GUIDELINES FOR CATECHESIS

INTRODUCTION

On November 15, 2000, the Antilles Episcopal Conference published a Pastoral Letter, *On the Ministry of Catechesis*. Issued as part of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 Celebration, the Pastoral Letter addressed what was judged to be a serious contemporary challenge to the Church: the growing faith vulnerability within the Catholic community.

In preparing the Pastoral Letter, the Bishops were able to benefit from the substantial guidance provided by the second edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the publication of the *General Directory for C*atechesis. In preparing the companion document to the Pastoral Letter, *Guidelines for Catechesis,* the Bishops have committed themselves to a broad based consultation process. The Bishops made the decision about consultation for two reasons:

1) **To ensure that the *Guidelines* will reflect the pastoral experience of the Caribbean Church;**

2) **To publish a document that will not only be responsive to the magisterial teaching on catechesis, but will also have practical value for those involved in the important ministry of catechesis.**

The Pastoral Letter *On The Ministry of Catechesis* provides an important context for developing catechetical programmes and, by implication, for developing religious education programmes for Catholic schools. The Pastoral Letter reviews the fundamentals of catechesis, beginning with the definition contained in the Prologue of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Catechesis is the education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to **initiating hearers into the fullness of Christian Life."**

There are three important dimensions in the definition: 1) Catechesis is directed not only to children, but also to young people and adults. **Implication:** Catechesis by its nature is lifelong; 2) Catechesis must communicate Christian doctrine (faith and morals) systemically. **Implication**: Limiting catechesis to pre-sacramental programs is not sufficient; 3) The purpose of catechesis is to initiate people into the fullness of Christian life. **Implication**: The method for catechesis must be related to the issue of lifelong initiation. Lifelong initiation is the reason why the Bishops chose a modified form of the programme contained in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as the catechetical model. The method not only touches the lives of those to be catechized, it also continually calls the community of the baptized to accept its responsibility in the initiation process.

The Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference stressed that the four essential elements of all catechesis must be given attention in every catechetical programme whether it be for children, young persons or adults: The four elements are:

1) **Content** or the communication of faith knowledge;

2) **Formation** based on the knowledge that has been communicated which avoids a merely informational approach to catechesis;

3) **Commitment** to the Lord which is an informed commitment because it is rooted in knowledge that has been communicated and internalized through formation; and

4) **Mission** or service which is a natural outgrowth of informed commitment.

When catechesis is ineffective, it usually means that one or more of the four essential elements of catechesis have not been addressed in the program by the catechists or have not been understood/appreciated by the persons being catechized.

The *Guidelines for Catechesis* provide a specific context for **a lifelong catechetical process** by targeting eight categories in the life cycle for consideration. The eight categories are:

> Infants (Birth-3 years);
> Kindergarten (3-5 years);
> Primary School (6-11 years);
> Adolescents (12-18 years);
>
> Adult Education according to these sub-categories:
>
> Young Adults (19-30);
> Middle Age (30-50);
> Late Middle Age (50-65);
> Senior Citizens (65+).

Each of the eight categories has specific catechetical needs that must be carefully assessed and then thoroughly addressed by the community that initiates.

The General Directory for Catechesis stresses that adult catechesis is the primary form of catechesis in the Church. Adult catechesis is the reference point for the catechesis of others in the Church whether they are children or adults. Therefore, adults have a special obligation to bring to maturity the faith with which God has gifted them. For example, the catechesis of children by their parents requires that the parents themselves be involved in a process of deepening their faith in Christ.

To make the pastoral goal of *The General Directory of Catechesis* regarding adults educating children a reality, it is important that Dioceses/Parishes create or strengthen programmes whereby adults who are parents can not only deepen their faith understanding but also acquire parenting skills. This goal should be a pastoral priority.

Since the various (Arch)dioceses of the Antilles Episcopal Conference are so different, the Catechetical Commission recommends that the important issues of inculturation and responding to the needs of specialized catechetical ministries e.g. the hearing impaired and the mentally challenged must be addressed within the context of the particular Church.

The Commission offers a similar recommendation regarding catechesis for ecumenical and inter-faith relationships. Globalization has brought peoples and nations into contact with each other at such a rapid pace that people now need guidance for authentic ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, prayer and pastoral collaboration.

Conclusion

These *Guidelines*, have structured the four essential elements of catechesis into a programme patterned after the RCIA program i.e. a journey which involves the community and requires periodic specific steps of commitment and re-commitment from the participants throughout the life process.

The Catechetical Commission hopes that as catechetical programmes are developed in light of these Guidelines, the catechists of the Conference will offer to those being catechized, an opportunity for personal commitment or re-commitment in both liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations based on the RCIA Programme. These celebrations should be parish based and preferably on Sundays because this is the time when the community gathers. It is important to

note that when students are attending secular schools or schools of other religious traditions, the catechetical role of the parish takes on an even greater importance.

The Catechetical Commission of the Antilles Episcopal Conference will continue its ministry to the catechists of the Conference by offering specific 'how to' recommendations on content/formation applicable to each of the eight (8) categories listed above. The Commission will also offer pastoral suggestions for celebrating the commitment and re-commitment of the participants to the Lord and their subsequent involvement in the mission of the Church.

The Bishops of the Conference encourage the prayerful support of the Caribbean Church for the implementation of the *Guidelines for Catechesis*.

Signed:

Archbishop Lawrence Burke, *Nassau*
Archbishop Edgerton Clarke, *Kingston*
Archbishop Kelvin Felix, *Castries*
Archbishop Maurice Marie-Sainte, *St. Pierre & Fort-de-France*
Archbishop Edward Gilbert, *Port of Spain*
Bishop Francis Alleyne, *Georgetown*
Bishop Paul Boyle, *Mandeville*
Bishop Ernest Cabo, *Basse-terre & Pointe-á-Pitre*
Bishop Vincent Darius, *St. George's*
Bishop Charles Dufour, *Montego Bay*
Bishop Malcolm Galt, *Bridgetown*
Bishop Robert Kurtz, *Hamilton*
Bishop Gabriel Malzaire, *Roseau*
Bishop Osmond P. Martin, *Belize City*
Bishop Donald Reece, *St. John's-Basseterre*
Bishop Robert Rivas, *Kingstown*
Bishop Louis Sankalé, *Cayenne*
Bishop Luis Secco, *Willemstad*
Rev. Fr. Wilhelmus de Bekker, *Administrator, Paramaribo*

Easter Sunday,
April 11, 2004

Guidelines for Catechesis
Infants: Birth to Three Years

1.   Introduction from Official Catholic Sources

1.1   In God's plan the family consists of "a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children." [1] This community, which is established upon the consent of the spouses, is "ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and the education of children." [2] "It is then a primordial and inalienable right of parents to educate their children, whom they must regard as children of God." [3] The members of the family are "persons equal in dignity. For the common good of its members and of the society, the family has manifold responsibilities, rights and duties." [4]

1.2   For the church, "in a certain sense, nothing replaces family catechesis for its positive and receptive environment; for the example of adults, and for its first explicit experience and practice of the faith." [5] "Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith." [6] Such education includes developing the human resources of our children "which provide an anthropological basis for the life of faith; a sense of trust, of freedom, of self-giving, of invocation and of joyful participation"[7] as well as of introducing them to a life of prayer and to Sacred Scripture.

1.3   "One moment that is often decisive is the one at which the very young child receives the first elements of catechesis from its parents and the family surroundings. . . I cannot insist too strongly on this early initiation by Christian parents in which the child's facilities are integrated into a living relationship with God."[8]

2.   Prenotes

2.1   The focus of this level of catechesis is on the involvement of the families in the faith formation programme of their children. This can be done through various and creative ways. Families need to set aside daily a specific time and sacred space for prayer and other matters regarding their children's physical, emotional and spiritual development. Families convinced of the importance of this will make quality time for their children.

2.2   Parents/guardians must be aware that children of this age learn through the senses, by play and imitation. Deep and lasting impressions are produced in their imagination by the images placed before them. Their eyes and ears are the highways to their minds and the windows of their souls. The use of modern technology (video, audio-visuals, etc) and modes of cultural expressions (music — calypso, rap, etc.) cannot be underestimated both positively and negatively.

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[1] Catechism of the Catholic Church, (CCC) 2202
[2] Ibid. 2201
[3] Ibid. 2222
[4] Ibid. 2203
[5] General Directory For Catechesis, (GDC) 178
[6] CCC 2225
[7] GDC 178
[8] Catechesi Tradendae (CT) 36

3. General Objectives

3.1   To help parents create an environment of love, care and faith so that infants and toddlers can develop and know themselves as loved. Thus the seed of faith can begin to germinate in them as they come to know and love the God who loves them.

4. Method

4.1   For children at this stage the faith is caught more than taught — toddlers and infants learn to love by being loved by their caregivers. Therefore, the model to be used is the Christian community — the natural family and the faith family — as the context for the faith formation and integral human development of these children.

4.2   It is important that we tell the story of our faith to them and we live the story of our faith in ways that will help them to enter the experience of God's love.

5. Essential Elements of Catechesis

5.1   Knowledge

    5.1.1   Teaching Through Prayer:

    5.1.1.1 **General Prayer:** For very young children, just beginning to speak and understand "short phrases," simple prayers could be said by parents and imitated by them e.g., *"I love Jesus." "Jesus is good to me." "Jesus loves me."* They can also be taught *simple grace before and after meals and **simple morning** and **bedtime** prayers like the **Prayer to the Guardian Angel—"**O Angel of God/ my guardian dear/to whom God's love commits me here."*

    5.1.1.2 **Prayer of Thanks**: *"Thank you, God, for this lovely day." "Thank you Jesus for making me a good child."* When something wonderful happens, pray a short prayer of thanksgiving.

    5.1.1.3 **Blessings:** *"Bless and keep me safe today." "Bless my mommy and daddy, my brothers and sisters, all my family." "Bless all my friends and all the people in the world." "Bless those who do not love us or care for us." "I bless my eyes/my heart/my mind etc., in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* [9]

    5.1.1.4 **Prayer of Praise:** When your family sees a beautiful scene, a spectacular sunset, pray a prayer of praise and also remember to pray for others who are sick or hurt in anyway.

    5.1.1.5 Introduce the infants to **simple hymns and choruses** with good Catholic theology. E.g. *All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small. . .* or *Jesus loves the little children.* Sing along with them and encourage the use of gestures.

    5.1.1.6 **Bible stories** and stories of saints should be creatively told, through pictures, video, audio-visuals, and books for infants with simple picture stories.

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[9] *Religion Teacher's Journal*, March 2001, p.13

5.2   **Formation**

5.2.1   For Parents:

5.2.1.1   Components of the **Pre-Cana Marriage Preparation Programme** give perspective to the emotional and social development of the child. These also help with parenting, offering motivational tips that reflect Catholic theology and spirituality and can keep parents/guardians ever mindful of positive values and insights that are essential to their children's well being. In this way the Church can be very influential, via parents or guardians — the *first Religious Educators/Catechists of their children,* in the Christian formation of infants.

5.2.1.2   It is very important to develop Support Groups in the parish for single parents and newly-weds so that they can learn from one another as they share experiences. They can also dialogue on the teachings of the Church, its prayers, sacraments and Catholic practices, and on how to conduct their lives in order that they can be good examples to their children.

5.2.2   For Children:

5.2.2.1   The toddler can be taught — to make the sign of the cross, to use Holy Water and to genuflect in Church. Those officiating in para-liturgies for children should make the service short and use puppetry and audio-visuals to hold the attention of the little ones. In addition, when parents/guardians take their toddlers to Mass each week, it is important to carry along picture books and other aids to occupy them during this adult ritual. Another option during Mass is the Liturgy of the Word for children conducted by the catechists in another location.

5.2.2.2   Parents need to make religious gestures deliberately, anticipating that children will imitate or "mimic" them. A meaningful ritual is seen in the simple gesture of blessing children and encouraging them to bless their parents, siblings, and one another.

5.2.2.3   Use occasions and celebrations of everyday life, such as birthday parties and family/faith community picnics, to teach them how to relate lovingly to others.

5.2.2.4   The faith community can have regular **AGAPE** experiences: These should be planned with a view towards socialising infants/children into the faith-family.

5.2.2.5   Parents /guardians should make every effort to create a "sacred space" in their homes, where the whole family can gather, at pre-determined times, for family prayer/worship.

