

2. Learning by Discipleship. We recognize that the best way to learn about Jesus is to follow in his footsteps and become his disciple. For this reason, *Faith First* emphasizes the life and teachings of Jesus throughout each grade level.

3. Learning Within the Christian Community. We understand that the witness of the Christian community teaches children in both explicit and implicit ways as it incorporates them into the Body of Christ. That is why *Faith First* provides resources to help children connect with the whole community of faith.



4. Learning Within the Christian Family. The Christian family is the first and most important place in which faith is born and nurtured. *Faith First* provides a number of support options for

families to help them feel more confident in this most important work.

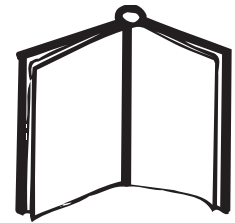


5. Learning Through the Witness of the Catechist. Catechists are a powerful influence on those they catechize. That is why *Faith First* catechist guides offer “front-to-back” catechist formation to assist them. In addition, RCL makes available to you the *Echoes of Faith* video-assisted resource for catechist formation so that catechists can be effective witnesses of the Gospel.

6. Learning by Heart. The *NDC* speaks of the value of memorization as a part of catechesis. As children learn the prayers and doctrinal formulations of their tradition, they build a stronger Catholic identity to carry with them throughout life. The faith vocabulary and summaries

in every chapter of *Faith First* will assist them in achieving this goal.

7. Making a Commitment to Live the Christian Life. Faith has not really taken root in us until we decide to live what we have learned. Every chapter of *Faith First* asks young people to make a concrete faith choice.



8. Learning by Apprenticeship. Apprentices walk with mentors as they seek to know more about their faith. Through projects and activities throughout the program *Faith First* provides opportunities for older students to mentor younger ones and assist in their faith formation.

FOR REFLECTION

- *How powerful a witness are you to the good news of Jesus Christ? Why?*
- *To which of the eight methodologies would you like to give special attention this year? How might you do this?*

Forming a Community of Catechists

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus called twelve disciples to follow him. Over the next three years the disciples became a community of faith, traveling with Jesus, sharing meals together, and learning from him as he explained his teachings to them.

As a catechetical leader, you have called catechists to service in your parish. Your task now is to nurture them and form them into a community so that they are able to share their faith with confidence and competence.

Here are several strategies for forming your catechists into a community of faith.

Catechist Meetings

Schedule catechist meetings throughout the year. These sessions give you the opportunity to gather catechists together for training on specific topics, such as theology, methods, and the catechetical ministry. Consider using a formal catechist formation program like *Echoes of Faith* for the most effective and comprehensive way to train catechists on-site, right in your parish. *Echoes of Faith* is a thirteen-module video-assisted program developed by the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) and published by RCL.

During the meetings allow ample time for catechists to meet together in grade levels for lesson planning. Working together to plan upcoming sessions enables the catechists to share success stories and strategies, to ask questions, and to get to know one another. As the catechists do their planning, visit each group to affirm them and to offer support and suggestions. Build in time for prayer during meetings. This is an excellent opportunity to model different prayer formats for catechists—ritual prayer, meditation, praying with Scripture, litanies, and spontaneous prayer—that they can use in their classes. Encourage socializing by offering hospitality. Sharing beverages and snacks encourages conversation and helps to build community.

Class Days

Even the process of arriving before and departing after sessions can be an opportunity to build community among your catechists. Have a plate of cookies and coffee and juice available for catechists who arrive early or those who may want to linger after class. This provides you with yet another occasion to be present to them, to visit with them, and to encourage them to share their experiences with one another.

Catechist Retreats

Plan a retreat for the catechetical community. This can be as simple as a Lenten evening of reflection or a day of renewal on-site or away from the parish. Catechists will welcome the opportunity to reflect on their own faith journeys, to share faith and prayer with their peers, and to renew their commitment to their ministry.

Mentoring

Invite veteran catechists to pair up with new catechists. Veterans can share their expertise with new catechists and serve as informal guides or coaches throughout the year. Mentoring is especially effective if the partners teach at the same grade level. Ask mentors to call their new partners before the catechetical year begins and to stay in touch throughout the year. Mentors do not usurp the important role that you play as the program director. Instead, they walk with a new catechist as a partner and act as a sounding board for feedback, questions, and tips throughout the year. Mentoring gives new catechists a peer to whom they can relate easily and helps them recognize that they are part of a community of catechists.

Special Events

Build community throughout the year by providing opportunities for catechists and the people close to them to celebrate together. Plan a Christmas party, a catechist appreciation dinner, a year-end brunch, or summer barbeque. Depending on your budget, events such as these can be catered or a parent committee can supply the food, decorations, and entertainment. The celebration doesn't need to be elaborate. What is most important is that the catechists feel affirmed and appreciated and have the chance to visit with one another socially.

Affirmation and Appreciation

Get in the habit of writing short personal notes to your catechists, letting them know how much you appreciate them. Small surprises given to the catechists let them know how much they are valued. A bag of candy at Halloween, a birthday card, a Christmas candle, shamrock stickers to share with their students on St. Patrick's Day, or an Easter bookmark are just a few of the many ways to show appreciation for your catechetical community.

The Parish Bulletin

Use the parish bulletin as a vehicle for celebrating the efforts of the catechetical community. List the catechist's names and grade levels in the bulletin on Catechetical Sunday. Throughout the year publish photographs and short blurbs sharing the different activities of your catechists and students with the parish community. Invite catechists to write short witness statements about their ministry for the bulletin. End the year by having students give brief testimonials about what a great catechist they had.

By incorporating the above strategies, you can assist in the development of a community of catechists that is strengthened, supported, and nurtured in ministry. This effort will have lasting impact on the dedication of your catechists to their ministry and on the overall quality of religious education in your parish.

FOR REFLECTION

- *What positive results have I seen from community-building efforts I have made in the past?*
- *What is a new strategy I would like to try this year?*

Initiation as the Inspiration for All Catechesis

Directors of catechetical programs, catechists, and parishioners remark from time to time that the R.C.I.A. seems to be the most successful catechetical program in their parishes. Participants seem enthusiastic and committed, much is taught and appears to be retained, and hearts are deeply converted to Jesus Christ and his way of life. What more could any of us ask for as outcomes of our catechetical programs?

The Catholic Church has seen the wisdom of these insights and in its most recent documents proposes the model of Christian initiation as the inspiration for all catechesis. While there are basic differences in life situations and faith needs between catechumens and those who are already baptized, there are some basic elements in baptismal catechesis that can and should inspire catechesis in all its forms.

Inspiration and Responsibility

As we experience the journey of catechumens toward the Easter sacraments each year, we are reminded of the importance of sacramental initiation and of the Paschal Mystery that it celebrates. We remember that we, too, are on a lifelong journey of faith and a deepening conversion into the Paschal Mystery. The catechumenate is an occasion that reminds us of our responsibility to

hand on our Christian heritage and to nurture the maturing faith of all those in our midst (see *GDC* 91).

The Stages of Christian Initiation

The formal stages and periods of the process of Christian initiation occur in a sequence that reminds us of important elements in the rhythm of every Christian's faith journey. The stages also remind us of the importance and integral relationship between instruction and formation in the faith (see *NDC* 35D).

Precatechumenate. The period of the pre-catechumenate highlights the role of inquiry and dialogue between seeker and catechist and the importance of a continuing proclamation of the good news of the Gospel. Our entire life of faith requires an ongoing encounter with the word of God. All good catechists recognize this. In *Faith First Legacy Edition* the word of God stands at the center of catechesis.

Catechumenate. The period of the catechumenate allows time for a comprehensive presentation of the Gospel message and an integrated and complete catechesis. This catechesis is accompanied by prayer and ritual celebrations of the word that help make the liturgical tradition of the Church both known and loved and prepares the way for the celebration of the Easter sacraments. Throughout this entire period, catechumens are

learning, by word and example, to live the Christian life. Should not all catechesis include these same elements? The spiral approach of *Faith First* provides a comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith, and each week's session begins and ends with communal prayer. The young people are challenged to apply and integrate faith concepts into daily living and to make faith choices that make a difference.

