

Doors are Opening...

Thank God!



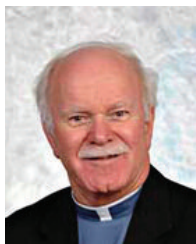
**CATECHETICAL SUNDAY
ANIMATION GUIDE**

2009



Assemblée des
évêques catholiques
du Québec





† Martin Veillette
President of the
Assembly of Quebec
Catholic Bishops

A Message from the President of the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops

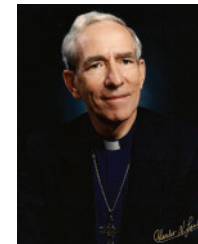
For the first time last year, the parishes and dioceses in Quebec were invited to dedicate the 3rd Sunday in September to catechesis. This event contributed to manifesting, in a joyful way, a new image of catechesis, not only to the people who are directly involved but also to the public at large.

Strengthened by this experience, we are reissuing the invitation this year not only to parishes and dioceses, but also to other places where Christian Life is flourishing: families, faith centers, groups, associations or Christian movements, small faith communities, spirituality, retreat or treatment centers, etc. In addition to parishes, in which the catechetical mission is diversified so as to support all aspects of Church life, these centers are each contributing in their own way to Christian Life formation, in its broadest sense. It is a matter of “opening the way to encounter Christ, the true way to advance the Kingdom for the betterment of people and of our world”¹.

The theme for *Catechetical Sunday 2009, Doors are Opening... Thank God!* is an expression of our desire to imbue our catechetical practices with audacity and creativity and to be open to new requisites, new methods, new strengths. While we may sometimes be confronted by declining numbers in these difficult times, why not adopt a new outlook on what we are doing and on the resources which are available to us by refocusing on the meaning of the catechetical mission and by developing new relationships? In this sense, the theme carries an invitation to experience catechesis throughout the entire year.

On the other hand, this year's theme strives to include catechesis in the Church's never-ending process of furthering the Kingdom for the betterment of people and of society. From this perspective, *Catechetical Sunday* is an occasion to acknowledge the richness of the people and groups who are working in a variety of ways to bring God's Word to all those who are searching for meaning and salvation. Even more, the theme invites all members of the Christian community to be in solidarity and to be responsible, in different ways, for the catechetical mission of the Church. It is a matter of opening the door to one's heart and life to participate, personally and collectively, in the work of furthering the Kingdom for the betterment of people and of the world already begun though the action of the Spirit.

¹ ASSEMBLEE DES ÉVÊQUES DU QUEBEC, *Jésus Christ chemin d'humanisation. Orientations pour la formation à la vie chrétienne*, Montréal, Médiaspaul, 2004, p. 23.



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Catechetical Sunday
2009

A Message from the Spokesperson, Mgr Maurice Couture

I believe that my status as a retired Bishop has allowed me to remain a discreet observer regarding the pastoral concerns of my Church. However, I have been convinced to express my strong support for *Catechetical Sunday*, an initiative which I welcomed last year with great satisfaction.

And for a very good reason! On September 22, 1999, almost ten years to the day before *Catechetical Sunday 2009*, I wrote in a Pastoral Letter on Evangelization: “It is important that, progressively, parishes present a more extensive and comprehensive way to assume the catechetical dimension of Christian education...The Church must assume, as quickly as possible, its responsibilities in this area, regardless of the changes with respect to the place of religion in public schools”.

Catechetical Sunday aims to make visible this catechetical turning point already undertaken by the dioceses and parishes of Quebec. It is intended, above all, to create solidarity around the catechetical mission which is incumbent upon the Church by its very nature. But, more and more, this Church is “us”! It is made up of our families, certainly including children, their parents and many other people of all ages and affiliations.

Concerning the youngest, we are no longer living within a Christian context which assured complementary and harmonious relationships between the school, the family and the parish. Now more than ever, the Christian community must be able to rely on the family to develop the faith in those who are baptized. Because with regards to this subject one thing is certain - Christian practice is destined for failure if it does not receive the strong and active support of the parents.

This catechetical turning point brings with it another requisite - that of proposing to adults of all ages, for whom the catechetical journey is very diverse, new paths for Christian Life Formation, even a new awakening of faith. New proposals are emerging along these lines but even more must be done so that this new outlook permeates all facets of life. And this, while not forgetting the most disadvantaged among us, especially in the difficult economic times through which we are going.

It is to such a rendez-vous that we are invited on *Catechetical Sunday*. It is also a time to give thanks to the Lord for all those who are exercising catechetical responsibility and who are authentic witnesses of faith in their own milieu. My deepest wish is that all Christian communities thus develop a catechetical mentality and become more and more “catechizing”.

Introduction

The goal of *Catechetical Sunday* is to create solidarity around the catechetical mission. In giving it a characteristic both official and festive, we are striving to emphasize the participation of the members of the community along with its different committees – who are all involved in this mission. In addition to parochial Christian communities, other Christian Life Centers are invited to highlight *Catechetical Sunday* and to recognize their own catechetical contribution: for example religious communities or sanctuaries, centers for faith formation or spirituality, community groups, associations or movements in the milieu who are involved in pastoral or spiritual activities, residences for seniors, etc.

