

# SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

## An outline guide

### Introduction

God reaches out to people in every age, place and culture. Christ's love for us can change our lives, convert our hearts and transform our world.

This **National Directory** lays down a framework and principles, suited to local needs in Ireland, for the presentation of the Good News of Jesus to people of all ages and stages. Its publication is a beginning that can lead a pilgrim, evangelising Church to reflection and action. It seeks to open a discussion and to prompt implementation among all the members of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Hopefully it will also encourage ecumenical, inter-religious and inter cultural dialogue.

### Chapter 1 Living the Gospel in Ireland Today

**A Christ-centred Vision:** Jesus asked "Who am I for you? Who do the crowd say that I am? The same risen Lord is alive and active today, encouraging people to live a new way, His way. Jesus personified good conquering evil, love overcoming fear. Through the Holy Spirit working in his followers, he continues this beautiful, loving work.

86.83% of the people of the Republic and 40% of people of N. Ireland state themselves to be Catholics. But, how many of these find a correlation between their faith and life? Many, especially younger people, lack understanding or commitment to the faith. The new Directory seeks to open up a dialogue about these things.

#### **The Irish Christian Tradition:**

St Patrick and others brought the good news of a beautiful, protective God to the Irish. They adapted the Christian message to many of the existing beliefs and practices they found. Monks transcribed the gospels in beautiful books. Artists produced high crosses. Craftsmen in wood and metals gave their special expression. Monks and missionaries brought the faith to every part of Ireland, the islands and Europe. A great love of Jesus and Mary led to a personal, warm and vibrant faith. Later, persecution and penal laws brought dangers and punishments. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century national schools developed a formal handing on of faith. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, vocations and missionary zeal flourished.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> a variety of **new influences** emerged. Unprecedented wealth, immigration and cultural diversity, as well as revelations about child sexual abuse changed much. Damage emerging from destructive effects of new technologies brought new problems. The relationship between sciences and religion was often fraught.

Ireland and the Church in Ireland find it difficult to integrate such **rapid and major change**. How do we welcome newcomers? Are they a gift for our Church? Or a threat? How does Christianity adjust to globalisation and the ever-growing communications technology? Some argue that, in Ireland, religion is on the retreat, and that secularism attempts to exclude God and religion from culture and public life. Some argue that religion does not disappear when its power is denied, but that rather there are signs that a different form of interest in the religious emerges.

**The Church must learn to engage with the questions** and searching that people express through a range of spiritual activities. So, how do we proclaim the love of God that we have experienced in Jesus and in each other? There must be openness to dialogue with all, based on the ideals of human dignity, human rights, justice and respect, bringing in the message of Jesus Christ, in whom God and humankind are united. Our celebration of liturgy and sacraments, must encourage belonging and participation. New language, new ways to help people, new communities of communities must be developed.

*'Lord, help us to know that the greatest gift we have for our world is You.'*

### Chapter 2: Evangelisation, Catechesis and Religious Education

#### **Some key quotations**

'The Church exists to evangelise!' *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14.

'Evangelisation is the most powerful and stirring challenge which the church has been called to face from her very beginning.' *Veritatis Splendor* 106

Evangelisation will also always contain... a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ... salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 27

'The community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ.' *RCIA* 9

**Evangelisation** relates to proclaiming the good news of God's love in Jesus. This directory distinguishes three dimensions to evangelisation:

Pastoral evangelization: - deepening the spiritual life of the faithful

Ecumenical evangelization: - addressed to a divided Christianity to promote unity of truth

Missionary evangelization: - addressed to those who do not know Christ. In this arena there is an **initial proclamation** of Jesus Christ, and it may be useful, too, to speak of *pre-evangelization*.

The Church interprets the Word of God in the particular context of each new generation

**Catechesis** '...promotes and matures initial conversion, educates the convert to the faith and incorporates him into

the Christian community.' *General Directory for Catechesis* 6. It takes place within a community living out its faith. The Rite of **Christian Initiation** of Adults (RCIA) is the model for all catechesis, and it is critical to the life of the church in Ireland today. 'The aim of catechesis is to help the Christian to reach spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic maturity.' *Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* 59

We need to consider **four traditional themes** when assessing vitality of catechesis: *Kerygma/ martyria*:- proclamation and witness to the gospel, *Koinonia*:- building up a caring Church community with gospel values, *Leitourgia*:- celebrating faith in prayer and worship, *Diakonia*:- service to neighbor especially the poor and vulnerable.

