

***Effective  
Adolescent  
Catechesis***

# Presentation Outline

- **Introduction**
  - Purpose of Catechesis
- **Foundations of Catechesis**
  - Stages of Faith Development
  - “Wedge Model”
- **Three Dimensions of Catechesis**
  - Practical Suggestions
- **Summary**

# Introduction

- Opening Prayer
- What does word “catechesis” mean?
- What is the purpose of catechesis?
  - Are we to **only** provide religious instruction (impart “head knowledge”)?
- Following video shows what may happen if we don’t understand our task and how to best accomplish it!



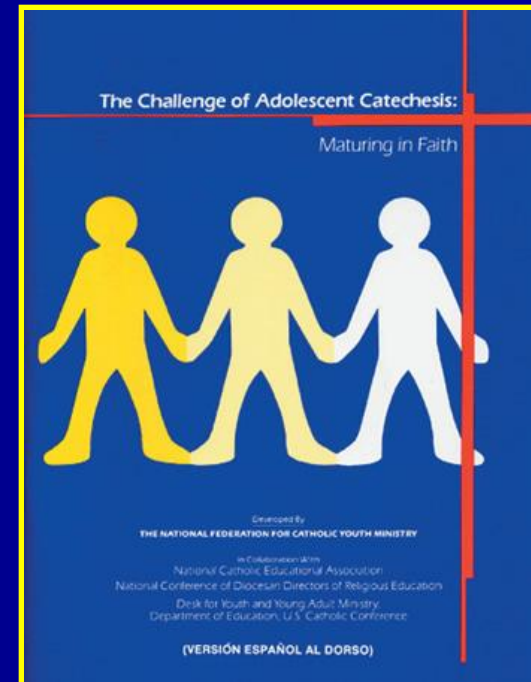


# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *National Directory for Catechesis*
  - By U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
  - “The aim of catechesis is to lead believers to a deeper knowledge **and** love of Christ and the Church **and** a firm commitment to follow him.”
  - What else besides “deeper knowledge”?

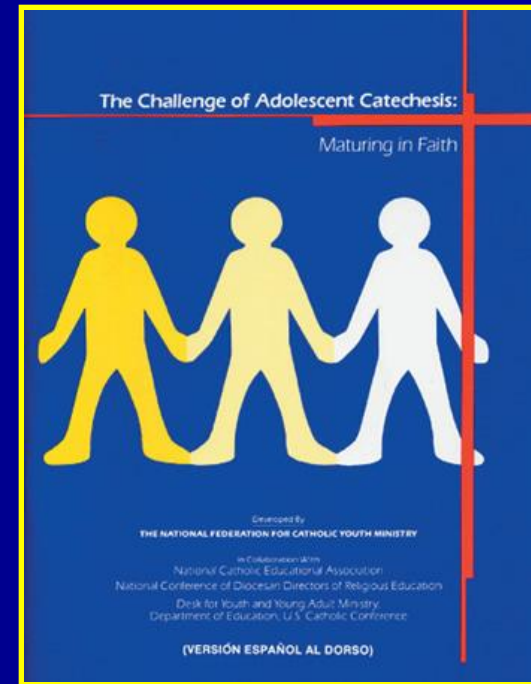
# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - By National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry
  - “The primary aim of adolescent catechesis is to sponsor youth toward maturity in Catholic faith as a living reality.”



# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - “We have two tasks: to foster in youth a communal **identity as Catholic Christians** and to help them develop their own **personal faith identity.**”



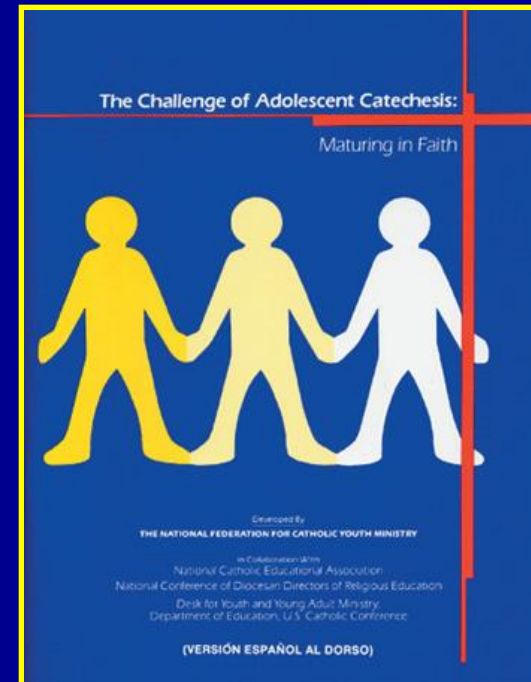
# Purpose of Catechesis

- **1st Task: Like Our Last (Family) Name**
  - Family inheritance (Catholic heritage)
  - We're like an **adoption agency**
    - Helping youth **find a home** for their faith by sharing what Catholics believe and practice
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Task: Like Our First (Given) Name**
  - Individual personality (our own faith)
  - We're like a **mid-wife**
    - Helping youth **give birth** to their own faith