The following is an explanation of the objectives, the theme and the animation kit suggested for the different local Christian communities on the occasion of *Catechetical Sunday*, not only as an event to mark a precise moment but also as a catalyst for the different initiatives throughout the whole year.

OBJECTIVES

In each parish, pastoral unit or Christian Life Formation Center, *Catechetical Sunday* is an occasion:

- To let the people of the milieu know about the different catechetical processes offered by the Christian community;
- To mobilize and to highlight the living strengths of the Christian community associated with catechesis for people of all ages;
- To sensitize the Christian community to the importance of their support for the catechetical mission, through their witnessing and through different concrete means.

THEME

Doors are Opening...Thank God!

The theme is an invitation to discover catechesis in a new light, focused on the future. While for a long time it was identified with children, school and with preparation for the sacraments of Christian Initiation, catechesis today is intended for people of all ages and takes on many forms. Its goal is to accompany children, youth, adults, families and communities on their faith journey and in their Christian life, through means adapted to the rhythm and the aspirations of each one.

Catechesis invites us to make room for seeking and journeying with others to encounter Christ. It is also an occasion to be open in our pastoral approaches to the challenges of our contemporary world. In this way, doors within us and around us are being opened: catechesis is the occasion to discover, to change one's outlook and attitudes, to experience reconciliation and transformation. It allows for God's Word to resound as it comes to life in the exchanges and discussions, in the witnessing of those whom we meet, in friendship and solidarity among people, in moments of prayer and celebration, in the actions of daily life. In catechesis, through encountering and being associated with Christ, the way to freedom, justice and peace for all humanity, people and communities are led to open up to each other and to the world.

Today, catechesis is understood as the mission of the entire Christian community. Not only catechists, but also the families play an important role in Christian Life Formation. People involved in different services to the Christian community contribute in a variety of ways to make it dynamic and evangelizing. Each member of the Christian community collaborates in the catechetical mission through the witnessing of his/her life, by his/her words or actions, even the simplest of them. To accomplish its mission, the community itself is invited to allow itself to be catechized and so become a true and living catechesis.

For all those who are contributing to the catechetical mission and for the fruits which are generated in their wake, *Catechetical Sunday* is an occasion to give thanks: *Thank God!*

Animation Kit

1. Suggestions for Celebrations page 12

To show that catechesis concerns the entire Christian community, in solidarity with the catechists and those who exercise a particular responsibility in the catechetical mission, three scenarios may be used as inspiration for the celebration of *Catechetical Sunday* in different milieus, within the framework:

- of a Eucharistic Celebration
- of a Liturgy of the Word
- of a Pastoral or Catechetical launching

These suggestions can be adapted to the particular circumstances of the Christian community celebrating this Sunday, keeping in mind both the specific ways in which they live out their catechetical mission and the people who make it concrete.

2. Homily Suggestions page 20

Beginning with the texts for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year B (corresponding to the 3rd Sunday of September 2009), the tips for reflection and meditation are suggested as inspiration for the homily, in relation to today's catechetical mission. These suggestions can also inspire the liturgy committee for other aspects related to a liturgical celebration.

3. Theme Song page 30

On this occasion, a hymn on the theme *Doors are Opening* is suggested. While it is a composition, (words and music) by Robert Lebel intended for liturgical celebrations, it can also be used to enhance periods of reflection during other types of gatherings. The music score and the CD for the theme song can be found in the animation kit.

4. A Poster *Doors are Opening...Thank God!*

Even though this reality has existed within our Church since its beginnings, catechesis is often misunderstood in our present world and is still associated with children. In order to make known its value and its true nature a poster based on the theme for *Catechetical Sunday* 2009, has been prepared. It can be used in places of worship as well as in other public places. Its goal is to show that not only does

catechesis exist, but it also concerns people of all ages, in keeping with their various concerns. This poster can be used alone as a tool to make people think or it can be used as a catalyst at the time of a meeting, a session or a specific course. An information sheet on the activities proposed by the parish, the pastoral unit or any other Christian Life Center can be displayed near the poster.

5. A DVD with cartoons to facilitate telling Bible stories as a family

As an extension to *Catechetical Sunday* catechists or others involved with families are invited to suggest a complementary step in faith awakening or formation in Christian life. To this end, a sample of the DVD *The Story Keepers* which presents, in the form of cartoons, the life of a Christian family living in Rome in the early days of the Church, can be found in the kit. Through the experiences of this family, each of the three 30 minute episodes suggested by the DVD, puts them in touch with stories about the life of Jesus. This presentation is intended for all families with children from 3 to 11 years old who wish to promote, in an uncomplicated way, the faith awakening of their children within the framework of family life. The DVD comes with a booklet which can lend support to the parents as they dialogue with their children at home.

6. Outline for planning a Christian Life Formation Project page 24

For pastoral teams, parish councils or local catechetical teams who wish to plan a project for Christian Life Formation in their own milieu, an outline is provided. It includes different stages for planning a project beginning with questions to stimulate discussion as a team on all the aspects which need to be considered in order to carry it out.

7. Witnessing from within the milieu

The animation guide for *Catechetical Sunday* 2008 suggested some witnessing by people of various ages regarding their experience as they journeyed within a catechetical group, or on their personal commitment to catechetical service in their milieu. We can again profit from such witnessing which is always relevant².

² A number of samples of the CD are still available at the Office de catéchèse du Québec (OCQ).