The General Directory for Catechesis speaks of **6 fundamental tasks** of catechesis: promotion of the faith, liturgical education especially re Eucharist, moral formation, teaching us to pray, education for community life (including ecumenism), missionary commitment.

Pope John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae* said the following

1. The baptised have the right to receive church instruction to deepen their faith life.
2. The more the church engages in catechesis the more she strengthens her internal community life and her missionary activity
3. The whole Church is responsible for catechesis
4. Catechesis must always be looking for new and better ways to transmit its message.

A Catholic vision of education is one where people discover the meaning of life in the context of God's love. Anthropologies based on autonomy, independence, and self-sufficiency need to be balanced with ones based on relationality, interdependence and transcendence. **Religious education** is viewed as a process that contributes to the faith development of children, adolescents and adults. It can take place within a church context or outside it. In Catholic schools it should never be simply a general study of religions nor just an approach that compares one religion to another. Students should engage from the context of their own lived faith.

**New evangelization** addresses the situation of those who are Catholics in a cultural sense, but whose personal engagement with the faith is tenuous or seriously underdeveloped. This requires approaches "new in ardour, methods and expression". It also demands the evangelization of culture. Great hope is invested in those engaged in **theological reflection**, not only professionally in formal academic settings but also those now studying theology as adults. The parish community 'should be willing to travel with and support those studying theology, discussing with them possible opportunities for engaging in practical service within the parish.'

**Faith development** is the 'overarching term' used in the Directory to highlight the lifelong journey that it envisages, embracing the **six key moments** outlined above: initial proclamation, Christian initiation, catechesis, religious education, new evangelization and theological reflection.

### Chapter 3. Our Faith: The Gospel Alive

**The focus of this chapter is on the Content of Faith / Sources of Catechesis**

Introduction: Growing in Faith. Clarification on 'What Faith is'

- Connection with the Living God; personal, historical and ecclesial.
- Faith reaches out to dialogue with human culture

#### The Deposit of Faith

- Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium (DV 10) – the principal sources of catechesis.
- Scripture study requires both historical and theological exegesis
- Living Tradition: received / handed down / growth in insight through the Holy Spirit
- Authentic interpretation entrusted to the Magisterium.

A Hierarchy of Truths. Hierarchy of priority in catechesis.

- Faith organised around mystery of Trinity in a Christocentric perspective
- Essential elements: i) The Apostles' Creed; ii) The Sacraments; iii) Life in Christ: Ten Commandments → Double commandment of love → Beatitudes; iv) Our Father / Prayer.

#### The Catechism of The Catholic Church 1992-1997

- Catechism is doctrinal point of reference for the 6 fundamental tasks of catechesis (Ch2)

The Profession of Faith: The Apostles' Creed – the Language of Faith. No one can believe alone.

The Celebration of the Christian Mystery: The Sacraments – gateways of Christ into the world.

- *Sacraments of Initiation:* Baptism - Initiation in the early Church and RCIA; symbolism of immersion in water; Infant Baptism and the responsibilities attached; Confirmation – growth in the Holy Spirit. Eucharist – sacrament of our innermost union with God.
- *Sacraments of Healing:* Penance and Reconciliation – celebrating Christ's forgiveness of us; Anointing of the Sick – participation in ministry of compassion and healing.
- *Sacraments at the Service of Communion:* Holy Orders – the sacrament of apostolic ministry; Marriage – builds up the ecclesial community / echoing the faithful love of God.

### Life in Christ: The Beatitudes and Commandments:

#### Education of Conscience

- The Beatitudes – the essence of all his teaching
- The New Commandment of Love – the *magna carta* of the Christian life
- The Ten Commandments – the framework / invitation to true freedom

#### Prayer in the Christian Life – OT conversation with God / different forms of Christian prayer

- The Lord's Prayer – a summary of the whole Gospel (CCC)

#### Ecumenical Outreach: The need to address a Christianity that is divided

- Ecumenical conversations, at all levels, to be encouraged nationally and locally
- Work collaboratively in exploring issues of faith

#### The Challenge of Inculturation: Evangelisation of Culture

- New ways to express within our culture (Ch 1) what we believe and value in Jesus Christ

#### Authentic Inter-religious Dialogue: Open and respectful dialogue without succumbing to relativism.

- Common spiritual inheritance with Jewish people. Respect for Muslims and efforts towards mutual understanding. Other non-Christian religions

## **Chapter 4      Adult Faith Development**

Bringing faith to full growth necessitates continuing faith development through all of life. Adults cannot be content with primary school religious knowledge. Difficulties often arise from lack of adult knowledge about our faith. **Adult catechesis** must be considered the chief form of catechesis. The RCIA has re-established the process of adult catechesis in a context of liturgical celebration. Each local parish should be able to facilitate and learn from the RCIA process. An educated world needs an educated faith. An adult's own experience should be recognised and taken into account in any Adult Faith Development programme and the various categories of adults should be acknowledged.