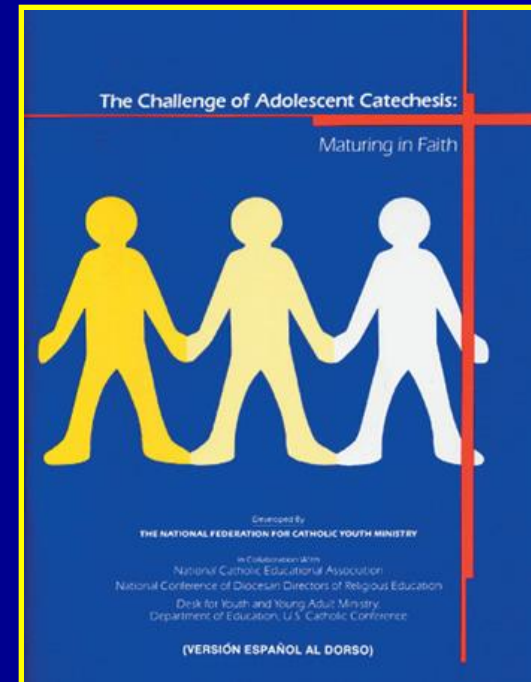
# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - “To accomplish the first task, we **present the faith convictions and values** of the Catholic Christian tradition and **invite** adolescents to adopt and own these values and convictions.”



# Purpose of Catechesis

- From *The Challenge of Adolescent Catechesis*
  - “To effect the second, we help adolescents **respond to God** in faith, in prayer, in values and in behavior. The sense of belonging experienced by youth in an **active Christian community** supports these two tasks.”



# Purpose of Catechesis

- **Why is an “active Christian community” important?**
  - **Experience of community is needed to “till the soil”**
    - **In order for youth to more readily accept Christian message**
- **Let’s look more deeply at why this is so important**

# Foundations of Catechesis

## 1. Westerhoff's Stages of Faith Development:

- (1) Experienced Faith
- (2) Affiliative Faith
- (3) Searching Faith
- (4) Owned Faith

# Stages of Faith

- **Expand into needs and elements of later stages**
  - After needs of earlier stages are met
- **Like rings of a tree**
  - We do not leave needs of earlier stages behind after expand into next stage
  - Continue to need faith experiences of earlier stages

# Stages of Faith

## (1) Experienced Faith

- First experienced by young children
- Grows by participating in customs and rituals
- Lifelong foundation of faith
- Faith of our senses
  - “Bells and smells”
- Rituals point to the love of God

# Stages of Faith

## (2) Affiliative Faith

- Belonging to (be affiliated with) an accepting Christian community
- Expand into affiliative faith during adolescence
- Dynamic youth ministry program
  - Social, spiritual and service activities
  - Protestant churches still better
- Most adults' faith is “arrested” here
  - “Cultural Christians” (family, friends)

# Stages of Faith

## (3) Searching Faith

- Questioning and internalizing what we have long been taught
  - Necessary prerequisite to having our own (not our parents’) faith
- Begins during late adolescence and continues during young adulthood
  - Can be troubling if not understood
  - College “debates” (personal & video)





# Stages of Faith

## (4) Owned Faith

- Rarely occurs before young adulthood
- May appear as great illumination or enlightenment
  - Because of serious struggle with doubt that precedes it
- Now our own faith
  - No longer faith of our parents, family, etc.
  - “Committed Christians”

# Stages of Faith

## (4) Owned Faith

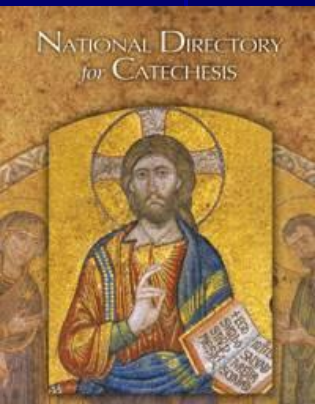
- **Witness by personal and social action**
  - **Stand up for what believe in**
- **God's intention for everyone**
- **Only way to owned faith is through searching faith doubts and questions**
- **Developed “Faith Challenges” program to help youth and young adults work through searching faith questions**

# Faith Challenges Program

1. Does God Exist? (Scientific Evidence)
2. Does God Exist? (Inner Evidence)
3. Which is True: Creation, Evolution, or Both?
4. Is There Scientific Evidence for the Design of Life?
5. Is Jesus Really the Son of God?
6. Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?
7. What Must We Do To Be Saved?
8. Why Go To Mass?
9. Why Would a Loving God Allow Evil & Suffering?
10. What is the Purpose of Life?

