

each becomes a distinct yet complementary task. Faith must be known, celebrated, lived, and expressed in prayer. So catechesis comprises six fundamental tasks, each of which is related to an aspect of faith in Christ. All efforts in evangelization and catechesis should incorporate these tasks.

1. *Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.* The initial proclamation of the Gospel introduces the hearers to Christ for the first time and invites conversion to him. By the action of the Holy Spirit, such an encounter engenders in the hearers a desire to know about Christ, his life, and the content of his message. Catechesis responds to this desire by giving the believers a knowledge of the content of God's self-revelation, which is found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and by introducing them to the meaning of the Creed. Creeds and doctrinal formulas that state the Church's belief are expressions of the Church's living tradition, which from the time of the apostles has developed "in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit."<sup>165</sup>
2. *Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments.* Since Christ is present in the sacraments,<sup>166</sup> the believer comes to know Christ in the liturgical celebrations of the Church and is drawn into communion with him. Christ's saving action in the Paschal Mystery is celebrated in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, where the closest communion with Jesus on earth is possible as Catholics are able to receive his living Flesh and his Precious Blood in Holy Communion. Catechesis should promote "an active, conscious genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds."<sup>167</sup> Sacramental catechesis prepares for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides enrichment following their reception.

165 DV, no. 8.  
166 Cf. SC, no. 7.  
167 General Catechetical Directory, no. 25.

3. *Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.* Jesus' moral teaching is an integral part of his message. Catechesis must transmit both the content of Christ's moral teachings as well as their implications for Christian living. Moral catechesis aims to conform the believer to Christ—to bring about personal transformation and conversion. It should encourage the faithful to give witness—both in their private lives and in the public arena—to Christ's teaching in everyday life. Such testimony demonstrates the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel.<sup>168</sup>
4. *Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.* Conversion to Christ and communion with him lead the faithful to adopt his disposition of prayer and reflection. Jesus' entire life, death, and Resurrection were an offering to his Father. His prayer was always directed toward his Father. Catechesis should invite the believer to join Christ in the Our Father. Prayer should be the ordinary environment for all catechesis so that the knowledge and practice of the Christian life may be understood and celebrated in its proper context.
5. *Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.* Jesus said to his disciples, "Love one another. As I have loved you. . . ." <sup>169</sup> This command provides the basis for the disciples' life in community. Catechesis encourages an apprenticeship in Christian living that is based on Christ's teachings about community life. It should encourage a spirit of simplicity and humility, a special concern for the poor, particular care for the alienated, a sense of fraternal correction, common prayer, mutual forgiveness, and a fraternal love that embraces all these attitudes. Catechesis encourages the disciples of Jesus to make their daily conduct a shining and convincing testimony to the Gospel.<sup>170</sup> "He also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church, as it is written, 'the manifestation

168 Cf. CT, nos. 29ff.  
169 Jn 13:34.  
170 Cf. CL, nos. 34, 51.

of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (1 Cor 12:7).<sup>171</sup> Preparation for community life has an ecumenical dimension as well: "In developing this community sense, catechesis takes special note of the ecumenical dimension and encourages fraternal attitudes toward members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities."<sup>172</sup> It should always provide a clear exposition of all that the Church teaches and at the same time should foster a "true desire for unity"<sup>173</sup> and inculcate a zeal for the promotion of unity among Christians. Catechesis will have an ecumenical dimension as it prepares the faithful to live in contact with persons of other Christian traditions, "affirming their Catholic identity while respecting the faith of others."<sup>174</sup>