This year, however, each Christian community is also invited to find witnesses from among people within its own milieu who can respond to the following question: ***What doors is catechesis opening within me and around me?*** This witnessing can be done at the time of a team meeting, at the end of a catechetical activity, at the time of a parish retreat or gathering of the Christian community, etc. Excerpts from this witnessing can then be posted in the Catechetical Corner or even presented during the Preparation of the Gifts within a Eucharistic celebration... All during the year 2009-2010, this question can be recalled so that it is not only an expression of the witnessing of a few people, but it also becomes the reflection of the entire Christian community.

8. Brochure *Catechism Today... A rendez-vous for people of all ages*

This eight-page brochure, published in 2008, is still relevant. It was designed to answer the questions people most frequently ask about catechesis. It can be used, not only on *Catechetical Sunday*, but also at various times throughout the year. Samples of it can also be “accidentally left” in waiting rooms or other public places where display racks are available. **Samples of this brochure can be obtained from the Christian Life Formation Services in the dioceses of Quebec.**

9. Why a Catechetical Corner? page 26

Catechetical Sunday can be an ideal time to inaugurate or renovate in the parish Church or in any other Christian Life Center a Catechetical Corner, where the members of the community can be informed throughout the year about the catechetical activities and courses being offered. In addition, picture taking, an article in the parish bulletin or the local newspaper, to name but a few, are some of the ways of making the upcoming activities known to the community. In this way, the Catechetical Corner is not only a tool for information, but is also a tool for publicizing events and sensitizing the people in the milieu. Thus, each person can become aware of the call to take time to nourish and enrich his/her faith with others and support those who are committed in a more specific way to the catechetical mission.

10. Think Catechesis throughout the whole year page 28

To maintain the interest awakened on *Catechetical Sunday*, simple suggestions with the aim of developing a reflex to “think catechesis” in different places and at different times, are made. These suggestions include how to use parts of the kit again in a variety of ways so as to stimulate the catechetical mission of the Christian community and its impact in the milieu.

11. Catechists' Prayer page 31

On the 4th page of the cover of the animation guide, you will find the *Catechists' Prayer* which was composed on the occasion of Catechetical Sunday 2008. It can be read with the assembly during a celebration for *Catechetical Sunday*; it can also be used at various team meetings or during times of reflective prayer.

Happy *Catechetical Sunday* Celebrations: May these celebrations instill vitality for the catechetical mission of the Christian Community throughout the Pastoral Year 2009-2010!

The Christian Education
Committee Of the
Assembly of Quebec
Catholic Bishops (AECQ)

Le Regroupement des
responsables diocésains
de la formation à la vie
chrétienne (RFVC)

L'Office de catéchèse
du Québec (OCQ)

Doors are Opening...



..... *Allow room for creativity!*

.....

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Suggestions for celebrating *Catechetical Sunday 2009*

A note for Pastoral Teams and those responsible for Christian Life Centers:

Here are some suggestions to highlight *Catechetical Sunday* within the framework:

- of a Eucharistic Celebration
- of a Liturgy of the Word
- of the launching of the Pastoral or Catechetical Year (a non-liturgical celebration)

In addition to parish Christian Communities, different Christian Life groups involved in the area can be invited to emphasize this event in their own way: for example a religious community or a sanctuary, a faith formation house or spirituality center, associations or groups from the milieu who are involved in pastoral or spiritual life, a Seniors' Residence, etc. In these Christian Life Centers, the following proposals can be adapted taking into account the circumstances and the people who are gathered there. Thus we can celebrate *Catechetical Sunday* with them in solidarity with the parish Christian community and benefit by challenging people to journey in the midst of a catechetical group in their own milieu, in keeping with their particular condition and according to the possibilities that are offered to them.

1. Suggestions for a Eucharistic Celebration

WELCOME

Upon welcoming the people who enter the church, we can ask them to write their names on a card which will be gathered during the Preparation of the Gifts. Care is taken to have pencils and cards available to be distributed at the doors or they can be placed in the benches.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

While the Entrance Procession takes place as usual, we can benefit by using other doors which provide access to the worship space: through these other doors people who are contributing to Christian Life Formation can join in the procession. For example, catechists, members of a family, people who are journeying with catechumens, people who visit the sick, those responsible for youth groups, etc. These people can also be involved at other times during the celebration.

The theme song for *Catechetical Sunday 2009* is sung.

The following suggestion may be used:

Good Morning! When you arrived today you either pushed or pulled a door. Happily, it opened! You were expected, even hoped for. On the other side, upon hearing the doors opening, we were silently saying: Thank God, a variety of people of all ages are arriving from everywhere to celebrate with us. When we open a door, we risk the unknown which can bring about a feeling of surprise or disappointment. Today, all these doors which are opening become an invitation to form one community and to celebrate in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Kyrie may be introduced in the following way:

*Let us open our hearts to the presence of others, even though it is sometimes difficult.
Let us open our hearts to the presence of God, even though we sometimes do not hear him.*

The Glory to God may be introduced with the help of these words: *Today, parishes and different Christian Life Centers across Quebec are emphasizing Catechetical Sunday: Doors are Opening... Thank God! In effect, we are underlining the beauty of the practice of people of all ages who are journeying in the Christian faith. At the same time we pay tribute to all those who have accepted to accompany them and journey with them. For all these seekers of God, let us give glory to God.*

The following words may be used:

The first reading reflects upon the outlook of those who reject God; let us pay attention to the faith of the just person which can be discretely heard amid the tumult of violence which is being directed against him...

