PROJECT MUSE®

Evangelizing Catechesis: An Essential Element of the New Evangelization

Joseph Kirkconnell

International Journal of Evangelization and Catechetics, Volume 1,
Number 1, Winter 2020, pp. 3-18 (Article)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jec.2020.0010>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/757067>

Evangelizing Catechesis: An Essential Element of the New Evangelization

Joseph Kirkconnell

The call for a New Evangelization has been resounding in the Catholic Church for several decades and through several papacies. It is a call to proclaim Jesus, by word and deed, not only to those who have never heard the Gospel before but to people and cultures who, after having heard and received the Gospel, have now rejected it or are bored by the Christian message. At the same time, the New Evangelization includes constantly proclaiming the Gospel to those who are already members of the Church so that it may be received and deepened again and again. Alongside of the call for a New Evangelization, although perhaps less prominently, is the call to renew catechesis in the Catholic Church.

In recent decades, several official documents of the Catholic Church pertaining to evangelization and catechesis have been published presenting different explanations of the nature of evangelization, catechesis, and their relationship. Evangelization and catechesis are intimately related. In fact, they are so closely related that many are now advocating for an “evangelizing catechesis.” However, it is not clear what an “evangelizing catechesis” is exactly. In this essay, I will first summarize the ways in which the relationship between evangelization and catechesis has been defined in Church documents. Then, I will begin to define and outline the nature of an “evangelizing catechesis.” An evangelizing catechesis is the way forward for renewal in the Catholic Church.

Evangelization and Catechesis

The first way that official documents of the Catholic Church describe the relationship between evangelization and catechesis is to identify evangelization as the first step in proclaiming the Gospel which is then followed by catechesis. In other words, evangelization and cate-

chesis are envisioned as existing along a timeline with evangelization taking place first, and then, once completed, catechesis takes over. Evangelization begins the process of conversion while catechesis builds upon and deepens that initial conversion. The *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD) from 1971, for example, indicates that evangelization effects “the arousing of the beginnings of faith” while catechesis follows afterwards in order to help the initial faith to become “living, conscious, and active, through the light of instruction.”¹

In 1975, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) [On Evangelization in the Modern World], St. Paul VI wrote, “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.”² Thus, he affirmed that evangelization is the proclamation of the Gospel through which someone comes to know Jesus Christ personally. Four years later in 1979, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) [On Catechesis in Our Time], St. John Paul II wrote, “The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion-bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³ Catechesis fosters ongoing conversion by providing a fuller understanding of who Jesus is, His message, and the life He calls each person to live. Therefore, one way that the relationship between evangelization and catechesis is presented is in a linear, side-by-side fashion with catechesis following upon evangelization. Once evangelization has taken place and is accomplished then catechesis can begin.

At the same time, however, the documents of the Catholic Church present other ways of describing the relationship between evangelization and catechesis. For example, catechesis is envisioned as one part of the whole process of evangelization. That is, evangelization is described as the broader mission of the Church and catechesis makes up one element

1. *General Catechetical Directory* in *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource*, (Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996), 17. Hereafter GCD followed by the paragraph number.

2. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [On Evangelization in the Modern World] 22 (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1975). Hereafter EN followed by the paragraph number.

3. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* [On Catechesis in Our Time] 19 (Washington, D.C., USCCB, 2003). Hereafter CT followed by the paragraph number.

of that mission. This understanding of evangelization was articulated and developed by St. Paul VI in *EN*.

While St. Paul VI clearly stated that there is no true evangelization without the proclamation of the Gospel, he also indicated that the Church must avoid “[reducing] evangelization to particular elements even if they are particularly important.”⁴ Some of the elements that make up evangelization are: “the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative.”⁵ Catechetical instruction is also identified as a “means of evangelization that must not be neglected.”⁶ Evangelization is, therefore, multi-faceted. It includes both the witness of one’s life as well as explicit proclamation of the Gospel. In fact, all of these elements are “complementary and mutually enriching.”⁷

Building on this explanation of evangelization, St. John Paul II indicated that catechesis is one of the elements of evangelization. Indeed, he wrote that evangelization is “made up of elements, or one could say moments, that are essential and different from each other,” and “Catechesis is one of these moments—a very remarkable one—in the whole process of evangelization.”⁸ In this model, the relationship between evangelization and catechesis is not set side-by-side but allows for overlap. Evangelization is described as a process within which one finds catechesis. Catechesis is a moment, or series of moments, located within the entire process of evangelization.⁹ Evangelization is not simply the first part of the timeline which is followed by catechesis. Rather, evangelization makes up the entire timeline and catechesis is one of the moments, or a series of these moments, within the timeline. These catechetical moments, together with other moments such as those named by St. Paul VI above, make up the whole process of evangelization.

