

Episcopal Commission for Evangelization and Catechesis

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Mandate

March 2015

1. Guiding principles

- No. 35** Since the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God, this sacred synod invites all to a deep interior renewal; so that, having a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the Gospel, they may do their share in missionary work among the nations. (**Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity** *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 35)
- No. 41** ...for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." [67] St. Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word. [68] It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus- the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity. (**Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI** *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41)
- No. 42** People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the "witness" par excellence and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ. (**Ioannes Paulus PP. II** *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 42)
- No. 31** Evangelization consists in proposing the Gospel which transforms the human individual, his world and his personal story. The Church evangelizes when, in virtue of the power of the Gospel proclaimed (cf. *Rm* 1:16), she takes every human experience and gives it rebirth through the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. *Rm* 6:4), immersing each one in the newness of Baptism and life according to the Gospel and in the Son's relationship to his Father, so as to feel the power of the Spirit. (**XIII Ordinary General Assembly, Instrumentum Laboris**, no. 31)

- No. 27** I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. (“**Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis**” *Evangelii Gaudium, no. 27*)
- No. 114** Being Church means being God’s people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God’s leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God’s salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel. (“**Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis**” *Evangelii Gaudium, no. 114*)
- No. 46** The Church "exists in order to evangelize" that is "the carrying forth of the Good News to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and renew the human race".
- The missionary mandate of Jesus to evangelize has various aspects, all of which, however, are closely connected with each other: "proclaim", (*Mk 16,15*) "make disciples and teach", "be my witnesses", "baptize", "do this in memory of me", (*Lk 22,19*) "love one another" (*Jn 15,12*). Proclamation, witness, teaching, sacraments, love of neighbour: all of these aspects are the means by which the one Gospel is transmitted and they constitute the essential elements of evangelization itself. (**Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, GDC no. 46**)
- No. 47** The Church, while ever containing in herself the fullness of the means of salvation, always operates "by slow stages". The conciliar decree *Ad Gentes* clarifies well the dynamic of the process of evangelization: Christian witness, dialogue and presence in charity (11-12), the proclamation of the Gospel and the call to conversion (13), the catechumenate and Christian Initiation (14), the formation of the Christian communities through and by means of the sacraments and their ministers (15-18). This is the dynamic for establishing and building up the Church. (**Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, GDC no. 47**)
- No. 48** Accordingly, in conformity with this, evangelization must be viewed as the process by which the Church, moved by the Spirit, proclaims and spreads the Gospel throughout the entire world. Evangelization:
- is urged by *charity*, impregnating and transforming the whole temporal order, appropriating and renewing all cultures;

- bears *witness* amongst peoples of the new way of being and living which characterizes Christians;
 - *proclaims explicitly the Gospel*, through "first proclamation", calling to conversion.
 - *initiates into the faith and the Christian life*, by means of "catechesis" and the "sacraments of Christian initiation", those who convert to Jesus Christ or those who take up again the path of following him, incorporating both into the Christian community;
 - constantly nourishes the gift of *communion* amongst the faithful by means of continuous education in the faith (homilies and other forms of catechesis), the sacraments and the practice of charity;
 - continuously arouses *mission*, sending all the disciples of Christ to proclaim the Gospel, by word and deed throughout the whole world.
- (Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, GDC no. 48)**

No. 49 The process of evangelization, consequently, is structured in stages or "essential moments": missionary activity directed toward non-believers and those who live in religious indifference; initial catechetical activity for those who choose the Gospel and for those who need to complete or modify their initiation; pastoral activity directed toward the Christian faithful of mature faith in the bosom of the Christian community.

(Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, GDC no. 49)

2. Objectives

- 2.1 To advise the Conference, reporting to its Executive Committee and Permanent Council through the General Secretary.
- 2.2 To assist the members of the Conference in the areas of evangelization and catechesis.
- 2.3 To participate in reflection and dialogue on evangelization within the context of the Canadian Catholic Church.
- 2.4 To give specific attention to the following priorities: catechesis for adults, children and youth within parishes and families.
- 2.5 To provide for the formation of those involved in catechesis for adults, children and youth within parishes and families.
- 2.6 To identify changes, needs and opportunities in the Church and society that affect evangelization and catechesis.

- 2.7 To provide catechetical resources for all ages.
- 2.8 To monitor pertinent statements by the Magisterium and documents by the offices of the Holy See as well as other Episcopal Conferences in order to advise the Bishops on developments in evangelization and catechesis.

3. Means

- 3.1 To conduct research and consultations within dioceses in the areas of evangelization, catechesis for adults, children and youth within parishes and families.
- 3.2 To develop resources in accordance with the expressed needs of the dioceses.
- 3.3 To prepare supplementary catechetical resources, with Canadian content, for programs in use within dioceses.
- 3.3 To further enhance and develop resources available on the website www.ongoodsoil.ca as a means to assisting dioceses with pastoral planning for adult faith formation within dioceses.
- 3.4 To promote the use of the *Criteria for Catechesis: Infancy to Age 18* as a tool for vetting programs under consideration for faith education within the dioceses by creating web based resources.
- 3.5 To develop and implement learning opportunities for catechists and directors of adult faith formation using electronic modes of delivery i.e. webinars, and e-learning modules.