



Foreword

In recent years, the Diocese of Saint Cloud restructured 131 parishes into 29 Area Catholic Communities (ACCs) to provide for the pastoral and spiritual needs of its 123,475 baptized Catholics. Priests, deacons, lay ecclesial ministers and the lay faithful have been eager and hard at work to foster this new model with a culture of co-responsibility. This requires a substantive shift and expansion in mindset. What is forming is not merely an Area Catholic Community with more programs but an Area Catholic Community that is a learning community with a vision of thriving, and a capacity to live into that vision. Area Catholic Communities have been paying attention to the changing social and cultural context of their communities and pastorally planning for their mission by igniting pastoral imagination, fostering mature discipleship, using digital Church demographic tools, and reenergizing Christian practices for thriving community life.

You hold in your hand one of several workbooks that provide a vision and template for assessing the pastoral life of the Area Catholic Community. It can serve as a resource for the diocese, deaneries, and Area Catholic Communities for pastoral planning to build strong faith communities that nurture discipleship. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization---an effort involving all of us.

This workbook can be used for spiritual reading and study, pastoral planning, *lectio divina* with the Church's Tradition, self-assessment tool, adult faith formation, gratitude practices and appreciative inquiry for all that is well with the church community.

ON THE COVER

The cover illuminates John 1:35-51.

© Call of the Disciples, Donald Jackson, 2002. The Saint John's Bible, Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition, © 1993, 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Workbook guide

The following format can be used to read Scripture or documents and writings of the Christian Tradition together using *lectio divina*.

One person reads the passage aloud as others follow. This first reading of the passage is followed by at least two minutes of silence after which another person reads the passage again. In the silence that follows the second reading of the passage, invite the group to reflect on what they have heard. Some questions to guide this reflection might include:

- What have you heard in this passage that is new?
- What teaching do you hear in these words?
- What do you wonder about as you hear these words?
- What do you see now that is new?

After the silence, offer the participants the opportunity to speak about their reflections. Listen to one another with respect and avoid turning the sharing into a theological debate. After the third reading and silence, invite the group to pray about the reading. This private time with God can either lead to sharing or not, as the group prefers. After *lectio divina*, move to the reflection questions under *Where Two or More are Gathered*. Provide quiet journaling time and then group sharing. This workbook may take several months to complete. Trust the process of becoming a thriving learning community.



My Experience

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His Resurrection, He gave the Apostles a final command – to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded" (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, 1).

"The true apostle is on the lookout for occasions to proclaim Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them towards the faith, or to instruct them, strengthen them, call them to a more fervent life; 'for Christ's love urges us on' (2 Cor 5:14), and in everyone's heart the apostle's words should find an echo: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel' (1 Cor 9:16)" (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 6).

"If catechesis is done well, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it on to their children, to make it known to others, and serve the human community in every way" (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, 24).

"A catechesis, in fact, that sets up an opposition between the content and the experience of faith would show itself to be worthless. Without the experience of faith one would be deprived of a true encounter with God and with one's brothers; the absence of content would block the maturation of faith, keeping one from finding meaning in the Church and living the encounter and exchange with others" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 80).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. Recall some of your own stories of learning the faith. What are some of the most obvious features and memorable moments? Who are the people who have passed on the faith to you?



2. What wisdom do you draw from your story now?





The Vision

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The apostolate of the church, therefore, and each of its members, aims primarily at announcing to the world, by word and action, the message of Christ and communicating to it the grace of Christ. The principal means of bringing this about is the ministry of the word and of the sacraments" (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 6).

"In order to form believers for an integral Christian life, catechesis therefore pursues the following tasks: leading to knowledge of the faith, initiating into the celebration of the mystery, forming for life in Christ, teaching to pray, and introducing to community life" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 79).

"Where it is possible, offering catechesis that takes into account the ways of understanding and practicing the faith typical of the countries of origin constitutes a valuable support for the Christian life of migrants, above all for the first generation. Great importance is attached to the use of the mother tongue, because it is the first form of expression of their identity" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 275).

