http://www.cms-shop.org.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/CMS/\\_WSPACKS004/-/The%20Christ%20we%20Share](http://www.cms-shop.org.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/CMS/_WSPACKS004/-/The%20Christ%20we%20Share)
- Bill Huebsch
  - *Whole Community Catechesis* (ISBN 978-1585951840) and *Handbook for Success in Whole Community Catechesis*, (ISBN 978-1585953080) Twenty Third Publications
- Pope John Paul II – *On Catechesis in our Time*
  - [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae_en.html)

Who do you say that I am?

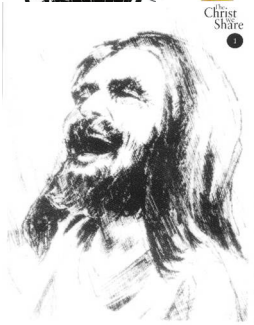
Where do I encounter Christ?

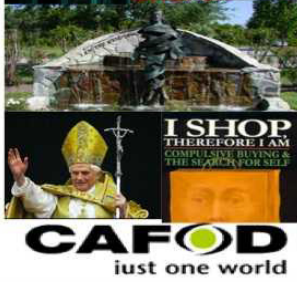
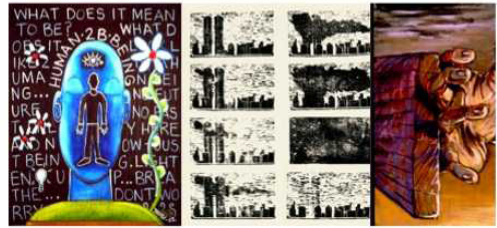


Who introduced Jesus Christ to me?



Who have I shared Jesus the Christ with?





# The Purpose of Catechesis

## PRIOR READING

*If you have time before the session take time to read the following extracts from Church documents as an introduction to the session. There is space to make you own notes in the right hand column.*

“Twenty years ago, in Sydney, I was invited to dinner by a priest and a sister who belonged to another religious order. After a couple of glasses of wine they were enthusing about how wonderful it was to have a personal relationship with Jesus and could not understand how anyone coped who was not so blessed. I felt increasingly inadequate. I did not doubt their sincerity but it was not a language that fitted my experience; I wondered whether I was a fraud, not a real Christian. I could not imagine Jesus as my invisible pal, with whom I had an intense relationship. What was I missing? Reflecting on that conversation all these years later, I realize two things. First of all, that I do not know what they meant by that ‘personal relationship’. Perhaps they were not thinking of Jesus as an invisible buddy at all. Second, that in my experience at least, the absence of that sort of relationship with Jesus is not necessarily a loss of intimacy. The fact that I do not imagine Jesus sitting at my side chatting like a pal, does not imply absence. Our intimacy with God is deeper, for he is ‘closer to me than I am to myself’, in the words of St. Augustine.”

(Timothy Radcliffe OP, *Why Go To Church?* Continuum Books, 2008, p 34)



On the whole we don't take Jesus seriously – whether we call ourselves Christians or not. There are some remarkable exceptions, but by and large we don't love our enemies, we don't turn the other cheek, we don't forgive seventy times seven times, we don't bless those who curse us, we don't share what we have with the poor, and we don't put all our hope and trust in God. We have our excuses. I am no saint. It is not meant for everybody surely? It's a great ideal, but not very practical in this day and age. *Albert Nolan OP, Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom*



“The most obvious problem regarding the face of Jesus is its apparent vagueness. Nobody can see this face. We do not even have an artistic or photographic evidence of it. So people might imagine any sort of face and project whatever they like onto it.

But the fact that we don't know what Jesus looks like might be helpful to us: “...the undetermination of (Jesus) face is intrinsically connected to both the mystery of God and relationship to every other face. It is the openness of the hospitable face, the good undetermination of not being self-contained. This face is alive with the life and glory of God, so its openness has all the capacity for innovation and surprise which belong to God. It is so oriented to others that knowing and loving this face means being called to know and love them. Its self-effacement constantly urges those who look to it that they should route their seeking the face of Christ through other people. This is the long detour of recognising Christ in others, not one of whom is irrelevant to knowing and loving him...”

Adapted from David F Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 1999, p172-



Discovering Christ is the finest adventure of your life. But it is not enough to discover him just once. Discovering him means to seek him always, to come to know him through prayer, participating in the sacraments, meditating on his Word, through catechesis and listening to the teachings of the Church. This is our most important task, as St. Paul had well understood when he wrote: “For me, indeed, to live is Christ.” (Phil 1:21 (John Paul II, Compostela, Spain, August 1989))