

The Catechetical method

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity." (Catechesi Tradendea 5)

Our goal here is to review some ideas for preparation and stages in a Catechetical session.

Stage A: Getting Ready

As a catechist you should be in a regular habit of prayer and so start your time of preparation with prayer. There is a wonderful selection of prayers in *Appendix A of the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The Compendium and the Catechism of the Catholic Church are essential reading for all Catholics and especially Catechists. If you do not have a copy of these books, Stop! Get them before you go any further. You can also view them online at the Vatican website. Read through the scripture you will use for the session and also the section in the catechism that you will be using.

"This step suggests that the Catechist must help create the conditions for the possibility of deepening God's Word in the hearts of those being served. This is no easy task in the setting of modern, hectic life in the Western world, where the individual is daily subjected to a barrage of stimuli from the media of communication, advertising, competing ideologies, etc." (Kelly, 138)

The first part of preparation is the setting of the room. The room should be a place set apart. This can be difficult to accomplish in some instances. Consider, for instance, a sacred space. A place in the room, such as a small table, with liturgical colours, a crucifix, a Bible open to a passage you will be using that day. Whenever you can, lead them to the liturgy, where our community worship takes place. Always start your session with a time of prayer. You could use a prayer from the divine office or a devotional prayer and a reading from Scripture. Music or a hymn should also be used when possible.

Stage B: Announce

"It is this aspect that from the start gave us the word catechesis - coming from the Greek word meaning to re-echo, to resound the Word of God." (Kelly, 141).

Catechists know that most people will not remember everything that they hear in a session. In fact, if we can get people to remember, even one fact, one important point from the day, a Catechist has been successful. The second stage is to announce the Word of God to the group. The announcement should be rooted in the truths of the faith. It should be simple, and encompass the whole aim or point of the session. Always know what point about the subject is important and return to your core points several times in the session. Try to avoid starting a debate or discussion about the topic. You are announcing, The Good News and not starting a debate on Newsnight! Be clear about what the points are which you want people to take away from the session to reflect on, study further and pray over.

Stage C: Illumination

"In the third step, in a certain sense, the catechists' personal creativity is now more challenged and evoked so that they may help participants come to a deeper personal understanding and assimilation of the message of faith. This explanation that will be made will, of course, be always in the light of the Church's understanding of the Word, but the catechist is challenged to find appropriate ways to "inculturate" this message so that it can be adapted to diverse groups to whom it is addressed." (Kelly, 143)