Purification and Enlightenment. The period of purification and enlightenment affords the elect a time of heightened attention to prayer and reflection as they prepare for their celebration of the sacraments of Christian initiation. This period reminds all catechists of the importance of taking time for reflection and for personal and communal prayer. In addition to weekly prayer, *Faith First* offers catechists twenty-three reflections and celebrations of the Church's seasons so that the children will experience and grow to appreciate the rhythm of the Church's constant and ongoing reflection on the Christian mysteries.

Mystagogy. Following the celebration of the Easter sacraments the newly baptized, now known as neophytes, reflect back on the significance of the mysteries they have celebrated. This period of mystagogy is also a time of continued catechesis, of

sacramental celebration with the entire Christian community, and of commitment to participation in the Church's life. This period reminds all catechists of the importance of lifelong catechesis and reflection on the Paschal Mystery that every sacrament celebrates. It reminds them of the importance of a catechesis that challenges participants to commitment and decision. *Faith First* provides children with this ongoing catechesis and challenge to commitment.

Liturgical Catechesis

Guided by the baptismal catechumenate, both the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis* emphasize the importance of liturgical formation. The General Directory reminds us that it is important not only to teach about liturgy and the sacraments but to make the liturgy's rituals, symbols, and gestures both known and loved (see *GDC* 87). The experience of the Church's prayer leads people to an appreciation and love for it. That is why good catechists, following the example of Jesus, provide meaningful opportunities of communal prayer for those in their care.

Inculturating the Gospel Message

The baptismal catechumenate teaches the importance of

inculturating the Gospel message. In the catechumenate inquirers are welcomed as they are, and the message—without being diluted—is adapted to the needs of those receiving it so that they will be moved to continuing conversion. The National Directory reminds us: “The baptismal catechumenate is where the Gospel message deliberately engages the culture of the catechumens. All catechesis must ‘take flesh’ in the various cultures and environments in which the Gospel message is proclaimed” (*NDC* 35D).

Good catechists learn to recognize the seeds of the Gospel already present in their learners. They are open to listening to and learning about the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture(s) in which they are catechizing. As you continue your journey as catechists and catechetical leaders, observe the baptismal catechumenate unfolding in the midst of your parish community. Do all that you can to incorporate its wisdom into your own ministry of catechesis.

FOR REFLECTION

- *When have I been most catechized through an experience of liturgy? What elements caused this to happen?*
- *What can I do to be more sensitive to the cultural needs of those in my care as I catechize them?*

The Church's Social Teaching

In 2005 the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace issued a summary of the social teachings of the Catholic Church entitled *A Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. This valuable document surveys the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching so that all the faithful can have ready access to this rich tradition. Chapters 3 and 4 of this document summarize the five foundational, inter-related principles of all Catholic Social Teaching: the dignity of the human person, the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, participation in society, and solidarity. All catechists need to be familiar with these principles so that they will be able to articulate them in developmentally appropriate ways for those they catechize.

The Dignity of the Human Person

The first principle is the foundational one in which the others are rooted: the dignity of the human person. This principle states that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. This truth is the source of our basic dignity as persons. We are each fundamentally related to God and therefore each of us, male and female, is of equal value. Human beings make up the fabric of society. We are both its subject, origin, and goal (see *Compendium* 106.)

While God gave humans dominion over the earth and all the lesser creatures that dwell there (see Genesis 1:28–30), it is a dominion that carries with it a profound responsibility of care. Humans are fundamentally social creatures, created for one another. Since we are the pinnacle of God's earthly creation, we carry a profound responsibility for one another's well-being.

God created us with the gift of freedom and yet, as a result of the sin of the first human, we too choose to violate that gift, and sin. When we sin, we wound both ourselves and others, and the repetitiveness of our sin serves to create the structures of sin that permeate human society. Yet our awareness of the pervasiveness of personal and social sin is contrasted with our awareness of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Our knowledge of our salvation reawakens in us an awareness of the Holy Trinity to whom we are oriented in the depths of our being. Through Christ we glimpse again the right order that God intends for all creation.

The Common Good

The other four principles of Catholic Social Teaching are all rooted in the fundamental reality of our likeness to God. The principle of the common good refers to all the conditions that need to exist in society for us reach our full potential as children of God. All of us have a fundamental obligation to work for the realization of these conditions. “The human person cannot find fulfillment in himself, that is, apart from the fact that he exists “with” and “for” others” (*Compendium* 165). No one is exempt and no one is excluded from this task. In fact, the realization of these goals is the purpose of all human authority (see *Compendium* 168).

The Universal Destination of Goods

This third principle of Catholic Social Teaching reminds us of the purpose of all goods produced by the peoples of the earth. In paragraph 171 the

Compendium quotes a fundamental teaching of the Second Vatican Council: “God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and for all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity” (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [*Gaudium et Spes*] 69).

Each person has the right to acquire private property because it can afford the autonomy we need to realize our human potential. But the creation of personal or corporate wealth can never be justified if it is gained through exploitation or exclusion of others. There must always be a willingness to subordinate the acquisition of wealth to the common good of all. We must also guard against the temptation to be seduced by material things and to treat them as ends in themselves, for this violates the purpose for which these things were given (see *Compendium* 182).

Through the course of human history structures of social sin have created a disparity between those who have and those who are in need. The Church teaches that we must work to right this evil in society by making a preferential option for the poor. We must give our special concern and support to those who have been most left

out by society. To do so is to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to live the Beatitudes.

Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity can be understood from several perspectives. On one hand, this principle instructs larger units of society to refrain from making decisions for smaller units that the smaller units can and should make for themselves. From another perspective, this principle refers to a requirement to adopt an attitude of support and encouragement—to help less powerful individuals and societies to advance in ways that would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to do on their own (see *Compendium* 186). As we apply this principle of subsidiarity, we need also to be governed by the principle of the common good.

Participation in Society

The Catholic Church teaches that all are called to participation, from the most privileged to the most disadvantaged, in society. The right order of society requires this participation. Such participation occurs most readily in a free democracy that guarantees the fundamental human rights of its members and provides avenues for their participation (see *Compendium* 189 and 190).

Solidarity

The principle of solidarity flows naturally from the four principles that precede it. It expresses clearly the interdependence of all the members of a society and indeed the interrelatedness of all the countries that make up the global community. The Church reminds us that an awareness of our mutual responsibility to stand with one another in solidarity is required if we are not to multiply, on a global scale, the injustices that exist in individual societies, especially in the most powerful and dominant nations (see *Compendium* 192).

Faith First Legacy Edition incorporates and supports, in age-appropriate ways, these Catholic social teaching principles throughout every grade level. Make yourself knowledgeable about these teachings, reflect on them, and live them so that you will be able to help the young people entrusted to your care to be worthy inheritors of this profound social heritage of the Catholic Church.

FOR REFLECTION

- *In what ways have you acted on these principles in your own life?*
- *Which of these principles is the hardest for you to live? Why is this and what can you do to overcome the barriers that keep you from living more fully?*

Catechesis in a Multicultural Church

If you have been involved in catechesis for very long, you have probably noticed that the ethnic and cultural diversity of your parish has changed over the past few years. Even parishes that have long been dominated by one ethnic group are experiencing change. There has been an influx of new Hispanic and Asian immigrants in every region of the United States. The Northeast is providing a new home to eastern European, Caribbean, and Vietnamese immigrants. The South, long the home of a large African-American Catholic population, has experienced an extraordinarily rapid increase of the Hispanic population. The Midwest, long influenced by northern European roots, has experienced a similar Hispanic influx.

Hispanic populations have always been large in the West and the percentage of California Hispanics in 2000 as a percent of total population was over 32 percent, compared with 13 percent in the nation as a whole. The West also includes a larger Asian population than any other region. A large number of immigrants from Southeast Asia have arrived in recent years, particularly in California.

This changing ethnic and cultural makeup is a great gift to the Church in America for the welcoming community as well as for the immigrant. *The National Directory for Catechesis* points out:

The diversity of ethnicity, education, and social status [in this influx] challenges the Church to integrate the new immigrants in ways that both respect their diverse cultures

and experiences of Church and enrich both the immigrants and the Church. The Church of the twenty-first century in the United States will be a Church of many cultures, languages, and traditions—yet one in faith.

