

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))