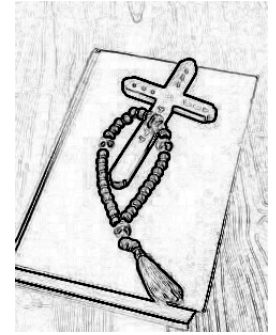


EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS



BACKGROUND & GUIDE

Background

One of the four themes addressed during the *Assembly for Mission* (AKA Mission Assembly) for the District of SFNO is that of Evangelization and Catechesis. The 65 delegates from around the District came to Mont La Salle to read, listen, discuss, consider, and put together four directional statements, along with appropriate action steps. Once endorsed by the District Chapter and approved by Rome, they become the directional statements for the District moving forward.

This prayer service focuses on the work of the committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, bringing their directional statements to the Boards for their future planning at the school. The CEO and school leadership develop strategies for implementing the substance and intentions of the directional statements. The Board annually monitors the CEO in responding to elements specified in the directional and action statements.

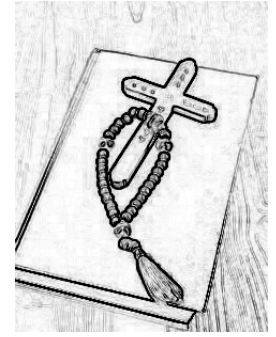
There are various ways to use the resources in the packet, according to individual board circumstances. Please review all the elements provided so that a substantial session may be provided and the board might be fully engaged in the important process initiated by the 2016 Mission Assembly.

Guide

TIME REQUIRED: 20-25 Minutes (*More, if needed or desired*)

- ❖ **NOTE:** If a member of the board or institution attended the 2016 Mission Assembly, then he or she may be well placed to guide this process and perhaps take responsibility for one of these prayer/formation sessions.
- ❖ Make sure that you have enough copies of the PRAYER and other elements provided. All of these should be part of this packet. You may want to email them to board members for their perusal and study prior to the meeting.
- ❖ Choose readers before the meeting. Ask them to read their part and become familiar with it, so that they are able to read it slowly and deliberately.
- ❖ Provide any instructions (For example: “We will read Common Prayer on the back together, and in the formation section [name] will give some background and impressions of the Mission Assembly, after which we will”)
- ❖ Be sure to observe a pause (30-60 seconds) after the first reading and a longer pause (1 – 2 minutes) for the Personal Reflection Moment.
- ❖ The video is 5 minutes and does not have to be included. However, it is quite well done and the board members will enjoy it. <https://youtu.be/qdGkTdv4Dt4>
- ❖ The closing prayer may be said by the leader or by everyone together.

EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS



Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of
God. [PAUSE]

Reading 1:

(From Br. John Crawford – “Evangelization & Catechesis”)

Josiah is highly praised in the Bible as a monarch in the best traditions of King David, the great King, because of the serious commitment and zeal that Josiah had for the covenant... trying to reform and renew the faith commitment of the people of Judah at a time of great stress. ... Yet, Josiah and his ... reforms are also critiqued severely by an unexpected source, the prophet Jeremiah.

As prophets go, Jeremiah was both among the most reliable and the least liked. What could he possibly find to criticize about a faithful king making a concerted effort with religious authorities ... to renew the true faith and practice of Judah? Jeremiah's point is that the ... reform worked too well. The people of Judah had learned to rely on the words of the Law. They memorized it. They drilled it into their children. And they missed the point; at least as Jeremiah saw it. He argues: “Put not your trust in the deceitful words, ‘This is the temple of the LORD! The Temple of the LORD! The Temple of the LORD! (Jeremiah 7:4)” Jeremiah continues: “How can you say, ‘We are wise, we have the law of the LORD?’” (Jeremiah 8:8). If Jeremiah suggests that it is wrong to rely on the Temple, recently remodeled through King Josiah's initiative, ... then where should the people's reliance be founded? “They refuse to recognize me, says the LORD (Jeremiah 9: 5).”