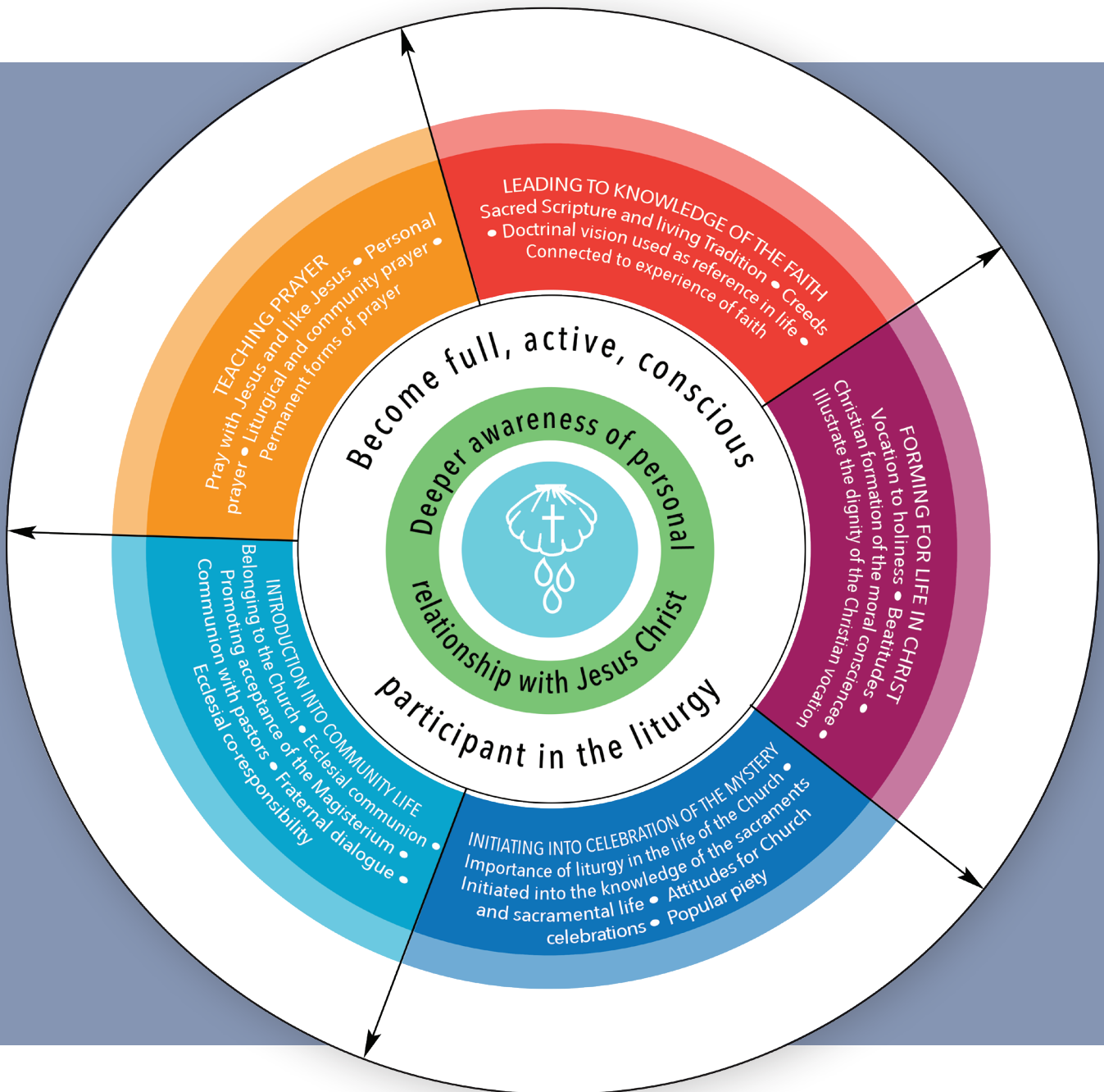
"The Church 'has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities.' She works for 'the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity.' She does not claim to compete with earthly powers, but to offer herself as 'a family among families, this is the Church, open to bearing witness in today's world, open to faith, hope and love for the Lord and for those whom he loves with a preferential love. A home with open doors. The Church is a home with open doors, because she is a mother.' And in imitation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, 'we want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship, goes forth from its sacristies, in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity... to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation'" (*On the Fraternity and Social Friendship*, 276).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. In what ways are the nature and mission of the Church reflected in our vision for catechesis?



2. Recall religious education or faith formation opportunities that our Area Catholic Community (ACC) sponsors and identify the fundamental task(s) of catechesis that they fulfill. *Record the opportunities in the outer circle.* ✓





Adults

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The condition of the adult is particularly complex today. In comparison with the past, this stage of life is no longer understood as an already completed state of stability, but as a continual process of restructuring that takes into account the evolution of personal sensibilities, the interweaving of relationships, the responsibilities to which the person is called" (*Directory for Catechesis, 257*).

