



# Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA Office of Faith Formation

## *Appendix 5:* *Evangelizing Adolescent Catechesis* *and the Family*

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### Adolescent Catechesis within the Context of the New Evangelization

*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

John 8:12

Young people search for light, truth, a sense of self, and a vision of what they will become. Searching is a normal stage of adolescent development, by which young people become healthy adults physically, socially, and spiritually. Religious educators and youth ministry leaders are privileged to walk with young people through this journey as they develop into active Roman Catholic Christians. In partnership with families throughout the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, the Church provides a healthy and safe space for young people to develop into faith-filled disciples. The questions before us are: How does the Church walk with young people on this journey? How do we provide opportunities for this exploration? How do we challenge and form young people in the faith? How do we share the Good News? How do we catechize youth and families? And what do we teach?

Saint John Paul II challenged the Church to invite and welcome young people to follow the Gospel. *“This is what is needed: a Church for young people, which will know how to speak to their heart and enkindle, comfort, and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the Gospel and the strength of the Eucharist; a Church which will know how to invite and to welcome the person who seeks a purpose for which to commit his whole existence; a Church which is not afraid to require much, after having given much; which does not fear asking from young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as that of following the Gospel”* (John Paul II, 1995 World Day of Prayer for Vocations).

Archbishop Broglio reiterates the importance of invitation, *“Indeed we are charged at the end of every celebration of the Eucharist to go forth and announce the Gospel we have heard. It is so important to invite others to experience this healing presence of the Lord and His word, which saves. Yours may be the only witness that another experiences! You may be the only ‘evangelist’ (bearer of the Gospel) that he or she meets!”* (Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, Archbishop for the Military Services, *Archbishop’s Year of Faith Pastoral Letter: Seek Peace*, 2012.)

### Role of Partners in Adolescent Catechesis: Parents, Priests, Coordinator of Youth Ministry, Coordinator of Religious Education, and Catechists / Adult Mentors

Youth ministry leaders and all catechetical leaders in partnership with parents are empowered by the Archbishop to evangelize, form and nurture young people in the faith. Empowering young disciples, drawing young people to responsible participation in the life of the Catholic faith community, and fostering spiritual growth is the responsibility of the entire military Catholic faith community, under the leadership and direction of the priest, in collaboration with the pastoral staff and the coordinator of youth ministry.

Military Catholic faith communities and parents seek online support resources from the AMS Office of Evangelization for guidance and input related to passing on the rich heritage of our faith and Catholic teaching, while creating an engaging ministry for youth. In collaboration with the Office of Faith Formation, the Office of Evangelization revised *Curriculum Standards for Adolescent Catechesis* to the language and culture of the military. These standards are consistent throughout the developmental stages of the person, but the indicators are changed. The indicators are designed to

respond to the faith development of adolescents and their realities in the context of the military Catholic faith community setting.

Overseeing adolescent catechesis is the responsibility of the entire military Catholic faith community, the home for catechesis, (DC 244-56). On the Archdiocesan level, the Office of Evangelization provides support for adolescent catechesis, Grades 9 through 12. The Office of Faith Formation oversees military Catholic faith community religious education for children, Grades pre-K through 8. These offices collaborate to provide consistent support to priests, Catholic coordinators and catechists striving to share the faith with young people and their families.

Catechetical leaders and parents recognize that the Director of Religious Education (DRE) is the AMS-endorsed Catholic priest. The Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM) must collaborate with the priest to follow the vision set for the local military Catholic faith community. This shared collaboration extends throughout the Archdiocese as the local Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) takes the primary lead with younger adolescent catechesis (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade) in collaboration with the local Coordinator of Youth Ministry. Alternatively, the CYM takes the primary lead with older adolescent catechesis (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade) in collaboration with the CRE.

As the number of certified part-time and volunteer Coordinators of Youth Ministry increases in the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, military Catholic faith communities are benefiting from a Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) and a Coordinator of Youth Ministry (CYM) who share catechetical responsibilities. They both follow the direction of the AMS-endorsed priest (DRE) who sets the goals for catechesis at the local level. Both roles are essential in fostering Catholic identity in military-connected youth. “The ministry of formation flows from the kerygma and is an essential part of ministries with youth, collegians, and young adults, as it trains one for a life of discipleship, the aim of which is “intimacy with Christ,” (*Listen, Teach, Send*, USCCB, p. 29.)

For many military Catholic faith communities, the CRE also serves as the CYM. For military Catholic faith communities that cannot hire a CYM, the Catholic community may wish to form a Youth Ministry Advisory Team of committed Catholic adults to oversee youth ministry or designate a volunteer Coordinator of Youth Ministry. In both situations, the team and/or volunteer coordinator of youth ministry works under the direction of the AMS-endorsed priest (DRE) to create a vision, recruit adult volunteers (catechists), and empower and engage youth.

