

# CATECHESIS

## PRINCIPALS OF CATECHESIS

### A MOMENT WITHIN EVANGELIZATION

Catechesis is a point, a “moment” WITHIN evangelization. In order to understand it more clearly, we must see the whole process of evangelization. Life Teen seeks to introduce teens into a relationship with Christ (evangelization) while educating them on the truths of His Church (catechesis).

*“The Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesi Tradendae, places catechesis firmly within the Church’s mission and notes that evangelization is a rich, complex and dynamic reality which comprises essential but different “moments”. “Catechesis”, is one of these moments—a very remarkable one—in the whole process of evangelization”. This is to say that there are activities which “prepare” for catechesis and activities which “derive” from it. The “moment” of catechesis is that which corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalized, and provides a basis for first adhering to him.”*

- General Directory for Catechesis, #63

### THE PERSON OF CHRIST

Our goal with Catechesis is to lead a person more deeply into the mystery of Christ. Catechesis is about JESUS, the person of Christ and a personal relationship with Him.

*“To put it more precisely: within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors 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 promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him.”*

- Catechesi Tradendae, #20

### CATECHIZING TODAY’S TEENS

These principles of Catechesis are even more challenging when we consider the teen generation. There are unique challenges in passing on the Deposit of Faith to young people. The Church provides great wisdom for us in approaching this daunting task.

*“Genuine catechists know that catechesis “takes flesh” in the various cultures and milieu: one has only to think of the peoples with their great differences, of modern youth, of the great variety of circumstances in which people find themselves today . . . true catechesis eventually enriches these cultures by helping them to go beyond the defective or even inhuman features in them . . .”*

- Catechesi Tradendae, #53

## CATECHESIS TO ADOLESCENTS NEEDS TO:

- Give teenagers roots to their faith - roots to the message they heard when they were first evangelized.
- Be inculturated into the very fabric a teenager’s life - so that it connects faith to the way a teen lives!
- Provide the answers to the fundamental life questions that a teen is asking and searching for.

Catechesi Tradendae outlines the following essential conditions in order for Catechetical work with teenagers to be successful:

- It must be linked with the real life of the generation to which they are addressed, showing close acquaintance with its anxieties and struggles.
- It must cause a young person to re-examine their life and engage in dialogue.
- It must address life's great questions for them.
- It must reveal Christ as a friend, a guide and a model for life.
- It must reveal Christ as humanity's only answer.

*"We must translate the message of Jesus into their language with patience and wisdom, without betrayal. Remember that these young people have within them, even though in a confused way, not just a readiness or openness, but a rather a real desire to know Jesus...who is called Christ."*

- Catechesi Tradendae, #40

## LIFE TEEN'S APPROACH TO CATECHESIS

Life Teen utilizes two primary sources for its Catechetical Curriculum:

- The Sacred Scriptures
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church

We do not use a textbook, but rather draw from these rich sources in the Church and provide periodical materials that assist with presenting the faith of the Church in a very dynamic and relevant way.

Our greatest desire is to meet a young person where they are at, connect with them and then lead them to meet the person of Jesus. A Scriptural image that can be used here is the Road to Emmaus. Jesus met the disciples on the road, He walked with them, and He listened to their doubts and struggles.

Then He taught them, He broke open the Scriptures for them, and He did it so powerfully that their hearts were burning inside them! And then they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread - the Eucharist. If we could provide a catechetical vision for the ministry of Life Teen, this Scriptural image would capture it.

## OUR "VEHICLES" FOR CATECHESIS

The Life Teen model of ministry can be broken down into a number of facets, always remembering that our primary aim of Catechesis is to introduce a young person to the person of Jesus Christ. This is a relationship, not a program. It's a way to live, not a class or a Life Night. That being said, the Life Teen model provides a number of "connecting" points where the rich deposit of faith can be passed on.

### MASS

Through their involvement in and during the Liturgy, teens are drawn into the Sacramental and Liturgical life of the Church and the faith community.

*"Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings."*

- Catechesi Tradendae, #23

**LIFE NIGHTS** - These evangelistic and catechetical nights are typically offered on Sunday evenings after the youth Mass. It is open to all high school teenagers. These nights are designed to replace traditional religious education classes for high school students.

**SUMMIT DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE** - Dive into the Sunday readings while forming teenagers as disciples. Weekly small group gatherings designed around themes from the Sunday readings.

**UNLEASHED MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE** - Take teenagers deeper as disciples and prepare them to be sent out as missionaries. Each small group gathering is focused on an apologetic and formational theme, perfect for evangelized teenagers desiring to learn how to share and defend their faith.