Another image that may be helpful for reflecting on this description of the relationship between evangelization and catechesis is that of a

4. *EN* 17.

5. *EN* 24.

6. *EN* 44.

7. *EN* 24.

8. *CT* 18. For further discussion of the relationship between evangelization and catechesis, see Robert J. Hater, *The Relationship Between Evangelization and Catechesis* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Diocesan Directions of Religious Education—CCD, 1981), 11–26.

9. For St. John Paul II, it is baptized children who have never truly been introduced to the person of Jesus Christ, in particular, that need to be evangelized as they are catechized. See *CT* 19.

painting. A painting is made up of different elements like canvas, paint, and each particular brush stroke. Completing the painting is a process just as the whole process of evangelization is made up of different elements or moments. Catechesis is an important element of evangelization because it adds depth to the work of art. In other words, catechesis helps one to know Christ more intimately by adding greater depth to one's understanding and relationship with Jesus Christ. Catechesis enables one to see the big picture more clearly. It helps a person to recognize the beauty and coherence of Christ's message as well as the way that this message draws one into greater intimacy and experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ Himself. Through communion with Christ, one is drawn into deeper communion with the Triune God. In this model, the process of evangelization is not envisioned as parallel or juxtaposed but intertwined. Each element is necessary to complete the masterpiece.

Matthew Halbach, in his doctoral dissertation from 2014, "The Conceptual Evolution of "Evangelization" and "Catechesis," from the General Catechetical Directory (1971) to the General Directory for Catechesis (1997): Tracing the Path Towards the "New Evangelization," provides another analogy for describing the relationship between evangelization and catechesis. The analogy that he proposes is a "symbiosis of mutualism." In nature, a "symbiosis of mutualism" is when two organisms live in a relationship in which both are: "(1) related but distinct (2) mutually beneficial (3) sharing the same purpose (4) and co-evolving."¹⁰ Halbach argues that these four qualities also characterize the relationship between evangelization and catechesis. Additionally, he adds a fifth characteristic of the symbiotic relationship between evangelization and catechesis. The fifth characteristic is the fact that they "share the same content: the kerygma."¹¹

Halbach's analogy is very helpful for thinking about the relationship between evangelization and catechesis. As has already been described above, evangelization and catechesis are intimately related but they cannot be identified exactly with one another. The *GCD* even indicates that each of them "are governed by their own laws."¹² Therefore, it is impor-

10. Matthew Halbach, "The Conceptual Evolution of "Evangelization" and "Catechesis," from the General Catechetical Directory (1971) to the General Directory for Catechesis (1997): Tracing the Path Towards the 'New Evangelization,'" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2014), 189, <https://cuislandora-wrlc-org.proxycu.wrlc.org/islandora/object/cuislandora%3A28237/datastream/PDF/view>. Hereafter Halbach followed by the page number.

11. Halbach, 189.

12. *GCD* 17.

tant to make logical distinctions between the two but, “in the concrete reality of the pastoral ministry, they are closely bound together.”¹³ In other words, when one actually attempts to evangelize or catechize in real life, they are not so neatly distinguished.