"The commitment to the maturation of baptismal faith is a personal responsibility that the adult above all must perceive as a priority on account of being involved in an ongoing process of the formation of his own personal identity. In adulthood this task, which is proper to every person, comes up against family and social responsibilities that can provoke moments of crisis which at times can be quite profound. It is for that reason this, even at this state of life and with characteristic accentuations, accompaniment and growth in faith are necessary so that the adult may mature in that spiritual wisdom which illuminates and brings unity to the manifold experiences of his personal, family, and social life" (*Directory for Catechesis, 259*).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. Recall an adult formation process (i.e., *Why Catholic?*, RCIA, Bible study) in which you participated. 

What was the faith or daily life issue that you discussed or explored?

How was the faith or daily life issue connected to the paschal mystery?


In what ways were you touched and transformed by the life-giving message of Jesus?

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION


"Catechesis with migrants during the time of their initial reception has the task of sustaining their trust in the closeness and providence of the Father, in such a way that the anguish and hopes of those who set out on the journey may be illuminated by the faith. In catechesis with the communities of reception attention should be paid to encouraging the duty of solidarity and combating negative prejudices" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 274).


"Often people can go the extra mile for others because they have been spiritually formed through suffering. For Christian suffering is both hope and challenge" (*Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, 5).


Where Two or More are Gathered

1. In what ways does our Area Catholic Community guide or care for people as they inquire about the faith and are gradually initiated into the Catholic way of life? 

2. In what ways do we adapt our schedule and design faith formation programs to meet the diverse needs of families, i.e., single parents, grandparents, work schedules, persons with disabilities, migrants? 

3. In what ways do retreats and days of reflection fit in with our Area Catholic Community's ongoing process for spiritual formation? 

4. Reflect on the life of our Area Catholic Community (i.e., the liturgical seasons, sacrament preparation, outreach ministry, or life transition rituals). What are some "teachable moments" that are utilized to assist adults to reflect on their own faith? What methods could be used at these times? Example: Baptism preparation – discussing each of the symbols for Baptism and their meaning to the parents and godparents. 

5. During times of crisis, grief, or loss, for people, how does the Area Catholic Community provide or refer people to peer support groups? In what ways is a spirituality of dying and rising with Christ integrated into these groups? 

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"In the final analysis, catechesis with adults reaches its goal when it makes the adults themselves capable of taking their own experience of faith in hand and desirous of continuing to journey onward and to grow" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 260).

"Over the past fifteen years, we have seen great numbers of lay people become involved in the liturgy as cantors and music directors, readers, eucharistic ministers, and altar servers. Furthermore, in some places laity are responsible for leading Sunday worship in the absence of a priest. Men and women of all ages engage in these ministries, which in turn can be a means of spiritual and religious formation for them" (*Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, 16).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. List the ministries in which you are involved. Reflect on how you were called, prepared and provided ongoing formation?



Your Ministry	How were you called to this ministry?	How were you prepared?	What types of ongoing formation have you received?	What kind of formation opportunities would help you now?

2. A variety of learning activities, methods, processes, and resources are encouraged to meet the diverse needs of parishioners. Check (X) those that are offered at this time:



- Liturgical catechesis
- Family or home-centered activities
- Small faith communities
- Days of reflection, retreats, and missions
- Technology i.e., web pages, social media, e-mail
- Bulletin inserts
- Area Catholic Community newsletter
- Bible study
- Parenting classes
- Multimedia resources – videos, podcasts, books
- Group service projects
- Lectures
- Ministry reflection groups
- Ecumenical activities
- Prayer groups
- Support groups
- RCIA process
- Discernment as a way for making decisions
- Preparation for marriage
- Marriage enrichment
- Seasonal prayer resources for Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter, etc.
- Sacramental catechesis for children (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation)
- Vocation awareness
- Delivery methods (online platforms, in person, small group, individual)
- Called and Gifted (Siena Institute)
- StrengthsFinders
- Other



Young Adults

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"By investing in young adults today, the Church will yield much in the future in the forms of stewardship, leadership, and vocations. Further, young adults' investment in the Church will be one hundred-fold because of their talents, abilities, education and desire to serve" (*Sons and Daughters of the Light*, 53).

"The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging, and challenging them. All should regard young people with understanding, appreciation and affection, and avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years" (*Christ is Alive*, 243).

"Along these lines, our institutions should provide young people with places they can make their own, where they can come and go freely, feel welcome and readily meet other young people, whether at times of difficulty and frustration, or of joy and celebration" (*Christ is Alive*, 218).

"Work allows young adults to meet their practical needs but even more importantly to seek meaning and fulfillment of their dreams and visions. Although work may not help achieve their dreams, it is important for young adults to nurture a vision, learn how to work in a truly personal and life-giving way, and to continue to discern God's call" (*Christ is Alive*, 268)

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. Young adults are people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties, and live varied lifestyles. Check (X) those life situations representative of the young adults in our area.



- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married | <input type="checkbox"/> In college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced | <input type="checkbox"/> Living with parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Re-married | <input type="checkbox"/> Entering workforce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married with children | <input type="checkbox"/> In the military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single parents | <input type="checkbox"/> With disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engaged | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

2. How does our Area Catholic Community foster the gifts of young adults (people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties) and empower them to use their gifts in our Area Catholic Community?



3. Adults reconnect with the Church during many transitions (during seasonal breaks from college, leave time from the military, preparation for their marriage, or baptism of their first child, etc.) How does our community welcome young adults during these transitions? How does our community meet their needs?



4. What pastoral care and support do we provide for the families of young adults in transition?



5. What modes of learning does our Area Catholic Community use to prepare and form young adults for life-changing events, such as marriage, priesthood, consecrated life or other vocational choices?





Youth

The Church's Tradition

"Enthusiasm is contagious. But do you know where this word comes from: *enthusiasm*? It comes from Greek and it means 'to have something of God inside' or 'to be inside God.' Enthusiasm, when it is healthy, demonstrates this: that one has something of God inside and expresses him joyously. Be open, with this enthusiasm, to hope and to yearn for fullness, yearn to give meaning to your future, to your whole life, to imagine the appropriate journey for each of you and to choose the path that brings you peace and human fulfillment. Appropriate journey, choose the path... what does this mean? Do not stand still, a young person cannot stand still! , and journey. This means go toward something; because a person can move and not be one who journeys, but a 'wanderer', who roams, roams, roams through life... But life is not made for 'roaming through', it is made to 'journey through,' and this is your challenge!" (*Pope Francis, Address, July 2014*).

"It is therefore to be the concern of the community and the catechist to make room within themselves for grasping and accepting without judgment and with sincere educational passion this adolescent search for freedom, starting to channel it toward an open and daring life plan" (*Directory for Catechesis, 248*).

"Pre-adolescence is also the time in which the image of God received in childhood is refashioned: for this reason, it is important that catechesis should accompany this delicate passage and its possible future developments with care, seeking help from the research and tools of the human sciences as well. . . Moreover, catechesis is urged to recognize the self-assertion of pre-adolescents, to create a context of meaningful group relationships, to create a climate in which questions are welcomed and brought into contact with the presentation of the Gospel" (*Directory for Catechesis, 247*).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. In what way does the community affirm the enthusiasm of youth? What opportunities are available for youth to journey to God? How are youth invited to give testimony to their enthusiasm?



2. How do our catechetical and youth ministry programs assist youth in understanding contemporary issues in the Church and in society?



3. In what ways do we help young people recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit in their lives and discern their Christian vocation in the world, in their career choices, in marriage or single life, in the priesthood, the permanent diaconate, or consecrated life?



4. How can post-Confirmation youth support the faith growth of pre-adolescent youth?



5. How are leadership traits in youth called forth, affirmed, and empowered for peer-to-peer ministry?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Three interdependent and equally important goals guide the Church's ministry with adolescents. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. To draw young people to responsible participation in life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person" (*Renewing the Vision, pg. 9, pg.11, pg.15*).

The group is important in personal formation processes... The catechist is called to awaken within the group the experience of community as the most coherent expression of the Church's life... If it is an authentic place for relationships among people, the experience of the group is fertile soil for welcoming and sharing the message of salvation. Alongside the proclamation of the Gospel in community form, the communication of the faith also requires person-to-person contact. (*Directory for Catechesis, 219*)

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. Notice ways in which our Area Catholic Community's ministry with youth is open to the sensibilities and challenges of this age group (12 - 18 years old). Name ways the parish ministers to youth gathered in Catholic peer groups and when they are scattered individually in family, school or parish activities. In these areas, whom can you affirm as mentors to youth?



		Empowering youth to live as disciples	Drawing youth to responsible participation in the faith community	Fostering growth in each youth
F A M I L I E S	Gathered Activities			
	Scattered Individually			
	Mentors			
A C C	Gathered Activities			
	Scattered Individually			
	Mentors			
S C H O O L	Gathered Activities			
	Scattered Individually			
	Mentors			

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Ministry with adolescence utilizes each of the Church's ministries—advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship—in an integrated approach to achieving the three goals for ministry with adolescents; provide developmentally-appropriate programs and activities that promote personal and spiritual growth for young and older adolescents; enrich family life and promote the faith growth of families of adolescents; incorporate young people fully into all aspects of church life and engage them in ministry and leadership in the faith community; create partnerships among families, schools, churches, and community organizations in a common effort to promote positive youth development" (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 20).