By analogy, this quick study of the Josiah-Jeremiah story speaks to the debate today about catechesis and evangelization. Just as Josiah relied upon his reforms to renew the people of Judah into knowledge and practice of their religion, with particular emphasis on knowledge of the Law, good catechesis attempts to get believers to know and practice their religion. However, as Jeremiah pointed out, knowledge and practice is irrelevant apart from the deep personal recognition of the reality of God. The evangelical principle always calls people to a more intimate relationship with the divine. Religion is more than learning, or even of doing. At its heart, religion, as Jeremiah knew, is recognizing that God is with us. The Hebrew Bible example serves to remind us that evangelization is always a deeply personal, intense, and loving encounter with the living God. Without that, catechesis about God and religion makes little sense.

Reading 2:

(Declaration 41.3 – With inclusive language changes)

A Lasallian educator exercises his or her apostolic ministry whenever he or she strives to awaken the young to an awareness that life is to be taken seriously, to a conviction of the greatness of human destiny; when he or she helps them to be able to experience, with intellectual rigor and a desire to seek the truth, the autonomy of personal thought; when he or she helps them use their liberty to overcome their ready-made prejudices and ideas, as well as to overcome social pressures and those that derive from the forces of disintegration within the human person; when he or she disposes them to use their freedom, their intelligence, and their training in the service of their fellow human beings, to open them to others, to teach them how to listen and try to understand other people, to trust and to love them; when he or she instills in the young a sense of justice, brotherhood, and fidelity.

[PAUSE]

Personal Reflection Moment:

- What do you see as important elements in a person's faith life?
- How can we teach both the head and the heart when it comes to religion?

Our Common Prayer Response: *(Attributed to Sir Francis Drake)*

All: God of truth, you who said to us,
"If today you hear my voice,
harden not your hearts,"
we pray to you this day.

Left: You who speak through the marvels of creation,
which you give us for our joy:
open our eyes that we may recognize therein
the trace of your steps.

Right: You who speak to us through today's happenings:
make us attentive, so as to discern your holy will
in each of our joys and pains.

Left: You who speak to us through our brothers and sisters:
help us to discover your face
in the faces of those who surround us.

Right: You who speak to us through Your Son, Your living Word,
announced by the prophets and proclaimed by the evangelists:

Left: You who speak to us in our silences,

All: Give us the grace to open our hearts to Your calls,
to listen to them with joy,
to follow them with love,
until the twilight of our lives,
when we will arrive at that eternal 'today,'
forever and ever. Amen

Group Reflection

- ❖ This is the time when the participant from your board who attended the 2016 Assembly on Mission provides a short report on his/her experience there.
- ❖ Take a look at the document(s) that accompanied this prayer/formation activity: what can/should the board do over the next year(s) to move all this forward.
- ❖ What steps can be taken now to enable the board to address these directional statements responsibly, especially in terms of educating itself in key areas?

Closing Video *(5 min. – Optional – Good example of contemporary RE instruction.)*

Busted Halo – How to Receive Communion - <https://youtu.be/gdGkTdv4Dt4>

Closing Prayer:

Father, in your great love, You sent into our world Jesus, your Son and our Brother.
In your providence, You have called us to show love this day to those who share our lives.
Empower us with your Spirit that we may see and love in others what you see and love
in them. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen



When Jesus, after the resurrection, walked unrecognized with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he listened to their talk about what was happening in Jerusalem and then, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.” (Luke 24:27) Today, we need similar encounters “on the road” with one another.

What do the words “Evangelization” and “Catechesis” mean?

“[W]ithin the early Christian community, preaching [kerygma] and teaching [didache] worked together like hand and glove. ... *Kerygma* is analogous with evangelization. The simple, attractive and inviting message calls the listener to attention. *Kerygma*, like evangelization, intentionally avoids complication or equivocation. It represents a straightforward proclamation of basic truths. But once the hearer was engaged, what happened next? ... [T]here was another form of religious education at work in the early Church. ... The Greek word “*didache*” means “teaching.” If *kerygma* represented the means to attract and win over the candidate, then *didache* encompassed the way to inform and deepen the faith of the newly interested hearer. ... Evangelization shares the good news. Catechesis reinforces it.”

(Br. John Crawford - *Evangelization and Catechesis*)

“Catechesis seeks, through a realistic and progressive apprenticeship, to prepare missionaries for God by witness, by instruction, and by prayer in order that the divine life within them will reach its full development and finally overflow into all humankind.”