6. *Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.* "The 'world' thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation."<sup>175</sup> Catechesis seeks to help the disciples of Christ to be present in society precisely as believing Christians who are able and willing to bear witness to their faith in words and deeds. In fostering this spirit of evangelization, catechesis nourishes the evangelical attitudes of Jesus Christ in the faithful: to be poor in spirit, to be compassionate, to be meek, to hear the cry of injustice, to be merciful, to be pure of heart, to make peace, and to accept rejection and persecution.<sup>176</sup> Catechesis recognizes that other religious traditions reflect the "seeds of the Word"<sup>177</sup> that can constitute a true "preparation for the Gospel."<sup>178</sup> It encourages adherents of the world's religions to share what they hold in common, never minimizing the real differences between and among them. "Dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*."<sup>179</sup>

171 LG, no. 12.  
 172 GDC, no. 86.  
 173 CT, no. 32.  
 174 CT, no. 32.  
 175 CL, no. 15.  
 176 Cf. Mt 5:3-11.  
 177 AG, no. 11.  
 178 LG, no. 16.  
 179 RM, no. 55. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)* (NA).

These six tasks of catechesis constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ. All these tasks are necessary in order to attain the full development of the Christian faith. Each task, from its own perspective, realizes the object of catechesis, and all the tasks are interdependent. Knowledge of the Christian faith, for example, leads to celebrating it in the sacramental Liturgy. Participation in the sacramental life encourages moral transformation in Christ. Christian moral living leads to prayer, enhances community life, and encourages a missionary spirit. To accomplish these tasks, catechesis depends on the "transmission of the Gospel message and experience of the Christian life."<sup>180</sup> "It is very important that catechesis retain the richness of these various aspects in such a way that one aspect is not separated from the rest to the detriment of others."<sup>181</sup>

## 21. INCULTURATION OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

### A. The Mystery of the Incarnation: Model of Evangelization

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, became man—a particular man in space and time and within a specific culture. In the mystery of his incarnation, Jesus Christ is the human face of God and the divine face of humanity.<sup>182</sup> The incarnation of the only Son of God is the original inculturation of God's word. The mystery of the incarnation is also the model of all evangelization by the Church. Every culture needs to be transformed by Gospel values because the Gospel always demands a conversion of attitudes and practices wherever it is preached. Cultures must often be purified and restored in Christ.

### B. The Evangelization of Culture

Just as "the Word became flesh / and made his dwelling among us,"<sup>183</sup> so too the Good News, the word of God proclaimed to the nations, must

180 GDC, no. 87.  
 181 *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 31.  
 182 Cf. EA, no. 67.  
 183 Jn 1:14.

take root in the life situation of the hearers of the word. Inculturation is precisely the insertion of the Gospel message into cultures. Inculturation is a requirement for evangelization, a path toward full evangelization. It is the process by which "catechesis 'takes flesh' in the various cultures."<sup>184</sup>

"The new evangelization calls for a clearly conceived, serious and well organized effort to evangelize culture."<sup>185</sup> The inculturation of the faith is a complex and deliberate process. It "needs to take place gradually, in such a way that it really is an expression of the community's Christian experience."<sup>186</sup> "It is not simply an external adaptation designed to make the Christian message more attractive or superficially decorative."<sup>187</sup>

### C. The Process of Inculturation

The inculturation of the Gospel occurs within a dynamic process that has several interactive elements. Inculturation involves listening to the culture of the people for an echo of the word of God. It involves the discernment of the presence of authentic Gospel values or openness to authentic Gospel values in the culture. This discernment is governed by two basic principles: "compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church."<sup>188</sup> It involves, when necessary, the purification of the elements in the culture that may be hostile or adverse to the Gospel. And it involves an invitation to conversion.

True inculturation occurs when the gospel penetrates the heart of cultural experience and shows how Christ gives new meaning to authentic human values. However, the Church must never allow herself to be absorbed by any culture, since not all cultural expressions are in conformity with the gospel. The Church retains the indispensable duty of testing and evaluating cultural expressions in the light of her understanding of revealed truth. Cultures, like individual human beings and societies, need to be purified by the blood of Christ.<sup>189</sup>

184 CT, no. 53.

185 EA, no. 70.

186 RM, no. 54.

187 GDC, no. 109.

188 RM, no. 54.

189 USCCB, *To the Ends of the Earth: A Pastoral Statement on World Mission* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 1986), no. 44.

