

What is Catechesis?

What does this unfamiliar word—**catechesis**—mean?

First, it is pronounced as "cat-ick-ee-sis." From early in her history, the Church used the word catechesis to describe her efforts to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God. By believing this, people would have life in His name. However, they would also need to be educated and instructed in this life to grow and deepen their faith, so to build up the body of Christ.

Jesus Christ is Himself the source of all catechesis.

- He is the whole of divine revelation, the very Word of God (John 1:1-14).
- Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
- Jesus entrusted the ministry of proclaiming and handing on revelation—called the "deposit of faith"—to the Church he founded with his apostles.

St. Paul describes this 'handing on' in a letter to Timothy, a man whom he commissioned for this very task:

"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you."

~2 Tim 1:13-14

As Christ, in his very person, is the whole of divine revelation, the ultimate goal of catechesis is to help people:

- learn more about Christ
- be in a more and more intimate relationship with Him, and
- be faithful to Christ in ever deeper ways.

Catechesis fosters a living, conscious, and active faith in the people.

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ" (GDC 80).

Catechesis takes a person who has already come into contact with Christ in some way, and guides that person more fully into the mystery of Christ. Catechesis continues and deepens the desire and the conversion to become more like Christ. The longer a person walks with God—who is all holy—the more they realize their own weakness, sinfulness, and their need to change... to "turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel."

Experiencing salvation and growing in intimacy with Jesus Christ means:

- being fully incorporated into Christ's Body, the Church
- following Christ

- thinking, acting, and judging as Christ does.

So catechesis includes all activities to make disciples. It means helping people "be reconciled to God"ⁱ and "to put on the new self."ⁱⁱ

ⁱ **Evangelii Nuntiandi**, 2; and also check Eph. 2:15, 4:24; Col. 3:10; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:14; 2 Cor. 5:17

ⁱⁱ **Evangelii Nuntiandi**, 2; and also check 2 Cor. 5:20