



PASTORAL PLAN FOR CATECHESIS

DIOCESE OF DES MOINES
Bishop Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S

*Promulgated December 12, 2006
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*



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Office of the Bishop

December 12, 2006

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“We exhort you in the Lord Jesus,...learn to make still greater progress.” 1 Thess 4:2.

The time of preparation is at hand! The season of Advent reminds us—a time of preparing ourselves, our Church, our world to meet the Lord and to follow in his ways. Saint Paul’s words to the first generation of Christians resound in our generation of the Church—“learn to make still greater progress” as we journey toward the Lord.

This holy season echoes with the visions that have supported people of faith for 3,000 years and more—visions of peace, of reconciliation, of compassion for the poor, visions of a time and place where God’s justice is the cornerstone of all our ways.

Come to Christ! Lead others to Christ! This is our mission as the Body of Christ. Arise and let your light shine forth, says the prophet Isaiah. He is speaking to us in our day, in our diocese. It is a vision to stir us and compel us and fill us with hope. We live by our visions, we are guided by our hopes.

I share with you a vision for our diocese, a vision to stir us and compel us and fill us with hope. It will call us to growth in faith—“Learn to make still greater progress!” It is a pastoral plan for catechesis, to draw us into our future with joy and purpose. This plan for growth in faith has much in common with the pastoral planning which parishes and schools and pastoral staffs do on a regular basis. In the same way, we have considered our present circumstances, our future as a diocese, and what it will take for us to grow into that future.

We have cause for great joy as a community of faith. Hundreds of adults come seeking baptism, wanting to be part of the body of Christ. Hundreds of baptized Christians come as well, longing to share the Eucharist and our communal life. Their hunger and thirst for faith are a great blessing to us all!

We have reason for true concern as well. Congregations and households find it increasingly difficult to share faith with the next generations. For too many Catholics and other Christians, faith and life are in conflict instead of in dialogue.

I am keenly aware of this. Yet I am firmly confident that the Risen Christ urges us on. “Go, make disciples of all nations,” he says to us. “Baptize them, teach them all I have commanded you.” Growth in faith for all of us will strengthen us for this mission Christ himself gives us.

In the Church's *General Directory for Catechesis* as well as the U.S. Bishops' *National Directory for Catechesis*, each diocese is called to systematic planning and sustained efforts for growth in faith. It is my great responsibility as bishop and our common responsibility as a diocesan community to promote growth in faith. I have called for this long range plan because sustained growth in faith demands such careful planning.

Growth in faith also requires careful and prayerful listening and reflection. This statement of vision and purpose springs from a year of such prayer and listening and reflecting within the diocese. The process for developing the pastoral plan has been a central concern for the Diocesan Council for Catechesis, whose purpose is to "plan, promote and advocate for the lifelong formation in faith of all members of the Catholic community."

If the planning was called for by the Church itself, the shape of the pastoral plan comes directly from the wisdom and experience of our diocese. The Diocesan Council for Catechesis sponsored numerous listening sessions in the diocese about our long range hopes and needs for faith development. These hopes and needs, voiced by parishioners and pastors and staffs, determined the focus of this pastoral plan. The focus of this plan is not all inclusive; rather, it concentrates on the most pressing hopes and needs which the diocesan community has identified. They are the priorities which the diocese has named for itself, if we are "to make still greater progress" as the Body of Christ.

This pastoral plan is, above all, a declaration of our visions. We live by our visions, we live on our hopes! The plan announces for us where we want to be in five years and the steps that will help us move in that direction. This plan will help us to "lean into the future," will help guide our steps in the ways of faith, hope and love.

This plan will challenge us, which is the purpose of all good pastoral planning. It will call for the best of our efforts and our resources. No parish can do all that is envisioned here, but every parish receives here a vision of how "to make still further progress."

Together as a diocese, we can make the goal of "lifelong growth in faith for all members of the Catholic community" clearer than ever. As stated often in this pastoral plan, I commit the diocesan staff to be a resource to parishes and schools, to implement this pastoral plan.

With joy and hope, I call upon the diocese and parish communities to embrace this vision and to act upon it. We must commit the best of our resources to this crucial effort. Let us make still further progress as followers of Christ! Let us shine forth, so others will be drawn to Christ!

Wishing you many blessings during this Advent season, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S.

Most Rev. Joseph L. Charron, C.P.P.S.
Bishop of Des Moines

**Diocese of Des Moines
Pastoral Plan for Catechesis
2007 – 2012**

Formation for Discipleship and Mission

“The call to work for social justice is embedded in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, who came to ‘bring good tidings to the poor / ...liberty to captives / and recovery of sight to the blind.’ The Church’s social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, but it is not merely a series of documents. Rather, it is a living tradition of thought and action.” *National Directory for Catechesis*, pp. 170-171

“The Church and its adult faithful have a mission in and to the world: to share the message of Christ to renew and to transform the social and temporal order. This dual calling to evangelization and justice is integral to the identity of the lay faithful; all are called to it in baptism.”
Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, # 72.

