

## **Ecclesial Method**

Preparation  
Proclamation  
Explanation  
Application  
Celebration

Modern man listens more to witness than teachers, and if they are teachers it is because they are witnesses.

Evangelization in the Modern World, 41

1. The Catechist is the textbook!
2. The textbook cannot teach for you.
3. It cannot anticipate questions the student may ask that need to be answered.
4. A book is not a witness to the faith. It is an aide to the catechist who serves as the key witness to the student(s) in the classroom.

### **The Ecclesial Method and Lesson Planning**

#### **A. General Comments on Methodology**

- Your knowledge of your students, your objectives for this class, and the content you will be presenting should determine the methodology.
- Try to make your student text and teacher's manual aids to your lesson, rather than being tied to their lesson for you to do next- the more you plan the lesson the better you will teach.
- If you are teaching this class once a week, make time to take notes and write ideas and impressions right after teaching the class – that is when you'll have some ideas about what ought to come next, what you want to do again, questions and arrangements you would like to make before the next class, (and are likely to forget by next week!), - then you can wait to finish the plan until just before the next class, knowing you will be better prepared.
- Plan once a term to look at the lessons coming up and make decisions about whether the text has the best order of topics for you, decide what you want to do about feast days, see if there is an activity that would help get some lessons across but will need advance planning etc.
- Teach the same class again the following year. It does get better!

## **B. Objectives Help, make yourself write them and follow them**

- Realistic goals – one for understanding what you want to do and the other for the change (conversion) you want to take place. (See: Catechesis In Our Time, 20); avoid the plodding along ritual in one week (CCD) catechetical program. Preparation is the Key!
- Do you want your students to have a better academic grasp of the material, a deeper conversion, is the goal to stir up apostolic zeal, develop their Critical Christian thinking skills, practicing proper reverence i.e. genuflection, Holy Water etc. or is your goal to show them how much you love them.

## **C. Have stories ready! Always be looking for Stories and Collect them.**

- Have the main points of a story ready for your lesson
- Stories of your life, not embellished are helpful because they reveal yourself to the student.
- Your story should witness to them, inspire them in their faith.
- For teens and adults, stories from the news, parish or neighborhood are great aids.
- Read from the lives of the saints, they are real and true. They did exist!

## **D. Don't read to your students, except Stories or Scripture**

- Paraphrase the story
- Paraphrase the Catechism when quoting an article.
- Attention spans tend to wane very quickly

## The Ecclesial Method

### Preparation

Establish an immediate relationship with your students. St. John Bosco said, “Get them to love you and they’ll follow you anywhere!”)

- Classroom environment should be hospitable, clean, attractive
- St. Augustine warned not to let them be too cold or too hot because they will sleep or be distracted.
- Be ready, know their names
- Have the sacred space ready (i.e. altar with proper liturgical colors, crucifix, candle, bible etc.

The Purpose of this step is to create the conditions for the deepening of God’s Word in your student’s hearts. This preparation should help them disengage from other preoccupations and remember how good it is to come to class! Note: this could take several sessions!

### Proclamation

Your announcement of truth to be examined, learned, and assimilated comes like that of a herald, boldly, clearly, stated but not intended as a confrontation. It is really like rolling a very interesting object into the midst of a curious crowd.

- The proclamation serves as the key element that will engage the audience.
- Its’ revealing to the class this is the lesson for today!
- The proclamation is the one short key phrase that will lead you into the explanation of the lesson i.e. “Today you are going to learn about the “Holy Eucharist.” Christ offered himself for all humanity to partake of him after his death on the cross through the forms of bread and wine. These two forms once consecrated serve as the actual true and present elements of Jesus Christ himself for us to partake in.”

The purpose of this step is to clearly proclaim the truth to be taught. It does not take long at all, but following a well-crafted proclamation, everything else follows more clearly.

In other words, you are telling them “this is what we are learning today.”

The announcement must not be ambiguous.

**This is the central step of the method!**

## **Explanation**

- Your proclamation signals the opportunity to examine this “good news” which you have just presented to the students.
- The catechesis should be presented in a straightforward manner.
- Things to draw out the explanation include the following:
  - ⇒ Do some apologetics
  - ⇒ Catholic art, sacred and holy pictures
  - ⇒ Share your testimony
  - ⇒ Break into small groups to examine the ramifications of this truth
  - ⇒ Study and discuss the ramifications of Sacred Art, e.g. the Crucifixion, Annunciation
  - ⇒ Study a new prayer to memorize
- This is the step where all questions need to be answered and doubts need to be honestly addressed.
- Truth must be taught with reasonableness, at the heights of transcendence in order to reveal the true wonder of Christ’s grace.
- Truth must never insult. Rather it informs and inspires.

## **Application**

- You address the questions brought forth from the explanation
- Establish avenues where the doctrine can be applied at home i.e. prayer to the Sacred Heart, reciting Eucharistic Prayers I-IV, Adoration time etc.
- Help think about what has just happened as a result of what they have learned.
- This step intends to help the truth and conviction of the earlier steps bear fruit.
- The goal is to enlighten the mind of the student.

## **Celebration**

- To conclude your session, give the student a way to respond to the grace which God was giving them while they investigated His truth.
- Hints: Pray the Memorare, Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be, Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Act of Contrition, Penitential Rite, Penance ask for our Blessed Mother’s intercessory prayers along with all the angels and saints.

## **A Few Words on Methodology and Content**

### **Catechetical Objective**

To assess proper methodology and content as it relates to catechetical instruction within the Classroom.

