

The Catechumenate: developing Social Justice

*Seeking the
Living God*

*The place of Catholic Social Teaching in the Catechumenate
Integrating the pastoral action of the parish into the Catechumenate.*

Links to other sessions in this series:

General

- What is RCIA? An Overview

Catechumenate

- Overview
- Discernment — Prior to Election

Roles in RCIA

- The Role of the Community



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

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Listen to Scripture

My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.

The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.

He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.

He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.

He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Luke 1: 46-55

Read & Reflect

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life.¹ In this way, the dispositions manifested at their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity.

As they become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents, and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practise love of neighbour, even at the cost of self renunciation.

Since the Church's life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.

The special celebrations of the word of God arranged for the benefit of the catechumens have as their main purpose: to implant in their hearts the teachings they are receiving; for example, the morality characteristic of the New Testament, the forgiving of injuries and insults, a sense of sin and repentance, the duties Christians must carry out in the world

RCIA 75:2, 4; 82:1

Act

- Is social justice a topic that can be explored in one session or more? Is it a consistent thread throughout the Catechumenate?
- How might it be integrated into what is already planned?
- Which of the local projects might be visited?
- In what ways can the justice dimension of the Sunday gospel be explored each week?

Prayer

Lord,
perfect your Church in faith and love
together with N. our pope, N. our bishop,
with all bishops, priests, and deacons,
and all those your Son has gained for you.

Open our eyes to the needs of all;
inspire us with words and deeds
to comfort those who labour and are burdened;
keep our service of others
faithful to the example and command of Christ.

Let your Church be a living witness
to truth and freedom, to justice and peace,
that all people may be lifted up
by the hope of a world made new.

Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs & Occasions

Further Reading & Resources

- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*
Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
published Burns & Oates, 2006
 - http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html
- *Cherishing Life*
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
published CTS, 2004
 - http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/ccb/content/download/956/9550/file/Cherishing_Life_2004.pdf
- CAFOD
 - www.cafod.org.uk
- LiveSimply
 - www.livesimply.org.uk

The Catechumenate & Social Justice

PRIOR READING

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

The instruction that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.

RCIA 78



An integrated and coherent approach to catechesis which will not permit simplistic or one dimensional thinking. This coherence revolves around the four dimensions of faith: 'in virtue of its own internal dynamic, the faith demands to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer.' Formation in doctrine and scripture, liturgy, the commitment to justice and discipleship, and prayer are thus seen as the 'diverse, interrelated tasks' of catechesis, 'inspired in the manner in which Jesus formed his disciples' Priority of Adult Formation



The Church, Mother of mankind, above all, sees with profound sorrow "an innumerable multitude of men and women, children, adults and old people and unique human beings, who suffer misery".

By means of catechesis, in which due emphasis is given to her social teaching, the Church desires to stir Christian hearts "to the cause of justice" and to a "preferential option or love for the poor", so that her presence may really be light that shines and salt that cures.

GDC 17



For continuing education in the faith, the ministry of the word uses many forms of catechesis. Among these the following may be highlighted:

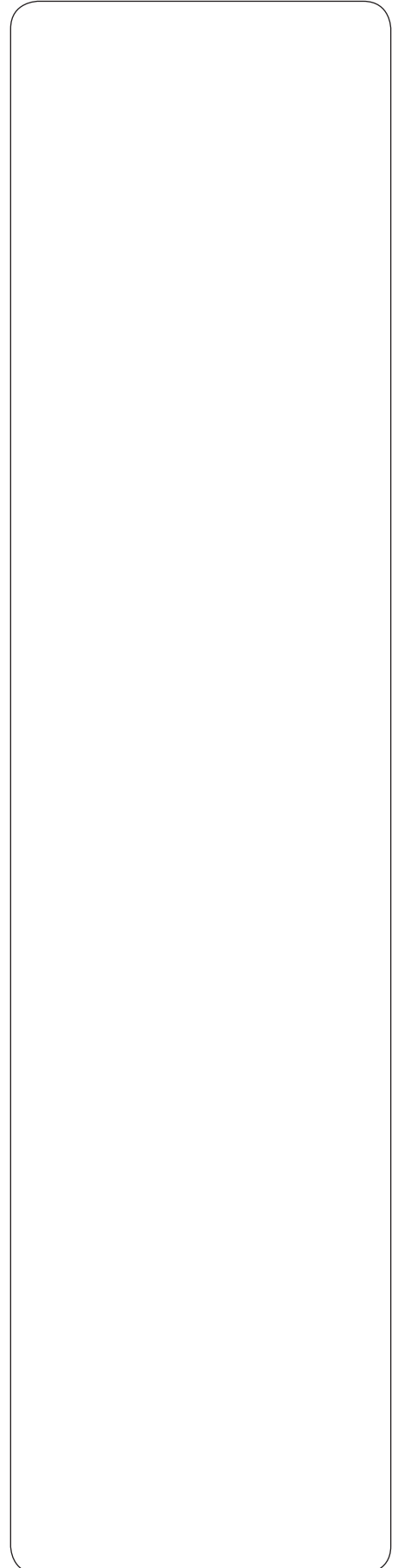
A Christian reading of events, which is required of the missionary vocation of the Christian community. In this respect the study of the social teaching of the Church is indispensable, since "its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching".