The symbiotic relationship between evangelization and catechesis means that there is overlap and mutual benefit between them. For example, both share the same purpose (i.e. the conversion of people and cultures to Jesus Christ).¹⁴ Their purpose is to make disciples of all nations by leading people to faith in Jesus Christ and the personal commitment to follow Him. Evangelization has the specific focus of introducing a person to Jesus Christ while catechesis focuses on leading people to a mature faith in Him.¹⁵

Additionally, evangelization and catechesis share the same content (i.e. the kerygma or the Gospel message).¹⁶ While catechesis helps to deepen both a person’s knowledge of the faith and their adherence to that faith through a systematic presentation of the Gospel message, it must always be founded upon the kerygma.¹⁷ In order for catechesis to lead someone deeper in their relationship with Christ, catechesis cannot only be understood as instruction or passing on facts. Instead, catechesis must be understood in terms of a relationship with Jesus Christ. As St. John Paul II wrote, “the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.”¹⁸

In addition, Halbach’s concept of “co-evolution” is very important to grasp. In tracing the way that the terms “evangelization” and “catechesis” have been used in the documents of Catholic Church from the time of the *GCD* (1971) to the *GDC* (1997) and up to the present day, it is clear that there has been development or evolution. That is, the understanding of each individually, and of their relationship, has grown.

The *GCD* of 1971, which was published prior to *EN*, identified evangelization with “missionary preaching,”¹⁹ but the *GDC* of 1997,

13. *GCD* 17.

14. Halbach, 185.

15. Halbach, 185.

16. Halbach, 183.

17. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, D.C: USCCB, 1998), 85. Hereafter *GDC* followed by the paragraph number.

18. *CT* 5.

19. *GCD* 17.

which was published after *EN* and *CT*, makes more distinctions. For example, the *GDC* from 1997 distinguishes between “primary proclamation” and “catechesis.” Primary proclamation is directed to “non-believers and those living in religious indifference,” which takes place by making the Gospel known and calling people to the initial conversion to Him.²⁰ In St. Paul VI’s understanding of evangelization, “primary proclamation” is one element of the whole process of evangelization. Therefore, while the term “evangelization” had previously been reduced to “primary proclamation,” or to “missionary preaching” in the *GCD*, St. Paul VI provided a broader understanding of evangelization, which was incorporated into the 1997 *GDC*. Catechesis, on the other hand, is said to be directed to those who do believe and have experienced an initial conversion. It aims to bring about a mature faith in believers, to educate them in faith, and to incorporate them into the community.²¹

At the same time, the 1997 *GDC* identified more distinctions within catechesis. The *GDC* uses the term, “kerygmatic catechesis,” or “pre-catechesis,” to refer to the proclamation of the Gospel to those who are leaning toward the Christian faith, even though they do not yet have faith.²² In fact, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* allows for local bishops’ conferences to receive those who are leaning toward the Christian faith (or “sympathizers,” as the *RCIA* calls them), even though they do not yet have faith. This reception is not a formal rite but simply being welcomed by a member of the community to continue the journey towards Christ.²³ The *GDC* suggests that sympathizers should receive kerygmatic catechesis whereas those who do not have faith should receive primary proclamation. Therefore, it is clear that there has been evolution in the way that evangelization, catechesis, and their relationship have been defined.

Halbach maintains that whenever there are developments in evangelization, catechesis must also develop in a corresponding way.²⁴ Therefore, he argues that as the Catholic Church puts all of its energy into a “New Evangelization,” a “New Catechesis” must also develop. As the Church faces a changing culture and discerns the best way to respond

20. *GDC* 61.

21. *GDC* 61.

22. *GDC* 62n6.

23. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988) 39. Hereafter *RCIA* followed by paragraph number.

24. Halbach, 198.

with new ardor, new methods, and new means of expression,²⁵ so too must catechesis adapt to the changing environment. I propose that the “New Catechesis” that Halbach calls for is, in fact, an “evangelizing catechesis.” In the next part of this essay, I will define what an evangelizing catechesis is and identify characteristics of what must be included as part of an evangelizing catechesis.

An Evangelizing Catechesis

As far back as the 1971 *GCD*, the need for an evangelizing catechesis is articulated at least in germ form. The *GCD* pointed out that while catechesis usually presumes a commitment to Christ, many who are being catechized have never made that personal commitment. Therefore, evangelization must either precede or accompany catechesis.²⁶ Hence, the *GCD* states that “the element of conversion is always present in the dynamism of faith, and for that reason any form of catechesis must also perform the role of evangelization.”²⁷ Likewise, in 2005 the *NDC* reaffirmed the need for an evangelizing catechesis. The *NDC* states, “In many situations . . . catechesis must be concerned with arousing initial faith and sustaining the gradual conversion to complete adherence to Jesus Christ for those who are on the threshold of faith.”²⁸

Along the same lines, the 1997 *GDC* indicated that because many who come for catechesis have not experienced genuine conversion, “the Church usually desires that the first stage in the catechetical process be dedicated to ensuring conversion.”²⁹ In so doing, this allows catechesis to “fulfill its proper task of education in the faith.”³⁰ This, however, seems to be based on the first model of the relationship of evangelization and catechesis whereas the reality is often that evangelization and catechesis must coincide.