### **Points of Emphasis**

- An instructor must know the personality of the class and the most need individuals. (Takes time!)
- Catechesis must be seen as an organic (active participation) education of children into the fullness of the Christian Life.
- Catechesis must not be a “drill” or a “test” but it must be an assessment of the revelation of grace outpoured to the soul of the person.
- Catechesis must be a process of Introduction, Revelation and Initiation.
- Through this process, a relationship with Jesus Christ is formed thus allowing for a proper methodology to be formed.
- Methodology is what the instructor does.
- Learning style is what the student receives.
- Accommodate all learning styles (Visual, Audio, and Kinesthetic)
- Remember: 1 Cor 11:23 “Through Humility and Discipleship we pass on the “Word.” Revelation is what God’s word is all about. All, revelation is about Christ Himself.”
- Catechesis must be Christo-centric not anthro-centric(man-centered). Catechesis is primarily about God.

## Catechetical Elements for each Section of the Ecclesial Method

### I. Preparation

- Establish an openness and docility from the student
- Focus on the Transcendence
- Sacred Space (Portable if not in the classroom)
- Music, art – creates an environment to help your students touch God.
- Liturgy of the Word (three moments of Liturgical Celebration: proclamation of the Word, silent reflections, common response)
- Para-liturgy
- Some opening prayer (Spend time reflecting on opening prayer – should flow into lesson)
- Storytelling – use story to prepare for proclamation
- Incorporate Liturgical Seasons and Saints when possible.
- 1 John 1 “What we have heard . . . looked upon . . . touched, seen with our eyes. . .” Be mindful of using all learning styles in class.
- Don’t be bound to the text – it is meant to be an aid for your teaching. Use only that which will serve you in passing on the Faith.
- You can change around the order of what is presented to coincide with Liturgical Celebrations.

### II. Proclamation

- Use of Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church is Key!
- It must be clear, concise and no more than 2-3 minutes long
- Deliver a clear and concise delivery of doctrine: one or two points. (Use the In Brief sections of the Catechism)
- Re-echo what God has revealed
- Pedagogy (age-appropriate) Revelation (revelation and faith response)
- Revelation equals response of faith by all!
- CT, 58, 52 – catechesis is not a matter of transmitting human knowledge
- CT, 30 – everyone (your students) have the right to receive the faith with all its rigor and vigor.
- How do we get the faith? Proclamation and Internal light of the Holy Spirit
- Careful not to start with experience (truth does not come from within us – must be revealed). Begin with doctrine. Let us judge our life experience in light of doctrine, not doctrine in light of our experience.
- Remember: “No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis of some simple private experience, that is to say, without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ . . .” Catechesis in our Time, 22

### III. Explanation

- Expound Doctrine: draw out deeper meaning
- Inculturation \* penetrate with the Gospel, speak a clear language suited for the child and young people
- Scripture is your driving force
- CCC-Catechism – harmony with other doctrines, Patristic (Church Fathers) sources, cross references, Saints witness to doctrine.
- Connection to other doctrines
- Exploit imagination: Storytelling, signs, symbols, illustrations, images
- Chalk talks
- Skits
- Games
- Craft
- Sacred Art and Music
- Use of Literature to expound doctrine
- Teach from the Liturgical Rites
- Apologetics (in Junior High as soon as they have mastered the doctrine) Typology could start in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Memorization: key words, phrases (could use In Brief section of CCC)
- Teach common misconceptions of this doctrine (heresies)
- Learning Styles: use a variety of methods to explain doctrine
- Use media (video, slides, movies)
- Case studies – apply to real life situation/Role playing
- Small group discussion
- Learning Centers around the room
- Human Experience – GDC, 152
- Age-appropriate techniques
- Handouts as an extension of the lesson/audio visuals
- Personal creativity
- Active participation/engagement
- Witness of the Saints
- Test for understanding

### IV. Application

- How does this doctrine affect our lives? Make connections.
- Apply teaching to their lives – tell them how this must affect them.
- Intended to facilitate a response: What must I do?
- Witness: our lives must give witness to Christ. Others should be able to see through our witness that we belong to Christ.\Service: call to serve. Matt 25:31 We will be judged according to how we have served our brothers and sisters
- Connect with their human experience: GDC, 152
- Best to have them personally make the application. Lead them to it.

## V. Celebration

- The lesson begins in prayerful attentiveness to word of God and ends in prayerful gratitude and praise to God.
- All catechesis leads to the Eucharist – some connection “source and summit of our Faith”
- Liturgical celebration: Word, reflection, common response
- Liturgical Year: connect to the lesson. Feast of a saint, Liturgical Season . . .
- Sacramental Rites: baptismal vows, prayers, blessings
- This step should bring together the other four steps and give the sessions a unity that will facilitate the kind of total response which catechesis should seek – cognitive, affective, and behavioral.



**Catechetical Lesson Plan  
According to the Ecclesial Method**

**I. Objective (The student will . . .)**

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**II. Materials (text book, media (including art, music, literature), handout, etc.)**

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**III. Procedure**

**A. Preparation (prayer/calculated disengagement)**

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**B. Proclamation (Scripture, Catechism, other)**

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**C. Explanation: content and method of delivery (lecture, small groups, board work, chalk talk, etc.)**

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**IV. Application and Evaluation**

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## V. Assignment and Celebration

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### Notes and Reminders Ecclesial Method continued

Scripture References: \_\_\_\_\_

Catechism of the Catholic Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Liturgical Component: \_\_\_\_\_

Feast/Season: \_\_\_\_\_

Art: \_\_\_\_\_

Music: \_\_\_\_\_

Literature: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_