(1997 Declaration - 38.2)

Why should I care?

In Lasallian Catholic schools, both evangelization and catechesis are essential parts of the school’s mission. They are expressed through religion instruction courses and non-classroom activities such as retreats, service programs, school culture, hospitality, faculty character, discipline, and the like. Each activity has different goals and methods, but all may be vehicles for evangelization & catechesis. Boards help shape these through the policies they write.





Catechesis and the 1997 Declaration

From its origins, the Institute has recognized the central place that catechesis has in the apostolate of the [Lasallian educator]. This fact, however, has never led the Institute in practice either to dissociate the catechesis from the rest of education nor to devote itself to catechesis exclusively. Almost by instinct, the living tradition of the Institute has been careful to integrate faith in Jesus Christ with the way young people lead their daily lives. There has always been this determination to tie together the work of evangelization with the effort to develop good citizens and to give them access to a good human education. ...



Lasallian catechesis is concerned with the whole person; respectful of the individuality of each one, it takes as its starting point the character, the social situation,

and the personal vocation of each student. Such catechesis aims to lead young people to take over progressively their own religious development. It seeks to take into account their true interests and to attach more importance to life itself than to programs. It is designed to prepare young people for the kind of life they will lead in the world, to integrate them into human society, and to make them capable of serving the earthly city. ...

The Word of God does not fall out of the sky as an abstraction on anonymous individuals; it comes rather by way of a human experience to which it is joined, by which it is clarified and deepened. It is not in books or in words that the young first encounter the God who calls them, but rather in the one who catechizes them (*Declaration 40.2-5*)

“Urgent Calls” from Circular 469 - 3.12

- To be effective ambassadors of Jesus Christ, witnesses and ministers of his Word.
- To offer words of encouragement and confidence to those engaged in evangelization in the many diverse situations in the Institute.
- To present the Gospel with credibility in a world marked by violence, intolerance and a troubled Church.
- To provide a voice of leadership in the area of catechetics, including contributions to the multi-cultural and interreligious dialogue.
- To help our Partners, especially young Lasallian teachers to progress in their faith journeys and in their study of the Christian message.
- To meet young people where they are, treating them with respect and approaching them through dialogue.

From the Brothers & the Documents of the 45th General Chapter

2.1 Today, the Institute is called to be involved, together with the entire Church, in a new stage of evangelization marked by the joy of the Gospel (*Evangelii Gaudium* 7). We allow ourselves to be challenged by Pope Francis, who opens us to the dynamic force of the Holy Spirit: “Are we determined to break the new ground that the novelty of God presents to us or to dig in on old structures that have lost the

ability to respond?” (Homily on the Feast of Pentecost, 2013).

2.2 We renew our focus on those who have inspired our association, poor children and youth. “Today and always, ‘the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel,’ and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the Kingdom of God which Jesus came to establish.” (EG 48). In the Pope’s call, we hear an

echo of our Founder’s invitation “to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society” (EG 187).



Catechesis in the Lasallian Tradition

BY LORRAINE KILMARTIN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, ST. MARY'S PRESS (MIDWEST)

The evangelization and catechesis of the young is an “essential imperative” of Lasallian schools. More precisely, it is the true vocation of all Lasallian educators to give witness to and make known the Gospel. This is what John Baptist de La Salle, the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, whose charism marks all Lasallian schools, intends when he says: “In carrying out your service to children, you will not fulfill your ministry adequately if you resemble Jesus Christ only in his guidance and in his conversion of souls. You must also enter into his purposes and his goals” (*Meditation* 196.3); and when he invites us to reflect on this question: “Do you have a faith that is such that it is able to touch the hearts of your students and inspire them with the Christian spirit? This is the greatest miracle you could perform and the one that God asks of you, for this is the purpose of your work” (*Meditation* 139.3).

In this light, District representatives from various educational ministries in the U.S.-Toronto Region were invited to participate in a Lasallian Symposium on Catechesis in September 2006. The gathering was sponsored by the Brother Visitors in the Region and Saint Mary's Press for the purpose of articulating a contemporary Lasallian vision of Catholic catechesis and evangelization of the young. A statement of essential and imperative characteristics of the Christian education of Lasallian schools and the Christian educator were set forth by the participants.

