

Getting Catechesis Back on Track

By Fr. Lee Nelson, SSC

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared on Anglican Compass (formerly Anglican Pastor) in 2015. You can find the original posts [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Thanks to Anglican Compass for allowing the IRCC to republish this excellent piece.

Part 1: Recovering the Lost Tools

The Church Father Gregory of Nyssa once remarked in the middle of the Arian controversy of the fourth century, "If you ask anyone in Constantinople for change, he will start discussing with you whether the Son is begotten or unbegotten. If you ask about the quality of the bread, you will get the answer: 'The Father is greater, the Son is less.' If you suggest taking a bath you will be told: 'There was nothing before the Son was created.'" The quantity of heresy, let alone the quality, is shocking, I know. But if Gregory is to be believed, even if he is being a bit hyperbolic, can you imagine it? Questions of christology taking center stage in contemporary life?

Gregory's point in those days was this: that doctrinal battles are not fought in councils, but in the hearts and minds of ordinary people, as the Church seeks to catechize and form those hearts and minds in the Faith once delivered. He knew as well as anyone that the heretics, especially the Arians, were undertaking massive efforts at catechesis, and he and his confreres, the Cappadocians, took great efforts to win hearts and minds with persuasive and attractive teaching on Holy Scripture and especially the teaching it contains on creation, the person of Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This is what won the day.

Today, we are in a similar position. Christians are being won over by efforts to redefine marriage and many are being persuaded by the passionate pleas of famous atheists. Young people are disaffiliating from the Church. As James K.A. Smith has noted: "We need to remember that for every finger we point at Millennials, there are three pointing back at us. We have failed them. We have failed to catechize them. This is our fault." In this, the first of a three part series, I hope to tackle the question of how may we succeed in catechesis, first looking at recovering the lost tools of catechesis.

It always happens when I have some job to do at our house. The precise tool I need goes missing. I know where all the other tools are, just not the one I need! As I have practiced the art of catechesis

these last several years, I have come to the conclusion that there are at least five essential tools in the toolbox of any solid catechist. (By catechist, I mean one who instructs Christians or those about to become Christians, in those truths by which they must live and how to live by them.)

Here they are:

1) THE BIBLE IN FORTY-FIVE MINUTES

Many Christians have grown up seeing the Bible as a series of disconnected mini-narratives, and not as a narrative whole. How to fix it? Learn to tell the whole story of Scripture quickly but comprehensively. The master catechist can do this in a few minutes or an hour; it doesn't matter which, but what he allows in this is for those being instructed to begin to see the whole story from Creation to Christ and even to Cincinnati, or wherever the catechesis is taking place. Saint Augustine once wrote in his basic manual for catechists, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*:

“The narration is full when each person is catechized in the first instance from what is written in the text, ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,’ on to the present times of the Church. This does not imply, however, either that we ought to repeat by memory the entire Pentateuch, and the entire Books of Judges, and Kings, and Esdras, and the entire Gospel and Acts of the Apostles, if we have learned all these word for word; or that we should put all the matters which are contained in these volumes into our own words, and in that manner unfold and expound them as a whole. For neither does the time admit of that, nor does any necessity demand it. But what we ought to do is, to give a comprehensive statement of all things, summarily and generally, so that certain of the more wonderful facts may be selected which are listened to with superior gratification, and which have been ranked so remarkably among the exact turning-points (of the history); that, instead of exhibiting them to view only in their wrappings, if we may so speak, and then instantly snatching them from our sight, we ought to dwell on them for a certain space, and thus, as it were, unfold them and open them out to vision, and present them to the minds of the hearers as things to be examined and admired.”

2) THE APOSTLES' CREED AS THE RULE OF FAITH

Every major catechism has included the “Three Pillars” of catechesis, often called the “Catholic Standards.” The first is the Apostles' Creed, and it has been taught as the inheritance and received

responsibility of every Christian. Saint Ambrose told his hearers in a rhetorical flair – which, while untrue, is still instructive – that the Apostles’ Creed was the sum of the contributions of each of the twelve apostles, and that, as in a joint stock company, each contributor is responsible for the whole. He taught the Creed to catechumens on the last week before their baptisms orally, requiring that they recite it silently in their minds. The Creed was considered to be part of the Tradition, passed down to each generation of Christians as their responsibility and joy.