(NDC 11C, 1)

Inculturation

How do we rise to this challenge as parish catechetical leaders and catechists? The National Directory offers some guidance by pointing out important features of the rhythm of inculturation (see *NDC 21C*). To enculturate the Gospel message is to make it come alive for those you catechize and to help it take root in them within the context of their various cultures. Here are some suggested guidelines to bear in mind in any catechetical situation:

- **Listen** before you speak. God was speaking in the lives of the people you are catechizing before you met them.
- **Discern** what Gospel values you can already see in those you catechize. Acknowledge the presence of these values and build upon them.
- **Purify** the culture where necessary. This is not done by delivering a negative judgment. It is done by telling the story of faith and inviting the people into dialogue with it.
- **Invite** conversion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Of these four guidelines, the hardest to implement is often the first. Many parish leaders

and catechists feel inadequate when faced with cultural diversity. If you have responsibility for parish catechesis, invite leaders from each cultural group in your parish to participate in planning. Ask them to help you identify cultural events that could be opportunities for catechesis during the year. Ask them to share examples of religious celebrations and devotions. Invite volunteers to talk with your catechists and acquaint them with their traditions.

Language is frequently a barrier for new immigrants, particularly among adults. While children, however, adapt more quickly to the English language once they enter schools in the United States, learning a new language is often more difficult for adults. Parents may want their children to be catechized in their native language so that prayers, religious traditions, and devotions will be maintained. Some parishes respond by offering catechetical classes in other languages where sufficient numbers of children require it and qualified catechists can be found or trained. Other parishes concentrate on providing good materials for parents in their native language and make a special effort to make Catholic prayers and practices available in the child's native language.

Many parishes celebrate liturgies in languages other than English

and some parishes have bilingual liturgies from time to time so that the whole community can worship together. For the same reason, some program coordinators team with a partner in order to conduct parent meetings bilingually. Some parishes offer ESL classes or job training programs to help recent immigrants have a more successful entry into American culture. Such outreach shows that we are willing to respond in practical ways to the Gospel mandate "to proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Respect the Dignity of All Persons

What Catechists Can Do

If you are a catechist, pay attention to the behaviors of your students and invite their parents into dialogue with you. Asian children who will not look at you when you are speaking to them may frustrate you until you learn that in their culture such behavior is a sign of respect for one's elders. When you become aware of a religious tradition, such as Las Posadas, ask parents about it or even research it yourself. Find simple ways to make such celebrations part of your catechesis and

classroom prayer. Learn about recently canonized saints from the cultures of the immigrant children and celebrate their feast days in your classroom. Take time for community-building activities and familiarize yourself with the past religious education experience and the traditions of immigrant children. In all cases, express your delight in them both by your words and your actions.

All who are involved in the ministry of catechesis are actively responding to the Gospel mandate to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). A successful approach to inculturation involves living the social teachings of the Catholic Church, which call us to respect the dignity of all persons. Catechists and parish leaders who do this well are usually not experts. They are simply people who care, who listen well, who try to love one another, and who help others do the same.

Note: You will find another article on the cultural lens of catechesis in the *Faith First Legacy Edition* resource *Keeping Faith First: A Resource Supporting the Whole Community of Faith*.

FOR REFLECTION

- *What is the cultural landscape of your parish?*
- *What have you gained by being a part of this landscape?*

Called and Gifted

In one of Pope John Paul II's messages entitled "The Church Must Learn To Cope With Computer Culture," given for the annual World Communications Day in 1989, we are reminded that the Church's mission calls her to be "in the very midst of human progress, sharing the experiences of humanity, and seeking to interpret them in the light of faith." One of these movements in human progress to which catechists should attend is the new understanding of how our brain functions. Very exciting discoveries in the field of biophysiology can be extremely helpful to those of us in catechetical ministry. These discoveries remind us that each person with whom we share faith, regardless of their age, has some built-in gifts that can enhance their faith development. These scientific discoveries are brain-based. We now know which parts of our brain fire when faced with certain situations. As religious educators, we are called to examine these theories closely and apply them, when appropriate, to our teaching strategies.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences reminds us what a great gift the human brain is. The Great Commandment challenges us to love God with our whole heart, soul, *mind*, and strength. So how does this mind of ours function? According to Gardner various areas of our brain actually house various intelligences—capabilities and potentials to deal with particular aspects of

life around us. Gardner, an educational psychologist, suggests eight intelligences that all of us possess to varying degrees and which, when used in concert, can help us develop into well-balanced human beings.

The various intelligences deserve not only a passing review but also incorporation into our personal catechetical teaching style. The multiple intelligences are:

- linguistic intelligence
- logical-mathematical intelligence
- musical intelligence
- spatial intelligence
- bodily-kinesthetic intelligence
- interpersonal intelligence
- intrapersonal intelligence
- naturalist intelligence

Researchers today are suggesting the possibility of yet a ninth intelligence, an existential intelligence. This way of learning involves an ability to engage with ultimate issues—even spiritual ones. Howard Gardner considers this additional intelligence in his book *Intelligence Reframed* (Basic Books, 2000) and argues that it meets many of the evaluative criteria of the intelligences. While he has not yet considered it to be a ninth intelligence, many include it as the "eight and a half" intelligence. Note: See blackline master related to this topic on page 69.

Linguistic Intelligence uses words and language.

Catechetical Applications:

hearing Scripture stories, memorizing various traditional prayers, creating spontaneous prayers, poetry

Teaching Modes:

storytelling, journaling, choral reading, discussions



Logical-Mathematical Intelligence uses logic and numbers.

Catechetical Applications:

probing dilemmas from Church history, analyzing moral issues, checking parish statistics

Teaching Modes:

time lines, critical thinking skills, mental calculations



Musical Intelligence uses patterns of tone and rhythm.

Catechetical Applications:

learning and singing hymns, composing simple acclamations, listening to chants

Teaching Modes:

playing music for relaxation, using CDs and instruments to accompany input



Spatial Intelligence

uses images and color.

Catechetical Applications:

portraying liturgical/seasonal environment, drawing or coloring pictures of Bible stories, designing worship space

Teaching Modes: imagination games and guided imagery, metaphors, art activities (montages/collages/murals)



Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence uses movement.

Catechetical Applications: liturgical gesturing, miming Bible stories, Christmas and Easter plays

Teaching Modes:

hands-on learning, drama, body movement, role-playing, sports games



Interpersonal Intelligence uses relational empathy and communication.

Catechetical Applications: faith sharing, giving and receiving positive feedback, celebrations and prayer services of reconciliation

Teaching Modes:

peer teaching, cooperative learning, brainstorming



Intrapersonal Intelligence

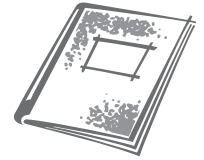
uses the ability to access one's feeling life, nuance personal emotions, and acknowledge one's strengths and weaknesses.

Catechetical Applications:

centering prayer, examination of conscience

Teaching Modes:

independent study, self-esteem building



Naturalistic Intelligence uses patterns in nature to apply to other realities.

Catechetical Applications:

ecospirituality, appreciating nature as source of God's presence, noticing nature metaphors in parables

Teaching Modes:

field trips, nature walks, classroom pets



FOR REFLECTION

- How attentive am I to the needs of young people to express their learning through various intelligences?
- What can I do this year to bring more variety of expression into the catechetical process?



Connecting Faith and Life

The Faith First Legacy Edition Difference

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Helping children connect what they are learning about their faith to their daily lives is a vital part of the catechetical process. As the *National Directory for Catechesis* states, we are to “provide experiences in which [children] can live faith and apply the message of salvation to real-life situations; [and] encourage the use of imagination, as well as intelligence and memory” (NDC 48E, 2). *Faith First Legacy Edition* provides numerous opportunities for students to tangibly connect faith and life.

At the beginning of every chapter the children answer questions about their life experience as it relates to the chapter theme. These prior knowledge questions enable the catechist to

explore with the children what they already know about the topic of the chapter both intellectually and experientially. The children are able to see their real-life connection to faith as they relate their stories about attending a Baptism, helping a neighbor, feeling God’s presence in the glory of a sunset, or a myriad of other experiences that help to bring their faith to life.

The heart of *Faith First Legacy Edition* is the “What Difference?” pages in every chapter of the program. These pages help children understand how faith is lived and how they can apply the faith knowledge that they have learned to their daily living.

Our Church Makes a Difference

As students explore the “Our Church Makes a Difference” page, they will discover how the chapter theme has been lived out in the Church and in the lives of Christians throughout history. This page helps children to see how faith has made and continues to make a difference in the Church and in the lives of Jesus’ followers today.