5.2.3   Celebrating the Liturgical Cycle at Home

5.2.3.1   The entire family should celebrate the liturgical seasons of the Church (*Advent/Christmas/Lent/Easter*) at home. This is certainly a very creative way through which parents/guardians can initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the

Catholic faith. Symbols like the *Advent Wreath, the Jesse Tree, the Christmas Crib/Creche, the Paschal Candle, the Cross and the Rosary* stimulate children's imagination and curiosity. The colours of the seasons also attract their attention especially when used to create an ambience. The use of practical and fun-filled activities can "foster in children interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life."[10]

5.2.3.2 **Advent Liturgical Celebrations:** create an activity around the **Advent Wreath and Jesse Tree** such as an Advent Prayer Service, where small children can gather with their family, perhaps around the evening meal. The lighting of the candles becomes a ritual that remains in the imagination of the little ones. Another activity involves the **Jesse Giving Tree,** where the one to three year-olds can be encouraged to take a card from the tree and, on the following Sunday, to carry whatever is purchased and put it under the Jesse/Giving Tree. Or perhaps parents/guardians could carry the child to visit with a less fortunate family and let the child present the gift to a child of that family.

5.2.3.3 **Christmas Liturgical Celebrations:** The use of enjoyable and engaging activities can be a means of "picking up" knowledge of the Christmas story. For example, provide an opportunity for children to participate in a Family Christmas Prayer Service, which involves the ritual of the setting up of a Christmas Crib/Creche or Christmas Tree. Perhaps children within the same neighbourhood can come together and celebrate a Birthday party for Jesus

5.2.3.4 **Lenten Practices: Reconciliation**—Family members can demonstrate reconciliatory behaviours when there are occasions of misunderstanding in the family and among friends or neighbours**.** Parents/guardians must be reminded that, by word and example, they should create a home where tenderness, respect, acknowledgement of one's failings and being able to say "I am sorry" are the rule. In this way, they provide their children with the opportunity to understand that reconciling after conflict situations is an important part of deepening family bonds.

5.2.3.5 **The Easter Triduum at Home:** The whole family (including infants and toddlers) can, in various and creative ways, celebrate the Easter Triduum.

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[10] Catechism of the Catholic Church, (CCC) 2225

5.2.3.6 Set up in the sacred space a cross draped in purple. Enhance the ambience thus created with purple candles and palms from the Palm Sunday liturgy. At the appropriate time(s) play music suggesting the themes of the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord.

5.2.3.7 Let them experience the ritual of the Washing of Feet on Holy Thursday during a sacred meal (an adapted version of the seder meal). A child's version of the Exodus story can be dramatized.

5.2.3.8 **Good Friday:** Together with the whole family, the little ones can enact a mini Way of the Cross around the house. Following the example of adults, let them sign themselves with the sign of the cross and adore the cross in the sacred space. These activities can be a teachable moment –an opportunity for catechising the infants and rooting them in Jesus' love.

5.2.3.9 For **Easter** change the liturgical colours to white and gold — candles, banners, etc. Light an undersized Paschal Candle and put it in the sacred space. Let the alleluias ring out in the music played and the songs sung with the children. Let them experience the joy of Easter through the spirit of joy that animates the family.

6.   The last two essential elements of catechesis—commitment and mission are not applicable to children of this age.

7.   Transitional Statement: This stage (birth to three year-old) is crucial for the integral human and faith development of a person. It is important that a positive foundation be laid in the children at an early age as they relate with parents/guardians and the divine. A wholesome foundation at this tender age will foster interior dispositions that are a necessary preparation for the next stage (three to five year-olds). Note that the material presented for the birth to three year-olds can also apply to three to five year-olds.

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Guidelines for Catechesis
Early Childhood: Three to Five Years

1 Introduction from Official Catholic Sources

1.1 "This age group, traditionally divided into early infancy or pre-school age and childhood, possesses …the grace of the beginnings of life, from which "valuable possibilities exist, both for the building up of the church and for the making of a more humane society." As a child of God, in virtue of the gift of Baptism, the child is proclaimed by Christ as a privileged member of the Kingdom of God."[11]

1.2 "The catechesis of children is necessarily linked with their life situation and conditions."[12]

1.3 "Beginning school means, for the child, entering a society wider than the family, with the possibility of greater development of intellectual, affective and behavioural capacities"[13]

1.4 In Mark's gospel, Jesus embraces and blesses children even when the disciples thought they should be turned away. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."[14]

1.5 "The first elements of catechesis…will perhaps be no more than a simple revelation of a good and provident Father in heaven to whom the child learns to turn its heart. The very short prayers that the child learns, will be the start of a loving dialogue with this hidden God whose word it will then begin to hear."[15]

1.6 "In fact, the education of the young and even a measure of continued instruction for adults have grown both easier and more urgent in the circumstances of our times"[16]

2. Prenotes

2.1 Children at this stage are moving from day-care to preschool and some are beginning elementary school. Separation from parents, family and caregivers can be a traumatic experience for them but this is also the time when they begin forming relationships outside the home. The teacher becomes for the child a person of authority who is always right. Children at this stage require affirmation from adults so that their initiative is accepted and their contributions, no matter how small, are truly valued. As a result, they begin to feel that they are worthy to be loved. It is necessary for adults who care for them to build up their self esteem verbally and through body language.

2.2 Three to five year-olds enjoy playing pretend-games. They have a vivid imagination, hence fairy tales and stories are real for them. They begin learning letters and digits and some enjoy writing what they have learned. They are unable to form accurate concepts and their thinking is egocentric so that these children make experiences conform to their own view.

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[11] General Directory of Catechesis, January 1999, N 177
[12] ibid N 178
[13] ibid N 179
[14] Mark 10:14
[15] Catechesi Tradendae (CT) 36
[16] Introduction to Declaration on Christian Education - (Gravissimum Educationis) A Response, Dr John Bennet

2.3   Erikson[17] suggests that the task for the three to five year-old is *initiative vs guilt.* The child experiences greater mobility and inquisitiveness into everything and is eager to learn and perform well. This is also the time for development of language and the imagination. However, the child's new freedom can create anxiety that can lead to feelings of guilt.

2.4   At each stage of life there is a virtue and strength which emerges. At this stage the virtue acquired is *purpose*. Purpose provides aim and direction, which is fed by the child's fantasy, yet it is rooted in reality. It is limited but not inhibited by guilt.[18]

2.5   The catechesis of children must take into consideration infants and children without religious support and those that belong to dysfunctional social conditions.

2.6   Fowler[19] names this stage of faith development *Intuitive–Projective*—an imitative faith where meaning is made intuitively. Faith is formed by imitation of words, attitudes, example, actions and the visible faith of significant adults, primarily parents. Therefore, the child's faith is a projection of the faith of the parents. Consequently, the whole atmosphere of the home, the value system, lifestyle and world-view exhibited there, is most formative.[20]

2.7   Five-year-olds approach new experiences with full enthusiasm and excitement. Parents, guardians and catechists should display that same enthusiasm and excitement when dealing with this age group. They should encourage children to make and act on choices and make sure that each child has a chance to experience success. Parents and catechists need to encourage make-believe through role-play. They also need to be tolerant of accidents and mistakes, especially when children are attempting to do something on their own.

3.   General Objectives

3.1   To introduce Christian faith and Christian values to children and to share God's message of love with them, so that they can develop a positive image of God as a loving parent.

3.2   To form habits and practices related to faith and worship which they have absorbed from parents and the community.

3.3   To facilitate the beginning of good values like loving, caring, sharing, forgiving and feelings of empathy with others.

3.4   To provide parents, guardians, catechists and pastors with guidelines which will help in the development of programmes to enable three to five year olds to understand God's love for them.

4.   Method

4.1   The catechetical programme for the three to five year-old must be based on a method of teaching children in a manner that integrates the important socializing agents of home, school and parish.

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[17] Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society. New York: W.W. Norton,1963
[18] Ibid. pgs. 150,151,159
[19] James Fowler, Faith Development and Pastoral Care
[20] ibid. pgs 50-59

4.2 The four elements in the catechetical process – *knowledge, formation, commitment and mission* should be properly integrated in each lesson where possible. When the theme does not lend itself to such integration, the four elements may be brought out in consecutive lessons treating the same topic. It is also recommended that activities that reflect commitment and mission be fostered at home with parents giving feedback to catechists periodically.

4.3 Elements of the **RCIA process** adapted to early childhood will include:

4.3.1 Involvement of the community in the faith-life of the child.

4.3.2 Ritual celebrations during these three years especially on birthdays and in the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and on certain feast days. These can be celebrated at home as well as in the parish community.

4.3.3 A Liturgy of the Word for children, after they process out of the Church (patterned after the dismissal rite of the RCIA) and a re-entry at the Communion rite.

4.4 Children at this age will learn best through story-telling, pictures, drawing, colouring, play and activities which involve physical movement and gestures as they sing.

4.5 The computer can also be used by the children to explore simple religious and biblical stories.

5. Essential Elements of Catechesis

5.1 Knowledge

5.1.1 The three to five year-olds are ready to mimic the caregiver. Having looked at the caregiver earlier they are now able to begin making the sign of the cross. They should begin to learn basic Catholic prayers e.g. Hail Mary and to pray them every day. They can also be taught to pray the Rosary and encouraged to participate in family prayer at home. What is most important is that these habits of prayer be consistent.

5.1.2 Children should not only be taught why and how to pray, but they need to experience prayer in many different forms. Simple hymns should be taught as part of play activities. The children can also be taught that when they pray morning and evening prayers they are talking to God.

5.1.3 Simple rituals can be very effective—e.g. blessing the children everyday and using holy water to bless them when they are sick and at celebrations of birthdays. In addition, ritual actions during the Mass e.g. genuflecting upon entering the Church, standing during the reading of the Gospel, and holding hands and sharing the sign of peace will be mimicked by the three-year-old.

5.1.4 At this stage, children are full of awe and wonder at creation and therefore, nature outings and activities out-doors can become catechetical moments for them.

5.1.5 The use of symbols e.g. light, water, oil, bread and fire in simple rituals can leave a deep impression on the heart and mind of these little ones especially since they absorb information through their senses.

5.1.6   Since the attention span of the three-year-old is short, parents and caregivers should pay attention to them during Mass, and bring along appropriate books that can keep them focussed.

5.1.7   Relate Bible stories and stories of the lives of the saints which will teach them human values such as---Love, Sharing, Caring and Forgiveness. One story can teach many things.

5.1.8   Teach the children to show respect to all—adults and children alike—at home, at school and at church. This can be readily taught by the example of the parent and catechist.

5.1.9   Parents, guardians and catechists should repeat to the children words and phrases that speak to them of God's love—e.g. *Jesus loves me; Jesus saves me...* Eventually the children will begin to say them on their own. The children learn to understand God's love for them by experiencing human love of parents and care-givers.

5.1.10 A Liturgy of the Word for children can be introduced in the parish.

5.2   Formation

5.2.1   A loving atmosphere at home (with visible signs of forgiveness, frequent family prayer and Christian celebrations) is fundamental to the formation of the three to five year old as s/he grows up into the faith.

5.2.2   Catholic symbols like the Cross, candles, pictures and statues of the saints and Mary can be displayed on a mini-altar in the home around which children and adults gather for prayer. This will never be forgotten.

5.2.3   By nature three to five-year-olds do not see why they should share, therefore it is the role of parents and catechists to teach them and give them opportunities to share.

5.2.4   Encourage children to make and act on choices.

5.2.5   Make sure that each child has a chance to experience success.

5.2.6   Take children to Mass and other services regularly and let them participate actively in aspects of family Masses.

5.2.7   Teach children to say 'sorry' and 'I love you,' so as to recognise that other people have feelings too.

5.2.8   Regular participation in the Liturgy of the Word for children, as well as interactive para-liturgical celebrations of the liturgical seasons of Lent, Easter, Advent, Christmas can be a deeply formative activity for the three to five year -old.

5.3   Commitment

5.3.1   Commitment to the Lord for the three to five year-old flows from the home environment, the expressions of love and affectivity experienced and the interactive liturgical celebrations both at home and at Church suggested in Formation and Knowledge.

5.3.2   Teach them to say—*I love you Jesus* and to sing songs like *Yes, Jesus Loves me*. Link the love of parents and siblings with love of God eg *Mummy loves you and Jesus loves you too.*

5.3.3   They can participate in the making of crosses, collages and Christmas cribs as a means of developing a sense of commitment to the Lord.