Today, I daresay, we have seen the effects of a Church that has all but abandoned creedal instruction. We do so to our peril. Many Christians would not know Arianism, or Gnosticism, or Patripassionism for that matter, if it was uttered in even most material of manners. As Dorothy Sayers said of this: we are sending men and women into pitched battle with peashooters. She wrote: “it is fatal to imagine that everybody knows quite well what Christianity is and needs only a little encouragement to practice it. The brutal fact is that in this Christian country not one person in a hundred has the faintest notion what the Church teaches about God or man or society or the person of Jesus Christ.” She wrote that in 1942.

3) TEACH US TO PRAY

“Teach us to pray,” the disciples asked of the Lord. It is one of the few things they ask, and the only thing for which they ask specific teaching. It should not surprise us that in these times of indifference and materialism that Christians should ask, even demand, to learn to pray. Prayer, of course, is a gift of God to his people. That he even hears is a miracle in itself, and yet our prayers are so poorly formed and sloppy that the order of the day is to teach spiritual discipline. The catechist instructs upon the Lord’s Prayer as a means of establishing the “pattern and practice of prayer,” and in so doing participates in the making of a people of prayer.

Saint John Chrysostom, as soon as neophytes emerged from the waters of baptism, would place their hands on his head and implore them: “Pray for me.” The prayer they prayed was the Lord’s Prayer. John believed, as did most ancient Christians, that the neophyte had mystical and miraculous powers in prayer, but also that no one could really pray until they had first been made children of God in the waters of baptism. A master catechist is not content simply to teach prayer as a practice, but desires to see men, women, and children pray as adopted children of God, once disinherited princes allowed once again to dwell in the household of God the Father.

4) THE DECALOGUE

The Anglican theologian and catechist Jim Packer writes: “the moral law, as crystallized in the Decalogue and opened up in the ethical teaching of both Testaments, is one coherent law, given to be a code of practice for God’s people in every age.” Despite what some say, true repentance will always look like obedience to God’s revealed will as revealed in the Law and most perfectly in Jesus Christ. Many good pastors have completely forgotten that all people live in a world of moral questions. The police officer asks when he may draw and fire his weapon. The lawyer desires to know when confidences may be kept or not. The young student desires to know what constitutes cheating or plagiarism. They all have moral consciences that will be formed either by intuition, contemporary mores, or solid catechesis. We should desire the flourishing of the latter.

The catechist seeks to aid in the conversion of the catechumen’s life and ways by not only teaching the truth of what God has done for our sinful selves but also that we really are sinners and in what way we may be reformed. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the most important gift and the catechumen should be instructed in discerning the voice of God in his or her conscience. This requires deep formation, not merely information.

5) A CLASS, BUT NOT A CLASS

Catechetical instruction will, most often, look like a class, taught at regular intervals and for a sustained season, perhaps even as long as one to two years. It will be seen as the normal course of instruction prior to baptism and/or confirmation, and will be followed up by further explorations. This class has as its aim the making of mature disciples who are able to make disciples.

But, even though it looks like a class, it is not a class. Western pedagogy assumes the filling of the mind but not the training of the heart or the soul. Catechesis is an appeal that seeks to cut through to the heart, rightly wielding the Word of God and the Church’s teaching to pierce “to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The Scriptures, when taught in abstraction from the affairs of the heart, become lifeless and dull. But, when taken up by a skilled catechist who desires to see true conversion in the catechumen, catechesis is a passionate and sacred exercise. I have routinely seen people weep during a teaching on the most basic doctrines, not because they were taught persuasively but because they were aimed at the heart.

In the next two installments of this series, we will look at the recovery of the old ways and methods of catechesis and the recovery of a whole culture of catechesis and what that means for the Church, but especially for pastors who are called to shepherd the sheep and “to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life” (The Ordinal, 1662).

Part 2: Recovering the Old Ways

As I study the ways of the ancient Church, I have discovered two things: first, they had a very high standard for catechetical discipleship and subsequent Church membership, and second, that high standard only aided in their progress in evangelism. As we enter the age of Post-Christendom, it seems to me that if we seek to engage pagans on the front porch of the Church, we have much to learn from them.