“Our Church Makes a Difference” helps students deepen their appreciation for Church history and Catholic culture. They will learn how Catholic organizations, religious communities, and parish ministries continue the work of Christ today. They will meet a vast array of Catholic role models—saints, heroes, and contemporary Christians—and recognize what it means to walk

in the footsteps of Jesus. They will see how the practices, traditions, and devotions of the Catholic Church enrich our lives and help us to grow in faith.

This page is augmented by the “Our Catholic Identity” feature found in each doctrine chapter of grades one to six. This feature highlights special events, places, and objects in the Catholic Church. Both features help the students to build religious literacy and deepen their sense of belonging to the Catholic community.

What Difference Does Faith Make in My Life?

This page helps students apply to their personal faith life what they learn each and every week. It helps them discover that the Scriptures, and the beliefs and traditions of the Church make a difference in the lives of

Catholic Christians. This feature helps the students recognize that faith is not meant to be isolated or compartmentalized. Faith is meant to be lived. Each week, as the students complete the “What Difference Does Faith Make in My Life” page, they will choose one concrete way they will put into practice what they have learned in the chapter. Making this commitment on a weekly basis to live their faith shapes the children’s religious formation. It helps them recognize that in living as a follower of Jesus our Christian actions and attitudes can make all the difference.

FOR REFLECTION

- *What experiences have helped me to connect faith in my own life?*
- *What can I do to help catechists help children make these connections?*

Assessment in Parish Religious Education

Some parish religious educators equate assessment with formal testing and feel that it is inappropriate in faith formation programs. All would agree that we can never measure the depth of an individual's faith in God. However, assessment can be seen through a wider lens. Religious education assessment can be a form of ongoing communication among students, catechists, and families. Assessment can communicate young people's growth in knowledge about the Catholic faith. It can also provide an opportunity for them to communicate how they are integrating faith knowledge into their lives. This communication can help catechists and families to assist young people on their faith journey in a more effective ways.

Assessment, which involves much more than using and grading a standardized test, is an integral part of all teaching and learning. Assessment involves helping learners move to higher levels of thinking. Thinking moves from simple comprehension to application, analysis, and synthesis where students can apply what they have learned in ways that help them produce new ideas for how they wish to live. This kind of assessment moves far beyond the fill-in-the-blanks or true and false kinds of questions. While the latter strategies still have their place in testing,

they are not the totality of what true assessment is about.

Faith First Legacy Edition contains a variety of strategies to assist catechists and learners in communicating both what is to be learned and what has already been learned. The opening chapter at each grade level, "Welcome to Faith First," invites the young people to activate their prior knowledge and to communicate what they would like to learn during the year. The unit opener pages that introduce each of the four units function in the same way. Each chapter opener page invites the children both to tell what they already know about a topic and to name how that topic has touched their human experience in some way.

Once the presentation of the chapter concepts has begun, the catechist uses a variety of strategies and activities to help young people demonstrate both their comprehension and application of the concepts to practical situations. From these exercises catechists learn in informal ways how well their learners are grasping the lesson concepts and relating them to prior knowledge and to life.

Faith First incorporates a unique assessment feature in each chapter to assist both catechists

and learners. The sixth page in each chapter asks the critical question, “What Difference Does Faith Make in My Life?” The activity on the pages asks the young people to explore ways that they can integrate the faith concepts in the chapter into life situations in ways that would make a difference for others. The page closes with a challenge to the learners to make a personal faith choice. Catechists will encourage more authentic responses to these activities by participating in the process themselves and appropriately sharing their own experiences of living the faith concepts presented in the lesson.

Every *Faith First Legacy Edition* chapter ends with an assessment feature called “We Remember.” This is a very short review of the key lesson concepts. It is not so much a quiz as a way for the catechist to reinforce the key concepts and find out what learning has occurred. This activity also provides some feedback for parents, since it is on the opposite side of the “With My Family” page that will be sent home. The inclusion of such a feature can help to mitigate that age-old exchange that often occurs after religion class between parent and child: “What happened in religion class today?” “Nothing.”

Faith First Legacy Edition also incorporates two-page unit reviews. These reviews begin with two cognitive devices that demonstrate what the young people have retained about the main concepts taught in the unit. The third element asks the student to respond to the important question: “What are the three most important things you learned in this unit?” This helps catechists and parents to see what has seemed most important to the child—often an indicator not only of how well the concept was taught but of what the child most needed to know. A fourth element always relates to one of the Scripture stories in the unit.

There is, of course, a formal two-page test for each chapter. These tests, found in the *Assessment Tools* booklets, follow a similar format to the unit reviews. They move from a cognitive understanding of faith concepts and vocabulary to exercises that allow young people to express their understanding and application of concepts in their own words. Finally, learners are asked to reflect on a key chapter concept and think about what difference it will make in their lives. This final question should never be graded along with rest of the test. The young people’s response to this question is an

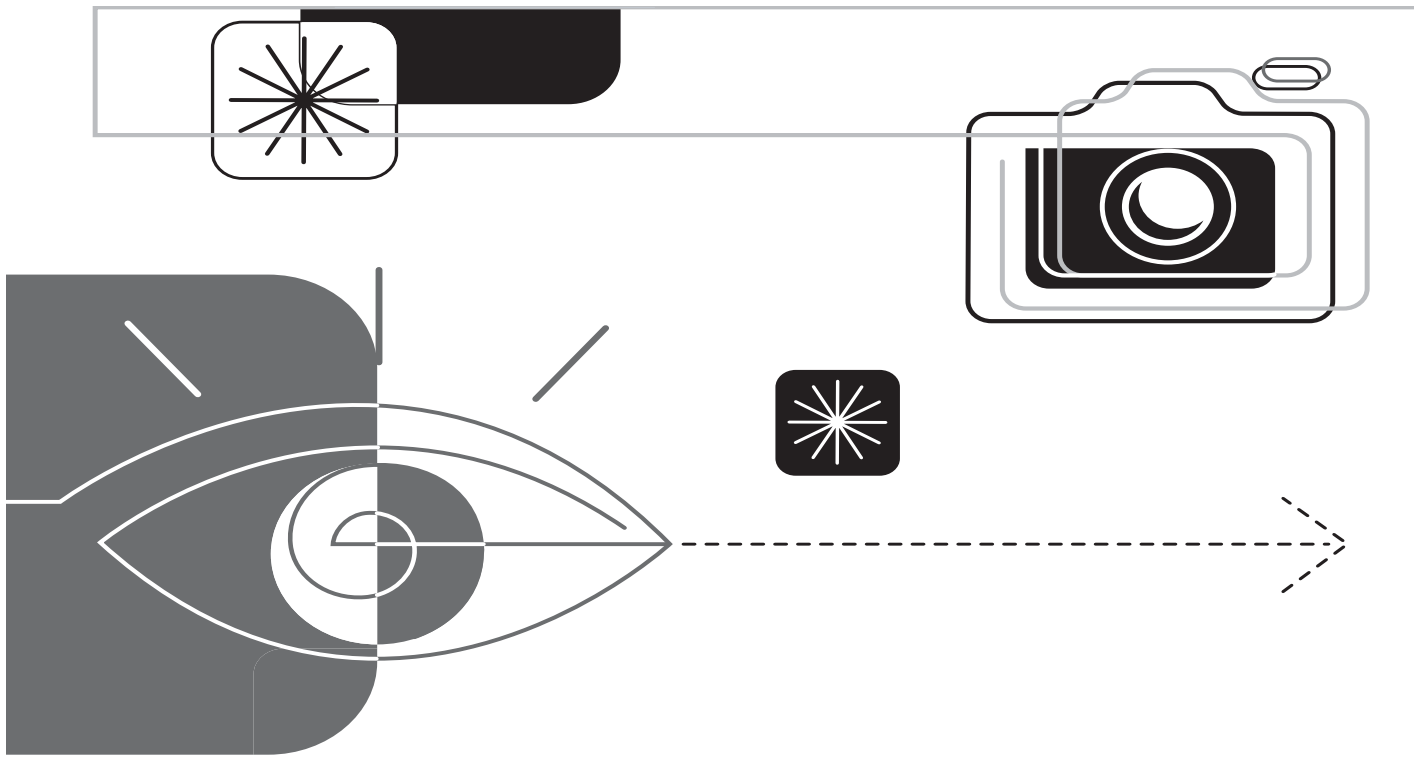
expression of personal faith and truly cannot be measured.