"These components provide a framework for the Catholic community to *respond* to the needs of young people and to *involve* young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community. They provide a structure for the Church's ministry with adolescents, while encouraging local creativity in developing programs, activities and strategies for each component." (*Renewing the Vision*, p. 26).

"Each young person's heart should thus be considered 'holy ground,' a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must 'take off our shoes' in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery" (*Christ is Alive*, 67).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. Review the essential components of youth ministry and assess the ability of the Area Catholic Community to offer a comprehensive vision.

- Scale: 4 = a real strength
 3 = current efforts are effective but can be enhanced.
 2 = current efforts need development and/or improvement.
 1 = currently lacking

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS	COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK						
	Develop-mentally Appropriate	Family Friendly	Inter-generational	Multicultural	Community Collaboration	Leadership	Flexible Programming
ADVOCACY: Interpreting the needs of young people, both as individuals and as a youth community.							
CATECHESIS: Deepening the faith of young people through teaching and reflection—working towards transformation							
COMMUNITY LIFE: Building community, not just between young people, but with their families and engaging youth in the broader parish community.							
EVANGELIZATION: Proclaiming the Good News and inviting youth into relationship with Jesus Christ through ongoing witness.							
JUSTICE AND SERVICE: Engaging young people in helping and serving other people and understanding the Gospel call to justice through education and reflection.							
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Inviting, training, and supporting adults and young people into leadership for youth ministry and with the broader ACC.							
PASTORAL CARE: Providing prevention programs for youth and families, caring for those in crisis, and providing guidance during times of decisions and moral choices							
PRAYER AND WORSHIP: Helping youth to develop an individual prayer life, experience a variety of communal prayers, and involving youth in the sacramental life of the Church							

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The Confirmation preparation process in the Diocese of Saint Cloud seeks to foster and strengthen the faith of the candidates through the relationships of family, peers, sponsors, and faith community, knowing that it is through witness and relationship that they can come to know and love God" (*Guidelines for the Preparation of the Sacrament of Confirmation, Diocese of Saint Cloud*).

"Dioceses and parishes should present catechesis for the Sacrament of Confirmation that:

- Teaches that Confirmation increases and deepens the grace of Baptism, imprinting an indelible character on the soul.
- Teaches that Confirmation strengthens the baptismal conferral of the Holy Spirit on those confirmed in order to incorporate them more firmly in Christ, strengthen their bond with the Church, associate them more closely with the Church's mission, increase in them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and help them bear witness to the Christian faith in words and deed.
- Teaches [about the role of the Holy Spirit, his gifts, and his fruits.]
- Is developmentally appropriate and includes retreat experiences.
- Includes instruction on the Rite of Confirmation and its basic symbols: the imposition of hands, the anointing with Sacred Chrism, and the words of the sacramental formula.
- Ensures that parents and sponsors are involved in the catechetical preparation of the children for Confirmation.
- Teaches that the bishop is the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation" (*National Directory for Catechesis, pp 122-123*).

*Almighty God,
 Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who brought these your servants to new birth
 by water and the Holy Spirit,
 freeing them from sin:
 send upon them, O Lord, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete;
 give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the spirit of counsel and fortitude,
 the spirit of knowledge and piety;
 fill them with the spirit of fear of the Lord.
 Through Christ our Lord.
 Amen.*

(Prayer from the Order of Confirmation)

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. In what ways does the preparation of youth for the Sacrament of Confirmation seek to foster and strengthen the faith of the candidates through the relationships of family, peers, sponsors, and faith community, knowing that it is through witness and relationship that they can come to know and love God and experience the Holy Spirit.



	How are these faith relationships fostered?	In what ways are the gifts of the Holy Spirit experienced through these relationships? (Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Reverence, Right Judgment, Understanding, Wisdom)
Family		
Peers		
Sponsors		
Faith Community		
Others		

2. Preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation begins remotely at an earlier age in the home, faith formation programs and liturgical celebrations long before the immediate preparation of the confirmand. Young people receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation need the ongoing support of their family, peers, sponsors and faith community. What are the strengths of the remote, immediate and ongoing preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation in your Area Catholic Community? Where is their need for development?





Children

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The ecclesial community should dialogue with parents if possible, supporting them in their educational task; it should also make itself present and available to offer motherly concern and practical consideration at all times: this will be a primary and fundamental proclamation of God's providential goodness" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 238).

"For Christian parents the mission to educate, a mission rooted, as we have said, in their participation in God's creating activity, has a new specific source in the sacrament of marriage, which consecrates them for the strictly Christian education of their children" (*The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, 38).