Essential Characteristics of Christian Education in Lasallian Schools

1. **The Lasallian school—the entirety of its academic, spiritual, pastoral, athletic, and communal life—is the proper environment for the Christian education of the young.**

Although religion teachers help students explore the meaning and significance of Christian faith, Christian education is not confined to the religion classroom. All Lasallian educators—Brothers and lay colleagues alike—are evangelizers and catechists

by their vocation of giving witness to the Gospel in ways that invite young people into a deeper, more integrated, more committed faith. Lasallian schools provide young people with formation in the Catholic worldview and an apprenticeship in Christian living. Gospel values are to be embodied throughout the school, and religious reflection is to be integrated with all subjects across the curriculum.

2. **Christian education in Lasallian schools is an encounter with a God who is always present—God who is present in the world, not removed from the world; God who unites, not separates.** Remembering that we are in the presence of God is, in one respect, an outcome of Christian education—we remember that God is present with us always, in every situation, in every experience, in every relationship, in every culture. This is an especially imperative point in our age of technology. In the rapid pace of society, especially in communication, the transmittal of information, and the expansive availability of entertainment through technological means, we are faced with the challenge of helping young people learn how to simply *be* in God's presence. We must seek new understanding and ways in which to utilize technology for the sake of the Christian message, which is ultimately about the primacy of meaningful relationships.
3. **Hiring for excellence and fidelity to mission is a critical responsibility of Lasallian schools.**

The young entrusted to our care, especially the poor, deserve excellence in education. It is not sufficient for teachers to be competent in their specific academic field or for coaches to be accomplished and knowledgeable in their particular extracurricular activity. The Lasallian educator must be committed to the values and mission of the Church and of the Institute, and to the Lasallian school as a community that gives witness to and embodies Gospel values. Although the teachers of religion in the school may have a unique role or opportunity in the evangelization and catechesis of the young, the entire Lasallian educational community assists the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Lasallian Catechesis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Do we have competent educators who have both the pedagogical expertise and the theological knowledge to adapt the message to the needs of the folks being served? Do we have vehicles of bringing adults and young people into a context where there can be a credible witness to the tradition?”

—Jeffrey Gros, FSC

young to interiorize and make normative Gospel values in their lives, to become more and more conscious of God calling them to help “fashion a world according to God’s design.”

4. The Lasallian school is rich in cultural and religious diversity and pluralism, and is, therefore, a welcome environment for interreligious dialogue and the advancement of ecumenism.

The Lasallian school body itself often reflects society’s cultural and religious diversity and pluralism. This demands an appropriate interreligious dialogue and literacy within the Lasallian school. The Lasallian school also must foster ecumenical Christian unity in and through formation in Catholic identity.

5. The Christian education of the Lasallian school is communal and holistic.
Lasallian spirituality is innately inclusive. We recognize, seek, and find God in community—together and by association. A Lasallian education is one that illuminates a young person’s experiences with the light of the Gospel. Knowledge of faith cannot be separated or compartmentalized from the whole of life. Catechesis is an education and formation in a living faith that is most effectively undertaken through the proclamation of the Gospel, service, community, worship, and prayer.
6. Christian service, especially the service of the poor, is a normative dimension of Lasallian education.
Service may first be undertaken by the young as an outcome of catechetical method. When under-

taken with selflessness, service is a profound entry point for the young to recognize and be attracted to the Gospel at work in the world. Christian service invites young people to walk through a transformative doorway that leads to awareness of their true vocation as Christians—to love and serve others. God does not call us to an impossible task.