The *Assessment Tools* booklets contain other support as well. Among the tools you will find are some guidelines for evaluating student work. These guidelines are called rubrics. The goal of these rubrics is not to assign letter grades to students in parish religious education. Rather, these rubrics give catechists some written materials to evaluate the success of their own teaching and to use on occasions when they are discussing the children’s participation and progress in the religion classes with parents.

Assessment is never a measure of a child’s personal faith. However, using a variety of both formal and informal assessment tools will help catechists to evaluate how well they are teaching, and to give both the students and their parents feedback on how well the young people have learned key concepts.

FOR REFLECTION

- *What is your personal feeling about assessment in religious education?*
- *Which assessment tools in Faith First do you think will be important to incorporate into your catechetical program?*



Using Media in Catechesis

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One of the most engaging descriptions of the role of the catechist found in the *General Directory for Catechesis* is that of mediator. The catechist is called to facilitate communication between people of all ages and the mystery of the Holy One. For this reason, it is important for the catechist to identify and understand those areas of experience which play an important part in the lives of those with whom they share faith. This reality of mediation is precisely what Jesus Christ came on earth to do. His presence here among us in our everyday human experiences showed us how and where God can be found.

One area of human experience which literally brackets the lives of most of us from the rising of the sun to way past its setting is media. Each

person, whether catechetical leader, catechist, or the youth being catechized, has one or several preferred media which provide them with information, education, entertainment, and motivation throughout the day. Radio, television, Internet, iPods, and all media provide us and others with a background to our everyday experience.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* urges us as heralds of the Gospel to enter into the background world of the mass media, to learn about it, and then determine how best to employ it to serve the Christian message. Once religious educators accept this challenge in their ministry, they can begin to look at any means of social communication as a possible locus

for mediating the Holy One. As Teilhard de Chardin once said, “Nothing is profane for those who know how to see.”

The local catechetical leader should encourage catechists to assess not only their own media habits, but also to determine the preferred media of those with whom they share faith. The easiest way to make this discovery is to simply ask others about their favorite media. Once this is accomplished the catechist can enter the media world of friends, family, colleagues, and students and begin to use various types of popular media to illustrate how we believe and how we are able to discover Christian values all around us. With this methodology, the popular culture can become a means of continuing catechesis in the daily lives of children and youth (and in the lives of their parents as well). It extends the lessons of the religious education text that we utilize.

This mode of passing on the faith does not mean that catechists abandon the use of “religious” media resources (videos, charts, DVDs, CDs, PowerPoint presentations, and so on) in their catechetical sessions. Well-trained catechists ought to be doing this already. This methodology simply

acknowledges that those with whom we share faith spend far more time each week interacting with their preferred media than they do in Church or catechetical settings. As wise catechetical professionals, we are called to assist believers in finding God in their everyday lives.

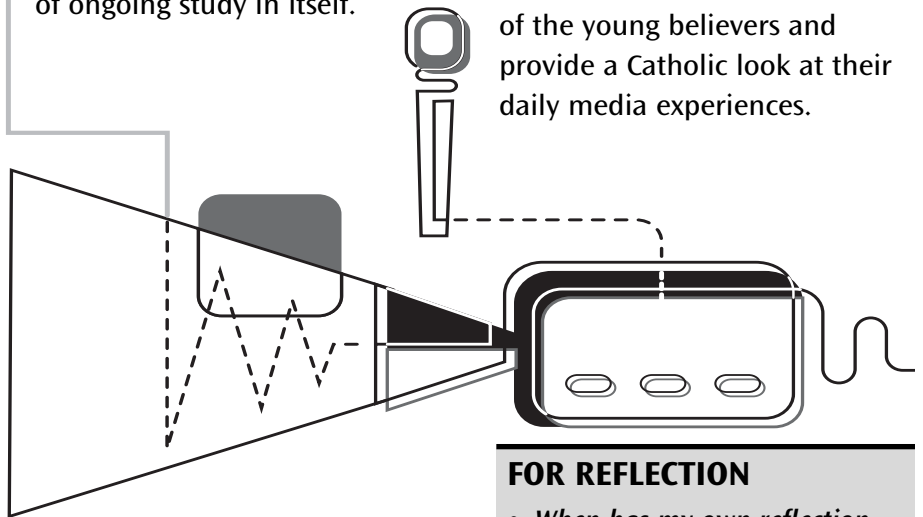
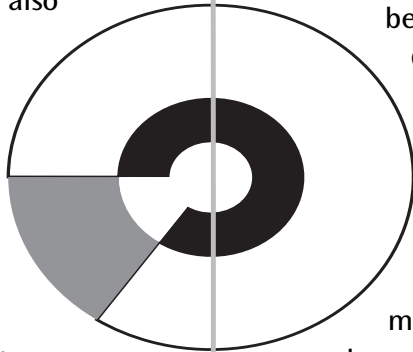
So how can this approach be fostered? First, as catechetical ministers, we must be convinced that with proper lenses we can find God anywhere. Second, we need to understand how media works. A certain level of media literacy is essential for both the catechist and the catechized. Media education is an important area of ongoing study in itself.

All manner of media can be used in the catechetical session to help the learner notice the underlying themes that can be found. Catechists can use current references to film, video games, magazines, books, TV,

music, and the Internet. Some of the media will affirm Catholic values, some of the media will clearly challenge Catholic values.

Using a segment from a Saturday morning cartoon with small children can help them examine what they see and detect what kind of values are played out in the program. Middle graders need to notice when video games contain too much violence or how books, such as the popular Harry Potter series, reflect or do not reflect the values they are learning. Teens can see how popular songs celebrate love or how they might promote values contrary to those of the Gospel.

The incorporation of media in each catechetical session can connect the session to the lives of the young believers and provide a Catholic look at their daily media experiences.



FOR REFLECTION

- *When has my own reflection on a piece of media enhanced my faith life?*
- *What have I done to educate myself about the possibilities electronic media could hold for our parish program?*

Interviewing New Catechists

The process of interviewing potential catechists is very important. During this time you will be become more familiar with the interested person, understand more clearly their goals and intent, and make some determinations as to whether their vision, gifts, and personality will be an appropriate match for the ministry of catechesis.

They will, in turn, be allowed to understand your vision and the ministry of catechesis in your parish. This list of questions can serve as a springboard to a successful and informative interviewing session. Use the space provided to take some notes during the interview for future reference.

Name _____ Date _____

☼ Tell me a little bit about yourself (family, interests, work, etc.).

☼ What is your understanding of what it means to be a catechist?

☼ Why are you interested in becoming involved in this ministry?

☼ Do you have any previous experience as a teacher or religious educator?

☼ What is your educational background and religious education experience?

☼ Are you a certified catechist? If not, are you willing to become certified?

☼ Are willing to continue your own religious education by attending workshops, conferences, and training sessions?

☼ Which grade level(s) are you interested in working with? Why?

☼ What parish organizations, groups, or activities have you been involved in?

☼ Would you consider yourself to be an active, practicing Catholic?

☼ Who has been a religious influence or role model of faith in your life?

☼ What would you consider to be your favorite form of prayer?

☼ Is there any area of Church teaching that you are currently struggling with?

☼ Are you committed to imparting the faith according to the teaching of the Church?

☼ What would you consider to be the biggest time commitments in your weekly schedule?

Catechist Yearly Commitment Form

I, _____, am a practicing Catholic and a member of _____ Parish. I agree to serve as a catechist for grade _____ for the coming year. I realize that I am responding to a call from the Lord expressed through my local parish and agree to the following:

- I will witness to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ as taught by his Church.
- I will express my commitment to the Catholic Church and try to communicate the teachings of the Catholic Church clearly.
- I will work to build a faith community among my learners.
- I will act as a servant of the Church, seeking out the needs of others, and teaching the learners entrusted to me to do the same.
- I will meet my responsibility to acquire the basic skills and abilities needed to conduct effective catechetical sessions.

Finally, I commit myself to assist in my formation as a catechist this year in the following ways:

Catechist Signature and Date

Program Director Signature and Date

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Catechist Evaluation Form

Evaluation is an important element in quality catechist formation. Separate copies of the following form can be completed by the catechist, the Director of Religious Education, or both. Each

can use it to assess particular areas of strength and areas where growth is needed. This form can serve as an important springboard to a constructive evaluative discussion.