The inculturation of the Gospel message is an urgent mission for the dioceses in the United States because it correlates faith and life. It seeks to dispose the people of the United States, who live in a multicultural and pluralistic society, to receive Jesus Christ in every dimension of their life. The process of inculturation must involve the people to whom the Gospel is addressed, so that they can receive the faith and reflect it. It touches them on the personal, cultural, economic, and political levels so that they can live a holy life in total union with God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit. "It is necessary to inculturate preaching in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed in the language and in the culture of its hearers."<sup>190</sup>

In the inculturation of the faith, catechesis has several specific tasks:

- To discover the seeds of the Gospel that may be present in the culture
- To know and respect the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture of the persons to whom it is addressed
- To recognize that the Gospel message is both transcendent and immanent—it is not bound by the limitations of any single human culture, yet it has a cultural dimension, that in which Jesus of Nazareth lived
- To proclaim the transforming and regenerating force that the Gospel works in every culture
- To promote a new enthusiasm for the Gospel in accordance with evangelized culture
- To use the language and culture of the people as a foundation to express the common faith of the Church
- To maintain the integral content of faith and avoid obscuring the content of the Christian message by adaptations that would compromise or diminish the deposit of faith

Within the ecclesial community, the catechist is an important instrument of inculturation. The catechist has encountered Christ, has been converted by Christ, follows Christ, and shares in Christ's life and mission. The catechist also possesses a living social conscience and is well rooted in the cultural environment. Thus, the catechist needs to be alert to all these tasks that incarnate the Gospel in a particular culture and

190 EA, no. 70.

likewise introduce the culture into the life of the Church. At the same time, the faithful have a right to receive the whole deposit of faith; catechists, "must take diligent care faithfully to present the entire treasure of the Christian message."<sup>191</sup>

Effective catechesis presents the authentic Gospel message, "the words of eternal life."<sup>192</sup> The genuine deposit of faith given by Christ to his apostles and preserved by them for more than two thousand years must be faithfully handed on to future generations of Christians.

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand, evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it.<sup>193</sup>

The evangelization of culture through the communication of the complete and authentic Gospel message, and the inculturation of that message through a profound dialogue between it and the language, customs, and practices of a people, constitute what Pope Paul VI termed the "drama of our time."<sup>194</sup>

#### D. Inculturation and the Media

Especially in the United States, "the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media."<sup>195</sup> In fact, the mass media are so influential that they have a culture of their own, which has its own language, customs, and values. Heralds of the Gospel must enter the world of the mass media, learn as much as possible about that culture, evangelize that culture, and determine how best to employ the media to serve the Christian message.

191 *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 38, cited in GDC, no. 112.

192 Jn 6:68.

193 EN, no. 63.

194 EN, no. 20.

195 RM, no. 37.

If the new evangelization of the mass media is going to be effective, however, the Church must deepen her understanding of the culture in which the communications media are so consequential and learn how to make proper use of the media to proclaim Christ's message. Pastoral ministers need to be trained as specialists in communications technology; state-of-the-art production centers need to be set up; communication networks need to be developed; and the faithful need to learn how to be more discriminating in their use of the media, especially in their homes. "Using the media correctly and competently can lead to a genuine inculturation of the Gospel."<sup>196</sup>

## 22. CONCLUSION

Evangelization is so central to the life of the Church that, should she neglect her sacred responsibility of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to all of humanity, she would be faithful neither to the mission entrusted to her by her Lord nor to her identity as mother and teacher. As it is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church's ministry of evangelization animates her life. The pastoral and missionary activity that constitute the Church's resolute commitment to evangelize comprises certain elements that have distinctly catechetical aspects: the initial proclamation of the Gospel that awakens faith, the examination of reasons for belief, the celebration of the sacraments, the experience of Christian living and integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic witness. The Church's mission of evangelization is permeated by catechesis. While catechesis and evangelization cannot be simply identified with one another, "there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelization. . . . Instead, they have close links whereby they integrate and complement each other."<sup>197</sup>