Essential Characteristics of the Lasallian Educator

1. The Lasallian educator is open to, in fact welcomes, the transformative love of God that acts through and within the student-teacher relationship.
The teacher in the Lasallian school must be truly present, first and foremost, to the needs of the student and, in so doing, give witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. In such a relationship, both student and teacher are transformed.
2. The Lasallian educator, especially in the religious education classroom, must give faithful witness to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.
The young are most transformed in the catechetical process through the teacher’s authentic love and genuine respect for them. This can be considered the greatest pedagogical practice in the Lasallian school. The competent catechist knows too that the interiorization of faith happens over a lifetime—not within the scope and sequence of “a course of study”—thereby acknowledging that he is but one teacher along the way.
3. The Lasallian educator knows that at the heart of catechesis is personhood—the lived encounter of the relationship between the person of the student and the person of Christ Jesus.
The aim of catechesis is always to help young people see the world and interpret their experience, throughout life, through the eyes of faith in Christ. This is what Lasallians mean when we speak of “enlivening minds, touching hearts.”
4. The Lasallian educator recognizes and respects the reciprocity of relationship between human experience and the proclamation of the Gospel.
Catechesis is an apprenticeship in interpreting experience in the light of the Gospel. The young cannot articulate their faith without linking it to their lived experiences. The young person’s experience of being loved opens their heart to the Word (which is Love);

this openness leads to hearing the Word proclaimed in ever deeper ways so that experience is reinterpreted in the light of the Catholic Christian tradition.

5. **The Lasallian educator masters the art of facilitating the young people's important questions of faith.**

How does a person mature if not by asking over and over throughout life critical questions, such as "Who am I?" and "What should I do with my life?" The effective catechist is one who creates "space" within the catechetical session for the young people to articulate their questions, for their questions present the opportunities for them to gain inklings of who they are. One of the most important methods a catechist can employ is the art of constructing questions that engage young people in conversations of profound religious meaning. This also means that the catechist must be able to accept that young people will ask questions of faith that are beyond the human capacity to answer.

6. **The Lasallian educator uses methodologies that help young people come to a deeper understanding of the content of faith.**

Method and content are necessarily related in so far as catechesis is a dynamic interaction between receiving the Word proclaimed and interiorizing Christian knowledge through apprenticeship in Christian living.

"Lasallian spirituality stresses that it is mainly in the relationship to students and colleagues that the presence and love of God manifested in Jesus Christ is to shine through words and actions." (Gerard Rummery, FSC)

7. **The Lasallian educator welcomes and respects the diversity of students that are entrusted to him/her.**

The religion classroom, in particular, cannot be presumed to be a place where faith speaks to faith. Some of the young people before us are believers, others find themselves struggling with their faith and are disconnected from the Church, some come from faith traditions other than Christian, and yet others have not heard the Gospel proclaimed. The catechist must welcome and respect all by acknowledging, accepting, and seeing the world of each of these students so that the proper conversation can be constructed for their salvation.

8. **The Lasallian educator engages young people in dialogue as a constitutive dimension of evangelization and catechesis.**

Evangelization and catechesis are not monologues; rather, they happen in a dialogue that affirms the great insights of the young as faithful contributors to the conversation. The catechist must shun any exercise that keeps the student in a passive role.

9. **The Lasallian educator uses language that is accessible to the young people they serve.**

How can the catechist capture the imagination of the young if not in using language they can access and that has meaning in their culture and experience? We know all too well that words can be used as a knife or as a spoon. The one cuts apart, divides, and separates; the other feeds and nourishes. The language of faith must always be at the service of catechesis, rather than catechesis being at the service of figuring out an inaccessible language. The Lasallian catechist strives to achieve a balance between the use of a common language of faith, which can serve to unify the Church, and language adapted to young people. From the founding of the Institute, catechism has been taught in the vernacular—so that the student can surely understand. We must ask ourselves perpetually, "what is the vernacular of the day" in the education and formation of the young. Our language must be accessible in the context of their lives and their cultures, but accessibility is not simplicity—we must be cautious not to oversimplify.

Lasallian educators are invited to reflect deeply on the characteristics presented here with hope that an understanding of our true vocation might be deepened, our fidelity to that understanding renewed, and our integrity preserved for the sake of the young entrusted to our care.

"To be a catechist by vocation is to love and respect our young people as distinct persons. It is to accept them 'as they are' and to take them seriously. It is to walk side by side with them, permitting them to share openly their perplexities and questions about the meaning of life and about religious faith."

—John Johnston, FSC, "The Challenge: Live Today Our Founding Story"