25. John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendour* [The Splendour of Truth] 106, (August 6, 1993), accessed May 9, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.

26. *GCD* 18.

27. *GCD* 18. For further discussion of evangelizing catechesis, see Catherine Dooley, O.P., “Evangelization and Catechesis: Partners in the New Millennium,” in *The Echo Within: Emerging Issues in Religious Education*, edited by Catherine Dooley, O.P., and Mary Collins, O.S.B. (Allen, TX: Thomas More Publishing, 1997), 145–159.

28. *NDC*, 54. For a deeper exploration of the topic of conversion, see Johannes Hofinger, SJ, *Evangelization and Catechesis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 30–47.

29. *GDC* 62.

30. *GDC* 62.

As mentioned above, the *GDC* refers to this initial stage of conversion, when it involves those who sympathize with the Christian faith, as “kerygmatic catechesis.” This definition of kerygmatic catechesis is narrower than the way I am defining evangelizing catechesis because it focusses only on those who are sympathizers with Christianity. Thus, evangelizing catechesis and kerygmatic catechesis are not identical. Evangelizing catechesis encompasses kerygmatic catechesis but it is broader than the *GDC*’s definition of kerygmatic catechesis. In other words, evangelizing catechesis must always include the kerygma but it is not only aimed at those who are sympathizers of Christianity. Rather, an evangelizing catechesis is aimed at all people. It is my contention that catechesis must always be evangelizing.

An evangelizing catechesis is aimed at every person, including every member of the Church, even if they have already been evangelized. As St. Paul VI wrote, “The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself . . . she always needs to hear the proclamation of the ‘mighty works of God’ which converted her to the Lord . . . she has a constant need of being evangelized.”³¹ Without constantly being evangelized, the Church becomes lifeless and stagnant. If the Church is going to “to retain freshness, vigor and strength,” the Church must be “evangelized by constant conversion and renewal, in order to evangelize the world with credibility.”³²

The Church herself needs to be evangelized constantly because members can grow weary or lose their way in the journey of faith. Additionally, there are members of the Church who have never been led to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. These members of the Church may have knowledge of the faith but have never come to know the living God. Even more than this, people who have never lost their way can always be drawn deeper into the heart and love of the Father through Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. God is infinite love and the depths of communion with Him can never be exhausted. Therefore, everyone is in need of constant evangelizing.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* [The Joy of the Gospel], Pope Francis insists that the kerygma must always be at the center of evangelization and catechesis. He writes, the kerygma is,

‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a

31. *EN* 15.

32. *EN* 15.

qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.³³

Although Pope Francis does not use the term, he is pointing to the necessity of an evangelizing catechesis. In fact, Pope Francis states, “On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: ‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.’”³⁴ Therefore, the first characteristic of an evangelizing catechesis is that it is centered on the kerygma.

The second characteristic of an evangelizing catechesis is that it must always include the invitation to encounter Jesus Christ and to friendship with Him. In his book *Liturgical Catechesis in the 21st Century: A School of Discipleship*, James C. Pauley calls this “the proposal.” Pauley writes, “The proposal of intimate communion with the Lord Jesus must become today the enveloping focus of every catechetical act.”³⁵ He insists that whenever a catechist teaches about any part of the faith it must always include the proposal to life in Christ.³⁶ Furthermore, he says, “Good catechesis penetrates the heart with the Good News and provokes conversion. It does so by helping us take in the Good News more deeply, not only for the sake of the ‘renewal of [the] mind’ (Rom 12:2), but with the intent of the whole person being transformed.”³⁷ Nevertheless, it is called “the proposal” because faith cannot be coerced or forced. The catechist must respect the personal freedom of those they teach.³⁸ Therefore, “All the catechist can do is create the conditions for the possibility of this encounter.”³⁹ Each person to whom the Gospel is proclaimed must freely receive and respond to the invitation to communion with Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

In his book, *New Perspectives: A Report on the Synod on the New Evangelization*, Frank DeSiano, CSP, points to the language of “a per-

33. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [The Joy of the Gospel] 164, (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013). Hereafter *EG* followed by the paragraph number.