Catechesis is so central to the Church's mission of evangelization that, if evangelization were to fail to integrate catechesis, initial faith aroused by the original proclamation of the Gospel would not mature, education in the faith through a deeper knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ would not transpire, and discipleship in Christ

196 EA, no. 72.

197 CT, no. 18.

through genuine apostolic witness would not be fostered. Catechesis nurtures the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit through the initial proclamation of the Gospel. It gives growth to the gift of faith given in Baptism and elaborates the meaning of the sacraments. Catechesis develops a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ, encourages more profound incorporation into the Church, and nourishes Christian living. It encourages discipleship in Christ and instructs in Christian prayer. Just as the mission of evangelization enlivens the Church's pastoral and missionary activity, catechesis makes concrete her mission of evangelization. It constitutes the "good news" that Christ commissioned his apostles to spread throughout the whole world and announce to every person.<sup>198</sup> This good news, which is the faith of the Church, will be presented in Chapter 3.

### CHAPTER 3

# This Is Our Faith; This Is the Faith of the Church

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. (1 Cor 15:3-5)

## 23. INTRODUCTION

In expressing and handing on the faith that Jesus entrusted to them before he ascended to his Father, the apostles made use of brief summaries by which all could come to know the fundamental content of Christian belief and preaching. These initial creedal statements synthesized the Christian faith and became the original catechetical reference points for the apostolic Church. They were the first professions of faith; they were intended especially for candidates for Baptism; and they have preserved the substance of the Christian message for people of all the nations for more than two thousand years.

Since the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a catechesis of the Creed, this chapter presents a brief introduction to it in order to facilitate its better understanding and use in the catechetical ministry. This chapter also provides the criteria for the authentic presentation of the Christian message in the United States at this time in history.

## 24. THE SYMPHONY OF THE FAITH

### A. Normative Instruments of Catechesis

Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *General Directory for Catechesis*, and this *National Directory for Catechesis* are distinct yet complementary instruments that serve the Church's catechetical activity. The *General Directory for Catechesis* provides "the basic principles of pastoral theology taken from the Magisterium of the Church, and in a special way from the Second Vatican Council, by which pastoral action in the ministry of the word can be more fittingly directed and governed."<sup>199</sup> This *National Directory for Catechesis* contains the general guidelines for catechesis in the United States and has been prepared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* gives a plan and strategies for development of an effective ministry of adult faith formation in parish life.

### B. Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture, the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has the preeminent position in the life of the Catholic Church and especially in the ministry of evangelization and catechesis. The earliest forms of Christian catechesis made regular use of the Old Testament and the personal witness of the apostles and disciples that would become the New Testament. Much of the catechesis of the patristic period took the form of commentary on the word of God contained in Sacred Scripture. Through all the ages of the Church, the study of Sacred Scripture has been the cornerstone of catechesis. The Second Vatican Council advised that catechesis, as one form of the ministry of the word, should be nurtured and should thrive in holiness through the word of the Scripture.<sup>200</sup> Catechesis should take Sacred Scripture as its inspiration, its fundamental curriculum, and its end because it strengthens faith, nourishes the soul, and nurtures the spiritual life. "Scripture provides the starting point, foundation, and norm of catechetical teaching."<sup>201</sup> Catechesis

should assume the thought and perspective of Sacred Scripture and make frequent direct use of the biblical texts themselves. "The presentation of the Gospels should be done in such a way as to elicit an encounter with Christ, who provides the key to the whole biblical revelation and communicates the call of God that summons each one to respond."<sup>202</sup>