5.4   **Mission**

5.4.1   Children of this age should be given opportunities to experience the gift of giving to others. A good way in which this can be achieved is by visiting the elderly especially their grandparents, where they can listen to stories and share some of the things they have learned

5.4.2   They should be encouraged to pray for family members and other people who are sick or hurting.

5.4.3   They can learn to serve at home and visit the sick with the family

5.4.4   They can also share their toys with children who are in need.

6.   **Transitional Statement:** The five year-old child is now moving from early childhood to the more formal primary school setting with the concomitant separation from parents, caregivers and friends. This can be a significant challenge.

The quality of spiritual formation and emotional development, which the child has received during the period of early childhood, will contribute significantly to her/his capacity for relating to God and others at the next stage of development.

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Guidelines for Catechesis
Six to Eleven Years

1.   Introduction from Official Catholic Sources

1.1   "The catechesis of children is necessarily linked with their life situations and conditions. It is the work of various but complementary educational agents. Some factors of universal relevance may be mentioned:

Infancy and childhood, each understood according to its own peculiarities are a time of primary socialization as well as of human and Christian education in the family, the school and the Church. These must then be understood as a decisive moment for subsequent stages of faith."[21]

1.2   "For the child there comes soon, at school and in Church, in institutions connected with the parish or with the spiritual care of the Catholic or State school not only an introduction into a wider social circle, but also the moment for a catechesis aimed at inserting him or her organically into the life of the Church, a moment that includes an immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. This catechesis is didactic in character, but is directed towards the giving of witness in the faith. It is an initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child's moral and religious life. It is a catechesis that gives meaning to the sacraments, but at the same time it receives from the experience of the sacraments a living dimension that keeps it from remaining merely doctrinal, and it communicates to the child the joy of being a witness to Christ in ordinary life." [22]

2.   Prenotes

2.1   Children in this age group go through many changes—physically, mentally, socially and psychologically. Girls and boys develop at different rates. At this time they are at primary school and are given more tasks to carry out on their own. They experience either a sense of "industry" and accomplishment or "inferiority" and inadequacy depending on how teachers/ parents/catechists work with them. At this time children also begin to discover a reality beyond everyday experience and encounter the limitations of life.

2.2   In the earlier part of this stage, boys and girls tend to segregate with separate interests and tend to be antagonistic toward one another. Therefore, they need much direction from adults. Between six and eight they also move from basic self-centredness to awareness of co-operating with others. This is the stage when children experience the need to belong to groups such as boy scouts, girl guides, brownies, boys and girls brigade or other social groups. The word of significant elders is more important than that of their peers.

2.3   In the later part of this stage, children become aware of the need for money and the status it gives one in society. If they perceive themselves to be in the lower social bracket, they become self-conscious and begin to question God's fairness. They measure themselves against their peers and often wear or want to compete with one another for the latest styles.

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[21] General Directory of Catechesis #178
[22] Catechesis in our Time, Catechesi Tradendae, 16 October 1979. #37

2.4   Ten to eleven year old children also begin forming bonds of friendship, yet at the same time they become self-conscious.

2.5   They pick up songs and fads from the media in the blink of an eye, but get bored quickly with religious gatherings, like the Mass, where they tend to be restless and inattentive.

2.6   They are very impressionable and are reluctant to perform tasks when an incentive is not forthcoming.

2.7   They justify opposing views assertively.

2.8   Physically, puberty begins and so they seek answers about sexuality and relationships. Some surf the net or read books in their quest for knowledge on the topic. Production of growth hormones increases, causing bodily changes that bring about and contribute to a lowering of self-esteem.

3.   General Objectives

3.1   Religious Education at this stage should help children move from one level of religious thinking to another—from a non-questioning experiential level to the beginning of a more cognitive understanding of the faith.

3.2   They should be exposed to the principal elements of the Christian message in language and content suitable to their age group.

3.3   It should help them to come to know God and have a relationship with the God who loves them tremendously. They should be challenged to begin to develop a personal prayer life.

3.4   They should be encouraged to value the wisdom of their parents and teachers. This should also prepare them for their teenage years --peer pressure, puberty and other teenage challenges.

4.   Method

4.1   The four elements of catechesis – knowledge, formation, commitment, mission, – should be undertaken in such a way that they are intertwined to set the ground work for the later stages in the child's life.

4.2   Since they are curious, the catechists should allow them to ask questions.

4.3   As they grow, encourage them to interact with their peers through group discussion and activities.

4.4   Invite them to prepare and present information gained from books or from the internet. This should be done in a non-judgmental atmosphere that allows the freedom to express their views, thus facilitating their learning and their ability to choose.

4.5   Make use of popular songs and television programmes that can teach them positive values and allow them to dramatize stories or scenes that will motivate them to virtuous living. Use illustrations made by students or cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers to communicate ideas and concepts.

4.6   Expose them to a variety of stories --Bible, saint, movies, novels, magazines, newspapers etc. Let them categorize the characters involved as heroes/heroines and villains. Provide the children with the opportunity to study and meditate on the lives of saints as models of discipleship.

4.7 Quiet time is critical for students at all levels of education. Reflective thinking and praying are possible at this developmental stage.

5. Essential Elements of Catechesis

5.1 Knowledge

5.1.1 Teach the children different types of prayers –thanksgiving, intercessory, praise, contemplative and spontaneous prayers of trust and forgiveness. Let them learn prayers to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Family prayer should also be encouraged. Introduce the children to the morning and evening prayer of the Church as well as novena prayers.

5.1.2 Provide the six to eleven year-olds with a basic knowledge of the Bible (division and content).

5.1.3 The children should also share their own stories as they read the story of the Sunday Gospel every week, using the Lectio Divina method of Bible reading.

5.1.4 Introduce the six to eleven year-olds to the significance of "sacrifice" in the Christian tradition. Use the stories of Jesus and the martyrs, from the beginning of Christianity down to our own day, to explain to them the idea of sacrifice. Let them discuss the daily sacrifices made by their own parents, relatives, neighbours and Church leaders. This should help them to appreciate the importance and significance of sacrifice in Christian tradition.

5.1.5 Introduce the children to the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life –The Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Allow sufficient time for questions on the significance of the Trinity. Develop their understanding of the birth of Jesus (Christmas) and of the descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost).

5.1.6 Preparation for the Sacrament of First Holy Communion should include catechesis on the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Baptism and the Eucharist. Efforts should be made to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrated in such a manner that children see it as a Sacrament in its own right and not as part of the Eucharist. Reconciliation develops a sense of the forgiving love of God for each child.

5.1.7 Explore with the six to eleven year-olds the marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. Exposure to Mary and the Saints and our communion with them at this stage is commendable.

5.1.8 The Moral Life--the commandments and the beatitudes should be treated as the laws of love given by God. These laws illumine God's will for all of us including the little ones and elicit from us a loving response, the obedience of faith. Thus the children learn that to become disciples of Jesus means to obey God's commandments and to love as Jesus loves.

5.1.9 Provide the six to eleven year-olds with opportunities to listen to and participate in well-planned children's masses and other liturgies. The option of the special Eucharistic prayers for children should be used.

5.2   Formation

5.2.1.   Since the child's thinking is developmental so too must be their Religious Education. Parents/guardians must be conscious of the different rates of development: physical, spiritual, and emotional among children so as to help each child experience his/her value as an individual.

5.2.2.   Children at this stage should be encouraged to express their love for God positively. This love for God involves self-acceptance, potential, strengths, weaknesses and feelings.

5.2.3.   Children must be made aware of the dangers of using drugs and be prepared and guided in making their own good choices.

5.2.4.   They must be helped to recognize the different ways in which children can be abused and to feel comfortable enough to confide in someone they trust about any abusive situation.

5.2.5.   Children must be taught personal responsibility by allowing them freedom to make personal choices. They must also be taught to accept the consequences of their choices and how to process mistakes in dialogue with a trusted other.

5.2.6.   Through discussion, children should become aware of the emotional and physical changes they are experiencing.

5.2.7.   Children should be led to listen to God and respond personally and as members of a praying community. Catechists and parents should encourage them to:

5.2.7.1 Acquire the habit of daily personal prayer

5.2.7.2 Become familiar with traditional Catholic prayers

5.2.7.3 Use the Bible as a source of prayer

5.2.7.4 Meditate on God's Word/Presence in a form appropriate to their age.

5.3   Commitment

5.3.1   Have special children liturgies every Sunday and/or on special feasts or involve children in adult liturgy in such a way that they can participate fully. Children should attend the Eucharist regularly on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation.

5.3.2   Help children understand stewardship of time, treasure and talent. The concept of stewardship will motivate a fuller involvement in the life of their parish and the larger Church.

5.3.3   After each lesson they should be given opportunities to practice their faith through activities planned by their catechist or their parent.

5.4   **Mission**

    5.4.1   Opportunities for sharing God's love should be given to the six to eleven year-olds through Christian service - for example, visiting the elderly and helping them.

    5.4.2   Encourage children to save a part of their pocket change, especially during Advent and Lent, and give the money saved to a needy family.

    5.4.3   Children must be taught to respect and not tease others. They should be encouraged to bless others by the good things they say to and about one another.

    5.4.4   Organize with the children cultural activities that conform to Catholic values.

6.   Transition Statement

In the Caribbean, eleven year-olds are about to move from primary to secondary school. Much has changed over the last five years and facing puberty will be a major challenge for them. A certain level of maturity and a less childish understanding of the faith are now expected.

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Guidelines for Catechesis
Adolescents: Twelve to Eighteen Years

1. Introduction from Official Catholic Sources

1.1 **The *General Directory for Catechesis*,** (GDC) underlines the importance of catechesis of young people – pre-adolescents, adolescents and young adults, because i) young people are the "first victims of the spiritual and cultural crisis gripping the world"[23] and ii) the Church knows that its hopes for a culture of life/civilization of love and solidarity among all peoples reside in youth.[24]

1.2 Much time and energy must be spent in the evangelization of youth and this has to be done with courage and creativity. For effective catechesis of youth the Church needs to understand their particular view of reality and the landscape of their minds. "In this respect experience suggests that it is useful in catechesis to distinguish between preadolescence, adolescence and young adulthood, attending to the results of scientific research in various countries." [25]

1.3 "Very often …the pre-adolescent, in receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, formally concludes the process of Christian initiation but from that moment virtually abandons completely the practice of the faith."[26]

1.4 "What confers on religious instruction [Religious Education] in schools its proper evangelizing character, is the fact that it is called to penetrate a particular area of culture and to relate with other areas of knowledge. As an original form of the ministry of the word, it makes present the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation."[27]

2. Prenotes

2.1 At the adolescent stage, young people need the stability of conviction and a cause they can rally around. They must be carefully guided at this time. It is for them, a time of character formation that involves sincerity, loyalty, courage, nobility of spirit, perfecting of the faculties, and mustering moral strength for the struggles of life. It is important also, to be aware of their need for belonging.

2.2 Adolescents need the Church's pastoral care, guidance and relevant catechesis at this critical developmental stage when their consciences are still being formed and their awareness of, and responses to life's realities become sharper. It is at this time too, that they begin their mental preparation for making life-style choices. These should reflect Christian attitudes and values and help to determine future careers, professions and vocations.

2.3 This life-stage is so critical that both schools and parishes have little choice but to look to the experts in the humanities for help in developing holistic and culturally relevant programmes to assist in the formation of the "whole person." In the development of religious and moral values, it is necessary to emphasize to adolescents, the necessity of learning and living a Christ-centred life-style.

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[23] *General Directory for Catechesis*, (GDC) 1997, p. 173, n. 181. Cf. General Introduction, GDC nos. 23 & 24.
[24] GDC, p.173, n. 181.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] **SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION**, Document, *The Catholic School* (19 March 1977) n. 26, Typographia Polyglotta Vaticana, 1977; *GDC* p.65 n.73, para. 3.

2.4   Further, it is important that catechists and teachers, parents and guardians co-operate with one another in order to provide these young persons with every opportunity for integral human development. This is the stage when they have the developmental task of forging their *identity* or remaining in a state of *isolation* or *confusion* about who they are and what they are about. *Relationships* with Jesus and one another become a personal, key issue.