Name _____ Grade Level _____ Date _____

	CONSISTENTLY	ADEQUATELY	RARELY	NEVER		CONSISTENTLY	ADEQUATELY	RARELY	NEVER
Promoting Knowledge of the Faith					Moral Formation				
Teaches Catholic beliefs and traditions appropriate to the age level of the children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fosters children's understanding of Christian morality and good decision-making skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhibits an enthusiasm for the Catholic faith and a desire to continue to learn about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Helps children apply Catholic, Christian values to their everyday lives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participates in various workshops and courses to further knowledge about the Catholic faith	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Models Catholic values for the children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Liturgical Education					Teaching to Pray				
Helps the children learn about and celebrate the Church's liturgical year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assists children in understand the importance of prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourages the children to fully participate in worship and the sacraments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorporates a variety of prayer forms into lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regularly participates in the liturgical life of the parish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepares and utilizes a prayer area for the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Takes time for personal spiritual renewal and has a regular practice of prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Education for Community Life

- Makes the classroom a loving Christian community so that children can experience and understand its importance
- Has good communication with parents and include parents from time to time in class sessions; encourages the children to share what they have learned with their families
- Recognizes and affirms the unique gifts of each child in the class
- Makes an effort to spend time sharing ideas with other catechists
- Attends catechist gatherings in the parish

Missionary Initiation

- Encourages the children to participate in service activities offered either through the class or through the larger parish
- Helps the children make faith connections to events and people in their families and communities and around the world

Challenges the children to think of the many different ways they can make a difference in the world

Classroom Management

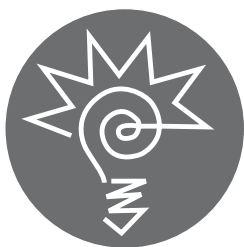
- Arrives in a timely fashion in order to appropriately prepare for the session
- Prepares an overall lesson plan in advance of the catechetical session
- Is flexible when lesson plans need to be adjusted for effectiveness
- Includes a variety of methods and incorporates media in lesson plans to keep students interested and involved
- Shows a familiarity with and utilizes the various components of the textbook series
- Is attentive to different learning styles and intelligences
- Demonstrates effective and appropriate discipline and management strategies
- Shows an understanding of the impact of environment on the learner

Comments: _____

Catechist

Program Director

Date



† R E S O U R C E S †

To Support Catechists

In-service Models

You'll find two in-service session plans to use with your catechists: Quickstart for Catechists and Overview of *Faith First Legacy Edition*, and an introduction to the *Echoes of Faith* catechist formation resource.

Blackline Activity Masters

This section includes a series of blackline activity masters to use in connection with the two in-service models, opening and closing prayers for in-service events, plus practical workshop handouts.

Quick Start for Catechists

This workshop provides a three-hour video orientation to the catechetical ministry and to the *Faith First Legacy Edition* for your catechists. The workshop is divided into four parts. You can offer these parts as four separate workshops or combine them into a single half-day event.

Workshop Materials

- Copies of the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1979) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005)
- *Faith First Legacy Edition* awareness video
- “QuickStart” video
- Catechist guide and student book for each catechist
- Blackline master worksheets (pages 69–72)
- Nametags

Preparation Checklist

- Set a workshop date several months in advance.
- Choose a team to assist you.
- Remind catechists by mail and/or phone before the event.
- Familiarize yourself with the workshop materials and session plan.
- Check your video equipment and preview the videos at least a week in advance.
- Arrange for refreshments. (Provide attractive alternatives for dieters.)
- Plan for a cantor or musician to assist at the session prayer services if possible.



- Arrive in sufficient time for room setup and to prepare refreshments. Have workshop packets available for each participant.
- Have extra writing paper and pens available for those who may forget them.
- Set up a display of all *Faith First Legacy Edition* components and a selection of useful resources from your resource library.

Workshop Environment

- **Prayer Center.** Place a prayer center at the heart of the workshop space that reflects the liturgical season. The first lesson in every *Faith First* grade includes an enthronement of the Scriptures. Model this ritual in the opening prayer for this workshop.
- **Seating Arrangement.** Arrange tables and chairs so that catechists can face one another during workshop discussions. Simple thematic centerpieces will communicate to all the importance of environment.
- **Comfort.** Adjust lighting and room temperature for comfort. Make sure that the meeting room can be sufficiently darkened for optimal video viewing.
- **Hospitality.** Provide an attractively-arranged hospitality table.

Session Plan **Three-hour model**

You can shorten the workshop time by twenty minutes by deleting the awareness video viewing in part 1 of the workshop. Instead, set up a VCR and monitor and a display of *Faith First Legacy Edition* components in a classroom space and invite catechists to drop by and examine the print components there and view the awareness video at the parish or at home. You should have received this video with your *Faith First Legacy Edition* sample pack.

20 minutes Introduction

- **Welcome.** Greet catechists as they arrive. Give them nametags, workshop packets, and the student book and catechist guide for their grade levels.
- **Begin on time.** Seat catechists with others near their own grade level at tables of no more than six people.
- **Pray.** Because of the centrality of the word of God in the ministry of catechesis, begin with a service of enthronement of the Scriptures. Prayerfully lead the service as outlined on the prayer sheet (see page 62).
- **Break the ice.** Greet your catechists. Then invite them to write in the corners of their nametags key words that represent two well-known and two little-known facts about themselves. Then divide the group into pairs and have each pair use the name tag facts to get acquainted. Have the catechists introduce their partners to the large group or to their table groups if a very large number of catechists is present.

Part 1 Orientation **30 minutes** to *Faith First*

Note: If catechists have viewed the awareness video prior to the session, use the this process but omit the showing of the video.

- **Program goals.** Ask volunteers to name the goal of a parish catechetical program. Record their responses on newsprint or an overhead transparency.
- **Summarize.** Summarize their insights and add your own understanding of the program goals.

- **Video.** Introduce the awareness video. Tell the catechists that the video will provide them with a short overview of the *Faith First Legacy Edition* program. Ask them to jot down features about the student books, the teaching process, and catechist support materials that impress them as they watch the video. Show the video and invite responses from the catechists. Explain your own reasons for choosing the *Faith First Legacy Edition* series for your parish catechetical program.
- **Browsing time.** Invite the catechists to browse through the program components during the break.

BREAK · 15 minutes

Part 2 The Catechetical **30 minutes** Ministry

“QuickStart for Catechists” on pages 17–34 of the grades 1–6 catechist guides or pages 19–37 of the junior high guides (JH) is an interactive, video-assisted workshop that provides a basic orientation to the catechetical ministry. “QuickStart” helps catechists answer four basic questions:

- What is a catechist?
- What will I teach?
- Who are my learners?
- How will I catechize them?

What Is Faith?

- **Faith.** Write the words “Faith is . . .” on the board or on newsprint. Ask each catechist to write a response to the statement and share it with a partner. Show Part 1, Segment 1 of the “QuickStart” video.
- **Response.** Share your the definition of faith on page 17 of QuickStart and have the table groups compare it with their definitions. Ask the catechists to write their responses to the two “For Reflection” questions on page 17 (JH page 19). Ask them to share their response to one of the questions with their table group.
- **Conclude.** Read aloud the quotation from the video (see GDC 53).

What Is a Catechist?

- **Summarize.** Share the content of page 18 in your own words. If your office still has a copy of the 1979 National Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for the United States*, show it to the group and explain its historical importance.
- **Video.** Show Part 1, Segment 2 of the “QuickStart” video.
- **Response.** Point out that page 19 (JH page 21) summarizes the list of qualities of catechists referred to on the video. Ask them to complete the “For Reflection” activity.
- **Growth plan.** If you have not yet discussed with the catechists a growth plan for the year, tell them you will discuss this later in the workshop.

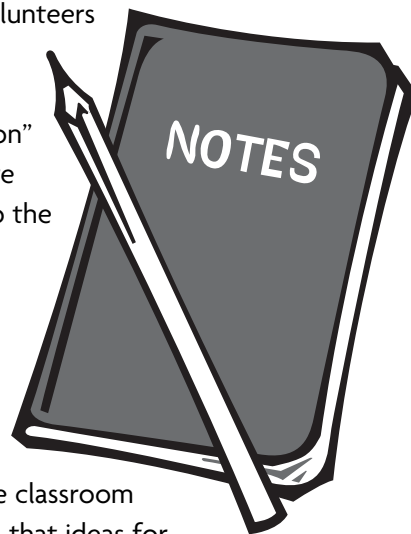
What Is My Task?

