

WHOLE PARISH CATECHESIS



Centred on the Sunday liturgy, the aim of Whole Parish Catechesis is to unite the formal instruction provided by the parish (homilies, schools, children's liturgy, sacramental preparation, parish programmes) with the informal sharing and living of faith in everyday family and parish life. The ultimate aim is to nurture parishioners' relationship with God by enhancing their awareness of Christ with them in liturgy and in daily life.

The strategy is simple: during Sunday Mass, the homilist leads everyone, including himself, to ask a single well-focused, real-life question, prompted by the scriptural text of the day. The purpose of the question is to draw the believer more deeply into the gospel and to encounter there the Christ who wants relationship with us. During the following week the question of the week is used throughout the parish for faith-sharing at the beginning of each gathering and at times when families get together, e.g. in the car, over meals.

The differences in the personalities of a typical Irish/UK parish meant that when the strategy was tried in Belfast, we adopted a modified approach which took account of:

- Difficulties some people have in sharing what is, for them, a private faith
- Challenges to families of finding time together
- People who express their faith through action rather than in reflection.

Two approaches

1. Parish uses prepared resources including THINK-DO-PRAY ideas for parish bulletin. Backed up by homily notes and children's liturgy sheets, bidding prayers. Every interested group, school, family participate at whatever level is practical for them. See sample Advent booklet.

2. Parish develops own resources by gathering a group and praying and chatting about material to devise THINK-DO PRAY for a specified season of church year. See *Whole Parish Catechesis for Advent* and Lent B O' Hare

Material

- Simple messages
- Practical activities
- Easy to organise at level of involvement that suits parish
- Advent/lent reflections linked by a theme; developed over the weeks.

Ready-made materials were carefully planned to provide development of key themes. Employed adult learning methods and sound knowledge of faith development theories.

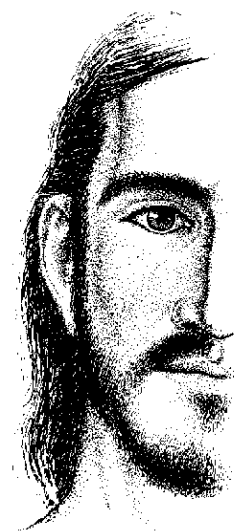
Supported by Diocesan workshops on

- Prayer with scripture
- How the liturgy can support catechesis

Bringing the gospel home represented another simple strategy for helping people relate to and have a personal experience of Christ in liturgy and in daily life. Helped parishioners attend to the presence of Christ in his Word. Leaflet produced "*Closer to God*" leaflet to facilitate prayer and reflection. Process simple:

- Listen prayerfully to Gospel
- Experience: Who is this Jesus I meet in the gospel?
- Action: How can I (*can we as a parish*) bring this Jesus to life in our lives this week?

Try it. Read the story of Bartimaeus below for yourself. Take your time. Imagine yourself in the scene as Bart or in the crowd.



As Jesus was leaving Jericho, trailed by his disciples and a parade of people, a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, was sitting alongside the road. When he heard that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, he began to cry out, "Son of David, Jesus! Mercy on me!" Many tried to hush him up, but he yelled all the louder, "Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped in his tracks. "Call him over." They called him. "It's your lucky day! Get up! He's calling you to come!" Throwing off his coat, he was on his feet at once, and came to Jesus. Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see again" "On your way," Jesus said. "Your faith has saved and healed you." In that very instant he recovered his sight and followed Jesus down the road.

From "*The Message*" a gospel translation by Eugene Peterson

- **Think of a few words to describe the Jesus you meet in this scene.**

*Egs Sensitive? Respectful? Alert to needs of others? Empowering? Attractive
?*

- **Now think: how can we as a parish of individuals bring this Jesus to life in our lives this week?**

How can we treat others with dignity and respect?

How can help people feel valued, in spite of the illness or difficulties?

Can we ask the question: What do you want me to do for you?