

The Way God Teaches

by Dr. Joseph White

The Divine Pedagogy

“Catechesis as communication of divine Revelation, is radically inspired by the pedagogy of God, as displayed in Christ and in the Church” (GDC, 143)

It is the Church’s mission to be “a visible and actual continuation of the pedagogy of the Father and of the Son” (GDC, 141).

5 Aspects of the Divine Pedagogy

#1 – God’s pedagogy is *invitational* and *person-centered*.

- We don’t “find God”; God finds us. Story of the Prodigal Son.
- Use of human experience
 - “experience, assumed by faith, becomes in a certain manner, a *locus* for the manifestation and realization of salvation” (GDC, 152).
- Adaptation to culture and situation
 - God “assumes the character of the person, the individual and the community according to the conditions in which they are found” (GDC, 139)
 - God’s revelation to humankind
 - Holy Spirit and Pentecost
 - St. Paul in the Aereopagus
 - This understanding necessary for proper interpretation of Scripture

An Invitational and Person-Centered Catechesis

- Invites the learner into the process
- takes into account the experience and needs of the human person
- Invites learners to be their best selves
- Keep a sense of humor

Questions for reflection

- How does the catechetical methodology used in our parish assist learners in seeing their personal experiences in the light of faith?
- In what ways does our parish make adaptations for the diversity of cultures and situational contexts that your learners bring?
- How are both the needs and the gifts of our learners acknowledged and appreciated?

#2 – God’s pedagogy is *incarnational*.

Incarnational

- A pedagogy of the senses
 - Unity of words and deeds (God’s word becomes action)
 - God reveals himself in creation itself
 - Jesus taught not only through words, but through healings, miracles and other actions
 - Jesus pointed to visible illustrations of what he was teaching: visual aids
 - Church continued this multisensory methodology
 - Sacramental rites
 - Sacred art, music, etc.
- Christocentric

Incarnational

- Unity of words and deeds in the lives of each believer
- St. Augustine -- “Receive what you are become what you receive.”
- The response of authentic faith to the grace of God causes good works to increase in the lives of the faithful.
 - “So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead .” (James 2:17-18; NAB).

An incarnational catechesis

- Unity of words and deeds -- the example we set, putting faith into action
- Christocentric
- Pedagogy of the senses
 - Awareness of multiple intelligences
 - Multisensory methodology

Questions for Reflection

- How are we examples to others, especially those we catechize?
- In what ways is our current catechesis *multisensory*? How might we incorporate more multisensory elements for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners?
- In what ways does our process of catechesis emphasize the centrality of Christ’s incarnation?

#3 – God’s pedagogy is *communal and familial*.

- God is love and he has created us to love and serve him and one another. He teaches us these truths through relationships
- The Holy Trinity is a communion of persons
- Christ and the Church
- The Church is a family

A communal and familial catechesis

- Importance of relationship with those whom we catechize
- Building relationships in catechesis; emphasis on the 5th task of

catechesis

- Primacy of the family in God's pedagogy calls us to support and involve the family as much as possible
- Catechetical programs geared towards every stage in the family life cycle
- Remote/proximate/immediate family life education

Questions for Reflection

- What am I doing right now to honor the "privileged place" of family in catechesis? How can I involve families more in the work I do?
- How is our catechetical program promoting a sense of the larger community of faith, both in our parish and around the world?

#4 – God's pedagogy is *structured, systematic and comprehensive*.

- Systematic and comprehensive
 - "Stages of revelation," using human events and words
 - Jesus comes as the definitive and complete revelation of God, sent Holy Spirit to guide the Church in interpretation of this revelation
 - God also does this with the individual human person -- open to God's grace we each continue to grow "progressively and patiently" towards Christian maturity.
- Structured and disciplined
- Gradual and adaptive, but not relative

A Structured, Systematic and Comprehensive Catechesis

- gradual and progressive conception of Christian formation, arranged in stages (GDC, 129) – developmental windows
- the catechetical message has "a comprehensive hierarchical character which constitutes a vital synthesis of the faith" (GDC, 114; cf. CT, 31) – one reason why we use books
- truths of the faith are organized in a hierarchy around the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, in a Christocentric perspective

Questions for reflection

- How does catechesis in our community respond to the developmental needs and characteristics of persons of various ages and developmental levels?
- What is the structure of catechetical ministry in our parish, school, and/or diocese?

#5 – God's pedagogy is *perpetual*.

- "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not

return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

- God's truths are handed on through the generations in the forms of Scripture and Sacred Tradition, which is the living memory of the Church.
- God's covenants do not end, but come to greater fulfillment and realization
- In baptism, each follower of Christ is sent forth as missionary.

A self-perpetuating catechesis

- Rooted in mystery -- seeds that will later grow and flower
- Spirit of mission – live the faith
- Prepare those being catechized to preach by example and be ready to defend/explain their faith
 - “always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15).
- Encourage those being catechized to discern the gifts they bring and how they can use them

Questions for reflection

- How does evangelization happen in our parish? What part do I play in this activity?
- How does our community reach out to those outside the community, including the uncatechized and those of other religions?

Let's connect!

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Check out *Alive in Christ/Vivos en Cristo*, the first and only curriculum built on the five aspects of the divine pedagogy: AliveinChrist.osv.com