34. *EG* 112.

35. Pauley, 22.

36. Pauley, 23.

37. Pauley, 19.

38. Pauley, 23.

39. Pauley, 23.

40. Pauley, 23.

sonal encounter with Jesus Christ” as transformational for the Catholic Church. The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 2012 Synod on the New Evangelization stated, “Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions which lead to this encounter between the person and Jesus Christ.”⁴¹ According to DeSiano, up until that point, the way that catechesis was carried out did not, in most cases, include fostering a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Yet, DeSiano writes, “Now the synod tells the Church that personal encounter is what faith, and catechesis, is all about.”⁴² Thus, the Synod recognized the primary importance of relationships more than institutions.⁴³ Furthermore, DeSiano writes, “Rather than a focus on buildings, or protocols, or historical privileges, the Church has to begin with who she is before God—a community of people who have encountered Jesus Christ and, therefore, have undertaken his mission in our lives.”⁴⁴ In addition to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, DeSiano suggests that more opportunities for encounter must be provided in creative ways within the family, small groups, and ecumenical movements.⁴⁵ Thus, DeSiano concludes, “We are clearly moving toward a new, relational, way of expressing faith.”⁴⁶

A third characteristic of an evangelizing catechesis is that it requires community, especially in the form of mentorship or accompaniment. In *EG*, Pope Francis wrote, “In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs.”⁴⁷ An evangelizing catechesis must, therefore, be carried out from person-to-person and heart-to-heart, which includes listening and compassion.⁴⁸ Spiritual direction is a particularly focused and fruitful example of accompaniment but accompaniment does not require formal training. Accompaniment can also simply be a kind of spiritual friendship.

In this regard, the *RCIA* serves as a fitting model of accompaniment because the baptismal catechumenate is considered to be the

41. Frank DeSiano, *New Perspectives: A Report on the Synod on the New Evangelization*, (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), chapter 4, Kindle. Hereafter DeSiano followed by chapter number.

42. DeSiano, 4.

43. DeSiano, 6.

44. DeSiano, 6.

45. DeSiano, 4.

46. DeSiano, 6.

47. *EG* 128.

48. *EG* 128.

model for all catechesis.⁴⁹ The *RCIA* considers catechesis to be a gradual process and holistic. In addition, the *RCIA* approaches catechesis as the introduction into a way of life rather than only passing on information. In order to learn the Christian way of life, the *RCIA* incorporates the help and guidance of sponsors or mentors who set an example and are able to dialogue with catechumens to help unpack what being Catholic is all about.⁵⁰ This takes place one step at a time as conversion takes place gradually and progressively.⁵¹ Moreover, the *RCIA* “leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.”⁵² The dialogue that takes place in the initial engagement between a sponsor and a catechumen is not supposed to end with the sacraments of initiation. Rather, seeking to understand the Catholic faith and pondering the mysteries of Christ’s life includes ongoing dialogue with others.

In summary, then, in order to be “evangelizing,” evangelizing catechesis must be centered on the kerygma. However, the kerygma cannot simply be taught in the same way that one teaches any body of knowledge. Those being evangelized and catechized must be invited to encounter the living God. At the same time, in order to be “catechesis,” evangelizing catechesis must lead others into deeper communion with Jesus Christ, the one whom they have encountered and to whom they have committed their lives as His disciple. To be taken into deeper relationship with Jesus Christ requires community so that members of the Church can continually learn from each other and be built up in faith from person-to-person. Thus, a Christian community enables a disciple to be mentored or accompanied through dialogue and the sharing of life. Accompaniment allows for handing on a way of life rather than information alone, which takes place gradually over time. Human beings need others to show them by example how to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, the elements of an “evangelizing catechesis” include the kerygma, invitation to friendship with Jesus, encounter, communion, conversion, dialogue, community, and accompaniment.

49. *GDC* 59.

50. *RCIA* 75.

51. *RCIA* 75.

52. *RCIA* 75.

Is Evangelizing Catechesis Doctrinal?