But what is the normal experience today for people joining a church in North America?

The usual responses among pastors are far from satisfactory. You write a check. You fill out a card. You join a small group. Worst of all, you just “attend.” Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, in their wonderful book, *Simple Church*, recall a friend who was prescribed contact lenses, thinking that he could pick them up that same day. He was told by the optician that he would have to come to a Saturday morning class, which would cover all the basics before he could take possession of them. They realized in hearing this story that the requirement for getting contact lenses is higher than the requirement for joining most churches!

In order to address this inadequacy faithfully, we must go back to the past in order to go forward. In this section, I will outline the basic stages of this catechetical formation as it was practiced in the ancient church, with particular emphasis on how adult pagans were welcomed, instructed, trained, formed, and deployed.

As I have put these practices in place in my own ministry, I have seen tremendous fruit.

STAGE ONE: EVANGELIZATION AND INQUIRY

We know intuitively that the Ancient Church was skilled in evangelism. How else could a fledgling group in Jerusalem come to be the dominant religious force in the empire in three centuries? But, how did they do it? Especially under the constraints of persecution?

The Church in those years lived on reputation, just as the Lord had told his disciples: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). That reputation was of those who adopted babies from the Roman exposure walls, who rescued those dying of disease from the streets, and who had lively and flourishing family life. The Church Father Tertullian noted what Romans of his day would say: “Look,” they say, “how they love one another” (for they themselves hate one another); “and how they are ready to die for each other” (for they themselves are readier to kill each other). The Christian life, as Roman life began to wither, became more and more compelling. By the dawn of the fourth century and the Edict of Milan, the churches and basilicas of the bishops became full of inquirers, who came to hear what the Church taught. Much of this we take for granted. The teaching of creation *ex nihilo*, for example, was a radical departure from the pagan understanding of preexistent matter. Christian monotheism itself was a strange doctrine. But, the Churches were full of those seeking to understand.

In the days of persecution, inquirers were typically allowed to receive teaching in the form of mentorship at the hands of Christian families and the hearing of sermons. They were not allowed to witness the celebration of the Eucharist or, in many cases, even to pray. During this period, inquiry was made into their lives. It was essential to know if they showed charity to the poor, cared for their parents, or whether or not they were drunkards or adulterers. If the inquiry was unsatisfactory, in many cases, they were told to delay baptism, being commanded to repent.

Augustine, a great catechist, notably turned this inquiry into a method of learning the character and passions of his hearers, that he might better teach them. He himself had been won over by the rhetoric of the great Bishop of Milan, Saint Ambrose, and he was determined that all of his catechetical instructions upon the Scriptures should be tailored to the hearer. These teachings in basic evangelization consisted essentially of teaching the whole narrative of Scripture quickly and in good order, drawing out examples which could reach the hearer with the message of fallen humanity and redemption in Christ. These were essentially “stump speeches” given to those who were hearing the Church’s message for the first time.

STAGE TWO: CATECHESIS AND THE CATECHUMENATE

The catechumen, as inquiring pagans were called, would enter into and remain in the next stage, *catechesis*, for at least one year, and perhaps as many as several decades. Augustine himself was enrolled in the catechumenate when he was an infant. By way of contrast, today nominal Christians are baptized church members. In the Ancient Church, nominal Christians were catechumens, those who had not made a commitment to Christ, who were being instructed, prayed for, and exorcised as they prepared to enter new life in Christ through the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

During this time also, the catechumen was instructed in Scripture, the Commandments, the doctrine of God, the person of Christ, and the person of the Holy Spirit. Catechumens were regularly marked with the sign of the Cross, receiving prayers of exorcism, and given the charge to live lives of holiness.

Typically, prior to the beginning of Lent, the Bishops would issue the call to enroll for baptism. This was a radical call, as it meant leaving behind one's former life and embracing a new one. Once enrolled for baptism, the next stage commenced.