2.5   The variety of family patterns in the Caribbean has to be addressed also in any School or Parish Catechetical programme while the ideal Christian family structure must be reinforced continually as God's choice for humanity. "A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life."[28]

2.6   The twelve to eighteen age-group can be divided into – twelve to sixteen and sixteen to eighteen – early adolescence and late adolescence.

2.7   The twelve to sixteen year-olds are in secondary school and are being prepared for Confirmation in the parish. The sixteen to eighteen year-olds have graduated from secondary school and are seeking employment or are continuing studies in preparation for tertiary education. In the parish they may be involved in a youth group and/or youth activities.

3.   General Objectives

3.1   The task of catechesis for this stage of development is to encourage the adolescent's search for meaning through a Christ-centred, relational spirituality, highlighting the personal, loving invitation of Christ to *"Come Follow Me."* Prayer should now become more intensely personal and participation with the faith community in the Eucharist, a strong desire.

3.2   Catechesis for adolescents must also include a strong evangelization component together with a focus on Christian formation and sound faith content suited to the adolescent's life-experiences, as well as their level of understanding and development.

3.3   Adolescents need to be so *formed in the faith* that they will seek not only to have *information* but be willing, to share their faith with their peers mainly *by the example* of the value-choices that they make. These choices will be made in light of Christ's life and teachings as given in Sacred Scripture, Tradition and the Teachings of the Catholic Church.

3.4   Catechesis should also aim at making the adolescent become very conscious of Social Justice issues as they are experienced in the Caribbean and the world at large. Therefore, they should be exposed to the Social Teachings of the Church and be encouraged to commit themselves to ready service and mission to those who are marginalized by society.

3.5   Formation for living in a non-violent manner with all of Creation is timely and should be given serious attention considering the chaos in our world today.

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[28] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* (**CCC**) 2225

4. Method

    4.1   Method should include the four essential elements of catechesis, viz., ***knowledge, formation, commitment and mission.*** As much as is possible, the catechetical method should be patterned on the **RCIA** process – a journey through prayer, learning and living, linked with liturgical celebrations and simple commitment ceremonies held in a community setting at home, in the parish or at school. Such ceremonies could be the culmination of a process, that will lead young persons to ***commit themselves*** to carry out some ***sustained mission or service***. These 'missions' can be expressed through any of the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy as well as in ***Works of Peace and Justice.***

    4.2   Community celebrations are integral to the method and process of faith- building and faith-sharing. These should, therefore, be planned to mark significant steps arrived at, not only for sacramental 'moments' such as Baptism, Reconciliation and Confirmation but when students/young persons make the choice of committing to a ministry in their Parish or an outreach programme at School.

    4.3   There is also need for activities such as special assemblies to recognize and celebrate the school's saint name or parish patronal Feast Days. Of great importance, is ***studying*** the lives of saints to understand better and provide a "rootedness" in the Catholic Faith and a way of living to emulate that reflects God's goodness.

    4.4   Participation in Pastoral/ Social analysis methods and ***praxis*** are integral to the catechetical process in today's globally oppressive realities, for example in issues of poverty, injustice, capital punishment, hunger, disease, war.[29]

    4.5   Encourage spontaneous personal prayer, group Bible Study and reflection on experience in light of the Scriptures. The Word of God, properly interpreted, should form a firm basis for the life of the adolescent. Other Works of Inspiration – secular and religious – are also excellent aids to a deeper, more reflective life. The use of natural and sacred symbols, music and dance in an environment that is carefully and creatively prepared also serves to inspire meaningful prayer and learning.

    4.6   Creative Journal-keeping is to be taught and encouraged.

    4.7   The effective use of Audio-Visuals; multi-media – radio & TV, and other modern technological devices, eg. Power Point is strongly recommended.

5.   Essential Elements of Catechesis

    5.1   **Knowledge**

        5.1.1   **Self-Knowledge**: A focus on Christian identity and developing a close relationship with Jesus Christ, to come to a better understanding of human dignity and personal identity.

        5.1.2   **The evangelization of the adolescent** attends to the personal and social issues facing the adolescent. Therefore, it should include exploring such questions as - *Who Am I – as an individual, as a Caribbean person? Who is God? How do I value and reverence God's Creation? Am I loved by God at all times even when I fail to respond positively to my situations?*

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[29] Expose Adolescents to the Church's Documents on its Social Teachings.

God created me male/female. Discuss truths too, for example, *God affirms my humanness, my sexuality…My body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.*

5.1.3 **Issues of self esteem** may be resolved by accepting ***God as Creator of only that which is good.*** (Gen.1:31). God's gratuitous love is that which led God to send His Son Jesus, as Saviour. Jesus wants to forgive sins and offer all the fullness of life and salvation. Jesus loves each person and wants *me* to be in a close relationship with Him. *How can I be and live like Jesus?*

5.1.4 **The reality of evil:** It is important to explore the reality of evil in all its forms, understanding that God is greater than evil. Emphasize the need to make *right choices* in favour of that which is good.

5.1.5 **God's Word as the Story of Salvation** and the revelation of God as Father, Son as Redeemer and Spirit as Sanctifier in the Scriptures – Old and New Testaments.

5.1.6 **Reflection on the Holy Spirit** as "the Lord and Giver of Life." –*Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the work of the Spirit in our lives?* The Spirit received at Baptism and more powerfully in Confirmation guides and reveals God to us, encouraging us to open our hearts to receive **grace** and to come to an experience and understanding of ***a Trinitarian God as a Community of Unity and Love.***

5.1.7. **For the age-group twelve to sixteen years,** an explicit catechesis providing sound teaching can be given, based on the Creed, the Commandments, the Sacraments the Beatitudes and Prayer. The Sacraments are to be studied and "celebrated," together. A variety of Prayer-forms should be introduced and creatively engaged in, to achieve maximum student expression and involvement, making all of this learning, ***a "lived experience."***

5.1.8 **The Apostles Creed:** contains truths about the three persons of the Blessed Trinity as well as about the Church:

i)   God as Father, Almighty and Creator;

ii)   Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Lord;

  a) His divinity as displayed by His conception through the power of the Holy Spirit;

  b) His humanity as affirmed in the statement that "He was born of the Virgin Mary;"

  c) The Mystery of His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension (The Paschal Mystery).

  d) Jesus will come as judge of the living and the dead

iii)   The Holy Spirit – *understanding the spiritual and charismatic gifts and the experience of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.*

iv)   The Church as the communion of the faithful both living and dead; God's forgiveness and our hope in the resurrection and everlasting life.[30]

v)   Different models of Church should also be presented – The Church as Community, as Sacrament, as Servant.

5.1.9   The Church's teachings about **Mary**—the mother of Jesus; the mother of God and our spiritual mother. Adolescents should look at Mary as the model for young people and as a Woman of Faith, Hope and Love.

5.1.10   **The Commandments:** the ten commandments in the Old Testament---(Exodus 20:1-17) and Jesus' commandment to love God, neighbour and self – in a selfless manner - in the New Testament.(Lk. 10:25-28). The Commandments are really about loving God totally–body, mind, spirit and emotions, and one's neighbour as one's self. The Commandments are God's loving and guiding way to truly liberate everyone and offer them redemption.

5.1.11   **The Sacraments:** The Sacraments should be grouped and taught as—a) *Sacraments of Initiation*: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist; b) *Sacraments of Healing:* Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick; and *Sacraments of Vocation*: Holy Orders and Matrimony.

5.1.12   **The Beatitudes:** The Beatitudes may be considered the *Magna Carta* of the Christian life. They stand in contrast to the values of society. They are the way by which disciples of Christ, experience "true happiness" even in the day-to-day trials and temptations of life.

5.1.13   **Prayer and the Church's Liturgical Life:** *"The living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer."[31]* This is a good time to introduce adolescents to a variety of prayer-forms, viz., i) Formal and Spontaneous prayer - praise, thanksgiving, adoration and petition for needs for themselves and others; ii) The Weekly/Daily Celebration of the Eucharist; Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharistic Prayers; Prayer Services to celebrate the different "Seasons" of the Church's liturgical year; iii) Praying the Psalms; Quiet/ Personal Prayer; the Rosary and other Devotional prayers, Guided Meditation, Reflection and Annual Class Retreats.

5.1.14   **Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships:** An introduction to Ecumenism will help adolescents to develop an ecumenical spirit, i.e. wanting to know about other Christian churches and working together with them on common projects. This should also be done with other religious faiths/traditions.

5.2   **Formation**

5.2.1   *Formation of the adolescent must be based on an understanding of stages of human and faith development.* Guidance must be offered and modelled by parents, pastors, teachers, catechists and other persons fit to

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[30] Living our Faith: Church, Harcourt Religion Publishers
[31] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* (CCC) 2567.

assist in a Christian and holistic development of the young person. – all "making time" to listen, to care and to counsel.

5.2.2 Formation in development of the "whole person" must aim at an ever deepening relationship with God revealed in Christ. *Formation in faith must help adolescents to move from a childish faith to a more owned and reflective faith.* The critical questions of the God-self and one's self in relationship must be honestly addressed.

5.2.3 A sense of belonging with the parish community needs to be encouraged. Faith-sharing sessions with their peers and even older members of the faith parish community have the potential to lead to deeper commitment and a more joyful and spontaneous spirit of mission and service.

5.2.4 Reflection on the passion/death/resurrection of Jesus (the Paschal Mystery) in a way that they relate to life experiences, aids in faith formation. Adolescents are to be given the opportunity in the catechetical setting to reflect, for example, on their difficulties in respecting authority; Church-going; seeing God's Will especially in experiences related to their sexuality; relationships with the opposite sex; hardships resulting from broken homes, domestic violence and incest – so common in our society; loss from death or departure of a loved one; failure and success; hope and fear.

5.2.5 Christian rituals may be celebrated to highlight important stages of development in their spiritual journey, for example, preparing and participating in a simple "Ceremony of Renewal of Students' Baptismal Commitment" at the end of lessons "revisiting" their Baptism. Vocation days can be held when committed Catholic adults, parents and others will pray with adolescents and give guidance about choosing a vocation in life - to Marriage, Ordained Priesthood, the Consecrated Life (Religious Life), and the Single, Celibate State - all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

5.2.6 Formation for understanding and living out relationships; the dignity of being human; dealing with issues such as abortion, euthanasia and caring for the earth/environment.[32]

5.3 **Commitment**

5.3.1 Commitment flowing from knowledge and formation can be facilitated with ceremonies of commitment at appropriate moments on the journey where adolescents are encouraged to make choices with regard to their relationship with God, their vocation and Mission. To ritualise commitment, a special Commitment Prayer can be included in a "Sending Forth" Ceremony of the sixteen year olds as they graduate from Secondary school or move to a Post-Confirmation class.

5.3.2 As an important part of commitment to living out their faith, young persons can be encouraged to attend any or some of the following: Parish/Diocesan Prayer Conferences, Parish Prayer Groups; Synods, Eucharistic Conferences; Diocesan/Regional/International Catholic Youth Assemblies, Retreats and Days of Renewal; Parish Renewal

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[32] GDC p. 180-181, n. 192

Programmes and Seasonal liturgies as is possible for them. Examples are Advent and Lenten Services, which include the Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross and the Easter Triduum.

5.3.3 All teaching and practices of the faith should assist adolescents in the formation of a spirit of peace and an urgent desire to promote non-violence towards self, others and all of God's creation. They should be helped to develop a conscience, to defend human rights where needed, and to assist when necessary in Peace and Justice issues affecting themselves and others – for example, crime and violence; pornography and drug abuse.

5.4 **Mission**

5.4.1 Involvement in the Missionary Childhood Association is a lived expression of commitment and mission for the early adolescent. Children in this age-group have a genuine desire to help other children in dire circumstances, especially if they can work with a friend or a small group. They are also very idealistic and like to be involved in projects that can bring about change and those that demonstrate qualities of stewardship

5.4.2 Adolescents should be led by example to pray for the Church and to see themselves as witnesses and evangelisers, used by the Holy Spirit to bring their peers to a deeper faith, encouraging them to trust God no matter what.

5.4.3 Another area of witness is the readiness and willingness of adolescents to share knowledge of the Church's teachings, to invite their friends to Mass and to live out their beliefs giving voluntary service in one of the Church's outreach programmes or ministries.