The following is a suggestion for introducing the Psalm:

It would be beneficial to read and mediate on today's Psalm more than once. For a long time, Scripture passages have proposed paths to prayer for believers. Let us open our hearts.

The Psalm may be read with soft music being played in the background.

OPENING HYMN

GREETING

KYRIE

GLORY TO GOD

FIRST READING

Wisdom 2, 12,17-20

PSALM

SECOND READING

James 3, 16-4, 3

This reading may be introduced in the following way:

James compares two types of wisdom, one of which dominates the community to which he is speaking. Let us allow ourselves to be challenged by this letter which is still relevant today!

**GOSPEL
ACCLAMATION
AND HOMILY**

During the acclamation of the Gospel, a number of people can be invited to light candles from the Pascal candle. For example, a member of the pastoral team, a family, catechists, catechumens, any of those who came in through one of the doors at the beginning of the celebration.

The homily may be a shared homily with the assembly taking part. This would consist of a dialogue with those who have been given candles and who have accepted beforehand to participate in the dialogue. The homilist can use the homily suggestions included in the Animation Guide for inspiration.

CREED

The Creed may be introduced in the following way:

People have always been searching for a meaning to their existence. As Christians, our lives find meaning in encountering Jesus Christ, the true way to the Father. The precise goal of Catechesis is to enable this encounter, so that it can transform our lives and our world. Together, let us profess the Church's faith which is an expression of her reason for existing as well as her ongoing mission.

**PRAYER OF THE
FAITHFUL**

The following intercessions may be used:

Our prayer is universal in its dimension. Let us pray for one another.

- *For children, youth and adults who are searching for meaning: That in encountering Christ they may find the way to a more humane world...*
- *For catechists, for those involved in Christian life formation: That they may be welcoming to those who are searching, those who have doubts and those who are seeking help so that they may grow in their faith.*
- *For Christian communities and for families: That the Gospel may inspire resolutions to the conflicts or tensions that arise and that the differences between people may serve as riches yet to be discovered.*

Father, may our hearts remain open to be welcoming, and to accept the inconvenience which may come about through the presence of others. We ask this through Jesus your beloved Son.

An action is suggested for members of the assembly who wish to participate: by placing the card on which they have already written their name (upon entering the church) in a basket; they signify that they are aware that they are involved in catechesis. One can be involved in different ways: by becoming aware of their own need to grow in faith, by undertaking a step to deepen their faith with others, or by putting into practice simple acts such as listening, welcoming and being in solidarity with people who are seeking or journeying in faith: one can also be involved in catechesis by accompanying a person or a group in Christian life formation in one's own milieu.

At the time of the collection, baskets filled with the cards are circulated row by row, by volunteers. These baskets can then be carried to the altar at the same time as the bread and wine. Through this action, we signify that catechesis is an invitation given to each one, whatever their age, their availability and their abilities.

The following may be useful:

Today we have celebrated God our Father who is present to his people now and forever... present through the Word heard and carried out... present through the shared Eucharist... present through words and actions which speak of sharing, forgiveness, comfort, solidarity, and friendship.

Father, we ask you to bless the members of this community. May they always have the desire to draw closer to you and to make your name known. We ask you to bless the catechists who have opened the door to their hearts so as to experience an encounter with your Son Jesus. We ask you to sustain them, be with them and fill them with your Spirit who opens the door to the Gospel!

**PREPARATION
OF THE GIFTS****DISMISSAL**

2. Suggestions for a Liturgy of the Word

Since the whole community is implicated in catechesis, we can also invite to this celebration, those who are involved in the:

- Different services from the parish Christian community (solidarity and social justice, liturgy, pastoral services linked to the sacraments – baptism of infants and school-age children, confirmation of youth and adults, catechumenate for youth and adults, marriage, etc., grief ministry, pastoral ministry to the sick and aged, movements and groups of all ages, wardens, etc.)
- Movements, associations or community groups from the milieu who are involved in pastoral or spiritual life, religious communities, faith sharing groups, etc.

OPENING

Read the Psalm (Ps 53 (54), 3-4, 5.7b, 6.8) with the music from the theme song for 2009 being played softly in the background.

GREETING

The following words may be used:

Good morning to each one of you. Today, parishes and different Christian life centers across Quebec are celebrating Catechetical Sunday. This event is a special occasion to highlight all that is being done for children, youth, adults and families in our communities so that they may grow in faith. It is also an occasion to thank all those who are working, in the catechetical mission.

GLORY TO GOD

Thank you God for being here! I now invite you to stand and sing Glory to God.

SPOKESPERSONS WHO ARE PRESENT

A representative from each parish committee (group, movement or association from the milieu) can be invited to share on the fruit of their work as well as on their goals for the coming year. Remember to allow someone representing the catechists to speak. Each spokesperson should see to it that a paper on which he/she has written the name of the committee or group which he/she represents has been prepared in advance.

At the end of each statement, the Presider says: *Thank God!*
The assembly replies: *Thank God!*

HYMN

The theme song for 2009 is sung.