### **Catechesis as an essential component of Youth Ministry**

“Evangelizing catechesis has many expressions. For example, formation can and should take place in the home as parents, grandparents, and families share the Catholic faith with their sons and daughters; it may also occur within religious education or classroom settings, in youth or young adult ministries, in informal dialogue groups, one-on-one conversations, dynamic presentations, online learning, and post-event processing, through visual art, theater, or music, and during the sacramental preparation for Confirmation, Marriage, or the Baptism of children of young adults. There are many learning styles and educational methods that can be used in the proclamation of faith. The *Directory for Catechesis* articulates the five interconnected tasks of catechesis inspired by the way Jesus formed his disciples: leading to knowledge of the faith, initiating into the celebration of the mystery, forming for life in Christ, teaching to pray, and introducing to community life (*Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 79-88; *Listen, Teach, Send*, USCCB, p. 30).

To meet the challenge of adolescent catechesis in a youth ministry setting, catechesis must be intentional, relational, and systematic. Intentional, relational, and systematic catechesis for adolescents means creating and implementing a vision of catechesis that is reflective of Catholic identity, seeks understanding of the culture, and considers the developmental needs of young people. Faith formation is at the heart of youth ministry. To be effective and engaging with youth, faith formation should include:

- Facilitation by open-minded, authentic, faith-filled qualified adults
- Engagement of youth's energies
- Community building
- Peer sharing, witness and leadership
- Celebrating Catholic identity
- Seizing teachable moments
- Being experiential, active and innovative
- Moving beyond the 'standard classroom model' to foster active engagement
- Catechesis that engages the young person in internalizing the faith (interior life), living as a disciples of Jesus Christ (behavioral) and growing in knowledge of the Lord (cognitive)

In *Listen, Teach, Send*, (2024), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops sets forth a three-fold plan for ministry with young people modeled on the familiar *Road to Emmaus* scripture passage (Lk 24:13-35):

1. **Listen.** Begin by asking young people, 'What's on your mind?', 'What's on your heart?' This first step draws closer to young people to help them recognize that Christ is fully present.
2. **Teaching.** Having patiently listened, all Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma*. Faith-filled parents, ministry leaders, and peer leaders share through the lens of faith. The four parts of teaching to mission include: proclaiming the kerygma, passing on the evangelizing catechesis, sharing the truth in love, and helping people encounter Jesus in the Eucharist.
3. **Sending.** One of the goals of the Church's accompaniment of youth and young adults is to guide them toward their mission to transform the world toward the Kingdom of God. This encouragement inspires young people to help others recognize that 'Christ is alive.' Extending charity and justice, fostering bold evangelizing witnesses, supporting vocational discernment, and inspiring faithful protagonists today happens when hearts are converted to the Lord and young people are sent forth to move further along the path God has laid out for them in their lives (cf., *Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults*, USCCB 2024.)

### **The Family and the Military Catholic Faith Community Partnership**

*The faith is professed, celebrated, expressed, and lived above all in community: "The communitarian dimension is not just a 'frame,' and 'outline,' but an integral part of the Christian life, of witness and evangelization," (DC 88.)*

*Believing parents, with their daily example of life, have the most effective capacity to transmit the beauty of the Christian faith to their children. "Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for 'an effort of evangelization and catechesis inside the family,'" (DC 124 and AL 200.)*

*The Lord Jesus, who 'sanctified the stage of youth by the very fact that he lived it,' in meeting with young people over the course of his public ministry showed them the Father's kindness, questioned them and inviting to a life of fullness. The Church, manifesting the same solicitude as Jesus, wants to listen to young people with patience, understand their anxieties, have a true heart-to-heart dialogue, accompany them in discerning their life plan. The pastoral care of youth by the Church is therefore to be first of all a humanizing and missionary outreach, which means being capable of seeing the signs of God's love and call in human experience. It is in the light of faith that the search for truth and freedom, the desire to love and be loved, personal aspirations and impassioned commitments to others and to the world find their authentic meaning (DC no. 252.)*

The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfillment of their educational mission to become above all the first catechist of their own children (DC, no. 124). Parents contribute to the spiritual growth of their children by nurturing the intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of their children. "Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God," (CCC 2226.)

*The family is a proclamation of faith in that it is the natural place in which faith can be lived in a simple and spontaneous manner. It "has an unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values" (DC, no. 227). The religious behavior of the parents, whatever it may be, can be called an accurate predictor of religious performance of children. The *Directory of Catechesis* notes that "the Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfillment of their educational mission" to become above all the first catechists of their own children, (DC 124.)*

The catechism states that "the parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for catechesis of children and parents," (CCC 2226). By celebrating the sacraments with their children, parents are already teaching their children not just knowledge about the faith but lived experience of the faith.

When families work together with the military Catholic faith community, the formation of their children is enriched. These two sources, families and the Catholic faith community, have appropriate roles and responsibilities in complementary ways; together they form a partnership in the responsibility for forming children. In this way, Catholic faith communities become schools of discipleship preparing people to live their faith fully and share their faith freely. In this light, parents should be made aware of and asked to participate in teaching these standards, thereby enriching their own faith through the process of catechizing their children.