5.4.4 There are other possibilities, namely, caring for younger children in their schools, in their neighbourhood or in Children's Homes; Visiting and praying with and for the Sick – especially for children in hospitals.

5.4.5 They can make conscious choices to be involved in Social Justice Issues. They can work with groups trying to alleviate poverty and its causes; do Works of Mercy and other spiritually and personally rewarding Social Outreach Programmes, with the elderly as well. They can read/share stories, prayer and reflection on the Sacred Scriptures and assist the elderly according to their special needs in the ministry of *"bringing others to Jesus."*[33]

6. Late Adolescence: Sixteen to Eighteen

An appreciable number of Secondary School Students—sixteen to eighteen-- will spend two more years in school, in the traditional Sixth Forms while others will proceed immediately to university – Local or Overseas. For the sixteen to eighteen year-old who continues in Secondary School or moves into other training institutions in preparation for employment or tertiary education, a different approach to catechetics is needed. Joining Youth Groups now has an appeal.

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[33] *Mk* 10: 13 – 16; *Jn* 1: 35 – 51.

6.1 **Knowledge:**

This age-group ought to be given the opportunity to have input in determining the content of this period of their catechesis. It is from their **Needs, Interests, Concerns, Questions, Personal Crises**, indeed, their search for the deeper and Ultimate Meaning of life and how they understand God's plan for them, that a full and relevant **Knowledge Component** can be drawn up. Some areas of the knowledge component for the younger 12 – 16 age-group can now be explored further and more experientially.

6.2 **Formation** is on-going and their Sacramental life, their level of **Commitment** and desire for participation in **Mission** on behalf of the Church and others should give them the courage to address moral and social ills with more compassion and determination to bring about meaningful change in their lives and that of the members of groups in which they may now have some influence.

6.3 The later adolescent's response to Fundamentalists who are ever determined to win over Catholics to their own faith, will depend on the knowledge, love and continued practice of the faith that has been nurtured and that they have developed to a more mature level. God's Holy Spirit, however, has to be continually invoked and God's grace relied on.

6.4 **Method:** The **main method** of catechesis will now be through discussion, dialogue and theological reflection. **Group discussions** and **feedback** from mission activities engaged in, will also add deeper meaning and quality to their lives. **Research** is also important, hence the use of the **Internet** for seeking information and analysing religious, moral and socio-economic issues with the intention of bringing a more mature, Christian response to these. Real issues in Church, School and Society include the HIV/AIDS crisis, incest, homosexuality and lesbianism.

7. Transition Statement:

At the age of eighteen, later adolescents are on the verge of young adulthood. The sky is the limit as they look to the future in faith with their dreams and aspirations. It is important that the Christian formation they have received from twelve to eighteen, has been deep and well grounded. The degree of maturity that they have attained to this point will determine how as young adults they will continue to profess and live their faith as committed "witnesses" to God's love and life within and around them.

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Guidelines for Catechesis
Young Adult: Nineteen to Thirty Years

1. Introduction from Official Catholic Sources

1.1 "With youth comes the moment of the great decisions… Good and evil, grace and sin, life and death will more and more confront one another within them not just as moral categories but chiefly as fundamental options which they must accept or reject lucidly, conscious of their own responsibility...Catechesis takes on considerable importance, since it is the time when the Gospel can be presented, understood and accepted as capable of giving meaning to life and thus inspiring attitudes that would have no other explanation, such as self-sacrifice, detachment, forbearance, justice, commitment, reconciliation, a sense of the Absolute and the unseen. All these are traits which distinguish a young person from his or her companions as a disciple of Jesus Christ…"[34]

1.2 "The Church, while regarding young people as "hope", also sees them as "a great challenge for the future of the Church" herself... the pressures of consumer society contribute to make of youth a world in waiting, not infrequently a world of disenchantment, of boredom, of angst and of marginalization. Alienation from the Church...lurks in many as a fundamental attitude. Often this reflects lack of spiritual and moral support in the family and weaknesses in the catechesis which they have received. On the other hand, many of them are driven by a strong impetus to find meaning, solidarity, social commitment and even religious experience."[35]

1.3 "The heart of catechesis is the explicit proposal of Christ to the young man in the Gospel; it is a direct proposal to all young people in terms appropriate to young people, and with considered understanding of their problem...Therefore young people cannot be considered only objects of catechesis, but also active subjects..."[36]

1.4 "The diversity of the religious situation should be kept in mind: there are young people who are not even baptized, others have not completed Christian initiation, others are in grave crises of faith, others are moving towards making a decision with regard to faith, others have already made such a decision and call for assistance. It should also be remembered that the most successful catechesis is that which is given in the context of the wider pastoral care of young people, especially when it addresses the problems affecting their lives..."[37]

1.5 "Generally youth catechesis should be proposed in new ways, which are open to the sensibilities and problems of this age group. They should be of a theological, ethical, historical and social nature. In particular, due emphasis should be given to education in truth and liberty as understood by the Gospel, to the formation of conscience and to education for love. Emphasis should also be placed on vocational discernment, Christian involvement in society and on missionary responsibility in the world...A necessary "adaptation of catechesis to young

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[34] Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (October 1979), 39

[35] Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, United States Catholic Conference, 1997, Published in USA, 1998, 182.

[36] Ibid.183.

[37] ibid.184

people" is urged, in order to translate into their terms "the message of Jesus with patience and wisdom and without betrayal.*"* [38]

1.6　　"The methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned; they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life...one sees that present conditions render ever more urgent catechetical instruction, under the form of the catechumenate..."[39]

2.　　Prenotes

2.1　　The years *nineteen to twenty two* begin the early adult transition, which is characterized as "a novicing period" in adulthood—a setting of the agenda for work, commitment and intimacy. Between *twenty three and twenty eight*, there is the full entering of adulthood when the young adult tends to seek out mentoring figures and as they approach thirty, there is an attempt to create a stable life structure. Sometimes, loss of youth can be difficult to deal with and this period may be marked by crisis.[40]

2.2　　The nineteen to thirty year old is no longer a child, yet s/he may still be searching for identity as a human person, as an adult and as a Catholic. Success is important, and there is movement toward a more personal opinion and choice of values and life-style as s/he searches for meaning in life.

2.3　　There is still need for love, nurture, affirmation and a sense of belonging especially as there may be a feeling of alienation from the church.

2.4　　For many young adults in the Caribbean, race and social and cultural background can become issues related to their experience of 'catholic church' and can undergird a special kind of identity crisis. In addition, the church's position on free sex, abortion, visiting relationships etc vis-à-vis what they actually see in the Catholic community and in their family, adds to their confusion.

2.5　　**Faith Development**---Adult faith is a journey, a pilgrimage of discernment as one hears and responds to God's call in the depths of one's life. For the young person at this time in life, there is a movement to 'owned faith'--self chosen and independent and to a greater degree of congruence between what is said and done. James Fowler speaks of an awareness of paradoxes and polarities of life but also a tendency to latch on to groups/communities which seem to give ready made answers to these issues.[41] In addition, relationship with God can either be bound up with an unhealthy reliance on devotional practices or total neglect of the spiritual life with an underlying cynicism. Therefore, it is important to help them to think critically, in dialogue with a community of faith.

2.6　　**Psychological Development:** Erikson suggests that for the nineteen to thirty year old the task is **Intimacy vs Isolation**; when the goal of life is to lovingly share with another in friendship, in marriage, procreation, in the family and in the work place.[42]

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[38] ibid.185

[39] Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975),44

[40] Patrick J. Brennan, *Re-Imaging the Parish*, (New York: Crossroad,1990), pgs. 99-100

[41] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, (San Francisco:Harper,1981), pgs.174-183

[42] Erik H.Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York:W.W. Norton & Norton, 1950), p.270

2.7 **Issues of life:** Some of the important issues of life at this time are choices regarding tertiary education, employment, career options and the whole area of vocation. At this time there is also the strong attraction to seeking pleasure and excitement in life at the same time struggling with the sexual drive and moral and religious issues including abortion and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

2.8 For those who are married there are issues of parenting and marital issues regarding domestic abuse, possible separation and even divorce. For those who are living in sexual relationships outside of marriage, there are other issues to face because the children of their union know no other way of life.

2.9 **Values of Contemporary Society**: As the young adult seeks to make choices for life s/he is influenced by some of the negative values of Caribbean society and the global society. There is aggressive competition for success and the lure of quick 'riches' with its attendant fall-out in crime among the young and the negative effects of tourism and the drug culture. In addition, the young Caribbean adult faces economic injustice, which presents itself in the unequal distribution of income, the high cost of living and inadequate salaries. This leads oftentimes to a sense of hopelessness in the youth regarding their future. This situation is exacerbated by the loss of human dignity and life-giving values as a result of the lack of formation of children according to spiritual values and the overall lack of spirituality in families.

3. General Objectives

3.1 To help young Catholics to become mature Catholics with a more adult understanding and ownership of the faith.

3.2 To help them on their journey of conversion to love God and neighbour and to become comfortable with their Catholic identity.

3.3 To help them to become committed Catholics witnessing to their faith in community and in society as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

3.4 To empower them to make right choices regarding their vocation and to explore the developmental task of intimacy at this time in the light of Gospel values.

4. Method

4.1 The four essential elements in the process of Catechesis *(Knowledge, Formation, Commitment, Mission)* referred to in the Introduction will be used as the approach to presenting each topic.

4.2 All topics have a **Knowledge** and **Formation** component which will include reflection based on life experiences in the light of the Gospel values. This reflection becomes heart-centred and leads to conversion and **Commitment** to the Lord which flows into **Mission. Mission** involves implementation of projects and activities which are service-oriented.

4.3 Catechesis must be presented in terms appropriate to young people and must be done in the context of a wider pastoral plan.

4.4 Adult religious education is about growth and discipleship. The young adult learner brings to any learning situation experience, insight and wisdom. Therefore, andragogy (adult learning praxis) involves not only learners but most importantly, active participation by the learner in the process.

4.5 The RCIA process facilitates this dynamic of active participation by the learner and it is the framework within which the four elements will be presented. In particular, focus will be on the *life journey* of the young adult with *catechetical input* linked to the *liturgical cycle* and the lectionary. The approach will be *dialogic* and will involve sharing of stories and *critical reflection* in the light of the Gospel. This will be linked to *ritual celebrations* of commitment at various stages of faith development within the context and with the involvement of the *parish Community*.

5. Essential Elements of Catechesis

5.1. Knowledge:

5.1.1 **Self Knowledge/Faith Development**: persons in this age-group need to be helped to develop a deeper awareness of God, self and others. This implies being comfortable with relationships within which they can experience God's love and their identity as young adult catholic men/women. Reflection on the stages of faith development can be very enlightening and can help them to accept themselves and others to recognize the dignity of the human person and affirm the good in themselves and others. They also need a wholesome understanding of human sexuality.

5.1.2 **Issues of Choice** with regard to vocation—reflection on the Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders, and the call to religious life, single lay consecrated life, life in ecclesial communities, and chosen single life.

5.1.3 **Bible and The Creed:**
The young adult needs to become familiar with the Catholic approach to understanding the Bible and an introduction to Biblical scholarship. In addition they need to reflect on important doctrines of faith—The Trinity, Mary, Sacraments and Church History.

5.1.4 **Christian Living**: It is important for the young person to develop a Christian attitude to life as determined by fuller understanding of the Commandments, the Beatitudes, Social Teachings of the Church. Other moral and societal issues would include an understanding of a Christian work ethic and a pro-life attitude to life.

5.1.5 **Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships**: Encourage young adults to discuss ecumenism and its significance. The aim of this is to awaken in them the desire to work together with other Christian churches and communities with a view to fufilling Jesus's call to Christian unity. It is also important to provide the young adults with the opportunity to i) discuss religious plurality as a growing fact of life; ii) promote inter faith dialogue for mutual understanding; iii) to engage inter-religious social action for advancing religious and cultural harmony.

5.1.6 **Spirituality/Various Prayer Forms:** The nineteen to thirty year old needs to be exposed to vocal/spontaneous prayer, liturgy of the hours, praying the scripture-(Lectio Divina), contemplative prayer as well as devotional prayer. Due to the phenomenon of suicide in the young adult it is necessary to help them to embrace a spirituality of hope.

5.1.7 **Understanding Liturgy** and the liturgical cycle and how to celebrate liturgy effectively is important for young adults in order to make the Eucharist more meaningful to them. This can also be helpful in their preparations for special young adult celebrations of the Mass.