These words may be used to introduce it:

Let us now listen attentively to today's reading with its challenges which are still relevant to us today.

Someone from the assembly carries a candle which is then lit near the ambo where the reading of the Gospel will take place.

After the reading, allow for a discussion based on the different texts from the Liturgy of the Word to take place among the people present. Ideas can be taken from the homily suggestions included in the kit to answer this question: How do these texts inspire us to continue in our respective commitments, in the different aspects of the catechetical mission?

A Prayer over the Gifts may be composed or one which already exists may be used. During the reading of this prayer, someone from the assembly can bring and set up the poster for *Catechetical Sunday 2009 (Doors are Opening...Thank God!)* in the Catechetical Space.

A basket, in which the names of committees, different groups, movements and other centers for Christian life formation can also be placed at the foot of the ambo or in the Catechetical Space. The representatives from these committees and centers, who spoke at the beginning of the celebration, are invited to place the name of their group in the basket.

Committee representatives who spoke at the beginning of the celebration then form a human chain in the area where the offerings were placed being careful not to block the assembly's view of this area (the ambo or the Catechetical Space). All the members of the community are then invited to form human chains where they are, as they recite or sing the Our Father.

The following words may be used:

Today we have celebrated God our Father who is present to his people now and forever... present through the Word heard and carried out... present through our shared faith...present through words and actions which speak of sharing, forgiveness, comfort, solidarity, and friendship.

Father, we ask you to bless the members of this community. May they always have the desire to draw closer to you and to make your name known. We ask you to bless the catechists who have opened the door to their hearts so as to experience an encounter with your Son Jesus. We ask you to sustain them, be with them and fill them with your Spirit who opens the door to the Gospel!

READING

James 3, 16-4, 3

READING OF THE GOSPEL

Mark 9, 30-37

GESTURE AND PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS

OUR FATHER

DISMISSAL

CLOSING HYMN

3. Suggestions for the launching of the Pastoral or Catechetical Year

PREPARATION

This gathering may be held outside, for example in a park, for a picnic, or in a location large enough to organize a brunch, even in an area where catechesis takes place. The members of the pastoral team will see to the animation and unfolding of this gathering.

Where possible, more than one Christian community can be involved by alternating the location where the event is held from one year to the next. In this way the event can be given broader recognition, especially in rural areas.

Care should be taken to bring pictures illustrating the major activities in the recent life of the community.

INVITATION

Of course, it is appropriate to personally invite the catechists and the different people at various stages of catechesis: children, adolescents, adults and families. It is also desirable to invite people involved in the different services of the parish Christian community (solidarity and social justice, liturgy, pastoral services linked to the sacraments – baptism, marriage, etc.–, grief ministry, movements and groups of all ages, wardens, etc.).

Finally, to show the diversity of the contributions of the Christian community to the catechetical mission, we can add to the list of invitations people responsible for the different Christian life centers in the area. For example, movements, associations or community groups in the milieu whose work is pastoral or spiritual, religious communities, faith sharing groups, seniors' residences, retreat houses and houses of prayer, etc. In this way, we are sending a message that catechesis does not happen only in a room in the rectory or in the basement of the church, but can happen almost anywhere we want it to.

OPENING

A member of the pastoral team or a person responsible for the animation committee thanks the people present who have responded to the invitation and emphasizes the collaboration of people and groups who have contributed to the organization of the gathering. Remind them that Christian communities are celebrating because they are alive through the participation of their members. The community is a gathering of people who put their talents at the service of others. Point out, at this the beginning of the year, the important and invaluable contribution of each one.

The celebration continues with the singing of the theme song for *Catechetical Sunday 2009*.

Each person representing a committee, a Christian Life Center or a group from the milieu such as the pastoral team, first announces the goals to be followed by their committee or the group which he/she represents and then the main challenges for the coming year and, where possible, some ways of overcoming them. It goes without saying that this time for speaking will have been preceded by a meeting to plan and prepare as a team.

After each presentation, a verse of the hymn can be sung or “*Thank God*” can be chanted together. This is also a good time to sign a “*Community Book*” in which the names of committees, places and groups are written indicating the names of the people responsible. One can take advantage of the time when the book is being signed to take pictures.

If a meal is planned, whether it be a picnic or a brunch, the musicians from the community can be called upon to create a pleasant atmosphere.

To bring the celebration to an end, a prayer of Sending Forth is suggested. It can be read by a person who exercises a leadership role in the community: the priest, the parish catechetical leader or a member of the pastoral team.

Suggested Prayer for the Sending Forth:

Today we have celebrated God our Father who is present to his people now and forever... present through the diversity of people gathered here... present through the Word shared... present through the words and actions which serve to build a more humane world in solidarity, love and hope.

Father, we ask you to bless the members of this community. May they always have the desire to draw closer to you and to make your name known. We ask you to bless the catechists who have opened the door to their hearts so as to experience an encounter with your Son Jesus. We ask you to sustain them, be with them and fill them with your Spirit who opens the door to the Gospel!