"In addition, the Christian communities to which the individual families belong or in which the children live also have a responsibility toward children baptized in the Church. By giving witness to the gospel, living communal charity, and actively celebrating the mysteries of Christ, the Christian community is an excellent school of Christian and liturgical formation for children who live in it" (*Directory for Masses with Children*, 11).

"Mature persons actively care for future generations. Christian maturity requires that all of us, lay and ordained, provide the best catechesis possible for children and youth" (*Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*, 20).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. The Church's role in faith formation is to help people grow in closer intimacy with Christ, living out that relationship in service to the community, Church, and world. In what ways are we doing this with children? ✓

2. How does our Area Catholic Community engage catechists, families, staff, and other concerned adults in the evaluation and needs assessment of its programs with children? What criteria are used in the evaluation? ✓

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony. Through it, the local Church evangelizes, educates, and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound lifestyle among its members" (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*, 34).

"It is the task of the local Churches to be open to the reception and ordinary presence of persons with disabilities within programs of catechesis, working for a culture of inclusion against the logic of the disposable" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 271).

"With concern, respect, and pastoral solicitude the Church wants to accompany those children who are marked by a wounded love, who find themselves in the most fragile condition, restoring their trust and hope. . . It is important that every Christian community take a realistic view of the heterogenous family realities, with their ups and downs, for the sake of accompanying them in an adequate way and discerning the complexity of the situations, without giving into forms of idealism and pessimism" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 234).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. In what ways are the sacramental formation programs for parents, as they prepare their children, genuine experiences of adult faith formation?



2. For those Area Catholic Communities with both a faith formation program and a Catholic school, how do we work together in strengthening the Catholic identity and furthering the mission of Jesus Christ?



3. How is the Catholic school community visible within our community?



4. What opportunities provide networks for parents? What are some of the benefits of these networks?



5. In what ways do we provide for the spiritual needs of young children (infant to 5 years old) through their parents?



6. What are ways that we reach out to children who do not participate in faith formation programs?





Ministry of the Catechist


THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Recognition should be given to those lay men and women who feel called by virtue of their baptism to cooperate in the work of catechesis. This presence is all the more urgently needed today as a result of our increasing awareness of the need for evangelization in the contemporary world, and the rise of a globalized culture. This requires genuine interaction with young people, to say nothing of the need for creative methodologies and resources capable of adapting the proclamation of the Gospel to the missionary transformation that the Church has undertaken" (*Instituting the Ministry of Catechist, 5*).

"Today, too, the Spirit is calling men and women to set out and encounter all those who are waiting to discover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Christian faith. It is the task of pastors to support them in this process and to enrich the life of the Christian community through the recognition of lay ministries capable of contributing to the transformation of society through the 'penetration of Christian values into the social, political and economic sectors'" (*Instituting the Ministry of Catechist, 5*).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. In what ways are catechists recognized and appreciated by the community for the ministry they do? 

2. How are the catechists called, formed and supported for their ministry? 

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION


"In confirming their call, the Church commits itself to an ongoing covenant with catechists to support and train them as disciples called to catechize. The following are important partners in catechesis: parish catechetical leaders, catechists, those catechized, the family, the parish, the bishop, and his delegates. Should any of these partners be poorly engaged or absent from the catechetical enterprise, the catechetical initiative will be weakened for all" (*Living as Missionary Disciples*, p iii).


"The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained catechetical leader...Ordinarily, the main responsibilities of this position are as follows:

- overall direction of the parish catechetical programs for adults, youth, and children;
- planning, implementation, and evaluation of the parish catechetical program;
- recruitment, formation, ongoing development, and evaluation of catechists;
- implementation of diocesan and parish catechetical policies and guidelines;
- collaboration with the pastor, other parish ministers, and appropriate committees, boards, and councils;
- assistance in liturgical planning; and
- attention to their own personal, spiritual, and professional development." (*National Directory of Catechesis*, 54B)

"In their journey of faith, adolescents need to have convinced and compelling witnesses by their side. . . It is to be the concern of the community to identify for the service of catechesis those persons who are best able to relate to their world, illuminating it with the light and joy of the faith. It is important that catechesis be carried out as part of pastoral care for young people and with a strongly educational and vocational connotation, in the context of the Christian community and of the other adolescent life environments" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 249).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. What images or metaphors portray the minister and the ministry of the catechist in your Area Catholic Community? 

2. What does your parish catechetical leader need from the pastor and community to fulfill their responsibilities? 



The Goals

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church's catechetical ministry; moreover, it must 'be considered the chief form of catechesis'" (*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, 13).