### C. The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an act of the Magisterium promulgated by Pope John Paul II by virtue of his apostolic authority.<sup>203</sup> It is "a statement of the Church's faith and of catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition, and the Church's Magisterium."<sup>204</sup> It "aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church's Tradition."<sup>205</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion; it is a sure norm for teaching the faith and an authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms. However, the *Catechism* is not just an authentic reference text; it is a beautiful collection of the truths of the Catholic faith, following in the footsteps of the early Church. The foundation of the *Catechism* is Sacred Scripture, and it includes writings of the Fathers, doctors, and saints of the Church. It is not intended to replace local catechisms, but rather to encourage the preparation of new local catechisms that take into account particular cultures and preserve the unity of faith and fidelity to Catholic doctrine.<sup>206</sup>

This *National Directory for Catechesis*, as far as the content of the Christian message is concerned, presumes and refers to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The following exposition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* seeks not to summarize its content but instead to facilitate its better understanding and use in the catechetical ministry in the United States.

202 The *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 39.

203 Cf. John Paul II, *On the Publication of the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" (Fidei Depositum)* (FD), no.

3, in CCC.

204 FD, no. 3.

205 CCC, no. 11.

206 Cf. FD, no. 3.

199 GDC, no. 120.

200 Cf. DV, no. 12.

201 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 1994), 39.



Pope John Paul II has called the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* “the ‘symphony’ of the faith”<sup>207</sup> because it is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church throughout the world and because it expresses the harmony of their confession of the faith.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is structured around four fundamental dimensions of the Christian life: (1) the profession of faith, (2) the celebration of the Liturgy, (3) Christian moral life, and (4) prayer. These four parts correspond to the essential aspects of the Christian mystery: (1) belief in the Triune God and his saving plan in Jesus Christ, (2) celebration of Christ’s saving actions in the sacramental life, (3) living life in Christ, and (4) expression of the Christian faith in prayer. This structure in turn derives from the profound unity of the Christian life.

The Church professes this mystery [of the faith] in the Apostles’ Creed (*Part One*) and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy (*Part Two*), so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father (*Part Three*). This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer (*Part Four*).<sup>208</sup>

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is the doctrinal point of reference for education in the basic tasks of catechesis.<sup>209</sup> However, it does not impose a predetermined format for the presentation of doctrine.

The inspiration of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* derives from the person of Jesus Christ as he reveals the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the mystery of the human person. Through Jesus Christ, we come to know God and his divine plan for our salvation, we come to know ourselves and our destiny, and we come to know how to live. These are the four golden threads of the *Catechism*: the Blessed Trinity; Jesus as God and Man; the Paschal Mystery of Jesus’ passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven attaining our salvation; the dignity of the human person.

As the central mystery of the Catholic faith, the mystery of the Triune God animates and orders the presentation of the Christian message

in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The profession of faith is precisely a confession of faith in the Holy Trinity. It is divided into the fundamental doctrinal formulations that state Christian belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It presents the sacraments and the Liturgy as the “work of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>210</sup> It presents the Christian life as directed by the Trinity: “Everyone who follows Christ does so because the Father draws him and the Spirit moves him.”<sup>211</sup> The profession of faith presents the prayer of the believer as “a communion with the Holy Trinity.”<sup>212</sup>

The mystery of the human person is woven throughout the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as well. Every human person longs to know God. “Believing’ is a human act, conscious and free, corresponding to the dignity of the human person.”<sup>213</sup> The celebration of the Christian mystery in the Church’s Liturgy and sacraments expresses the faith in words and signs that make sense to the human person. “It is with and through their own human culture, assumed and transfigured by Christ, that the multitude of God’s children has access to the Father, in order to glorify him in the one Spirit.”<sup>214</sup> In seeking to conform their lives to Christ, Christians are called to lead a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”<sup>215</sup> “The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father’s only Son.”<sup>216</sup> By deliberate actions, the human person “does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience.”<sup>217</sup> Christian prayer is “the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment.”<sup>218</sup>