A TIME TO SPEAK

MEAL TIME

TIME FOR LEAVING

THEME SONG

Suggestions for the Homily Catechetical Sunday September 20, 2009

INTRODUCTION

The homily suggestions are based on the texts from the liturgy for the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time. At first glance, these texts are upsetting and leave a bitter taste: they seem far removed from what concerns catechesis and the festive spirit of *Catechetical Sunday*! Why were texts more directly linked to this celebration not chosen? Because the Liturgy of the Word introduces us to the very dynamics of catechesis: it consists of welcoming the Word given to us in faith by the Church and not in choosing that which we would like to hear. We are invited to listen to the Word, to let ourselves be challenged by it and then allow it to lead us to places other than the roads already mapped out by our own convictions. The road proposed to us in catechesis has, since its inception, consisted of allowing the Word of God to resonate so that it may become alive for us today.

In order to facilitate the preparation of the homily, suggestions are given for all the texts used in the Liturgy of the Word and which relate to one another. First, these suggestions are closely tied to the essence of the texts so that they bring out certain key elements of the reading promoting ownership of the texts by the homilist. Secondly, the challenges for today are presented as many doors to be opened on the occasion of *Catechetical Sunday*; these suggestions can directly bring inspiration for developing the homily.

Understanding the texts: a few key thoughts

*Of rivalries,
jealousy and
schemes...*

The readings for this Sunday, each in their own way, present schemes, jealousy and rivalry:

- In the 1st reading and in the Psalm, the adversaries of the faithful one seek to test him and to see him done away with. Two opposing points of view: those who plan to do evil and do not care about God on one side and on the other side, the righteous person who is close to God and who counts on his help.
- In the letter of James, conflict and rivalry is tearing the Christian community apart: we see division among them because even though they share the same faith, they are following their instincts for jealousy and greed, each in their own way.
- In the Gospel, the disciples are discussing among themselves who is the greatest: even among the disciples of Jesus, rivalry is at work...

In each of these texts, we see that the rivalry and conflicts lead to a dead end. The letter of James is particularly explicit: the spirit of rivalry, of jealousy and of greed lead to unproductive conflicts, to war. Nothing good can come from it, even prayer remains shallow!

...that leads nowhere

In contrast to the impression of cynicism and desolation which the texts may leave, each one of them allows the faith and hope of those who welcome God to show through:

- The excerpt from the Book of Wisdom profiles the faith of the just person in relationship to God who watches over him and who intervenes to deliver him from his adversaries.
- The Psalm is a prayer which is marked by both suffering and serenity: what underlies the psalmist's call for help is his faith in God who is good and who offers his unfailing support.
- In contrast to the spirit of rivalry, James recalls the wisdom which comes from God and which produces the fruit of justice and peace and is "a harvest of righteousness", as the letter says.

*The faith and hope
of those
who welcome God
bear fruit!*

In the Gospel, Jesus draws his disciples' discussion to what is essential: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." So, from God's point of view, one becomes great when he/she moves away from the logic of rivalry and enters into one of service and self-effacement, for the benefit of others. Is this not what Jesus himself did, even to death on the cross?

*Welcoming the lowly
is the way to God.*

Another key to the reading is given in the last part of the Gospel: this scene shows Jesus welcoming a child. Through this gesture, Jesus indicates to his disciples the path to follow: To welcome the least of the least in Jesus' name is to welcome Jesus himself and, in so doing, is to welcome God. Disputes surrounding the question "Who is the greatest?" no longer hold up: for the disciples of Jesus, the path to the Father is found in welcoming the least among us.

Suggestions for the homily: How do these texts challenge us on this Catechetical Sunday?

*Conflicts and rivalries in
our own relationships:
as many doors
are closing...*

This Sunday's texts plunge us abruptly and with realism into the tribulations of human relations: conflict and rivalry is never far away, even in Christian communities of which we are a part. In fact, being brothers and sisters in Christ does not spare us from the difficulties of forming a family consisting of a variety of people not of our choosing. Does not every family have its share of tensions and suffering, where love and jealousy intermingle?

Even in catechetical projects, occasions for conflict are not lacking: we might disagree on what we believe to be the "right texts" for catechesis or the "right way" of doing it... When we do not listen and when we search for who is right ("who is the greatest"?), we are following a dead end which leads to division and a turning in on ourselves: That is when many doors close!

*The challenge
for the community:
to become a
living catechesis!*

The challenge to form community is given to us today: in welcoming the "wisdom from above", we, in our human relationships, can find a way of understanding, of tolerance, of integrity, of loyalty. Moreover, to follow Christ means to break away from the rationale of competition and of personal gain so that we can care for others and be of service to them. This is what catechesis does: gathering people around the Word of God opens doors within ourselves and around ourselves, between people of all generations and diversities, building a community capable of welcoming and of giving. Such a community becomes a true living catechesis, a witnessing of mutual support and solidarity which speaks of God to those who are seeking him!

*Opening the door
to the lowliest
and the poorest:
the way of
Christ's disciples.*

God's Word, which is addressed to us today, finds an echo in this Sunday's theme: Doors are opening... Thank God! Opening doors means welcoming others and allowing them to come in and take the risk of being transformed. Who are these others? Jesus tells us that they are the lowliest and those considered to be the least. We can not welcome Jesus if we do not open the door to the most vulnerable, the most diverse.

No matter our age and our situation, we are invited to let ourselves be transformed by the lowliest, those who are suffering, those who are rejected or ignored. In welcoming these people, and more than

that, through the acts of service and of giving which we undertake, we truly become disciples of Christ who is the way to freedom, justice and peace.

