



# Nurturing the Growth of *Living Witnesses* THE ADULT CATECHUMENATE

A new vision of the Church has been offered in *Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate*. Like any innovation the use of this process will take time in its acceptance and implementation. Two decades or longer would not seem an unusually long time for the understanding and rites of initiation to become customary practice in parish life.

Offered in this pamphlet is information on the stages that institutions undergo during an innovation. This *Stages of Concern and Level of Use* material is intended for synodical and regional training teams in the adult catechumenate in assisting parishes and pastors at various points of interest. Your extensions and suggestions to this document are invited.

## Encouraging the Ministry of Living Witnesses: The Adult Catechumenate

Through conversation we are able to tell from conversation the stage of concern about the catechumenate which pastors and people are expressing. For the nonuser, personal concerns about “what the catechumenate is” and “what it means for *my* parish” are intense, and concerns about the impact of the change on the parish are relatively low. For parishes using *Living Witnesses*, concerns about management will increase and informational and personal concerns will diminish. In the later stages, the parish will face consequence and collaborative concerns. Offered here are some suggestions about what might help pastors and parishes move from one stage of concern to another as the adult catechumenate is introduced and refined within parishes.

### Stage 0: Awareness Concerns

*“I don’t know anything about it.” “I don’t care to know.” “My mind is on other things right now.”*

- a. Acknowledge that little concern is legitimate and appropriate;
- b. Share human interest stories about the catechumenate in hopes of arousing interest;
- c. Tie the catechumenate to some aspect of ministry that the pastor or parish is involved in or concerned about;
- d. Encourage the pastor or parishioners involved in the process to talk with others about the catechumenate;
- e. Give reasons for the usefulness and relevance of the catechumenate.
- f. Use entry points like *Praying the Catechism*, confirmation ministry, or a bible study by itself.
- g. Maintain a network of all those interested from regional presentations and training sessions.

### Stage 1: Information Concerns

*“I only have a superficial picture and would like to know more.” “It is related to what I am interested in, but I don’t know enough to say very much about it.”*

- a. Share descriptive information through presentation sessions, personal conversation, videos, mailed brochures, etc.;
- b. Provide information contrasting what is currently being done with what the catechumenate innovation would entail;
- c. Provide an opportunity to visit a pastor or parish where the catechumenate is being used;

## Stages of Concern

**0 Awareness:** Little concern about or involvement with the catechumenate is indicated.

**1 Informational:** A general awareness of the catechumenate and interest in learning more about it is indicated. Pastors are interested in an open manner in the essence of the innovation such as theological bases, effects on the parish, and cultural shifting.

**2 Personal:** Pastors are uncertain about the demands of the catechumenate, their inability to meet those demands, and their role with the catechumenate. This includes decision making and consideration of potential conflicts in existing parish structure or personal commitment.

**3 Management:** Attention is focused on the processes of using the catechumenate and the best use of the *Manual* and resources. Issues related to organizing, managing, and timing are utmost.

**4 Consequence:** Attention focuses on the impact of the catechumenate on the parish and on the relevance of the change for parish members.

**5 Collaboration:** The focus is on coordination and cooperation with other parishes regarding the catechumenate, synodically and nationally as well as interfaith sharing.

**6 Refocusing:** The focus is on exploration of greater congregational and more churchwide benefits from the catechumenate, including the possibility of more intensive use, extension, or adaptation. This stage occurs after the parish has been through the catechumenal process several times.

**“Catechumens themselves  
become sacraments for the  
entire parish assembly — vis-  
ible signs of invisible grace.”**

**~ James B. Dunning**

- d. Express enthusiasm and involve others who are excited about what has been happening;
- e. State realistic expectations about the benefits (and demands) associated with its use.
- f. Select articles and materials appropriate to expressed concerns, like relationship of catechumenate to small faith communities or to youth work.

### **Stage 2: Personal Concerns**

*"I am committed to deepening the way our congregation prepares for baptism, but I worry about how I will balance this new catechumenate ministry with an already full slate of ministries"*

- a. Maintain rapport and give encouragement through conversations, visits, or letters;
- b. Encourage catechumenate use in small manageable ways or in ways that relate directly to some aspect of current ministry;
- c. Clarify how the catechumenate relates to other parish priorities that are potential conflict in terms of energy and time demands on pastors and parishes;
- d. Show how the catechumenate can be used by gradual introduction rather than with an all-encompassing leap and how to set reasonable, easy-to-meet expectations;
- e. Provide personal support through easy access to synodical catechumenate teams who can be supportive and of assistance;
- f. Legitimize the expression of personal concerns by pastors and parishes.