5.1.8 **Theology of Ministry**—to understand Jesus' call to humble leadership and self- sacrificial love.

5.1.9 **Evangelization:** understanding of the Good News of salvation and the call to discipleship, in order to proclaim the Good News.

5.1.10 **Stewardship**: Understanding the Biblical basis and the church's position regarding stewardship of time, talent and resources.

5.2 **Formation:** The nineteen to thirty year-old person needs to be formed as a more mature Catholic through practice of different types of prayer and a more mature participation in Liturgy and Bible study. This can be encouraged through peer-support groups and interaction with more mature praying persons to share life stories and prayer. This is also be the time to help the young adult to discern wisely regarding important life choices to be made. The method used in imparting knowledge, with emphasis on dialogue and critical reflection, is essential in the formation of the young adult.

5.3 **Commitment:** The young adult needs to become committed to the process of growing in faith—recognizing the need to deepen the interior life and to become involved in community. Retreats and days of prayer and reflection on situations of life in the light of the gospel will facilitate the conversion process which leads to commitment. In addition rituals for celebrating the different moments on the journey and special Eucharistic celebrations also facilitate the movement from the head (knowledge) to the heart (conversion and commitment).

5.4 **Mission**: With knowledge—understanding of what a Catholic at this age needs to know; formation based on knowledge and commitment to the process of growing in faith, persons in this age group should be better ready to live the Catholic faith and witness to it in community and in society. Therefore, young adults should be encouraged to share their gifts and talents within the church community-- with teenagers in youth groups and as catechists. They can also initiate and participate in support groups for singles and young married couples in the church.

5.5 Flowing from their study and reflection on social justice issues they can also be encouraged to initiate projects affecting young adults in society and thus enter into the experiential dimension of service.

6. Transition Statement

At age thirty the young adult is in a transition space moving toward mid-life. S/he straddles both the young adult world and the more mature adult world. Her journey through adult choices and decisions for life as a Catholic, has prepared her/him to move toward a greater maturity in faith and in life. At this point s/he begins either to settle down into the choices of vocation that were made with excitement and expectation earlier on the journey, or to reevaluate these initial choices as s/he moves toward the next phase of life into the middle adult era.

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Guidelines for Catechesis
Thirty to Fifty Years

1.   Introduction From Official Catholic Sources

"The discourse of faith with adults must take serious account of their experience, of their conditioning and of the challenges which they have encountered in life. Their questions of faith as well as their needs are many and varied. Consequently, the following categories may be distinguished:

    1.1.1   adult Christians who consistently live their faith option and sincerely desire to deepen it;

    1.1.2   adults who have been baptized but who have not been sufficiently catechized…to such a degree that they may be called 'quasi catechumens;'

    1.1.3   non–baptized adults, to whom the catechumenate truly and properly corresponds;

    1.1.4   those adults from Christian confessions not in full communion with the Catholic Church."[43]

1.2.   "Adult catechesis concerns persons who have a right and a duty to bring to maturity the seed of faith sown in them by God. It is addressed to individuals who are charged to fulfil social responsibilities of various types and to those who are also prey to all kinds of changes and crises, sometimes profound. The faith of adults, therefore, must be continually enlightened, developed and protected, so that it may acquire that Christian wisdom which gives sense, unity, and hope to the many experiences of personal, social, and spiritual life. Adult catechesis requires the accurate identification of the typical characteristics of Christian adults. It must translate them into objectives and content and determine certain constants of presentation..."[44]

1.3.   "Among the criteria which assure an authentic and effective adult catechesis, mention must be made of the following:

    1.3.1   attention to those to whom it is addressed, to their condition as adult men and women, requires taking account of their problems and experiences, their spiritual and cultural resources, with full respect for their differences;

    1.3.2   attention to the lay condition of adults, on whom Baptism confers the task of "seeking the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's Will," and whom it calls to holiness;

    1.3.3   attention to the involvement of the community so that it may be a welcoming and supportive environment."[45]

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[43] Congregation of the clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, United States Catholic Conference, 1997, Published in USA, Jan. 1998.172.
[44] ibid, 173
[45] ibid. 174

2. Prenotes

2.1 According to Patrick Brennan,[46] at this stage, some adults experience genuine growth while some are themselves stable, but are thrown into a whirlwind because of a serious failure or life accident, not of their own choosing.

2.2 Some break out of a life situation or structure that is dissatisfying or was a poor choice from the outset and some experience genuine occupational, fiscal advancements that create problems and impede growth while others have been in unstable life structures that continue, perhaps even deepen, in patterns of instability.

2.3 **Some other issues facing persons at this time of life:**

    2.3.1 **Work:** In the world of work, there tends to be greater focus on career development with the attendant stress and long hours of work. This is also a time when serious challenges to Christian values arise in the workplace.

    2.3.2 **Marriage:** An important source of tension at this time tends to be in marriage where there are family crises and problems in the parenting of young children and teenagers and the 'empty nest syndrome' as children leave the home. There can also be wide differences in growth between partners which can lead to extra-marital relationships and ultimately to a break-up of marriage and to divorce.

2.4 **Physical Development**—During child-bearing years some women neglect themselves. The same scenario occurs for many men caught up in work. Later on there is the urgency to catch up with fitness especially for those over forty as the body begins to react. In addition as women move into middle adulthood—forty five to fifty years, menopause with all its attendant upheavals takes centre stage.

2.5 **Psychological Development**—For Erikson,[47] the task at this age is *generativity vs stagnation.* The adult is one who is learning to care for the 'wholeness' of his/her life-- to draw strength from past experiences and the truth of what they reveal, and to reclaim what is good. Thus life tends to be less reactive and more responsive and there is empathy and concern for others. This is also the time for the emergence of the creative dimension from deep within and an over all movement toward a more integrated life.

    2.5.1 This is also the time of ***mid-life crisis*** for both men and women. There is the fear of aging and the struggle with difficult questions about life's meaning, values and direction. This leads to a reappraisal of one's life— *What do I have to pass on? What have I been living for? Was it worth it?* As a result, sometimes, drastic changes are made to reflect a greater integrity and integration of life.

    2.5.2 However, for some stagnation takes over. There is poor self-esteem, fears, unfulfilled dreams and boredom and escape is found in compulsive work, sexual affairs, excessive drugs and alcohol.

2.6 **Faith Development—** The adult of thirty to fifty normally begins a deeper journey inward. S/he wants serious answers to questions of faith and at the same

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[46] Brennan, P. Reimaging the Parish, (New York:Crossroad,1990),p.101
[47] Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W.W. Norton &Norton, 1950), p.

time, there is the desire to experience God's presence and God's love and to place one's faith in the power and presence of that love. There is also a greater willingness to let go of grievances and to forgive.

2.6.1   Fowler[48] names this time--*Conjunctive Faith*, where paradoxes and polarities are embraced and there is a new quality of commitment—a reappropriation of the faith and greater empathy. It is the time for indepth critical reflection/dialogue and decision making and great spiritual growth.

2.6.2   People, especially in the latter part of this era, seek the inner growth in wholeness found in retreats and workshops

2.6.3   On the other hand, for some this is a time of total disenchantment with faith and the Catholic church because faith has not developed with growth in other areas of life and also because the Church has not met their needs. So the thirty to fifty year old goes through life with the faith received in childhood which now becomes inadequate to deal with the issues of mid-life. Therefore, at this time some join other churches which meet their needs.

3.   General Objectives

Catechesis for persons in this middle adult era will:

3.1   help them to face fears and insecurities and to move to inner freedom even in the midst of profound crises of life.

3.2   lead to a process of in-depth critical reflection—seeking answers to the deepest questions of life and thus opening up themselves to growth in Christian wisdom.

3.3   move them from a childish understanding of faith to a more adult personal faith which is linked with their daily life experiences seen in the light of the Gospel.

3.4   help them to answer for themselves the questions –*Who is God for me? Why am I still a Catholic? What does that mean? What do I really want as I face this middle era?*

3.5   help persons move to greater spiritual growth, strength and maturity

3.6   help them to take responsibility for their own formation

3.7   encourage them to share their wisdom and skills with others

4.   Method

The style of teaching of adults (Andragogy) focuses on dialogic methodology with discussions about the faith, as the adult learner brings to bear their own life experiences on the subject. This process will be encouraged through retreats, days of prayer and reflection, meetings, workshops and sharing with members of the community and will facilitate the emergence of creative ways of expressing faith and life.

Material will be presented a) within the framework of the **RCIA model**—i.e. focus on *spiritual journey, conversion within the community, ritual celebrations and sharing of faith stories in the light of the Gospel* and b)

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[48] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), pgs.184-198.

incorporating the four elements— **Knowledge, Formation, Commitment and Mission.**

5. **Essential Elements of Catechesis**

A great deal of what is done in the previous age-group can apply here - but from the perspective of the older person. They have much more from their life-experience to bring to bear on the subject.

5.1 **Knowledge:**

5.1.1 **Self--Knowledge**--**Catholic Understanding of the Human Being:** Understanding mid-life and what is happening psychologically, socially, physically and spiritually. *What light does the Christian faith give to living this period of life wholesomely? What do we see as a Christ-centred image of self for the Catholic Caribbean man/woman?*

5.1.2 Spirituality **for Mid-Life**: will address stress and create balance in life, helping the person to develop an integrated life. It will expose the person to contemplative prayer and silent retreats and an in-depth study of the Mystics. A spirituality for mid-life sees God in all things and leads to creative freedom and expression in prayer incorporating music, dance, art and poetry which also develops self-worth and integrity.

5.1.2.1 A theology of 'letting go'--opening oneself to change-- is also an important part of this spirituality for mid-life and an understanding of the sacramental nature of life.

5.1.3 **Sacramental Life**: The person at mid-life needs to be encouraged to develop a deep sacramental life with emphasis on the Sacraments of the Eucharist, Reconciliation, and the Anointing of the Sick. They need to be exposed to the theology of the sacraments with deep reflection on their experience. It is important to enter into the richness of the sacramental life as one struggles with issues of mid-life—meaninglessness and depression, burn-out, loneliness and intimacy--and through these celebrations to experience deep inner healing and a faith-filled ability to cope with whatever life has to offer.

In addition, with crises in marriage and family life at this time, as some couples deal with temptation to fidelity, there is need for deep reflection on the Sacrament of Marriage and understanding of the graces of this Sacrament

It is also important to offer sessions on family life enrichment to parents who are dealing with parenting and spiritual formation of children.

5.1.4 **Liturgy**: The person in mid-life needs to enter deeply into the liturgical life of the church celebrating the feasts and the liturgical seasons both in the parish and at home. In this way the Catholic identity is formed both for the adult and the children in the family. Entering deeply into the paschal mystery at the heart of the liturgical cycle sheds light on the mystery of life itself as it unfolds.

5.1.4.1 The practice of 'Lectio Divina' of the Sunday Gospels also creates a deeper appreciation of the Sunday Liturgy and the liturgical cycle while the introduction to the Prayer of the Hours

can give breadth to the prayer of the person in mid-life as s/he unites with the universal praying church**.**

5.1.5 **The Creed**: Persons in mid-life are seeking to find answers to deeper questions of life and faith and should therefore be exposed to more in-depth theological understanding of God as Trinity, the Church, Mary and the Saints, Salvation, Catholicism and Pentecostal Fundamentalism. They should also be exposed to the Vatican II documents dealing with the Church including cultural issues facing the Church today (inculturation) and the Role of the laity in temporal affairs.

5.1.6 **Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationship:** The thirty-fifty year old person should also be encouraged to reflect more deeply on Christ's call to unity of the baptized and to work together with members of other religious traditions. They can become involved in initiating ecumenical and inter-faith projects within their parish communities.

5.1.7 **Christian Living**: Because of challenges to the Christian faith in the world of work, for Catholics who are now in senior positions, it is important to deal with gospel values and work, reflecting on issues like---power, success, dishonesty, justice and ethics in the workplace. The Catholic at this stage of life also needs exposure to the Theology of Ministry and Stewardship and in-depth reflection on the Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Social Teachings of the Church and a systematic study of the Bible as a whole.