- **Discuss.** Ask: What is the most important thing you hope to accomplish this year? Ask volunteers to respond. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the quotation at the top of page 20 (JH page 22). Point out that this should be each catechist’s ultimate goal.
- **Church documents.** Show the catechists the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005).
- **Video.** Show Part 1, Segment 3 of the “QuickStart” video. Tell the catechists that they will be viewing a reflection on the six tasks of catechesis.
- **Response.** Point out that the “Tasks of Catechists” listed on “QuickStart” page 21 (JH page 23) are included in both documents. Ask the catechists to respond to the “For Reflection” questions. Remind the catechists that all the tasks of catechesis are interdependent and important.

Teaching Others to Pray

- **Begin.** Remind the catechists that a key task of catechesis is to teach others to pray. Read aloud the quotation from the General Directory at the top of “QuickStart” page 22.
- **Read.** Invite the catechists to read page 22 (JH page 24) silently.

- **Response.** Ask volunteers to write their response to the first “For Reflection” question and share their responses to the second question.
- **Summarize.** Share your own expectations for classroom prayer. Point out the importance of the classroom prayer center and that ideas for setting one up properly are on page 32 (JH page 34).



BREAK • 15 minutes

Part 3

30 minutes

Skills for Catechists

Assure the catechists that *Faith First* will provide them with all the tools they need to feel both competent and confident in their presentation of doctrine.

- **Begin.** Point out that becoming familiar with the spiral approach is essential to understanding the structure of *Faith First*.
- **Summarize.** Share the content on page 2 (JH page 25). Have the catechists discuss the “For Reflection” questions at their tables.
- **Explore.** Have them turn the page and look over the scope and sequence chart.
- **Video.** Show Part 1, Segment 3 of the “QuickStart” video to reinforce the main principles and advantages of the *Faith First* spiral approach.

Who Are My Learners?

- **Begin.** Ask the catechists to write their responses to the first reflection question on page 28 (JH page 30).
- **Read.** Have them silently read pages 28 and 29 (JH pages 30 and 31) to learn more about the typical characteristics of children at their grade levels.

- **Response.** Ask them to share one new thing they learned with a catechist for the same grade level. Then have them respond to the second reflection question.

How Do Children Learn?

Remind the catechists that the National Directory is the guide for the way that we are to do catechesis in the United States.

- **Begin.** Point out that a key passage in the National Directory names eight methodologies, or ways, that we learn about our faith. Tell them that the next video segment will explain these eight ways.
- **Video.** Show Part 1, Segment 4 of the “QuickStart” video.
- **Response.** Ask volunteers to share with you and the group one influence on their own faith journey.
- **Presentation.** Remind the catechists that they will influence the faith journeys of their students. To do the best job, they will need to develop certain knowledge and skills. Summarize the information about learning styles and multiple intelligences on page 30 (JH page 32) and pass out the handout on page 69. Then ask the catechists to look over the handout (pages 71 and 72) of appropriate activities for their grade levels.
- **Response.** Have them discuss the “For Reflection” questions in their table groups. Ask the catechists to make a resolution to try one new kind of activity each month.

Looking Ahead

- Remind the catechists that becoming a catechist is a gradual process. This workshop is only a beginning.
- If you have access to the *Echoes of Faith* catechist formation modules, point out to the catechists that each of the modules offers a more in-depth treatment of the topics discussed today. Suggestions are highlighted throughout the “QuickStart” workshop pages.
- Point out diocesan and parish resources and upcoming in-service opportunities.
- Invite catechists who have not already done so to make an appointment with you to design a personal growth plan for the coming year.

NOTE: You may wish to have a short standup break before proceeding to Part 4.

BREAK • 15 minutes

Part 4 Teaching a *Faith First Lesson* 35 minutes

Tell the catechists that in this final segment of the workshop, they will learn the elements of a Faith First lesson.

- **Video.** Begin by showing Part 2 of the “QuickStart” video. This will provide an excellent demonstration of the teaching of a typical Faith First chapter.
- **Response.** Ask volunteers to share what they noticed and liked most in the video presentation.
- **The Catechetical Process.** Distribute the handout on (page 70). Review the three step process using the diagram on the page.
- **Catechist guides.** Point out some of the special features of the catechist guides:
 - Evaluation.** Emphasize the importance of self-evaluation and point out the evaluation features at the bottom of the “With My Family” page in each chapter.
 - Catholic Social Teaching.** Point out that there are eight boxes at each grade level each highlighting a key principle of the social teachings of the Catholic Church.
- **Student book.** Invite the catechists to turn to the contents page of the student book. Point out the following features:
 - “Welcome to Faith First!” opening day lesson
 - Thumbnail of content for each chapter given on the contents pages
 - Unit openers and unit reviews
 - “Catholic Prayers and Practices” section, glossary, and index
- Remind the catechists of the wealth of resources available each week on **www.FaithFirst.com**, especially its “Online Lesson Planner Resource.”

Closing Prayer

Close the in-service event with a service of commitment. A copy of the order of prayer for this service can be found on page 63.

Introducing Echoes of Faith

Echoes of Faith is a video-assisted, basic catechist formation project of the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) produced by RCL. It was designed by the catechetical community for the catechetical community. *Echoes of Faith* uses an integrated learning design that includes both video and booklet components. The learning design moves back and forth between the two pieces, so to cover any model theme adequately, both pieces are required.

Since *Echoes of Faith* has been purchased by virtually every diocese in the United States, it is likely that you can find it in your parish or in your diocesan media library. This workshop model provides an opportunity for you to introduce your catechists to *Echoes of Faith* and help them see how its modules can help them to grow as catechists in the coming year.

Workshop Materials

- nametags and markers
- crucifix, Bible and candle for each table
- paper and pencils for each table
- copies of the *Echoes of Faith* reflection handout (page 74)
- copies of three *Echoes of Faith* modules, video, and booklet
 - “The Roles of the Catechist,” segment 2
 - “Catholic Morality,” segment 1, part A
 - “Getting Started as a Catechist,” segment 1

Preparation

Follow the guidelines for advance preparation given in the previous workshop model (page 56). Be sure to preview and cue the three videos to the segments you will be showing. Display the complete set of modules on a display table.

Session Plan

Two-hour model

This model utilizes three segments from the *Echoes of Faith* resource. The goal of this workshop model is to encourage your catechists to create a personal growth plan to ensure that they become the best possible catechists that they can be.

Part 1

40 minutes

Being a Good Catechist

- **Introduction.** Help catechists engage with the workshop theme and lead them in prayer.
- **Break the ice.** Explain the purpose for the workshop. Invite catechists to introduce themselves to their table groups. Ask the catechists to discuss this question with their table groups: What do you recall as your best catechetical experience when you were a child? Allow a short time for reflection and invite all to respond.
- **Pray.** Gather the catechists around the prayer space that you have prepared. Proclaim Mark 4:3–8 (the parable of the Sower). Use the correct liturgical form for proclaiming the Gospel. Remind the catechists that the sower in the parable is God and the seed is the word of God. Our role as catechists is to till the soil in our learners so that the seed will grow in them and increase their faith.



- **Overview.** Share with the catechists that the *General Directory for Catechesis* emphasizes that catechists need formation in three areas, namely, being, knowing, and *savoir faire* (see GDC 238). This is the “how-to,” or the ability to share the Gospel message. This workshop will give catechists a better understanding of all three of these areas of catechist formation.
- **“Being.”** Distribute the reflection handout (page 74) and ask the catechists to write a response to question 1a. Invite them to share their responses in their groups.
 - Show segment 2 of “Roles of the Catechist.”
 - Invite catechists to respond to the video segment by writing a response to question 1b. Ask for responses from the whole group.
 - Point out to catechists some important qualities and ways of being that you noticed in the catechists on the video.
- Summarize by describing what it means to assist in the formation of a moral person. Refer to or quote from the *National Directory for Catechesis* section 42, page 163.
- **“Savoir faire.”** Remind catechists that one of the tasks of catechesis is to acquire the skills and methods to communicate the Gospel effectively.
 - Ask catechists to write a response to question 3a. Ask catechists to share their response with a partner at their tables.
 - Show segment 1 of “Getting Started as a Catechist.”
 - Ask catechists to write responses to question 3b and to work together to create a common response from their group. Ask for group reports.
 - Conclude by stating your own vision of an ideal catechetical space.
 - Remind catechists that they have seen only a small portion of each of these videos. Invite them to use the entire modules at a later time. It would be a good idea to invite your catechists to design a personal formation plan for the coming year using the catechist commitment form on page 51. Tell catechists who express an interest in certain modules that you will obtain the booklets for them.