# Foundations of Catechesis

- From *National Directory for Catechesis*
  - “Youth catechesis ... is most effective when situated within a **comprehensive program of youth ministry** that includes social, liturgical, and catechetical components as well as opportunities for service.”
  - What is a “program of youth ministry”?
  - If your parish doesn’t have one, how can youth catechesis still be “effective”?



# Foundations of Catechesis

## 2. “Wedge Model of Youth Ministry”

- We read article by Tom Zanzig in 1982
  - “Lights went on”
  - Basis for our classes since then
- **Classic Video Workshop**
  - “Effective Adolescent Religious Education”
  - Will distribute handout after video
- How use these concepts in your youth ministry or religious education class?



# Discussion Questions

- **What for you were some new or particularly relevant insights from this video?**
- **How will you apply these insights in your ministry?**



# Dimensions of Catechesis

## ■ 3 Dimensions of Youth Catechesis?

### 1. Community

- Welcoming and building community
- Helps meet “Affiliative Faith” needs

### 2. Message

- Systematic education and teaching

### 3. Service

## ■ How use in rel. ed. class settings?

- **Integrate** each and every dimension

# 1. Community

- **How can we be more welcoming?**
  - **Call each student before class**
    - **Remind them of class & just to talk**
  - **Remember each student's name**
    - **Talk with each student as they arrive**
  - **Hang balloons, streamers, welcome banner (at least for first class)**
  - **Arrange chairs in circle**
    - **Comfortable setting (e.g., meet in home)**
  - **Send birthday and Christmas cards**

# 1. Community

- **How be more welcoming (continued)**
  - **Provide lots of snack food and drinks**
    - **Popcorn (adds festive air)**
    - **Have available at beginning of class**
  - **Play music as students arrive**
    - **Contemporary and appropriate**
  - **Allow 10-15 minutes of socializing at beginning of class**
  - **Use lots of appropriate humor**
  - **Other suggestions?**

# 1. Community

- **How can we build community within our classes?**
  - **Use some icebreaker games**
    - **Adjective Names Circle**
    - **Serendipity Bingo**
    - **Clothespin Tag**
    - **“Snowball” fight, etc.**
  - **Attend their school events, etc.**
    - **Plays, band concerts, sports, graduations**

# 1. Community

- **How build community (continued)**
  - **Class social activities**
    - **Bowling, movie, pizza, etc.**
  - **Overnight “Lock-Ins”**
    - **Games, music, movies (appropriate)**
      - *The Passion of the Christ* (Recut)
    - **Kidnapping Lock-In**
  - **Other suggestions?**
  - **Team teaching adds more talents**

## 2. Message

- Need to “till the soil” in order for youth to hear Christian message
  - By welcoming and building community
- What are some practical teaching tips and techniques?
  - Classes must be “interesting”
    - Not necessarily fun
    - Boredom is bad!

## 2. Message

- **Some practical teaching tips and techniques (continued)**
  - **Use Active Learning**
    - Individual reflection worksheets
    - Small group discussions
    - Ask lots of questions
    - Student skits
    - “Fishbowl Discussion” (rolled magazines)
  - **Marilyn Kielbasa on Active Learning**





## 2. Message

- **Some practical teaching tips and techniques (continued)**
  - **PowerPoint Presentations**
    - **With embedded video clips and discussion questions (mix it up)**
  - **Group prayer**
    - **Prayer Center: crucifix, Bible, candle(s)**
    - **Hold hands**
  - **Other suggestions?**
  - **Team teaching is best!**

# 3. Service

- **What service opportunities can we offer?**
  - **Prepare and distribute “goodie bags” of food for the poor (e.g., contractors)**
  - **Living Stations of the Cross**
  - **Other suggestions?**

# Summary

- **Purpose of Catechesis**
- **Foundations of Catechesis**
  1. **Stages of Faith Development**
  2. **“Wedge Model” of Youth Ministry**
- **Three Dimensions of Catechesis**
  1. **Welcoming and Building Community**
  2. **Teaching Tips and Techniques**
  3. **Service Opportunities**
- **Closing Prayer**

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