As disciples of Christ we are invited to hope and to trust, not to flee from the world, but rather to build it up. Numerous people respond to this call in many ways: through them, our community becomes catechized while it is catechizing :

- Each member of the Christian community contributes to catechesis, through the witnessing of his/her life, by words and actions, even the most simple;
- Families, including many grandparents, play an important role in Christian life formation;
- various people and many groups contribute to building up a vibrant, welcoming and evangelizing community: solidarity and social justice committees, liturgy teams, pastoral teams linked to the sacraments – baptism, marriage, etc.–, pastoral teams in grief ministry, movements and groups of all ages, wardens, etc.
- finally, catechists are neither experts nor perfect beings but are men and women of good will who have accepted to give a little of their time, their energy, their talent and their faith experience in the service of others.

On this *Catechetical Sunday*, we have the occasion to give thanks for all those who are contributing to nourishing our hope and to building a more humane world: *Thank you!*

*For all those who are
nourishing hope
and building
a more humane world:
Thank God!*

PLANNING A PROJECT

Outline for planning a Christian Life Formation Project

For parish teams or pastoral councils • For teams responsible for Christian Life Formation

In line with Catechetical Sunday, here is an outline for pastoral teams or parish councils who wish to plan a project for Christian Life Formation in their own milieu.

Planning Stages

WHAT?

What is our project?

What do we want to accomplish?

FOR WHOM?

Who are the people we wish to target through this project? (their age, their socio-religious situation, their needs - either expressed or perceived, etc.)

WHY?

What is our goal for this project?

What needs do we wish to respond to?

UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS?

What are our assets (the strengths, the support on which we can count in our milieu) to carry out this project?

What are the obstacles, the difficulties, the resistance to be taken into account in carrying out this project?

BY WHOM?

Who can assure the implementation of this project?

How do we recruit them? How do we support them in their duties?

HOW?

What means, approaches or courses do we want to use to implement the project?

WHERE?

Determine the location for the project : What are the advantages and/or the inconveniences of this place? How can we best benefit from it?

WHEN?

Establish the calendar for the project (the beginning, duration, frequency, dates for meetings): Does the calendar take into account the other pastoral projects which may involve the same people from the milieu?

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

Through what means, by whom and when will the communication for and the promotion of this project be implemented?

EVALUATION

How, by whom and when will the realization of this project be evaluated?

Our project

Building a Catechetical Corner

Catechetical Sunday is an ideal time to inaugurate a Catechetical Corner in your parish church or in any other center involved with Christian Life Formation. In places where a catechetical space was already set up at the time of Catechetical Sunday 2008, you may benefit from this time to renovate it or to give it a certain perspective particular to this year. Manifesting the vitality of the community, this space will help the members to stay informed about the catechetical courses and activities for Christian Life Formation being offered. It will stimulate curiosity by making known what the children, youth, adults and families are experiencing in these courses. Little by little, it will become a way of developing a sense of belonging within the community, and of solidarity with its catechetical mission.

What is a Catechetical Corner?

It would consist of a certain area in your parish church or other Christian Life Center (a side chapel, an entranceway, notice boards...) where the catechetical activities which are taking place in your milieu can be highlighted. This space is...

Progressive

The information is updated in keeping with the life of the parish and the catechetical processes.

Informative

Information on registration, dates, names of people to contact, suggested readings, bulletins about catechetical endeavors and leaflets can be found there. Samples of the brochure "*Catechism Today... A Rendez-Vous for people of all ages*" can also be placed there.

Unifying

Care should be taken to include information for each of the age groups concerned (children, adolescents, adults who are not yet confirmed and catechumens, parents who are requesting Baptism for their child...)

Appealing

The preparation and layout of this Catechetical Corner should reflect good taste with a concern for quality. The official poster for *Catechetical Sunday* would be most appropriate for this space.

Worthwhile

So that this Catechetical Corner is more than a simple bulletin board, the information must be posted in such a way that the visual elements and the texts highlight these important facets: the communal aspect of faith, the commitment of the volunteers, the wealth of discoveries made by the participants, the young people's joy, the parents' pride...

Stable

Since the layout of this Catechetical Corner aims to emphasize, from now on, the importance accorded to catechesis in your milieu, it is desirable that certain "permanence" be accorded to whatever space is set up. In this way, people can discover that catechesis evolves in keeping with the rhythm of the seasons and the liturgical year.

The Technical Plan

The cost of a Catechetical Corner may be small but its impact can be great. The way of designing it can be very simple. For example, styrofoam or plasticized panels can be used. A thematic banner can be posted on them: Our Catechetical Corner, Catechesis in Our Community or Catechesis for People of All Ages. Then a simple way of gathering information (the age groups, the type of information, etc.) must be found. One person can assure that this information is updated by regularly: adding photos, posting texts produced by those who are journeying through catechetical process, special invitations... In parishes where there is a team of animators those connected to the role of faith education can assume the task of keeping this space which is dedicated to keeping catechesis alive. On occasion, these people can remind the members of the community that a catechetical space awaits them.

Thinking Catechesis throughout the whole year!