Having identified these characteristics of an evangelizing catechesis one question still remains: where does the doctrine of the Catholic Church fit into evangelizing catechesis? If catechesis is the systematic presentation of the truths of the faith, how is the teaching of the Church to be incorporated into her evangelizing mission? What role does doctrine play or is doctrine to be sidelined?

In order to answer these questions, it is first necessary to discuss another development that occurred between the *GCD* to the *GDC*. From the time of the 1971 *GCD* to the 1997 *GDC* the understanding of the relationship between the “ministry of the Word” and “evangelization” developed. In the 1971 *GCD*, evangelization and catechesis were both considered a part of the ministry of the Word. Instead of evangelization being considered the overarching process within which catechesis makes up one element, evangelization and catechesis were identified as two forms of the ministry of the Word. The *GCD* also identified liturgy and theology as two other forms of the ministry of the Word.⁵³

In the 1997 *GDC*, however, which incorporates the insights of *EN* and *CT*, the ministry of the Word is no longer described as the overarching process. Rather, the *GDC* states, “The ministry of the word is a fundamental element of evangelization.”⁵⁴ Therefore, the ministry of the Word is regarded as another element within the whole process of evangelization.

In his effort to sort out the shifts in terminology and definitions in the fields of evangelization and catechesis, Halbach summarizes,

In the *GCD*, the ministry of the word is identified with the Church’s mission to proclaim the gospel message and convert peoples and cultures to Christ. In *EN*, the Church’s mission is identified with evangelization, not the ministry of the word. The *GCD* describes catechesis and evangelization as forms of the ministry of the word. *CT* adopts this vision while, at the same time, adopting the vision of *EN*, which situates catechesis within the process of evangelization.⁵⁵

Therefore, the most recent Church documents identify the Church’s mission as evangelization and yet also recognize the impor-

53. *GCD* 17.

54. *GDC* 50.

55. Halbach, 181.

tance of handing on the deposit of faith entrusted to the Church. As the *GDC* states, “the ministry of the word, within the context of evangelization, transmits Revelation, through the Church, by using human words.”⁵⁶ The ministry of the Word, therefore, includes transmitting Divine Revelation in Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and is guided by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Although the definitions and relationships are not entirely consistent in the various Church documents, the most important takeaway from the discussion of the ministry of the Word is the fact that Revelation is an essential part of an evangelizing catechesis.

In his book, *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine: The Good News and its Proclamation*, Johannes Hofinger, SJ, who pioneered catechetical teaching in the 1950s, advocates for catechesis that is rooted in Sacred Scripture. He suggests that the way to introduce people to the mystery of Christ is “primarily through a biblical-historical catechesis that leads to Christ through the telling of the story of salvation.”⁵⁷ This is what St. Augustine promoted in *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. Yet, the telling of the biblical narrative must also be in relation to the person of Jesus. Hofinger continues, “we must from the beginning present a picture of Christ which harmoniously unites His awe-inspiring greatness and His loveable attractiveness, His tender intimacy with each of us, and His adorable majesty.”⁵⁸

Hofinger recognized the need for introducing people to the person of Jesus Christ, and through Him to the love of the Father and the Holy Spirit, which he expresses through the phrase, “the Mystery of Christ,” instead of the language of “encounter” or “personal relationship.” For example, Hofinger writes, “the special purpose of kerygmatically oriented theological teaching is to allow the mystery of Christ to become evident in all the theses that the students must master.”⁵⁹ He, therefore, believes it is possible to present the truths of the Catholic faith in a way that is permeated by the mystery of Christ (i.e. the kerygma).

In the work, *Echoing the Mystery: Unlocking the Deposit of Faith in Catechesis*, Barbara Morgan and Athanasius Monroe also present a way in which doctrine can be kerygmatic. Morgan and Monroe admit that

56. *GDC* 50.

57. Johannes Hofinger, SJ, *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine: The Good News and its Proclamation* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2016) 23. Hereafter Hofinger followed by the page number.