STAGE THREE: ELECTION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Those preparing for baptism underwent intense pre-baptism training and catechesis. It was not unusual to see catechumens (now called *competentes*) spending as many as five nights a week in the church, receiving instruction from the Bishop or other catechists, separated from the hearing of all the rest. In most cases they were "handed" some version of a Baptismal Creed, later distilled into the Apostles' Creed. This was to be memorized, so that it could be "handed back" on the occasion of their baptism. They would also be taught the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. Aside from the intense teaching, however, this was a time of intense fasting. The *competens* would be required in many cases to fast from all meat and rich foods, to refrain from bathing, and to give alms generously. By the way, this is the origin of the liturgical season of Lent.

At this point also, inquiry would again be made into the candidate's life and moral standing. The idea was to understand what, if any, effect was being made in their lives by the teaching. As you can imagine, the effect was immense. But to be sure that no one, in being baptized, would cause scandal to the Church, these inquiries were made. At this point, let me say that the whole process, up to this point, was aimed at forming and training mature Christians, who from the moment of their baptism

would be able to live the fullness of the Christian life wherever they went. Case in point: Augustine understood his baptism to be the end of his academic and rhetorical life, and the beginning of a life of semi-monasticism, as he and his fellow neophytes established a Christian community, first in Italy and later in North Africa. When he would baptize as a Bishop, he understood that many of those he was baptizing would go back to their remote country homes and lives, but he trusted that they had been sufficiently formed as to live in maturity to their lives' end.

The end of this stage was initiation: Baptism, Chrismation (a precursor to Confirmation), and the Eucharist. In many cases, the candidates had no idea what they were about to experience. But, they trusted the Church to lead them into the divine life, and the next stage encompassed all that came after.

STAGE FOUR: MYSTAGOGY

After baptism, the neophyte would literally live in the church, being brought meals and being continually instructed, not as an outsider, but as a member of the household of God, attending to the sacred mysteries and enveloped in the Church's liturgy. The purpose of the mystagogical lectures was particularly *eucharistic*. The neophyte was encouraged to live a life of thanksgiving to God for the gift of redemption and adoption, living out a life full of the presence of God, and partaking in His mysteries in the Eucharist. This was a time of beauty and wonder converging the life of the new Christian, the new life of grace prevailing upon them as they were radically converted. The reception of the Eucharist, ongoing throughout the Christian's life, grounded them in the eschatological and nuptial reality of the Christian life, as they awaited final redemption.

Several months ago, a pastor I know told of how members of a church had gone to the pastor asking that he preach for a whole hour. They were complaining that his preaching had become oriented toward the seeker and had become shorter, to the extent that they were not being "fed." "The mature members of your congregation need longer, meatier sermons," they said. It's a Catch-22. Mature Christians would never say anything like that. Mature Christians are, by definition, self-feeders. Only children rely on their parents to provide their meals. And yet, pastors are seen primarily as "feeder." (Which, by the way, is absolutely right!) I would suggest to you that it is our definition of maturity that needs changing, and that maturity should include, as a necessity, a selfless determination to evangelize, teach, disciple, and grow others.

SOME BASIC THOUGHTS ON A WAY FORWARD

You might have noticed how the ancient catechumenate is *process driven*. It has a clear beginning, middle, and end in mind. No step is skipped over for the sake of expedience. The whole process is focused on growing pagans into mature Christians. That may seem like a no-brainer, but, as pastors, how much of our work is devoted to maintaining and growing programs – growing the organization – rather than growing *people*? Look at any major organization from McDonald’s to the Boy Scouts – all of them have a simple process aimed at growing people within their organizations. Our answers are best found in becoming architects and master builders of a *process* that leads to maturity. As Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger note: “Churches with a simple process for reaching and maturing people are expanding the kingdom. Church leaders who have designed a simple biblical process to make disciples are effectively advancing the movement of the gospel.” In short, the same processes that made disciples in antiquity are still doing it today.

Next, the ancient catechumenate is also driven by *content*. The mere word *catechism* became such a suspicious one that in many places, the practice has been dropped altogether. The teaching of doctrine is often seen as divisive. Yet, in the Ancient Church, we see the unifying solidarity it brought to the Body. Many will also deride catechesis for being a practice of the mind. I hope you’ll see how catechesis properly practiced engages both the heart and the mind. This, of course, is a practice which will, by necessity, include instruction in content. This content is at once biblical and creedal, informing not only a way of prayer, but a way of living as well. As J.I. Packer notes: “ignorance of God – ignorance both of his ways and of the practice of communion with him – lies at the root of much of the church’s weakness today.”