Goal I: *Parishes or groups of parishes will provide formational opportunities in catholic social teaching for their members of all ages .*

Objectives:

A. Parishes and schools will provide opportunities to learn about Catholic social teaching. These offerings will enhance knowledge and understanding of the difference between charity and justice.

B. Parishes and schools will provide opportunities for parishioners and students to act with charity and to work for justice.

Goal II: *Parishes or groups of parishes will provide formational opportunities for all members to develop a holistic understanding of stewardship – one which reflects a vision of collaboration in God’s creation and the nurturing of each disciple’s vocation.*

Objectives:

A. Parishes and schools will provide formation based upon the document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*.

B. Parishes and schools will offer opportunities for parishioners and students to share their time, talent and treasure with the parish and broader community.

Lifelong Formation in Faith

“The model for all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate when, by specific formation, an adult converted to belief is brought to explicit profession of baptismal faith during the Paschal Vigil. This catechumenal formation should inspire the other forms of catechesis in both their objectives and in their dynamism.” *General Directory for Catechesis, #59*

“Adult faith formation also benefits children and youth. An adult community whose faith is well-formed and lively will more effectively pass that faith on to the next generation. Moreover, the witness of adults actively continuing their own formation shows children and youth that growth in faith is lifelong and does not end upon reaching adulthood.”
Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, #40

Goal I: Parishes or groups of parishes will apply the *Baptismal Catechumenate* (articulated in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*) as the guiding vision and inspiration for all faith formation processes of the parish.

Objectives:

A. Parish catechetical leadership will actively seek and take advantage of formational opportunities concerning the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Opportunities may include offerings from the *North American Forum on the Catechumenate* and other workshops sponsored by the diocesan offices.

B. Parishes will financially support the participation of parish formation ministers at conferences and workshops on the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Goal II: Parishes or group of parishes in the diocese will form a Council for Catechesis modeled after the *Diocesan Council for Catechesis*.

Objectives:

A. Each parish or group of parishes will have a functioning Council for Catechesis.

B. The Department of Faith Formation, Catholic Schools Office and Diocesan Council for Catechesis will provide a framework and serve as a resource for parishes as they establish and then maintain their Councils for Catechesis.

C. Parishes serving as “Pilot Parishes” in 2006 – 2007 will serve as “Mentors” for parishes establishing their councils.

Goal III: *Parishes or groups of parishes will support and provide for the initial and on-going formation of all catechetical ministers, appropriate to the needs of the local community and consistent with the vision for “life-long formation in faith for all members of the Catholic community.”(Statement of Purpose, Diocesan Council for Catechesis, 2002)*

Objectives:

A. Parishes and schools will conduct yearly comprehensive catechetical and staff assessments to ascertain strengths, weaknesses and needs, to determine the appropriate initial and on-going formation. Particular attention will be paid to the formation needs of the various ethnic groups in the local community.

B. Parishes and schools will employ professional, well-trained, qualified individuals as the norm. Funding will be made available to assist ministerial staff in the advancement of their academic and professional credentials, as reflected in their budgets beginning with fiscal year 2009-2010.

C. Parishes and schools will make on-going formation for all present and future catechetical leaders, catechists, youth ministers, pastoral ministers and Catholic school principals and teachers a stronger priority. This will be reflected in their budgets beginning with fiscal year, 2009-2010.

Goal IV: *The Diocese will continue to provide faith formation staff members to serve as resource for parish and school faith formation processes.*

Goal V: *Parishes will support and provide for the initial and on-going formation of worship committees, to assist the pastor/parish staff/community in planning and celebrating liturgy.*

Objectives:

A. The Diocese will actively seek to hire a liturgy professional to serve as a resource for parishes as they provide for initial and on-going formation for local worship committees and liturgical ministers by July, 2007.

B. At least once a year, parishes will provide formation opportunities for parishioners who serve as lectors, cantors/musicians, servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and ministers of hospitality.

Formation for Lay Ecclesial Ministry

“Lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function properly.” Code of Canon Law, 231.1

“To set high standards means both to provide a thorough basic training and to keep it constantly updated. This is a fundamental duty, in order to ensure qualified personnel for the Church’s mission.” Pope John Paul II as quoted in Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry, USCCB, p. 33

Goal I: The Diocesan Office for Lay Ecclesial Ministry will maintain systematic formation and certification processes for lay people in pastoral and catechetical roles in accord with documents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “The National Directory for Catechesis” and “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord.”

Objectives:

A. The Diocesan Office for Lay Ecclesial Ministry in collaboration with the Diocesan Offices for Catechetical Services, Catholic Schools, Youth Ministry and Adult Faith Formation will revise the norms for the accreditation and certification for lay people in pastoral and catechetical roles in accord with standards recognized by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers” and “National Certification Standards for Pastoral Ministers.”

B. The Diocesan Office for Lay Ecclesial Ministry will provide structures and resources for parishes and schools as they provide for initial and on-going formation and certification for pastoral and catechetical ministers.

Goal II: Parishes, groups of parishes and schools will provide for the formation and certification of lay people called to ministry in pastoral and catechetical roles (e.g. pastoral care ministers, catechetical leaders, parish catechists, school principals, school teachers, youth ministers, parish liturgists, etc.).