58. Hofinger, 29.

59. Hofinger, 16.

catechesis “cannot be the delivery of formulas alone; it must be a gradual process which helps the person to become increasingly enfolded by the mystery of truth.”⁶⁰ However, they insist that “Revelation leads to relationship with God. Catechesis leads the one catechized to the discovery of new facets of the mystery and its bearing on his life, prompting an ever-deepening ‘yes’ of surrender to the Person of Jesus Christ, who is made known.”⁶¹ Similarly, Pope Francis writes, “All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart.”⁶² Therefore, an evangelizing catechesis must always relate the doctrine of the Church to the person of Jesus and to the actual lives of those being catechized. Faith and life must go together.⁶³

Introducing someone to the person of Christ (i.e. the kerygma) is what makes evangelizing catechesis, “evangelizing.” At the same time, what makes evangelizing catechesis, “catechesis,” is that it leads people to a deeper communion with Jesus Christ through the systematic presentation of the Catholic faith. However, this does not have to be in a formal classroom setting. In fact, the most recent Church documents indicate that it should primarily be through accompaniment and mentorship. As DeSiano puts it, “Although no one doubts that formal instruction will always be necessary, bringing children into classes to receive instruction hardly seems like a metaphor for personal encounter.”⁶⁴ Therefore, he argues that at all levels catechesis (e.g. families, small groups, and adult faith formation) will have to be transformed to be “geared to people who understand themselves as disciples.”⁶⁵

60. Barbara Morgan and Athanasius Monroe, *Echoing the Mystery: Unlocking the Deposit of Faith in Catechesis*, edited by John Dominic (Ann Arbor, MI: Lumen Ecclesiae Press, 2018), 13.

61. Morgan and Monroe, 13.

62. *EG* 165.

63. In this regard, Pope Francis notes the importance of the hierarchy of truths. He writes, while “All revealed truths derive from the same divine source and are to be believed with the same faith, yet some of them are more important for giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel. In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead.” *EG* 36.

64. DeSiano, 6.

65. DeSiano, 6.

Along the same lines, while commenting on growing in relationship with Christ, Pope Francis writes, “It would not be right to see this call to growth exclusively or primarily in terms of doctrinal formation. It has to do with “observing” all that the Lord has shown us as the way of responding to his love.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, while it is not primarily doctrinal, it does not mean that doctrine does not play a part at all. It is unthinkable that God would reveal anything to humanity with no purpose or simply to have an interesting idea to ponder. Doctrines are not only facts but ought to impact life. In order to “observe” Christ, as Pope Francis suggests, being imbued with the Word of God is essential. This includes knowledge of Sacred Scripture but it also includes the liturgy, through which one encounters the Word made flesh in the Eucharist, and prayer. In order to accompany another person towards Christ, one must accompany Jesus in one’s own life through prayerful meditation and the reception of the sacraments, which foster relationship with He who is the Word of God. As Pope Francis writes, “All evangelization is based on that word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to. The Scriptures are the very source of evangelization. Constantly, we need to be trained in hearing the word.”⁶⁷ Moreover, one must allow Jesus to accompany oneself in this pilgrimage of life.

Pope Francis also suggests that to foster growth in this relationship with Christ the *via pulchritudinis*, or way of beauty, must be incorporated into catechesis as well as a “mystagogical renewal.”⁶⁸ In reality, there is still much that has to be worked out in practical ways in the Catholic Church in these areas, but there is at least a direction and a way forward.

The relationship between evangelization and catechesis has developed as the understanding of each has been more fully articulated in the official documents of the Catholic. The symbiotic relationship between evangelization and catechesis means that both are intimately related and yet they remain distinct. As the Catholic Church directs her energies towards a New Evangelization, she must also direct her efforts towards renewing catechesis. This renewal is the promotion and development of an evangelizing catechesis. Evangelizing catechesis has the kerygma as its core and invites each person into communion with Jesus Christ through individual accompaniment. Within these mentoring friendships,

66. EG 161. For further discussion on the role of doctrine in evangelizing catechesis, see Hofinger, *Evangelization and Catechesis*, 59–60.

67. EG 174.

68. EG 166–167.

an evangelizing catechesis presents the Catholic faith systematically but in a way that makes clear how the Word of God relates to the person of Jesus and to life. Evangelizing catechesis is the way forward for the Catholic Church.

Joseph Kirkconnell is a priest of the Archdiocese of Detroit and is currently a doctoral student in Catechetics at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Email: kirkconnell@cua.edu.