"We have also learned that no one strategy, activity, or program is adequate to the task of promoting the three goals for ministry with adolescents and that families, parishes, and schools cannot work in isolation if the Church is to realize its goals. We have learned it takes the entire Church..." (*Renewing the Vision*, 19).

"Recognition must be given to the value of the creative and co-responsible contribution that young people themselves make to catechesis. The catechetical service of the young is a stimulus for their very growth in faith" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 255).

"The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodation to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities. All members of the faith community have a role to play in the invitation, welcome, and inclusion of people with disabilities. Pastoral ministers are encouraged to foster attitudes and a parish culture, and to develop informational materials, aimed at forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all of God's people around the table of the Lord" (*Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, 7).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. Assess the current evangelization and catechetical practices in our Area Catholic Community (ACC). *Circle one rating for each statement.*



- Scale:
- 4 = a real strength
 - 3 = current efforts are effective but can be enhanced.
 - 2 = current efforts need development and/or improvement.
 - 1 = currently lacking

EVANGELIZATION PRACTICES	RATINGS
<p>A. The ACC offers opportunities for personal and communal sharing of faith for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults • Youth • Children 	<p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p>
<p>B. The ACC offers opportunities for small groups to gather and share faith as it relates to everyday life.</p>	<p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p>
<p>C. The ACC offers evenings of prayer, events, and/or retreat days to enrich and deepen the faith of the people.</p>	<p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p>
<p>D. The ACC is one of hospitality, invitation and compassion, where no one is excluded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomers are welcomed into the ACC. • Efforts are made to reach out to the alienated, inactive, and disengaged. • Efforts are made to include different cultures in faith formation and the life of the community. 	<p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p>
<p>E. There is a sense of Christian joy about the Good News of Jesus Christ; it is evident</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In homilies • In worship • In our activities • In our outreach activities 	<p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p> <p>4 3 2 1 Don't know</p>

CATECHETICAL PREPARATION	RATINGS				
A. Baptismal preparation	4	3	2	1	Don't know
B. Eucharist/Reconciliation preparation	4	3	2	1	Don't know
C. Confirmation preparation	4	3	2	1	Don't know
D. Marriage preparation	4	3	2	1	Don't know
E. RCIA	4	3	2	1	Don't know
F. Intergenerational faith formation	4	3	2	1	Don't know
G. Children's faith formation (PreK- Gr. 5)	4	3	2	1	Don't know
H. Pre-adolescent faith formation (Grs. 6- 8)	4	3	2	1	Don't know
I. Adolescent faith formation (Grs. 9-12)	4	3	2	1	Don't know
J. Young adult faith formation (Ages 18-39)	4	3	2	1	Don't know
K. Adult faith formation (Ages 40 and beyond)	4	3	2	1	Don't know
L. Those responsible for faith formation are well-trained and well-formed.	4	3	2	1	Don't know

2. Choose five statements that represent the strengths of our Area Catholic Community (ACC). Put the letter (**S**) next to them. Then choose the five statements that most need to be overcome to become a stronger ACC. Put the letter (**O**) next to them.



- _____ A. Promotes education and formation as an ongoing process.
- _____ B. Provides ways to nurture the ancient prayer practices of parishioners.
- _____ C. Provides and evaluates resources to ensure constancy with Scripture and Church.
- _____ D. Provides opportunities for networking and support among faith-sharing and study groups.
- _____ E. Encourages faith sharing by ACC pastoral council, faith formation committee, school board, and other committees as a regular part of their meetings.
- _____ F. Identifies ways to provide Christian service to others through our formation processes.
- _____ G. Encourages ACC faith formation programs and Catholic schools to consolidate efforts for better programming, sacramental preparation and effective use of resources.