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a catechism for the universal Church. As a catechism, it is “an organic presentation of the Catholic faith in its entirety.”<sup>219</sup> It is universal in scope because it presents the “events and fundamental salvific truths which express the faith common to the People of God and which constitute the indispensable basic reference for

210 CCC, no. 1077.

211 CCC, no. 259.

212 CCC, no. 2655.

213 CCC, no. 180.

214 CCC, no. 1204.

215 Phil 1:27.

216 CCC, no. 1877.

217 CCC, no. 1700.

218 CCC, no. 2697.

219 CCC, no. 18.

207 FD, no. 1.

208 CCC, no. 2558.

209 See Chapter 2 of this Directory.

catechesis.<sup>220</sup> It seeks “to link the wondrous unity of the Christian mystery with the varied needs and conditions of those to whom this message is addressed.”<sup>221</sup> However,

by design, this *Catechism* does not set out to provide the adaptation of doctrinal presentations and catechetical methods required by the differences of culture, age, spiritual maturity, and social and ecclesial condition among all those to whom it is addressed. Such indispensable adaptations are the responsibility of particular catechisms and, even more, of those who instruct the faithful.<sup>222</sup>

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* presents and preserves the deposit of faith. The deposit of faith is the heritage of faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition and handed on in the Church from the time of the apostles—a heritage from which the Magisterium draws all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed. “Catechesis will find in this genuine, systematic presentation of the faith and of Catholic doctrine a totally reliable way to present, with renewed fervor, each and every part of the Christian message to the people of our time. This text will provide every catechist with sound help for communicating the one, perennial deposit of faith within the local Church.”<sup>223</sup>

Sacred Scripture has a preeminent position in catechesis because Sacred Scripture “present[s] God’s own Word in unalterable form” and “make[s] the voice of the holy Spirit resound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles.”<sup>224</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is intended to complement Sacred Scripture. Together with Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture constitutes the supreme rule of faith.

In practice, this means that catechesis must be permeated with biblical and evangelical thought, spirit, and attitudes through constant use of and reference to the word of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is not superior to the word of God but is, rather, at its service. Each nourishes the

<sup>220</sup> GDC, no. 124.

<sup>221</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter in Which the Latin Typical Edition of the “Catechism of the Catholic Church” Is Approved and Promulgated (Lactamur Magnopere)* (LM) (1997), xv. In CCC.

<sup>222</sup> CCC, no. 24.

<sup>223</sup> LM, p. xv.

<sup>224</sup> DV, no. 21.

ministry of catechesis: “Both Sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* must inform biblical as well as doctrinal catechesis so that they become true vehicles of the content of God’s word.”<sup>225</sup>

In addition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* retrieves several important aspects of the catechetical tradition of the Church Fathers, who placed a high priority on the baptismal catechumenate in the life of the local churches. They emphasized the gradual and progressive movement of Christian initiation and formation through a series of stages and rituals. This was acknowledged when the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called for the restoration of the adult catechumenate largely as it was celebrated and preserved in the patristic tradition.<sup>226</sup>

## 25. CRITERIA FOR THE AUTHENTIC PRESENTATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

The word of God contained in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition is the single source of the fundamental criteria for the presentation of the Christian message. The presentation of the Christian message

- Centers on Jesus Christ
- Introduces the Trinitarian dimension of the Gospel message
- Proclaims the Good News of salvation and liberation
- Comes from and leads to the Church
- Has a historical character
- Seeks inculturation and preserves the integrity and purity of the message
- Offers the comprehensive message of the Gospel and respects its inherent hierarchy of truths
- Communicates the profound dignity of the human person
- Fosters a common language of the faith

### A. The Christian Message, Centered on Christ

The Christian message concentrates on the person of Jesus Christ. Above all, catechesis must transmit this centrality of Christ in the Gospel message.

<sup>225</sup> GDC, no. 128.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. SC, no. 64.