Objectives:

A. Initial and on-going formation for all lay ecclesial ministers will be a stronger priority for all parishes and schools, reflected in their budgets beginning with fiscal year 2008-2009.

B. The Department of Faith Formation and Catholic Schools Office will provide guidance and resources for parishes and schools as they provide for initial and on-going formation of the lay ecclesial ministers.

On-going Formation for Priests and Deacons

“...a fundamentally decisive element must be the *catechetical formation of priests* both at the level of seminary formation as well as at the level of continuing formation.” General Directory for Catechesis, #234

“In order to maintain and enrich their ministry as catechists, priests are to give careful attention to their own catechetical formation and continue their education and spiritual formation after ordination.” National Directory for Catechesis, pg. 222-223

Goal I: *Priests and deacons will develop increased familiarity with catechetical documents and the role of the clergy in lifelong faith formation.*

Objectives:

A. Priests and deacons will participate in a workshop sponsored by the Priests' Continuing Education Committee and the Diocesan Department of Faith Formation to further enhance their role as collaborators with the Bishop, that the faith formation goals of the diocese be achieved. A recommended process is the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' workshop, “*Cultivating the Word.*”

B. Priests and deacons will actively seek and take advantage of formational opportunities concerning the Baptismal Catechumenate, the vision and inspiration for life-long formation in faith. Opportunities may include offerings on the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* from the *North American Forum on the Catechumenate* and other workshops sponsored by the diocesan offices.

C. During the second or third year following ordination, priests and deacons will participate in a series of workshops on parish life-long formation in faith, with an emphasis on adult faith formation. These workshops shall be developed and provided by the Diocesan Department of Faith Formation in collaboration with the Presbyteral and Diaconate Councils.

Goal II: Priests and deacons will participate in workshops designed to enhance their homiletic skills. These workshops will be selected by the Presbyteral Council in consultation with the Priests' Continuing Education Committee and the Diaconate Council .

Goal III: The Diocese of Des Moines will continue to develop a bilingual clergy.

- A. Annually, the Diocese will provide systematic formation for one or more priests in the Hispanic culture and Spanish language.
- B. Seminarians and deacon candidates will be provided with systematic formation in the Hispanic culture and Spanish language.
- C. Recruitment of Hispanic candidates will be a priority.

Documents Cited and Abbreviations

- CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997.
- CL *Code of Canon Law*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1985.
- CW *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Reference for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.
- GDC *General Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997.
- National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*. Washington, DC: National Association for Lay Ministry, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 2003.
- National Certification Standards for Pastoral Ministers*. Washington, DC: National Association for Lay Ministry, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 2004.
- NDC *National Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.
- OHWB *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999.
- RCIA *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988.
- Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.

In 2002, Bishop Joseph Charron established a Council for Catechesis for the Diocese of Des Moines, Iowa. This council, successor to a diocesan Board of Education, addresses a wider and more inclusive approach to growth in faith. “We seek to guide and promote ‘formation for the Christian life,’ ” the council’s vision statement reads (from the *General Directory for Catechesis [GDC]*, #68).

The council’s statement of purpose also indicates a broader approach to growth in faith: “The Council plans, promotes and advocates for the lifelong formation in faith of all members of the Catholic community.” (*For the Life of the World: Lifelong Formation in Faith. Foundational document for the Diocesan Council for Catechesis*, November 18, 2002. Available online at www.dmdiocese.org .)

In October 2005, the Council for Catechesis began development of a long range plan for growth in faith, prompted by the Church’s renewed emphasis on catechesis for all Catholics (*GDC 1997, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us [OHWB] 1999, National Directory for Catechesis[NDC] 2005*). Bishop Charron established an ad hoc committee for development of this “pastoral plan for catechesis” (see *GDC #281 and NDC #9*). This committee, including catechists and catechetical leaders, teachers and pastoral ministers, priests and deacons, participated in a planning process which it then used for similar sessions throughout the diocese. The process centered on “In light of the call for ‘lifelong formation in faith of all members of the Catholic community,’ what are the present and future catechetical needs of the diocese?”

These sessions were held in October and November 2005. In them, people of the diocese identified primary areas which such a plan needs to address. In particular, four such areas were identified by participants across the diocese:

- a) Formation for Discipleship and Mission
- b) Lifelong Formation in Faith
- c) Formation for Lay Ecclesial Ministry
- d) Ongoing Formation for Priests and Deacons.

The pastoral plan for catechesis is based upon these four primary areas for catechetical formation.

Through May 2006, the ad hoc committee continued development of the pastoral plan, by means of meetings and electronic communications. The committee developed goals and objectives for each of the plan’s four areas. It then presented a draft to the Council for Catechesis.

From May through November 2006, the council refined the draft and consulted with groups in the diocese. The draft was shared with the presbyteral council and regional meetings of priests, the diocesan pastoral council, catechetical leaders and school principals, the diaconate community, and others. Responses and reactions were taken into account with revisions to the draft.

The Council for Catechesis reviewed and revised the draft at three consecutive meetings. In November 2006, the Council presented the pastoral plan to Bishop Charron.

Bishop Charron accepted the plan and officially presented it to the diocese on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, 2006.