



# EVANGELIZING

New Vision - New Directions

# CATECHESIS

## *2016 Reflections*

### Article 6. The Person of the Catechist

by Terrie Baldwin

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus proclaimed that he had been sent to announce a joyful message to the poor, making it plain and confirming by his life that the Kingdom of God is for all, beginning with those who are most disadvantaged. Indeed he made himself a catechist of the Kingdom of God for all categories of persons, great and small, rich and poor, healthy and sick, near and far, Jews and pagans, men and women, righteous and sinners, rulers and subjects, individuals and groups. He is available to all. He is interested in the needs of every person, body and soul. He heals and forgives, corrects and encourages, with words and deeds. (GDC, 163)

There is no better model for the person of the catechist than Jesus Christ, to look at his life and ministry as described in the passage above from the *General Directory for Catechesis*. Those called to the role of catechist in the church are the present day disciples modeling their lives of faith as Jesus Christ in word and deed.

Jesus called the disciples of his time as “he concluded his earthly life by sending his disciples to do the same, to preach the Gospel to every creature on earth, to ‘all nations’ (Mt 28,19; Lk 24,47) ‘to the end of the earth,’ (Acts 1,8) for all time, ‘to the close of the age’ (Mt 28, 20) (GDC, 163). “While the entire Christian community from this mandate is responsible for Christian catechesis and for all of its members to bear witness to the faith, only some receive the ecclesial mandate to be catechists. . . . the Church confers the delicate task of organically transmitting the faith within the community in particular to specifically called members of the people of God, called catechists” (GDC, 221).

So who are those called to be catechists? It is good to look back again at the quote to see the essence of the person of the catechist modeled in Jesus Christ, as one who longs to bring the Kingdom of God to all, is interested in the needs of every person—body and soul, one who heals and forgives, and corrects and encourages.

The image of sower of God’s seeds provides reflection for this topic of the person of catechist as well. The seed is the word of God (Lk 8:11). The sower is Jesus Christ. Two thousand years ago he proclaimed the Gospel in Palestine and sent the disciples to sow the Gospel in the world. (GDC, 15)

Today, catechists are called to have a greater consciousness of the necessity to keep in mind the field in which the seed is sown, and to do so with the perspective of faith and mercy (GDC, 14). What a beautiful reminder and opportunity for reflection during the Year of Mercy.

The person of the catechist works as a sower of the seeds of God's word, transmitting his love and mercy, and together with the Spirit, remembering that neither catechesis nor evangelization is possible without the action of God working through his Spirit (GDC, 288).

The person of the catechist fully lives in personal relationship with Jesus Christ, using their own words and unique spiritual gifts to serve as witness; to be a sower of God's word in love and mercy following the command to go and make disciples.

## Reflection

- ❖ What do you think of the image of the sower in describing the work of the catechist?
- ❖ What qualities might a catechist who is building the Kingdom of God possess?
- ❖ The *General Directory of Catechesis* states "catechists are called to have a greater consciousness of the necessity to keep in mind the field in which the seed is sown." How would you describe "the field in which the seed is sown" today? Is it different than "the field" in years past?
- ❖ How does it feel when observing a catechist who uses love and mercy to proclaim the Gospel?

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