**OTHER WEEKLY ACTIVITIES** - Prayer meetings, XLT, and seasonal activities all could be potential offerings in a parish Life Teen ministry. The type of weekly events offered in a parish is at the discretion of the youth minister and should be tailored to meet the needs of the teens at the parish.

**SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION** - The Sacrament of Confirmation, placed in the high school years in many areas, allows for a very concentrated evangelistic and Catechetical offering for teens. Life Teen offers a Confirmation Preparation Program called One 8. This dynamic program is easily adapted into a variety of parish settings.

**RETREATS** - A Life Teen ministry should offer one if not more retreats per year, depending on the needs of the group. A typical retreat weekend may encompass as many as four or five catechetical sessions on various topics of faith. Life Teen offers a variety of teen retreat resources for your parishes.

**SERVICE** - The Life Teen model strongly encourages offering opportunities to teens for apostolic ministry or pastoral activity as the General Directory for Catechesis refers to it (#49). This is one of the essential “moments” of the process of evangelization. Various service opportunities and mission trips provide the teens a chance to put their faith into action. We offer the #SHIFT Service week resources, in a partnership with Catholic Relief Services, as an opportunity for teens to get involved in their community.

## OUR CURRICULUM

In November 2007, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a national framework for high school catechesis called “Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age.” This document was created to establish national standards for publishers of catechetical materials. We at Life Teen have used this document as the framework and basis of our “Golden Semesters” curriculum.

Our new curriculum, starting with the September 2015 Life Support shipment, now includes:

- 2 Series Curriculum Guides
- Liturgy Planning Guide
- Summit Discipleship Resource
- Unleashed Missionary Discipleship Resource
- Core Formation
- Teen Retreat
- Video Support
- Social Media Support
- Extra Resources
- Online Access

In each Life Support shipment, we send a Curriculum Guide. This book is filled with Life Night outlines that break open the semester topic in dynamic and relevant ways. While we do not have a textbook for teens, the Curriculum Guides serve as leader manuals that can be used to form and catechize young people.

We strongly recommend that each parish work to create a systematic and complete high school curriculum. The youth minister should work in conjunction with the pastor and the parish director of religious education to form a curriculum that meets the needs of the teens. It should be noted that the Life Teen curriculum is not designed to override directives or materials given by the individual diocese, but is meant to help ensure full and complete catechesis for young people.

## **A NEW DIRECTION FOR CATECHESIS**

We are fortunate as Catholics to live in these times, and to be the recipients of the work of many over the past couple decades to provide the Church with a new Catechism. The last was given to the Church in 1566 following the Council of Trent. The process to develop the new Catechism began in 1985 and concluded in June of 1992 when Pope John Paul II gave his official approval of the new Catechism, an English copy of which was released in 1994.

The Bishops of the United States established an Ad Hoc Committee to oversee the use of the Catechism to help direct the use of this new resource in the life of the Church in the United States. Since its inception the Committee has made a number of contributions including the development of a process to review catechetical materials and the creation of an instrument called the Protocol to aid in these reviews. On a quarterly basis a list of materials found to be in conformity to the Catechism of the Catholic Church are published in a newsletter for the US Bishops called Catechism Update.

Through the help being provided by this committee, and the work of the new USCCB Committee on Catechesis we have more direction and information at our disposal about Catechesis than we ever have had in the history of the Church. The age-old question of “What should we teach?” is almost a mute point as we have very clear and specific answers to that question now.

A common question that we receive is why Life Teen does not have any resources on the conformity list. The reasons for that are simple; Life Teen right now provides materials designed for the catechist and not for the student. Our resources can also be considered to be more periodic in nature. These two traits put our resources into a category that the Bishop’s Ad Hoc Committee on the Catechism does not accept for conformity review (see Catechism Update, Summer 2004, “Some Parameters of Conformity Reviews”).

However, Life Teen has been following the work of this Ad Hoc Committee for several years now and we have been revitalizing our Catechetical materials.

We also have been working very closely with the USCCB staff and the Catechism Committee. We are extremely excited to have the detailed direction and shepherding coming from the Bishops in this area of catechesis, allowing us as an organization to ensure that our resources are sound and complete.

The Golden Semesters eight-semester curriculum and the new Life Teen Series curriculum directly models the Doctrinal Guidelines for Catholic High School from the Committee on Catechesis. As more information is made available through the work of the Catechism Committee and the Committee on Catechesis, Life Teen will adapt our resources accordingly. It is our intention and desire to be in full and complete compliance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church with all of our Catechetical resources.