



# EVANGELIZING

New Vision - New Directions

# CATECHESIS

## *2016 Reflections*

### Article 3. The Tasks of Catechesis

by John Boucher

These six tasks of catechesis constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus.”  
(GDC 86-87; NDC 20, p. 61-63)

There is something important about making a list, whether we use paper, a smartphone or our fingers. It doesn't matter whether it's a grocery list, a list of household chores, or even a Christmas list. So it is not surprising that we have a list of the “six tasks of catechesis” in the *National Directory of Catechesis*. But what happens if we start with the first item and run out of time or resources before the completing the list? In the case of the sixth task of catechesis— missionary initiative—this can be tragic! An example of this occurred in an article about the six tasks in a popular Catholic magazine, where missionary initiative was reduced to “putting money in the Rice Bowl during Lent.”

What if we use the human hand to “list” these six tasks? And what if missionary initiative is not just a last item, but rather the engine that drives the bus of evangelizing catechesis, fueled by the Holy Spirit? In that case we might reimagine the six tasks to be like a hand, with missionary initiative as the palm that unites, coordinates and moves the other five tasks (fingers).

Missionary initiative is not a task that we might get to after we accomplish the other five. It is the foundation of the Catholic faith. The Church does not have a mission of catechesis, then evangelization. The *evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ HAS the Church* and us (and catechesis!). The objective of evangelizing catechesis is to make disciples of Jesus who continue his mission (Mt. 28:18-20). We are called to see “missionary” and “evangelizing” as adjectives describing each of the other five tasks: missionary/evangelizing “knowledge of the faith,” missionary/evangelizing “liturgical education,” etc. Pope Francis speaks about this as the “missionary option:”

I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.” (*Evangelii Gaudium—The Joy of the Gospel*, 27)

Pope St. John Paul II stated that, “. . . the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the *mission ad gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church

can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples” (*Redemptoris Missio*—*Mission of the Redeemer*, 3).

In short, to be an “evangelizing missionary” is to be Catholic, to be ready and willing to share our faith with others, especially given the backdrop of our secular culture. We need to evangelize and catechize others at the same time, so that all followers of Jesus breathe, eat, think, worship, live, love, pray, and speak as evangelizing missionary disciples. Jesus tells us, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (Jn. 20: 23).

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