GDC 71



The Good News of the Kingdom of God, which proclaims salvation, includes a "message of liberation". In preaching this Kingdom, Jesus addressed the poor in a very special way: "Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh" (Lk 6,20-21) The Beatitudes of Jesus, addressed to those who suffer, are an eschatological proclamation of the salvation which the Kingdom brings. They note that painful experience to which the Gospel is so particularly sensitive: poverty, hunger and the suffering of humanity. The community of the disciples of Jesus, the Church, shares today the same sensitivity as the Master himself showed them. With great sorrow she turns her attention to those "peoples who, as we all know, are striving with all their power and energy to overcome all those circumstances which compel them to live on the border line of existence: hunger, chronic epidemics, illiteracy, poverty, injustice between nations... economic and cultural neo-colonialism". All forms of poverty, "not only economic but also cultural and religious" are a source of concern for the Church.

As an important dimension of her mission, "the Church is duty bound—as



her bishops have insisted—to proclaim the liberation of these hundreds of millions of people, since very many of them are her children. She has the duty of helping this liberation, of bearing witness on its behalf and of assuring its full development”.

GDC 103



The active participation of all the catechized in their formative process is completely in harmony, not only with genuine human communication, but specifically with the economy of Revelation and salvation. Believers, indeed, in the ordinary state of Christian life, individually or in age groups, are called to respond to the gift of God through prayer, participation in the sacraments, the liturgy, ecclesial and social commitment, works of charity and promotion of human values, such as liberty, justice and peace and the protection of creation. In catechesis, therefore, subjects take on a commitment in activities of faith, hope and charity, to acquire the capacity and rectitude of judges, to strengthen their personal conversion, and to a Christian praxis in their lives. The same subjects, especially if adults, can contribute to catechesis, by pointing out the most effective ways of understanding and expressing the message such as: “learning while doing”, by employing research ‘and dialogue, by exchanging challenging points of view.

GDC 157



The faithful need to be reminded that there can be no active participation in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ’s love into the life of society.

Sac Car 55



The mystery of the Eucharist inspires and impels us to work courageously within our world to bring about that renewal of relationships which has its inexhaustible source in God’s gift. The prayer which we repeat at every Mass: “Give us this day our daily bread,” obliges us to do everything possible, in cooperation with international, state and private institutions, to end or at least reduce the scandal of hunger and malnutrition afflicting so many millions of people in our world, especially in developing countries. In a particular way, the Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist, are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities. To do so, they need to be adequately prepared through practical education in charity and justice. To this end, the Synod considered it necessary for Dioceses and Christian communities to teach and promote the Church’s social doctrine. In this precious legacy handed down from the earliest ecclesial tradition, we find elements of great wisdom that guide Christians in their involvement in today’s burning social issues. This teaching, the fruit of the Church’s whole history, is distinguished by realism and moderation; it can help to avoid misguided compromises or false utopias.

Sac Car 91

Lord and God,
You know the secrets of our hearts
and reward us for the good we do.

Look kindly on the efforts
and progress of your servants.
Strengthen them on their way,
increase their faith,
and accept their repentance.

Open to them your goodness and justice
and lead them to share in your sacraments on earth,
until they finally enjoy your presence in heaven, RCIA 94:F

Keep your Church alert in faith to the signs of the times
and eager to accept the challenge of the gospel.
Open our hearts to the needs of all humanity,
so that sharing their grief and anguish,
their joy and hope,
we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation
and advance together on the way to your kingdom. EPVN



Further Texts

General Directory for Catechesis (GDC): 18, 19, 31, 32, 85, 86, 102, 104, 140, 158, 174, 175
Sacramentum Caritatis (Sac Car): 83, 89, 90, 92