Catechetical Sunday is an important time to refocus on the catechetical mission of the Christian community and its impact in the milieu. Once the event is over, the challenge to maintain interest throughout the coming months remains! Without a doubt, thinking catechesis during the entire year is a response which needs to be encouraged. For those with this goal in mind, here are a few suggestions to make the task easier. To encourage recycling... several elements in the kit can be used more than once.

PLACES

First, let us think of places in which to develop this reflex for catechesis throughout the entire year. As the theme indicates, catechesis allows for doors to open. Baptism and marriage preparation courses are places where people can be sensitized to catechesis for adults. Young people's journey through catechetical courses remains an important place for Christian life formation for them as well as for the adults who are accompanying them. Social Action Services and all other places where care is given to those who are in any way disadvantaged also serve as stepping stones for drawing closer to Christ.

Different volunteer organizations can benefit by being open to suggestions and to organizing catechetical activities and the accompaniment of people, while not forgetting those who are working in the midst of these committees.

TIMES

There are times conducive to the implementation of catechetical courses. For example, for some it may be the beginning of the pastoral year, while for others it may be the month of January, a good time to resolve to deepen one's faith. The high points of Advent and Lent are always pertinent times to begin one's journey again.

SUGGESTIONS

Here are some suggestions for using parts of the kit :

- **The Poster** for Catechetical Sunday can be displayed anywhere we find a gathering place, a place where celebrations are held during the week or weekends, and at all other welcoming places (rectory, community center).

• The Theme Song for Catechetical Sunday

It is a reminder of the doors that are opening through catechesis... Can be used again at celebrations of Baptism, First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation; the end of preparation meetings for the sacraments; the time of registration for catechetical courses and at important moments on the catechetical journey; celebrations on Vocation Sunday , celebrations on Mission Sunday, celebrations of the parish's Patron Saint; parish gatherings or to highlight the anniversary of the parish, at formation sessions for catechists and at the parish or diocesan levels.

• Catechists' Prayer

This can be used after each formation session for catechists at the parish and diocesan level.

Ideas linked to parts of the kit for *Catechetical Sunday 2009*

- In the suggestions for celebrating *Catechetical Sunday* within the framework of a Liturgy of the Word, at the time of the Prayer of Thanksgiving, it is suggested that the poster *Doors are Opening... Thank God!* be brought up and displayed in the Catechetical Corner. It is also suggested that a basket in which the names of committees, groups or movements and other Christian Formation Centers have been collected, also be placed there.
- The Catechetical Corner can be used to familiarize families with the *The Story Keepers' DVD*. Why not show excerpts from it by setting up a DVD player?
- It would be interesting to suggest that families set up a Catechetical Corner at home. They can use suggestions found in the booklet which accompanies *The Story Keepers' DVD*.
- Just as with the Catechetical Corner for the Christian community, the catechetical space at home can be maintained throughout the year, and especially linked to each of the high points of the liturgical year (Advent, Christmas Season, Lent, Easter Season, etc.).

Allow room for creativity!

THEME SONG

Robert Lebel
Words & music

Doors are opening...

A door is opened
Whenever hearts reach out to God,
When they discover
God's presence even in their doubt;
And when they journey,
Surprised to find they're not alone;
And when they fathom
The depth of love that brings them home.

A door is openened,
The Spirit flies both bright and free,
A glowing presence,
A burning flame of liberty.
A door is opened
And Jesus, suddenly, is here:
Our eyes are opened...
As from our sight he disappears.

Chorus **Yes, doors are opening:
To God the Spirit's breath...
Yes, doors are opening
To welcome Life itself,
Yes, doors are opening
Thanks to God!**

A door is openend
Which has been, until now, closed tight:
So many poor ones
Have neither voice, nor strenght, nor sight.
But, here is Good News:
The Church is true community
Where all are welcomed
To live in solidarity.



A door is opened
When echoes forth God's living Word:
Both in our speaking
And in our acts it can be heard,
Becoming language
That speaks to folk of every age,
Of every color,
Of every stripe, of every stage.

CATECHISTS' PRAYER



Dear Lord,

You know that in my life I look
for signs of your presence.
At times I search blindly in the darkness.
At times during the brightest moments
of my daily life I search for You.
You have already shown Yourself to me,
and this is why again I look for You.
I look for you in the witnessing of the
people whom I meet.

I remember in prayer all those whom
I encounter as together we journey
toward You.
Give me the grace to be a presence
in a welcoming Church.
Lord may our dialogue and exchange
be an echo of your words in our lives
and in our communities.

Lord help us to transform our approach
so that as we embark on our journey,
together with others whom you have
placed on the same road, together we
will recognize the signs of Your Kingdom.
Lord help us to transform our hearing,
so that we may listen to your call
to live the Gospel.
Help us to transform our actions,
so that we may continue to follow
in your footsteps, and make the world
a more just and compassionate place.

We ask this through Christ our Lord...

Amen!



The invitation to celebrate *Catechetical Sunday* is addressed to the dioceses and parishes of Quebec by the Christian Education Committee of the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops. The production of materials was the responsibility of the l'Office de catéchèse du Québec in consultation with the Comité de l'éducation chrétienne de l'AECQ et le Regroupement des responsables diocésains de la formation à la vie chrétienne (RFVC).

**To obtain materials for *Catechetical Sunday*, please contact the
Christian Life Formation Office of your diocese or the l'Office de catéchèse du Québec.**

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