### **Stage 3: Management Concerns**

*"It takes all of my time to get ready for Sunday." "There is simply no more time for another extension of my/our time."*

- a. Acknowledge the appropriateness of management concerns; offer assurance that they can be resolved;
- b. Provide answers in ways that easily address the "how-to" issues that are the cause of concern;
- c. Show how the catechumenate can be coordinated with other parts of parish ministry, so that it is perceived as fitting in rather than adding on;
- d. Have other pastors/parishes share information about their successful and unsuccessful practices;
- e. Demonstrate or provide a model and appropriate resources for effective use of the catechumenate;
- f. Assist with planning one specific task and maintain interest and contact;
- h. Set a timeline for accomplishments of relatively simple and specific tasks;
- g. Become part of a catechumenate support group in a parish;
- h. Show how management concerns can be addressed by the catechumenate team coordinator so that the pastor can focus on the ministry she or he is already doing;

- i. Show how the resource *Gathered for Worship* outlines catechumenal responsibilities for each Sunday of the church year.

### **Stage 4: Consequence Concerns**

*"I wonder how to adapt the catechumenate next time." "I wonder how the rest of the congregation feel about this change."*

- a. Visit and encourage the pastor/parish team;
- b. Send written information about other parishes' use of the catechumenate which may be helpful;
- c. Advertise the parish's potential for sharing their experience with others;
- d. Encourage the pastor and parish team to attend a convention or workshop to explain their skills to others or to refine their use.

### **Stage 5: Collaboration Concerns**

*"If I could team up with another pastor to work, we might add much more power to the catechumenate in both our parishes."*

- a. Arrange a meeting between the interested individuals for idea exchange;
- b. Encourage parish at this level to assist others in use of the catechumenate;
- c. Encourage promotion of collaborative efforts by verbal encouragement, materials, and/or linkages toward the development of a "collaborative" awareness;
- d. Bring in a facilitator, possibly under synod auspices, to develop skills and resources in collaborative efforts;
- e. Create opportunities for pastor/parish team to circulate outside their present parish and work with others who may be less informed or experienced with the catechumenate.

### **Stage 6: Refocusing Concerns**

*"I have some ideas about another way this that will work even better."*

- a. Involve pastors and parishes as trainers in other parishes;
- b. Encourage the individuals to take action with respect to their new ideas;
- c. Provide them with the resources to access the other materials that may help them and encourage them to pilot test the changes;
- d. Encourage the writing of appropriate extension materials and resources.

*Adapted from Hall, Wallace, and Dossett, "A Developmental Conceptualization of the Adoption Process Within Educational Institutional" and "The LoU Chart: Operational Definitions of Levels of Use of the Innovation." Austin: Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, The University of Texas, 1973 and 1975.*

## **Levels of Use of Living Witnesses**

**0 Nonuse:** The pastor or parish has little or no knowledge of the catechumenate, no involvement with it, and is doing nothing toward its implementation.

**1 Orientation:** The parish and/or pastor has recently acquired information or is acquiring information about the catechumenate and/or has recently explored or is exploring its value and requirements.

**2 Preparation:** The pastor and parish is preparing for first use of the catechumenate.

**3 Mechanical Use:** The pastor and parish team focuses most effort on the short-term, weekly use of the catechumenate with little time for reflection. Changes in use are made more to meet parish needs than inquirers or catechumens' needs. The pastor/parish team is primarily engaged in a step-by-step attempt to accomplish the tasks required to use the catechumenate, often resulting in disjointed and superficial use.

**4A Routine:** Use of the catechumenate is stabilized. Few if any changes are being made in ongoing use. Little thought is given to improving catechumenate use or its consequences.

**4B Refinement:** The parish varies the use to increase the impact on parishioners. Variations are based on knowledge of both short- and long-term consequences on the faithful.

**5 Integration:** The parish team is combining own efforts to use the catechumenate with neighbouring parishes to achieve a collective impact on the faithful.

**6 Renewal:** The parish team reevaluates the quality of use and seeks modifications of or alternatives to present form. It examines new ideas and developments, even at the international level.

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