-
- _____ H. Ensures that presenters of adult education programs are adequately prepared in the teachings of the Church.
 - _____ I. Engages the laity in the discernment of their gifts and their call to service.
 - _____ J. Networks with the diocese, deanery, and other ACCs to supplement and enhance area formation opportunities.
 - _____ K. Creates opportunities for family service and justice activities, projects, and trips.
 - _____ L. Connect rituals of the domestic church to the celebration of Sunday liturgy.
 - _____ M. Respects the role of parents as the primary catechists of their children.
 - _____ N. Offers radical hospitality as children and adults of minority cultures adjust to a new way of life.
 - _____ O. Provides faith formation for immigrant communities and people with disabilities that incorporates all people into the life of the community while being sensitive to varying abilities and cultural needs.
 - _____ P. Provides renewal and retreat opportunities for engaged and married couples.
 - _____ Q. Incorporates the strengths of single adults into the life of the community.
 - _____ R. Provides support for children experiencing grief from divorce, separation or death.
 - _____ S. Encourages ACC activities and events that are family-centered as opposed to those that separate members of the family.
 - _____ T. Promotes participation in parenting-skill programs.
 - _____ U. Guides young people in the call to holiness by developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by meeting him in the Scriptures, in the life and teachings of the Catholic Church, and in their own prayer lives.
 - _____ V. Develops young people's critical thinking skills that empower them to analyze contemporary life and culture in light of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the teachings of Christ.
 - _____ W. Helps young people apply their faith to daily life experiences, nurtures in young people a lifelong commitment to the Catholic faith, guiding them in developing a personal faith and skills for continuing growth as Catholics.
 - _____ X. Empowers young people to serve those in need, to develop skills that foster social changes to secure justice and equality for every human being, and to live a life of Christian service modeled on the life of Jesus.
 - _____ Y. Promotes education and discernment about vocations of marriage, the single life, priesthood, permanent diaconate, the consecrated life, and lay ministry.
 - _____ Z. Opportunities are available to explore issues of the workplace and lay spirituality.
 - _____ Other:
-

3. What is the core factor that you notice giving vitality and life to our faith formation process – the one thing that is important for us to retain, to bring with us as we move into the future?



4. Choose a motivating symbol that helps you express and renew your best hopes for the ministry of evangelization and catechesis for all ages.



5. Make three wishes for the ACC that would enable us to foster an evangelizing culture and lifelong faith formation.



6. What part of the dream are you able to bring to life? What resources and supports will you need?



7. In our ACC, how can we move toward greater cooperation and collaboration? Among whom? What are opportunities for shared planning?



8. Write down the common threads that you hear in the stories shared. Put an asterisk (*) beside the ones on which you want further inquiry i.e., family-centered catechesis, find print or other media resources regarding the thread, or ask for a consultation/training regarding the thread.





The Pastoral Plan

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"It is not therefore a matter of inventing a 'new program.' The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever... But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community... It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified—goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources—which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture...What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization—a work involving all of us" (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, 29).

"Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late" (*Habakkuk 2:2-3*).

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours." (*Teresa of Avila*)

"Lord, launch us on the adventure of building bridges and tearing down walls" (*Welcoming Address of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, at World Youth Day 2016*).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

In writing a goal, make it **SMART**:

- **S**pecific: Well-defined, detailed, and clear.
- **M**asurable: Are you able to tell when you plan to reach your goal?
- **A**chievable: Can you reach the goal, taking into account your available time, skills, and financial resources?
- **R**ealistic: Is your goal realistically achievable within the time frame and with the available human resources?
- **T**imely: Set a start and finish date for your goal.

GOAL

--

How does this goal contribute to a thriving mission and building bridges?

WHAT IS THE FIRST MAJOR STEP?

Action/Task	Who	Target Date

WHAT IS THE SECOND MAJOR STEP?

Action/Task	Who	Target Date

WHAT IS THE THIRD MAJOR STEP?

Action/Task	Who	Target Date

WHAT ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE NECESSARY FOR THIS GOAL?

--

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO DUPLICATE AS NEEDED



Bibliography

Address of the Holy Father at the Welcoming Ceremony of World Youth Day (Jordan Park, Błonia, Kraków, Thursday, 28 July 2016), Pope Francis.

Address of Pope Francis at a Meeting with the Young People of The Dioceses of Abruzzi and Molise, July 5, 2014.

At the Beginning of the New Millennium (Novo millennio inuente), January 6, 2001), Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II.

Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.

Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit), March 25, 2019), Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem), November 16, 1965), Second Vatican Council.

Directory for Catechesis, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020.

Directory for Masses with Children, Congregation for Divine Worship, 1973.

Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017.

Instituting the Ministry of Catechist (Antiquum Ministerium), May 10, 2021), Apostolic Letter (issued *moto proprio*) of Pope Francis.

Living as Missionary Disciples, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017.

National Directory for Catechesis, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

On Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae), October 16, 1979), Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II.

On Fraternity and Social Friendship (Fratelli Tutti), October 3, 2020), Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997.

The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio), November 22, 1981), Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II.

Sons and Daughters of the Light, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996.

The Order of Confirmation, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016.

This workbook has been created through a partnership with Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary, Diocese of Saint Cloud and Saint John's Abbey's Center for Latino Ministry. It is funded by the Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Grant. For more information, contact Barbara Sutton, Director, *Bridge-Builders for a Thriving Mission*, Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary, Collegeville, MN.

Visit our website: <https://www.thrivingmission.org/>



CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF CHURCH LIFE AND MISSION

Workbooks Available

Community
Evangelization and Word
Justice and Charity
Leadership
Worship and Prayer