

MULTICULTURAL CATECHESIS

PHILOSOPHY

Just as all races, ethnicities, and cultures in the world are represented in the population of the United States, so too do they find a home within the Catholic Church. Each group brings its own language, history, customs, rituals, and traditions “for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Since persons can only achieve their full humanity by means of culture, the Catholic Church in the United States embraces the rich cultural pluralism of all the faithful, encourages the distinctive identity of each cultural group, and urges mutual enrichment. At the same time, the Catholic Church promotes unity of faith within the multicultural diversity of the people.
(NDC 11C 1)

We as church are called to be a welcoming community to a steady flow of newcomers, who speak a variety of languages and come from diverse cultures. Paying attention to multicultural diversity has become one of the fundamental characteristics of the archdiocese of Los Angeles. Within the mission statement for the archdiocese states that “*With Christ, we affirm the bonds that unite. We commit ourselves to remove the barriers that divide people in the large, complex and multicultural society of Southern California.*” Embedded in the Synod initiatives, we are called to pay attention to the rich diversity in the church and to encourage active participation of all according to each one’s particular gifts.

Faced with this reality catechesis is presented with tremendous challenges and opportunities. For if the starting point of our approach to catechesis is the *life experience* of the learners, then the catechetical process must be rooted in an understanding of the cultural background of its learners. More so, it goes beyond recognition and awareness of the diverse makeup of the church and delve into a deep understanding of how this diverse body incarnate Christ in their context. It is presenting the Gospel in relation to the hopes, questions and problems which culture present. Failure to incorporate this would lead to a danger of making religion and faith irrelevant, and divorced from the reality of everyday living.

The Office of Religious Education committed to its mission statement to “respond to the multicultural diversity of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles” sees its role as an advocate of multicultural catechesis and strongly supports parishes in their efforts of ministry and raising their communities’ consciousness of the growing needs of our ethnically diverse Archdiocese. Even in culturally homogeneous areas and parishes, catechesis should be multicultural in the sense that all should be educated to know and respect other cultural, racial and ethnic groups. The office is committed to serving and forming catechetical leadership that promotes and integrates the diverse perspective of both learners and catechists. Specific strategies and techniques to implement multicultural catechesis are reflected in the following goals that embodies the intertwining of faith and culture.

GOALS

Inculturation of the Christian Message:

“The theology of this multicultural Church is Inculturation Theology, the recognition that faith must become culture, if it is to be fully received and lived.” (Towards a Theology of Inculturation p. xi.). Thus the heart of multicultural catechesis is **inculturation of the Christian message** – a process that brings the transforming power of the Gospel to touch persons in their hearts and cultures at their deepest levels (NDC, 25F). It involves “listening to the culture of the people for the echo of the word of God” (NDC, 21C.) Among the many tasks of inculturation we find that catechesis needs:

- To discover the seeds of the Gospel that may be present in the culture (NDC, 21C) :
 - enabling those being catechized to become more able to explain the faith to others in the culture in which they live and to be able to “give reason for their hope” (NDC,25F)
- To know and respect the essential elements and basic expressions of the culture of the persons to whom catechesis is addressed (NDC, 21C) .
 - engage cultural symbols, integrating them with scriptures
 - develop catechesis that taps into popular devotions of cultural groups.
- To Express the need to communicate the Christian message through patterns of thought, history, culture and experience so that various culture could perceive the “Good News’ as addressed to them, in their own uniqueness and concrete situations.
 - inspire identity and pride in the riches of the cultures in order to bring them forth as an offering of gifts to the larger community.
 - develop and use culturally appropriate catechetical methods, tools, texts and resources (NDC,25F).
- To bring to those in the dominant culture the other cultures’ insight and actions, both as leaven and challenge.
 - Enhance the building up of the Catholic/Christian community and the integration into the larger society by understanding the Church through respect and appreciation of the people and cultures within.
 - Celebrate differences, value diversity as part in building cultural awareness
- To resource a variety of media and draws from a variety of disciplines to communicate and engage in a multicultural dialogue.
 - develop and use culturally appropriate catechetical methods, tools, texts and resources (NDC,25F)

Developing Catechetical Leaders

Multicultural catechesis invests in developing and nurturing creative talents that mirrors the “many faces in God’s house.” It ensures that our diocesan cultural makeup is reflected in our formational and leadership program. Multicultural catechesis is informed by those who minister within the individual cultures, therefore the following goals have to be seriously considered:

- Involve persons of various cultures in planning catechetical mission and that various requirements of diverse cultures are responded to (NDC, 25 F).
- Prepare catechists in their native language and cultural situations (NDC 25F).
- Provide catechists the opportunity to further develop their own religious education and spiritual formation in a multicultural perspective for an understanding of each culture's world view, their concept of God and their value system.

Programs/Processes

ORE Consultants

The office has consultants who specialize not only serving the needs of the various communities: African-Americans, Blacks, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Hispanic-Americans, but of equal importance ..

They:

- provide information and assistance to the parishes and their diverse cultures in their catechetical programs for children, youth and adult
- provide support for leadership and catechetical training programs to the cultural communities in English or their native languages
- provide consultation to other ORE consultants regarding ..

The great number of Catholics in our parishes that arrive constantly from the different Latin-American countries and speak only Spanish, require special attention. For this reason, the Office of Religious Education also has several Consultants to serve the catechetical needs of only Spanish-speaking, from pre-school to adults.

The Office of Religious Education regularly sponsors programs for the formation of catechists (see Catechetical Ministry section of the guidelines) and other general religious education programs, both in English, Spanish and other languages. These programs are planned and notices are sent to parish's Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education every month.

Catechesis in the Asian and Pacific Islander Perspective

Background and Context of Asian-Pacific Communities

"This Being Asian" is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the church can communicate the gospel in a way that is faithful both to her own tradition and to the Asian soul. (Ecclesia in Asia, no. 6)

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Asian and Pacific Americans comprise 4.4% of the U.S. population or 12.5 million strong and growing. Their presence is called a "teaching moment" for the American Church. This prompted the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops to issue the 2001 pastoral statement, *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* which "focuses attention on the little-known Asian and Pacific communities rooted in the United States, as well as new