5.2 **Formation:** The whole approach to catechesis at this stage of life will be a formative experience of life-giving knowledge facilitated through reflection and sharing of life-stories and experiences in the context of the faith community. In addition to support groups and 'Know Your Faith' sessions, special ritual celebrations will highlight periods of growth, letting go, decision making and life changes. Prayer Experiences—retreats, days of prayer, Spiritual Direction, and Life in the Spirit Seminars will encourage responses from the heart and deepen conversion. This usually leads to **Commitment to the Lord** and a desire to be of service to the church.

5.3 **Mission**: The journey of the person from thirty to fifty years as s/he comes into a whole new way of understanding and practice of the Christian life leads to the emergence of a person who can now take responsibility for his/her own formation as a self directed learner. S/he can now become a source of learning and wisdom for others through sharing stories, counselling, involvement in catechetics, in the RCIA and other ministries in the parish community. S/he becomes a Christian of integrity in the workplace and a wholesome role-model in the family.

6. Transition Statement

How well the thirty to fifty year old has lived this period of mid-life will determine her/his experience of the next phase of life.

6.1 The age of fifty, is an important milestone in the life of an adult—half a century. It is a time of jubilee---as the person reflects on the past and embraces the present, recognizing the invitation to a new phase of life. It is a time to savour fallowness by listening, waiting and receiving; a time of forgiveness, liberation and home-coming; and a time of justice and jubilation.[49] It is an invitation to embrace this moment of richness as s/he stands on the threshold of the next stage—the late adult era.

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[49] Maria Harris, *Proclaim Jubilee,* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), pgs.x-xii.

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Guidelines for Catechesis
Fifty to Sixty Five Years

1. **Introduction from Official Catholic Sources**

   1.1   Older people "must be understood as a gift of God to the Church and to society, and must also be given adequate catechetical care.

   Attention must always be paid to the diversity of personal, family and social conditions. In particular, account must be taken of factors such as isolation and the risk of marginalization.

   Catechesis addressed to the older person will associate with the content of faith the caring presence of the catechist and of the community of believers…"[50]

   1.2.   "Catechesis for the older person pays particular attention to certain aspects of their condition of faith. A person at this stage may have a rich and solid faith, in which case catechesis, in a certain sense, brings to fulfilment a journey of faith in an attitude of thanksgiving and hopeful expectation. Others live a faith weakened by poor Christian practice. In this case catechesis becomes a moment of new light and religious experience. Sometimes people reach this age profoundly wounded in body and soul. In these circumstances catechesis can help them to live their condition in an attitude of prayer, forgiveness and inner peace.

   At any rate, the condition of the older person calls for a catechesis of hope, which derives from the certainty of finally meeting God..."[51]

   1.3.   "The older person is a symbol of a person rich in wisdom and fear of God and as a repository of an intense experience of life which makes him/her a natural 'catechist' in the community. He is a witness to a tradition of faith, a teacher of life and a worker of charity. Catechesis values this grace. It helps the older person to discover the riches within themselves and to assume the role of catechist among children and young people and adults. Thus a fundamental dialogue between the generations can be promoted both within the family and within the community."[52]

   1.4.   "I remind older people that the church calls them to continue to exercise their mission in the apostolic and missionary life...They must always have a clear knowledge that one's role in the church and society does not stop at a certain age at all, but at such times knows only new ways of application…Arriving at an older age is to be considered a privilege: above all, because this period provides real possibilities for better evaluating the past, for knowing and living more deeply the Paschal Mystery, for becoming an example in the Church for the whole people of God…participants at a time of life which is humanly and spiritually fruitful."[53]

2. **Prenotes**

   2.1   **Psychological Development:** A person between the ages of fifty to sixty five is normally still working in a senior position with years of experience. S/he may be

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[50]   Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, US Catholic conference, 1977, USA, 1998, 186
[2] Ibid., 187
[3] ibid., 188
[53] Pope John Paul II, *Christi fidelis Laici:* Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, 1988.

looking forward to retirement — to leisure time and doing the things that s/he always wanted to do. There might also be joy in looking forward to time together with one's spouse and grandchildren. However, it is a transitional time between mid-life and the elderly and can therefore be a turbulent time as the person seeks to come to terms with decisions regarding life after work.

2.1.1　For those who become identified with their jobs, there can be an attendant loss of self-esteem and feelings of emptiness and uselessness and depression — *What am I going to do?* Therefore after retirement they look for another job, while for persons in leadership roles in the Church there can be resistance to 'letting go' because their role gives meaning to their lives and they feel threatened by the youth.

2.1.2　The older person strives to maintain dignity as they search for meaning and purpose in life and seek to discern what is really important and lasting. There may be unresolved guilt feelings and fear and anxiety--fear of sickness and death; fear of financial insecurity; fear of social isolation and loneliness; fear of the unexpected; the gradual loss of friends; doubts about sexual potency and fear that there is not much meaning in life and little ability to cope with suffering. And among high achievers there tends to be depression — *you can't do what you used to do.*

2.1.3　Patrick Brennan suggests that this is a time when males and females feel polarity in their lives—they feel young and old—creation and destruction going on within them. They feel both masculine and feminine. They feel a need to be both attached and separate.

2.1.4　As the senior years begin, there is a movement towards inwardness and introspection — a real analysis of one's life, which includes some discontinuity or life changes.[54] These years are described by Erikson as years of profound significance, years of recapitulating one's entire life style, discovering *either integrity and wholeness or despair* which leads to a feeling of meaninglessness about one's life.[55]

2.2　Physical Issues: For both men and women there is a slowing down of the body with increased tiredness and stress; memory loss, anxieties, pains and sometimes serious illness. For women the effects of menopause continue to be a challenge.

2.3　**Faith Development**: There can be uncertainty about God's presence since God seems to be silent or absent. A person in the later adult era has to make a total transition to a new stage of life. Since faith is an essential part of life, faith also has to be deepened and matured on this new level of life. People need to be helped to recognise what might seem to be a crisis of faith as a final God-given opportunity to grow through darkness and doubts to a mature and living faith.[56]

2.3.1　The life of the **mature Christian** becomes increasingly centred in a deeper communion with God. There is fine appreciation of the Sacred Scriptures, a sense of fulfilment of one's vocation, and a sense of the worthiness of one's life. Leisure time may be devoted to reading and there tends to be more reflection and listening to the Spirit of God. Death is approached as a true Christian surrender – an opening to a new life.

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[54] Patrick J.Brennan, *Re-Imaging the Parish* (New York: Crossroad, 1990) p.100.
[55] ibid., p. 105.
[56] Eugene Bianchi, *Aging as a Spiritual Journey*,(New York:Crossroad Publishing Co.1985), p.64

<blockquote>

2.3.2 Therefore, at this time there is the need for a spirituality of 'being' rather than 'doing.' However, many still get caught up in the pursuit of the material things of life.

2.3.3 There is also the danger of a hard-headed, elitist certainty that condemns all approaches to life other than one's own.

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3. General Objectives—to help them to grow in faith and trust in God as they seek the answers to the problems of life that they face at this time and to move to a new awakening to revelation.

> 3.1 *For those with solid faith*—to help them to bring this faith to fulfilment with thanksgiving and hopeful expectation
>
> 3.2 *For those who were not practicing Catholics*—with weak faith—to help bring them to conversion—to new insights and religious experience
>
> 3.3 *For those who have been deeply wounded* and are bitter and despairing—to share a catechesis of hope and to lead into healing, forgiveness and inner peace.

4. Method

The approach to catechesis at this stage of adult life would be very similar to the previous age group--there should be much dialogue, sharing of life stories and critical reflection on life experiences in the light of the Gospel. This should be done within the framework of a Pastoral Plan for the older members of the community, sustained by the community with support groups and planned events. Pastoral care should be provided to help address bereavement, fear, anger, aggression, loneliness, despair, lack of self-worth, personal loss and coping with retirement.

5. Essential Elements of Catechesis

> 5.1 **Knowledge**
>
> > 5.1.1 **Self Knowledge**: With all the uncertainties of transition and changes in so many areas of life, it is important for the catechist to help the person in the middle or late adult era of life to understand what is happening to them in all dimensions of life and to reflect on this in the light of the Scripture and the Traditions of the faith. *Growing old gracefully* is a good 'word of life' to hold on to while helping them to see themselves as gift of God to the Church and to see God as the God of transitions—the God in transitions.[57]
> >
> > 5.1.2 It is also important, if the older person is to come to wholeness, for them to let their truest, deepest selves—the real person—emerge.
> >
> > 5.1.3 **The Creed**: the reality of the Paschal Mystery and suffering in the Christian life; the reality of life after death, the Resurrection and the Communion of Saints are some of the riches of the Catholic faith to be shared and reflected upon by the older catholic for whom these issues are so real.
> >
> > > 5.1.3.1 The Trinity can also be presented as community. God does not exist as a lonely and isolated individual but in the loving exchange of three persons. God wills community for us because he himself exists as community.

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[57] Isaiah 43: 18-19.

5.1.4 **Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationship:** Persons at this stage of life may be more open and embracing of others and willing to dialogue with Christians and persons of other faith traditions. Therefore, they should be encouraged to make a positive contribution to harmony and peace in the society in terms of their relationships with people of other faiths.

5.1.5 **Sacramental life**: A Eucharistic spirituality at the heart of the Catholic life can be introduced to the older members of the community. It is important to help them to see the Eucharist as a self-giving and life-giving sacrifice—the sacrificial love of God for them. The Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick can be celebrated in a way that brings deep healing to persons of this age, with unresolved guilt, anger, unforgiveness, and painful memories. In addition, there can be other ritual celebrations to mark milestone events—retirement, recovery from illness, significant birthdays.

5.1.6 **The Bible**: A Person at this stage of life will find that study and prayer with Scripture will be very helpful. They can look at stories of older persons in the Bible and see how God uses everyone no matter how old we are. They can also be encouraged to persevere with the Lectio Divina or the Ignatian method of praying the Scripture.

5.1.7 **Christian Living**: Reflecting on what the Beatitudes have to say regarding personal finitude—"*Confrontation with personal finitude and self delusions are necessary to embrace the revolution of the Beatitudes.*" [58] This is a call to religious conversion for the person in the fifty to sixty five age group especially those who have not been practicing Catholics and whose faith is weak.

5.1.8 It is also necessary to face and discuss the question of Euthanasia and the culture of death and hopelessness vis a vis God's offer to the older person of a culture of life.

5.1.9 **Theology of Letting Go**—Letting go of independence and embracing inter-dependence or even dependence. [59] This is a radical letting go and entrusting of self to God in preparation for the final letting go of death**.**

5.1.10 **Prayer/ Spirituality:** A catechesis of fulfilment and hope based on a theology of hope needs to be shared with the older person helping her/him to develop a spirituality of hope and wholeness—"*a willingness to travel as a wounded healer, learning the value and beauty of contemplation and meditation--placing the past and the uncertain future in God's hands as you deal with fear of failure, rejection, pain, death…Praying spontaneously and then in silence...*"[60] with thanksgiving and the certainty of finally meeting God.

5.2 **Formation**: at this time in life the older person needs to embrace aging as a spiritual journey. S/he needs to begin to simplify life, shedding all the unnecessary baggage along the way *"It is a process of refining the gold of our*

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[58] Eugene Bianchi, p.147
[59] John 21:18
[60] Eugene Bianchi, p.147

lives—of using the pain and promise of our days to ennoble the golden years with the quality of soul that has been distilled."[61]

    5.2.1   **Spiritual Direction** can be of immense help to persons in the middle to late adult era. They need a companion on the journey—a person with whom they can share their prayer as they seek God's will and discernment in their lives. This process can also be facilitated through peer support groups in the parish

    5.2.2   It is also important to organize recreational activities for the older persons and to honour them within the parish community.

5.3   **Commitment:** At every stage of life we have to make a new commitment to Jesus Christ, or better still renew our basic commitment to him in the light of each new significant experience.[62] Therefore, it is important for the person at this stage in life to celebrate rituals of commitment, to attend retreats and workshops exploring issues that are being faced by them at this time. These opportunities for deep reflection help them to come into a deeper relationship with God and to experience the joy and freedom of the middle to late adult era in life.

5.4   **The Gift of Wisdom and Mission for the later adult years**: Because of the rich experience of life the older person is a natural catechist. It is necessary to help the person to discover the riches within and to assume that role in the community— to offer dialogue between the generations. They need to understand that the Church calls them to exercise their mission. This is their duty. Their longer life gives them the opportunity to evaluate the past, live in the Paschal mystery and be an example to the people of God—becoming a wisdom icon to the community.