If I were to tell you that I had been hired by a local school to teach geometry to eighth graders, but that I wanted to eschew teaching boring doctrines like the Pythagorean theorem or that $\pi = \frac{\text{circumference of a circle}}{\text{diameter}}$, you would give me an odd look. I would tell you that I wanted geometry to be fun and practical; you’d tell me I’m an idiot. Content matters, and in the battle we face, much of it is a matter of equipping the people of God with foundational and creedal doctrine. So we must teach the Hypostatic Union, the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Doctrines of Sin and Grace and Justification, boldly and without tiring, for these are the things of God, and without them, His people flounder.

Lastly, we can see in the ancient catechumenate the expectation that God’s prevenient grace moves sinners to growth in holiness and ultimately maturity, and that the Church is responsible for feeding

and equipping. There is also not the presumption that we can baptize the uninstructed and let God take care of the rest. No! The Ancient Church believed that they had been given a sacred task, and that even though the instruction was basic and elementary, they had a duty to convey it with passion and joy. Saint Augustine remarked that the most important thing for a catechist is that he “enjoy catechizing.” May we find that joy in this remarkable vocation yet again!

Part 3: On Building a Culture of Catechesis

Wendell Berry, in his 1977 book, *The Unsettling of America*, argued that agribusiness was taking the practice of farming out of its cultural context and away from families. It was a prophetic work, and in the years since, we have seen continued decline in family farming in favor of a system that devalues community and human labor in favor of profit and product. In many ways, we can trace a parallel trend in the Church. We have removed the work of catechesis, worship, and prayer from its proper cultural context that of the family and deep Christian community, in favor of a Church model driven by programs. Today’s pastor is continually set to the task of developing and introducing new programs as a means to sustained growth. The net effect, and this is not the only cause by any stretch, is that in altering an already unstable culture of making and maturing disciples, we have suffered in both quantity and quality of the fruit borne by our congregations.

In short, as American farming became about ever larger machinery and ever larger farms, the American church became about ever better programmatic offerings and ever larger churches. Somewhere along the way, we lost the biblical vision of families growing and instructing their children in the way of faith and churches making and growing disciples who could, in turn, make more disciples. We’ve learned this intuitively through church planting, where the smaller, leaner, family-oriented congregation makes disciples three times more effectively than established churches. But, what would it look like if all our churches took a holistic, culturally oriented look at building a culture of catechesis, just as many farmers are returning to the old ways and discovering a rich and sustainable life?

A CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY AND SUBSIDIARITY

The twin principles of solidarity and subsidiarity form the core of Catholic social teaching. They mainly deal with what should be centralized and what should be decentralized. For instance, a government should rightly decide where to put a highway (centralized), but not what a child should eat for breakfast (decentralized). In essence, most things in a society should be undertaken by the smallest possible unit (subsidiarity), but that when needed, smaller groups can band together in solidarity to address needs. This applies just as well, if not more so, to the Church. Families can, and should, take responsibility for the teaching of their children, while maintaining solidarity with the Church. Parish churches should be responsible for most, if not, all of their internal affairs, including budgets, service times, which Sunday School curriculum they should use, etc. But, they should keep in mind their solidarity with the whole Church in teaching and worship.

A simple way to put it is this: bigger is not necessarily better, but each smaller unit is responsible to the whole.

In reviving a culture of catechesis for the Church, the family must take center stage once again as the primary unit of catechesis and prayer. Central to the Gospel is the responsibility of parents to instill deep Christian virtue, believing, and prayer in their children. In our own tradition, parents of baptized infants have been exhorted in their “parts and duties” to teach their children the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, as well as to “virtuously bring them up to lead a godly and Christian life” and “die to sin and rise again to righteousness.” This is no small task, and it takes churches and pastors who advocate for family catechesis at every level.