The following pages suggest ways the family and the Catholic faith community can enhance each stage of their partnership throughout a child's involvement in the Catholic chapel programs. These recommendations are organized around the five tasks of catechesis, (DC 79-88.)

The recommendations that follow should help families and Catholic faith communities to regularly assess how their witness and example can enhance and strengthen the teaching of the standards in this Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide.

- The family recommendations provided here should be shared with families.

- The military Catholic faith community recommendations below should also be shared with various Catholic leaders in the chapel who assist the AMS-endorsed priest (DRE) in planning and organizing the life of the Catholic faith community such as the chapel staff, Catholic faith community pastoral council or finance committee.

It is hoped that by sharing these recommendations, families and military Catholic faith communities may be strengthened in their partnership by being more intentional in helping those who learn the faith also to live the faith -to come to know, love and serve the Lord in this world and to be happier with him in the next.

### **Leading to knowledge of the faith**

Family:	Parents share the Catholic faith story with older adolescents when they turn to the resources of the Catholic faith to respond to moral dilemmas or other challenges of daily living. Values are also shared during family discussions about current events and movies or streaming shows.
Catholic faith community:	The military Catholic faith community complements family catechesis by offering catechetical programming including an active Catholic youth ministry through which teens can come together with their peers and AMS certified catechists to discuss the implications of the Sunday readings for their faith lives. These efforts must include a comprehensive approach that involves young people in the ongoing life of the Catholic faith community rather than only providing isolated gatherings for youth.

### **Initiating into the celebration of the mystery**

Family:	Families celebrate the liturgical year as well as special life events with rituals and prayers from the Catholic tradition. Patterns of celebrating are adjusted at this time to meet the unique needs of the older adolescent. Families discuss the meaning of the sacraments on a deeper level as the teen matures.
Catholic faith community:	The military Catholic faith community invites all confirmed youth to participate fully in the ministries of the Catholic faith community per the particular requirements. Age-appropriate training ought to be provided along with efforts to provide effective mentoring by ministry leaders in the community. Families participate together in a full and active manner in the liturgical life of the Catholic faith community. Teens are introduced to various forms of Catholic spirituality, especially prayer and Lectio Divina that can be easily integrated into daily life. Vocational awareness programs for teens are to be offered on a regular basis.

### **Forming for life in Christ**

Family:	Teenagers face a very different world than the one in which parents may have grown up. It is essential that parents make time to listen to and
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talk with their teenage child. Make the effort to do things together in order to maintain a healthy, open relationship. Openness means that your child is willing to share with you what is happening and what he or she is feeling, not that you agree with everything they say. Let your communication be based on respect, appreciation, and support for one another, while also teaching your child the truth about the Church's moral teaching, their bodies and love. Let your child know they are a beautiful creation of God, made for a wonderful future.

Catholic faith community: Homilies and participation in programs that apply Catholic Social Teaching to issues in the community are opportunities for young people to make the connection with the Gospel and discipleship. Regular participation in the sacrament of reconciliation helps the young person develop the practice of examination of conscience and comfort in seeking and offering forgiveness.

### **Teaching prayer**

Family: Families incorporate prayer into their daily living both individually and together. Families pray together in times of stress, crisis, joy, and celebration and offer prayers of petition, adoration, thanksgiving, or contrition during mealtime or bedtime prayers. Additional responsibilities are given to the teen regarding planning and implementing family prayer rituals. See Appendix 2 for a list of prayers and Catholic practices.

Catholic faith community: The liturgical year has celebrations that are family-focused and offer something for every member of the family, especially the teen. Teens are invited and welcomed to Catholic faith community prayer events. All graduates receive special recognition and a blessing at a regular Sunday liturgy in the spring.

### **Introduction to community life**

Family: Teenagers are very concerned about community life; yet Catholic faith community life is not always high on their priority list. Keeping a vibrant connection to the Catholic faith community (Chapel) is important as the teen encounters the new challenges and opportunities. Teaching your child to live a life of virtue is important. Hopefully, you have a solid foundation to build upon, but if not, it is never too late to begin. As teens learn to live according to the teachings of Christ, they find new strength and freedom in fulfilling God's will for their lives.

Take extra time to discuss and expose your children to the various vocation choices they are facing. Share with them what marriage, priesthood, or religious life is really like. Provide opportunities for them to engage with others in religious experiences that help them make their

faith their own. Encourage them to continue to attend Mass weekly and regular confession through your own example.

Catholic faith community:

Through Catholic faith community outreach teenagers develop a sense of the Catholic character of evangelization. Teenagers come to appreciate service as integral to the Christian life. Offer opportunities of local service and off-site service projects that include opportunities for prayer and reflecting upon ways in which they have encountered Jesus Christ.

The Catholic faith community provides opportunities for families to develop a commitment to learn and apply Catholic Social Teaching in the home and community. This includes active participation of defense of the faith in the Public Square and generous response to archdiocesan and national appeals to aid needy and poor people. This allows teens to develop skills and confidence as evangelizers at home, in school, and in the community.