BREAK • 15 minutes

Part 2

One hour Knowing and Doing

- **“Knowing.”** Remind the catechists of their need and responsibility to continue to grow in knowledge of the faith just as they want the children to do. Ask catechists to write their responses to question 2a.
 - Show segment 1, part A of “Catholic Morality.”
 - Invite catechists to respond to the video segment by writing a response to question 2b. Then have them share their responses with their table groups.
- **Pray.** Close with communal prayer. You may wish to use the prayer service on page 27 of the booklet for “Getting Started as a Catechist.” It requires only well-known prayer responses so there is no need to provide copies for the catechists.



Tellers of the Word

Gathering

Place chairs in two semicircles on either side of the prayer center, leaving an open space in front of the prayer center. Gather at the back of the meeting space. Form a procession behind the reader, who holds the Bible high and leads a procession to the prayer center. Sing an appropriate hymn during the procession. Stand in line behind the reader as they place the Bible reverently on a stand in the prayer center and open it to the reading. Each person in line should now bow before the open Bible and form a circle around the prayer center.

Leader: Let us begin by recalling our Baptism.

All: ***Make the Sign of the Cross, praying,***
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Leader: Loving God,
we gather today as
tellers of your word
to honor you and give
you praise.
You are with us as we gather
around your holy word.

All: ***Trace a cross on their forehead as the leader prays,***

Leader: Send us the Holy Spirit
to help us remember
your word in our thoughts
as we share your word
with our students this year.

All: ***Trace a cross on their lips as the leader prays,***
May we remember your
word when we speak.

All: ***Trace a cross over their heart as the leader prays,***
May we hold your word
in our hearts.
We ask this through
Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Reading

Leader: The Bible is God's own
word to us. Let us sit and
humbly listen as the word
of God is proclaimed in
our midst today.

Reader: *Proclaim 1 Samuel 3:1–10.*

Closing Prayer

Leader: God, our loving Father,
today we have gathered to
honor and listen to
your word.

May the Holy Spirit
guide us this year as we
speak your word to the
students entrusted to us.

We ask this through Jesus
Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**



Called to Serve

Gathering

Gather in silence in the prayer center.

Leader: Gracious God, we ask for your blessing as we begin our catechetical year. As we reflect on our task, we are inspired by our ancestors in faith.

Reader 1: Give us the courage of Abraham and Sarah, who did not hesitate when God called them to a new land.

All: **Lord, give us courage.**

Reader 2: Give us the hope of Moses, who offered hope and freedom to others.

All: **Lord, give us hope.**

Reader 3: Give us the wisdom of Samuel to listen more than we speak.

All: **Lord, give us wisdom.**

Reader 4: Give us the justice of Amos, so that we will challenge children to a peaceful world.

All: **Lord, give us your justice.**

Reader 5: Give us the faith of Joseph, so that we can be models of faith to the children in our care.

All: **Lord, give us faith.**

Reader 6: Give us the humility of Mary, to remember that you are the source of any good we do.

All: **Lord, give us humility.**

Reader 7: Give us the enthusiasm and passion of Mary Magdalen to share the Good News.

All: **Lord, give us enthusiasm.**

Reading

Leader: Gracious God, help us to listen well to your message.

Reader: *Proclaim Hebrews 13:7–8.*

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Blessing of Commitment

Leader: *Invite each catechist to stand before you. Trace a cross on the hands of each person as you say, N., you are signed with the Cross of Christ. May God bless you as you do his work this year.*

Catechist: I will listen and do God's will.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Spirit of God, we ask for the courage to never waiver in our respect for the dignity of each child entrusted to our care. Let us teach as your Son did, allowing the children to grow in faith each day. With your love, the example of your Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are ready to begin.

All: **Amen.**

Close by singing an appropriate hymn.

Questions from Catechists

About *Faith First Legacy Edition*



What makes the Faith First Legacy Edition different from all other religion programs?

- *Faith First* is the only religion series with a pure spiral learning method that provides a complete, balanced, and holistic scope and sequence based on doctrine, Scripture, and the liturgical year.
- *Faith First* is the only religion series to offer unparalleled formation and support for catechists in catechist guides.
- *Faith First* is the only religion program that offers an award-winning Web site—the best and most widely used Web site in Catholic religious education.
- *Faith First* is the best value among religion programs today. Using *Faith First Legacy* saves your parish money every year with the most affordable student books and resources.



Why is the spiral learning method used in Faith First so effective?

- Each year students grow in their knowledge and understanding of the four pillars (Creed, Sacraments, Morality and Christian Prayer) of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* because the timeless truths of our faith are taught every year on every grade level in *Faith First*.
- Every year, students review and learn more about each of these important doctrines and beliefs of the Catholic faith. Woven through this doctrinal presentation is special Scripture chapters and celebrations of the liturgical year. This is far superior to

the thematic approach in which children are expected to learn most of what the Catholic Church teaches about a given theme in one year.



How does Faith First teach Sacred Scripture?

- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are the primary sources for catechesis. Recognizing the importance of children learning that God speaks to us through the Bible, Faith First grades 1–8 provides sixty-eight core Scripture chapters dedicated totally to the study of Sacred Scripture. In addition Scripture passages and references are found in every chapter of the program.
- The chapters dedicated to Scripture represent the equivalent of more than two years of Scripture study during a student's eight years of religious education. Each dedicated Scripture chapter consists of “Bible Background,” “Reading the Word of God,” and “Understanding the Word of God.” The latter is an exploration of the meaning of the story. This approach, unique to *Faith First*, ensures that students will grow in their understanding of and appreciation for Sacred Scripture year by year.



What time frame is suggested for teaching a Faith First chapter in a weekly parish program?

Faith First chapters are designed to be taught in one hour each week. Simply follow the complete wraparound lesson plan provided

in your catechist guide. For longer sessions, you can incorporate suggestions from the “Catechist to Catechist” column, the ideas in the tips and background boxes at the bottom of each page in the lesson plan, and the activities on the “Enriching the Lesson” page at the end of the plan. Catechists with hour-long sessions can substitute one or more of these activities for an activity in the formal lesson plan.



How can I best use Faith First with primary grade students who do not yet read well independently?

Primary texts in all religion series are written for the catechist to read to the children because some of the vocabulary words and terminology necessary to define the doctrines of the Catholic Church are not part of the normal vocabulary of young students. It is appropriate to read the text aloud since children’s listening comprehension is normally ahead of their reading ability. Once the children hear the text, work with the pictures, engage in discussion, and participate in the hands-on activities, they will understand the concepts. In fact, all children learn best when they actively work with the content rather than just read the text.



How will using the Faith First Legacy Edition catechist guide make me a better catechist?

- **QuickStart for Catechists.** The QuickStart multimedia catechist workshop in the front of your catechist guide provides unprecedented support. This video-assisted workshop will both help you reflect on your role as a catechist and acquire a clearer understanding of how children

learn, what you will teach, and some methods for successful catechesis. Utilizing this workshop will prepare you for a more successful year of sharing faith with young people and introduce you to the key features of *Faith First Legacy Edition*.

- **Chapter Background.**

- The background essay that opens every core chapter of the catechist guide helps you grow in your understanding of the Catholic faith and provides you with the opportunity to connect the faith concepts to your life.
- “Catechist to Catechist,” found in the chapter background pages, offers insights from veteran catechists on the chapter theme and practical ideas to present the concepts that will help you guide the children’s growth in faith.

- **Lesson Planner.** A one-page lesson planner gives you a quick overview of the session plan for the chapter and guides you resources available to plan and enrich your sessions.
- **Catechetical Process.** The *Faith First* teaching process—Engage, Teach and Apply, and Connect—will enable you to successfully achieve the chapter goals each week.
- **Lesson Plan.** Your lesson plan is filled with ideas, tips, and additional background materials that will fill you with confidence and expertise as you teach each chapter.
- **Evaluation.** The built-in evaluation tool at the end of each chapter helps you to assess each session immediately while the lesson is still fresh in your mind.

In short, your *Faith First Legacy Edition* catechist guide is every thing you’ve ever asked for—and more!