Expanding on this idea even more, subsidiarity requires that our efforts at making disciples go from “mass production” to one-on-one discipleship. In recent years, Apple has embraced this way of teaching people to use their products in their “one-to-one” initiative. Customers pay \$99 a year to be able to go into an Apple retail store to set up their email, transfer files, and have individual training. They also get small workshops and can hang around with their laptops and get help as needed. What Apple understands is that the classroom environment is not always the best way to impart knowledge, and even more important – a culture. Culture is passed through a context – that of living relationships between people. Skilled catechists understand this, and seek to guide new believers, nominal Christians, and seekers through conversion, not in a classroom but in one-on-one relationships.

A CULTURE OF APPRENTICESHIP

In the not so distant past, a career began in apprenticeship. Woodworkers, coopers, brewers, tailors, and others all began as apprentices. Essentially this meant working for room and board in exchange for gathering skills and proficiency in the craft at hand. This constituted that intimate passing of culture in the context of living relationships. In the last century, we have rejected this model in favor of a system of higher education in which apprenticeship is rare. This seems to be part of the phenomenon of recent college graduates unable to find work because of a lack of skill or experience. Expansion of the minimum requirements to masters-level education seems, so far, to be unhelpful.

This has been seen in the Church as well. Theological education is seen as something that happens in the seminaries, for which one must enroll and receive classroom instruction. This came into focus for me recently as a friend, who is teaching an introductory course in theology at a seminary, gave me his account of students who were unprepared for such a course, having not even the most basic understandings of the Bible, the Creeds, or the most simple of doctrines. All they knew was that they had seen well-formed Christians teaching or pastoring or leading and, wanting to become like them, had enrolled in seminary. We can, and should, envision a day in which Christians are instructed in such things from a very early time in their formation, again in the context of living relationships with master Christians, in this case, catechists! A catechist is responsible for passing a whole way of living and believing to a new disciple. We as pastors need to be raising up a generation of catechists who can do this.

And, we shouldn't assume that theological education is the sole calling of seminaries. Theological education and spiritual formation need to be seen as the responsibilities of our parishes yet again, if we are to meet the challenges of proclaiming the Gospel in the post-Christian world.

A CULTURE OF PRACTICE

To be a Christian is to live not merely in the theoretical but to apply the Faith in practical ways. Much has been made in recent years of practical preaching, but much of this has been detached from deep theological underpinnings, resulting in chaos. I remember some years ago going with my Church to serve lunch to the homeless on Good Friday. Families would take their children out of school for the day to be a part of this work. It was inspiring to watch children of five and six years old serving tables and supplying the needs of the homeless. For the Church Fathers, this instruction in Christian charity formed part of the corpus of catechetical instruction. John Chrysostom believed

it necessary to show catechumens how to visit prisoners and expected that adults coming to Baptism would be fully formed in the work of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.

The challenge for us today is to recover a culture of not only believing and worshipping together, but practicing charity and mission together, passing along the habits and virtues of the Church to others. This includes the transmission of spiritual disciplines as well. New disciples are crying out for people who will teach them practical ways of praying, fasting, giving to the poor, and living out Christian vocation in daily life. The Church has the opportunity to rise to the challenge.

A CULTURE OF MULTIPLICATION

Strong cultures necessarily multiply. Whether this is in terms of birth rates, or art, or agricultural product, multiplication is of the essence. This was made clear to me several years ago in a conversation with my Grandfather. I'm the oldest of eighteen first cousins on that side of the family, and I had just introduced him to my daughter, the first of many great-grandchildren. We stood on the patio, overlooking the scene – aunts, uncles, wives, husbands, my cousins' boyfriends and girlfriends enjoying a wonderful lakefront backyard, and he said: "Fifty-five years ago, it was just your grandmother and I."

He was making a point about multiplication.

Abraham became the father of many nations. The 120 disciples gathered in Jerusalem became the dominant religious and cultural force in the Roman Empire in a matter of less than 300 years. God means for his people to multiply. Jesus himself, teaching in the parable of the seeds, says that "other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and ca hundredfold" (Mark 4:8). He uses many parables and images to give this teaching on multiplication including leaven and mustard seeds. As Rodney Stark of Baylor University has been pointing out, this is not a mere matter of evangelism, but of procreation and adoption as well. We Christians are meant to grow in number, to become pervasive, and to fill the earth. Catechesis is thus not only the means of imparting a new way of believing and living but also a new way of multiplying oneself "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11).