

# An article-by-article summary of the GDC

## Introduction to the General Directory for Catechesis

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### *Preaching the Gospel in the Contemporary World*

#### **Listen! A sower went out to sow** (Mk 4:3)

- [14] We wish to foster in pastors and catechists  
an awareness of the field  
in which the seed is sown.
- [15] The gospels speak of a farmer who owns a field  
in which he or she plants,  
tends,  
waters,  
and eventually reaps a harvest.

This gospel story is the basis for thinking about evangelization,  
our first topic here.

Jesus is the first farmer.

It is Christ who has sown a seed of faith  
in our hearts  
and that seed is the word of God.

Today Christ continues to plant that seed  
through the Church  
and the Holy Spirit.

And just as in the first century when this story was first told,  
some seed falls by the wayside,  
some on stony soil,  
and some among the weeds and thorns.

But some seed also falls *on good soil*,  
that is, among men and women  
who are open in their lives  
to a personal relationship with Christ  
and to solidarity with their neighbor.

My friends, the reign of God is near,  
regardless the problems in the soil,  
regardless the difficulties of the world.

### **The standpoint of faith**

[16] Vatican II speaks of the joys and hopes,  
the grief and anguish  
of the people of our time.

These, the documents of the council tell us,  
are the joys and hopes,  
the grief and anguish  
of the followers of Christ!

We Christians face the world in its reality,  
but we see it through eyes of faith.

We know that every human event is laced  
with the reality of God's creative goodness,  
the reality of sin which limits and numbs us,  
and the reality of power,  
bursting forth from the resurrection of Christ  
and filling the earth with new life!

### **The field that is the world**

[17] And because we also see with sorrow  
that so many people suffer today  
around the world,  
we wish to stir Christian hearts.

The presence of the Christian people (who are the Church)  
can then be a sign of light and hope,  
and the cause of justice will be served.

[18] Human beings have dignity,  
and all human rights are rooted in that truth.

The Church (all the Christian people)  
is concerned, therefore,  
about the development of each human person  
and of all peoples on earth.

We champion human rights  
and reject whatever violates them,

including the right to life,  
work,  
education,  
the forming of a family,  
participation in public life,  
and religious liberty.

[19] Where these rights are violated,  
there is cultural and religious impoverishment,  
which is on a par with material poverty  
in its importance to us.

So the central task we undertake here  
is to announce the Good News  
which saves the world from all this impoverishment.

It is, in fact, the *only* way the world can be saved.

Catechesis has this as its ultimate goal!

[20] We are aware that “the seed” is sown  
in a variety of cultures today,  
especially the modern scientific culture  
which is worldwide.

In this context, religious truth has a definite role  
in unveiling mystery and love,  
which science itself cannot do.

[21] There is also the desire to retain local cultures  
in the midst of a growing worldwide web  
of communication and interaction.

A satisfying human life is usually lived in a specific culture,  
with its customs,  
traditions,  
and ancient connections.

We want to respect that and honor it and even encourage it  
while at the same time announce the gospel clearly.

[22] There is a sense of religious indifference today,  
a spread of atheism,  
which is sometimes linked to science  
as it tries to explain all things to us.

In the midst of this apparent atheism, however,  
there is also a renewed interest in things divine,  
sometimes expressed in emerging sects,  
new religious movements,

and fundamentalism.

- [23] There is also a moral challenge before us  
because many people today hold that there is  
no sure moral reference point.

As we proclaim God's word in the world, however,  
we provide people with a certain moral compass  
which is Christ's plan to save humankind  
through a deep bond with him.

### **The Church in the world**

- [24] Catechetical renewal in the Church in recent decades  
has helped give rise to Christians who  
experience God's mercy,  
who have rediscovered Christ,  
who have a sense of ministry in the world,  
and who are aware of the social obligations of faith.

- [25] But there are also those who, although baptized,  
live as though they were not.

In these person's hearts, there is no religious feeling left.

There are also those of simple faith

who follow popular devotions

but do not understand their faith deeply enough.

There are also those adults

who still live on their childhood lessons

and now need to reexamine and develop their faith.

- [26] And there are also, finally,  
those who shun an explicitly Christian life  
in favor of dialogue with others,  
secularism,  
or cultural pluralism.

A new evangelization is needed today in catechesis  
to address these situations more effectively.

- [27] The inner life of the Church is key in this,  
especially the fruit borne by Vatican II  
and how it has been received in the Church.

Without doubt, liturgical life is richer.

Indeed, more than ever before

it is seen as the source and summit  
of the life of the Church.

The people of God understand better  
that all share a common priesthood  
founded on baptism  
and lived with holiness and service.

The word of God holds a more central place.  
And the Church's mission in the world  
is now understood in terms of dialogue,  
human development,  
cultural diversity,  
and the urgent quest for Christian unity.

[28] But all of this has also had its cost.

In some quarters the council has not been received well,  
and in others, disagreement about its reforms  
has led to divisions  
which damage evangelization.

Because of this, we see it as urgent  
that catechetical programs spring  
from a unified vision of the Church as a communion.

### **Catechesis: Its successes and its challenges**

[29] There have been recent great strides forward  
in catechetical ministries.

Among these is certainly the large number of people  
who now dedicate themselves full time  
to this ministry.

Another is the rise of the catechumenal style  
in catechesis

which leads to *formation* rather than merely *information*.

A third is the expanding role of adult catechesis.

And lastly, pastoral plans for catechetics are of higher quality  
and richer content than ever before.

[30] But there are also some problems.

First, it's still not fully understood that catechesis  
should be about being a disciple,  
an apprentice in a *life of faith*.

Second, catechesis tends to focus on Revelation  
more than it does Tradition.

But our two-thousand-year history as a Church

must be brought into play  
even in order to understand Scripture properly.

Indeed, more balance is needed here.

Third, how we present Jesus Christ is sometimes  
out of focus:

either too much emphasis on his divinity  
or too much on his humanity.

Again, the answer lies in balance.

Fourth, certain problems exist regarding the content  
of catechesis.

Doctrinal gaps concerning  
the truth about God and humanity,  
about sin and grace  
and about the endtimes, is one.

The need for a more solid moral formation is another,  
as well as more adequate treatment of Church history,  
and more focus on social teachings.

Overall, texts tend to focus too much on selective interests.

Fifth, a weak and fragmentary link to liturgical life  
often leads to a lack of attention to such things as  
the liturgical year,  
the symbols and rites of the Church,  
and liturgical celebrations.

Sixth, over the years our method of teaching  
has sometimes been in conflict with the content itself.  
This doesn't have to be the case.

Good theological reflection  
and good teaching can both be accomplished.

Seventh, we must work at proclaiming the gospel  
in a variety of cultural settings  
in such a way that it can really be seen as the Good News.

Eighth, there is not enough focus on the missions  
of the Church in catechetical programs.

### **The sowing of the gospel**

[31] God gives us the Spirit to guide us for this work  
and also asks us to read the signs of the times  
and be fully prepared.

[32] We must discover the presence and purpose of God  
in today's events in the light of faith  
so we can know the missionary needs of the day.

[33] The following challenges, then, are before us:  
First, catechesis must present itself as a form of evangelization  
leading to missionary work.

Second, it must address itself to people of all ages.

Third, it must be based on ancient traditions  
and form people in faith, personality and all.

Fourth, it must announce the mystery of Christianity  
centered in the Trinity  
and leading to a life of faith.

And fifth, it must consider  
the preparation and formation of catechists  
a primary aim.