    5.4.1   Even when the older person is unable to be active in the community s/he has a ministry of intercessory prayer for the community. That is her/his mission.

5.5   **The Knowledge/Formation/Commitment/Mission Process:** For the person of this age group the process of knowledge, formation, commitment and mission is interwoven in the method. The approach to catechesis is a walking with the person as s/he is led to deeper insights re faith, and as s/he experiences the warmth and caring of a loving community, celebrated ritually in the Eucharist and other ritual celebrations. S/he develops a spirituality for the journey and finally becomes a wisdom icon.

6.   Transition Statement

At sixty five the older person is now removed from the 'rat race'of striving and career building which is the task for the first half of life. S/he is poised for a time of deep communion with God and the community and a rich life of listening, silence and contemplation. It is the time to refine the gold of life as s/he moves to the next stage on the journey--to the time of the elderly.

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[61] Ibid., 147
[62] Ibid.,p.67

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Guidelines For Catechesis
The Elderly[63]

1.   Introduction from Official Catholic Sources

1.1   "There is an urgent need to recover a correct perspective on life as a whole. The correct perspective is that of eternity for which life at every phase is a meaningful preparation. Old age too has a proper role to play in this process of gradual maturing along the path to eternity…The Christian community can receive much from the serene presence of older people…[64]

1.2   "It has to be recognized that the current situation (the reversal of the age pyramid) urges the Church to revise her approach for the pastoral care of older people." [65]

1.3   "In catechesis, they (the elderly) have the same rights and duties as all Christians." [66]

2.   Prenotes

2.1   How a person lives the phases of life **prior to** becoming a senior citizen will influence, in almost all cases, that person's agenda for the final phase of life and affect that person's capacity to live the Christian life well in the final phase of life.

2.2   It is extremely important that, during the catechetical process, senior citizens be encouraged **to choose** to be involved in community, both **Church and Civil Society**, not only to receive from community but to contribute to community.

2.3   Careful attention must be given to the diversity of personal, family and social conditions affecting the elderly. Their needs must be accurately assessed, not assumed by the Church, **through dialogue with the elderly**.

2.4   People must understand holistically the phase of life in which they are journeying. They must be alert to what is going on around them and within them. They must be aware of how to process, as a Catholic Christian, what they are experiencing.

2.5   While the aging process in the category of the elderly usually gives people more time for a relaxed pace of life and to pursue new opportunities, it also brings challenging changes in a person's life. **Physically**, the elderly begin to experience changes with their health. Eventually they must confront the inevitability of approaching death. **Psychologically,** the elderly frequently experience a crisis of meaning flowing from a lack of career identity, a sense of loss from the death of family and friends and, possibly, a loss of independence. **Spiritually,** the elderly frequently judge themselves adversely as they reflect on the prior phases of their lives and may even have doubts about their faith. **Intellectually,** while they may experience renewed interest for learning and

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[63] The terminology of contemporary demographers has two categories for the elderly: the third age, 65-75 and the fourth age, those over 75.

[64] Pope John Paul II, *Letter to the Elderly*, Vatican City: Vatican Press, October 1, 1999, N.10, 13.

[65] Pontifical Council For the Laity, *The Dignity of Older People and their Mission in the Church and the World*, Vatican City: Vatican City Press, October 1, 1998, page 9.

[66] Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, Translation from the *Editio Typica*, Copyright Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997, Published in the United States, 2000, N. 186.

growth, they can become increasingly afflicted by difficulty with concentration, eyesight and memory loss. **Socially**, for many different reasons, they begin to experience a sense of isolation.

2.6 The experiences of the elderly listed in 2.5 are complicated by four values of contemporary society:

Youth is valued over age;

Doing is valued over being;

Individualism is valued over the common good;

Independence is valued over interdependence.

3. General Objectives

3.1 To bring Gospel Values to the challenges that confront the elderly:

3.2 To motivate the elderly to participate in the catechetical process by reminding them that the call to Christian initiation is lifelong;

3.3 To invite the elderly to continue participating in the mission of the Church thereby continuing to have an ongoing experience of Church.

4. Method

The Church should provide the elderly with a continuing experience of Church community through a holistic process of addressing the four elements of catechesis - knowledge, formation, commitment and mission. Therefore, whenever possible, the process of teaching/learning, formative reflection, commitment/recommitment and decision for mission should occur in a group setting.

The elderly, who are unable to leave their homes for reasons of health, can be reached and ministered to by the Church through home visitation programmes and/or through electronic communications e.g. radio, television, audio/video tapes or DVD's.

5. Essential Elements of Catechesis

5.1 **Knowledge**

The elderly must be helped to understand the aging process and how the knowledge of Gospel values can provide helpful perspective for the aging process. The recommended themes for catechesis are:

5.1.1 The meaning of life from conception to natural death

Under this heading, catechesis should consider the biblical theology of creation, the human person created in the image and likeness of God, the stewardship responsibilities of the elderly for creation, earthly life as a preparation for eternal life, the theology, psychology and sociology of aging, the contemporary anti-life pressures of the Culture of Death that are affecting the elderly.

5.1.2 The Importance of the Sacramental Life

Under this heading, catechesis should consider the theology of each sacrament with special application to the needs of the elderly mentioned above under Prenotes. Some examples of this recommendation are:

5.1.2.1 Since one of the issues for the elderly is loss of career identity and a growing sense of isolation, the elderly should be helped to appreciate the communal and identity giving dimensions of the sacraments especially the sacraments of initiation;

5.1.2.2 Since one of challenges to the elderly is adverse self judgement flowing from a review of their prior lives, the elderly should be helped to participate in and appreciate the benefits of the sacrament of Penance and the opportunity for spiritual direction that it offers;

5.1.2.3 Since one of the challenges to the elderly is generally a decline in their physical health and the need to confront the inevitability of approaching death, the elderly should be assisted in celebrating and appreciating the meaning of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

5.1.3   Concept of Wisdom

Under this heading, catechesis should review the biblical, magisterial and even secular understanding of the concept of wisdom. The catechesis on wisdom should make clear that **wisdom does not come automatically with age**. Therefore, it is important to acquire the habit of reflecting on the meaning of life as understood in the Catholic tradition and how to live one's life well to natural death. Catechesis on the concept of wisdom should use the evidence available that shows the reverence that many cultures give to the elderly for their wisdom.

5.1.4   The Nature of Community for the Elderly

Under this heading, the catechist must help the elderly appreciate community itself and, in particular, Christian community. This point is extremely important because, as noted above under Prenotes, one of the challenges that the elderly must confront is a growing sense of isolation. The nature of Christian community, which is defined and sustained through the gift of the Holy Spirit, is characterized by sharing on many levels. The Christian call is to set aside selfishness and exclusively private interests in order to work for the common good. The elderly are still called to Christian stewardship and, therefore, must accept responsibility for the needs and rights of others especially their peers.

5.1.5   Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relationships

It is important that life experiences and values formed by Catholic beliefs be shared with members of other Christian faiths and religious traditions. This can promote and strengthen the sense of community.

5.2   **Formation**

The elderly must be taught how to allow their faith knowledge to touch their lives and shape their values. The recommended themes for catechesis are:

5.2.1   Prayer and Spiritual Direction

Under this heading, catechesis should consider: the theology of prayer, training in bringing the challenges of the third and fourth age to the Lord in prayer, training in methods of reflective reading of scripture and

Church teaching, teaching the healing of memories process, providing insights into the self emptying process of the Christian life with special application to the elderly, assisting the elderly through biblical and pastoral prayer services on issues that are related to the needs of the elderly, providing the elderly with the opportunity for spiritual direction in individual and group settings and offering opportunities for retreats for the elderly.

5.2.2   The Importance of Community for the Elderly

Under this heading, the catechist must be very sensitive to the issues raised under Prenotes. Community is a natural and ecclesial protection for elderly persons from being marginalized and overwhelmed by loneliness. Therefore, the catechist/parish must facilitate the development of community oriented programmes for the elderly that are designed to meet their needs for inclusion.

While the experience of the elderly will vary, it almost certainly includes experiences in religious and/or secular communities such as family, education, worship, employment and voluntary associations. However, it must be noted that the quality of participation by the now elderly person will also vary. As stated under Prenotes how a person lived the phases of life prior to becoming a senior citizen will affect how that person will live the last phase of her/his life. Therefore, the catechist/parish must develop needs assessments for the elderly who are participating in programs and expect that, due to the prior life experience of each elderly person, there will be varying levels of interest in and capacity for community programs for the elderly.

One point is very clear: to the degree possible for each elderly person, commitment to and involvement in community by the elderly will impact significantly on the quality of their lives.

5.2.3   Motivation for Mission

The responsibility of the catechist under this heading is to remind the elderly that initiation into the fullness of Christ and the fullness of truth is lifelong. It does not end with retirement. The basic motivation for the elderly to involve themselves in service is the stewardship responsibility to share the gifts of their time, talents and treasure in solidarity with other members of the community. Even when the limitations of age require the elderly to withdraw from active service, as Christians they must still be involved in prayer for the community and the success of the ministry of their successors.

5.2.4   Growth in Wisdom

Under this heading, catechesis should concentrate on examining the means through which, in the pastoral experience of the Church, people can grow in wisdom. Since the Wisdom literature of the Scriptures teaches that God gives birth to wisdom and since wisdom is a type of knowledge that allows a person to understand God's purposes and the divine will, catechesis should emphasize reflections on the wisdom literature with application to aging in general but especially to the lives

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of those being catechized. Continual attention should be given to the essential interrelationship of holiness, maturity and wisdom.

5.3   **Commitment**

The elderly must be reminded that commitment to the Lord does not exist in isolation. It flows from faith knowledge and formation. The recommended themes for catechesis are:

5.3.1   Commitment as Vocation

Under this heading, catechesis should bring the elderly back to the foundations of their commitment to the Lord: Baptism and the consequent universal call to holiness. To be truly alive, commitment must be rooted in an ongoing 'yes' to the Lord. It is not made once and then continued throughout life without change. It must always be open to growth. Since all believers participate in lifelong initiation, the elderly must be encouraged to deepen their commitment to the Lord

5.3.2   Commitment as Relationship

Under this heading, catechesis should help the elderly to remember that commitment is quite personal and has meaning in direct proportion to the quality of the personal relationship each elderly person has with God. The spiritual experience of the Church mentioned above under formation is applicable here.

5.3.3   Commitment as Witness

Under this heading, catechesis should help the elderly appreciate how powerful their witness is as they live out their commitment to the Lord in family and in community. Their prayer, their service, their presence can touch the lives of many.

5.4   **Mission**

5.4.1   The Potential of the Elderly for Service

Under this heading, the catechist must help the elderly to rise above the secular tendency of the elderly to turn inward (a concentration on hobbies and leisure activities) through a theology of service. The catechist must communicate to the elderly the objective data that describes the significant contributions the elderly have made to Church and State by voluntary service and witness. The catechist should encourage the elderly to become involved in service because they have wisdom and skills to share and, ordinarily, at least 20 years of productive post retirement potential to contribute to others.

5.4.2   Invitation to Service

Under this heading, the catechist will have to build on the teaching mentioned above that the elderly are both capable of and needed for service. The catechist must not only motivate people to become involved, he/she must invite the elderly to become involved by offering specific opportunities for service. The possibilities are multiple and varied in the context of Christian community and also in the civil community. One example is peer ministry - ministry by the elderly for the elderly. This form of service has a natural base for the elderly because their personal

experience helps them to understand and appreciate the challenges the elderly must face.

5.4.3 The Sharing of Wisdom

Under this heading, catechesis must help the elderly to understand that they are one of the most valuable wisdom resources for their peers. In addition, grandparents can have a significant catechetical influence over their grandchildren especially when the parents of the children have, at least temporarily, ceased to practice their faith. The elderly should open themselves to the possibility of acquiring new skills to share wisdom. Catechists should help the elderly to understand their responsibility to share wisdom and also help them to experience the new level of meaning in their lives that comes from sharing wisdom.

6. Conclusion

Each (Arch)diocese should examine whether or not it has specific programmes to serve the elderly and, if it has, it should evaluate their effectiveness in consultation with the elderly. If an (Arch)diocese does not have programmes to meet the needs of the elderly, it is recommended that they be developed in the light of these *Guidelines for Catechesis.*

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