The **parish priest** is responsible, with the **Parish Pastoral Council**, for the faith formation of adults in the parish. Each parish (or group of parishes / deanery) should have a qualified member of staff designated as **Faith Development Coordinator**, to lead faith development in adults, young people and children. There is a need for appropriately trained catechists as well. Many situations can be grounds for adult faith development e.g. RCIA, pre-sacramental preparation, marriage preparation, funerals, pastoral councils. The Sunday parish liturgy, however, provides a

core focus for liturgical catechesis and ongoing faith development.

Inter-personal skills, communication skills and awareness of how adults learn are central to the success of any adult faith programme. **Personal involvement and active participation** are indispensable. Distance learning can also be helpful. It is vital to respect the freedom and autonomy of adults. Adult religious education should not be isolated from other local adult education initiatives.

**Young Adults** may need to be given opportunity to grow in personal faith and spirituality. A distinction must be made between youth ministry and young adult ministry in terms of the language and activities used. In Ireland today young men and women in their twenties and thirties form the largest section of the Catholic population but are the least active. New evangelisation initiatives should be offered for those who have been baptised but have not yet come to own their own faith.

**Third Level Students** should be helped to recognise the contribution of Christian thought and love in the world. The place of theology at third level is key, because of the diversity of people's values and beliefs today. Catechising young adults often means assisting them to make their own of faith at a personal level. We evangelise young adults by inviting them to become active in the local church, giving them an opportunity to explore together their understanding of faith and life. Modern communications and social networking have great potential to engage young adults around their questions. Their skills in communication technology can also help to evangelise others. World Youth Day and related events have also been a successful method of catechesis for young adults.

ACCORD does good work in Ireland to prepare couples for marriage. Their work in **Marriage Preparation and Support** as well as their recently developed marriage enrichment courses have the potential to contribute in a significant way to the faith development of couples. **The family** is the primary context within which Christian formation takes place. The role of parents as the first and best teachers of their children in faith needs special attention. Good adult faith development is essential to help make the most of family as the source and high point of faith filled love. **Sacramental preparation programmes** have an important role to play in adult faith formation. Reflection on new ways to engage men in the faith life of their community is also essential.

**Single people** too need support in the Christian Life. Having met Jesus and his Church no one should ever feel alone. Single people can minister to others in a rich variety of ways. **Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Religious** also have a need for on-going faith development in their lives. In parishes, collaborative ministry and teamwork is to be chosen decisively and wholeheartedly. Priests and religious must prepare themselves for this change and lay people should be accepted as co-responsible for the Church's life and ministry. Priests working in parishes should be

supported and resourced towards ongoing personal and ministerial education.

Many issues take on new significance for **Adults of Mature years**: embracing the present, confronting limitations, reconciliation and forgiveness, reflecting on death itself. For those who reach old age wounded in body and soul, catechetical outreach can help develop an attitude of prayer, forgiveness and inner peace. The elderly can foster faith among the young. Older people have time and are often happy to put their experience at the service of others. For those connected with the life of the parish, being part of a theological reflection group can be a wonderful experience.

## **Chapter 5 Sharing our Faith with the Young**

**Parents/Guardians** take on the principal role in faith formation of their children, introducing them to Jesus and preparing them for the sacraments of initiation. However they should be supported by the local school and parish i.e. sharing the faith with the young is the work of the whole Christian community.

**The Baptism of Children** The significant decision by parents to have their child baptised should not be taken lightly. A parish faith development coordinator and baptism team should be available to provide parents/guardians with catechesis concerning meaning and responsibilities of baptism. Godparents and Grandparents should be encouraged in their role of supporting the parents in the faith formation of their children.

**Presenting the Gospel to Children** Family Ministry Teams can develop useful strategies for helping families to engage actively in family catechesis. Parish programmes, under the direction of the Faith Development Coordinator, can address faith formation in a variety of ways, depending on circumstances and needs of children attending.

**Infancy and Early Childhood-** High-quality early participation in family faith activities is important, laying foundations for all future catechesis and faith development.

**Middle Childhood-** At this stage, a child's faith journey is focused on participating and belonging. A clearly defined process of sacramental preparation for First Holy Communion and for the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation should be in place in all parishes, along with the programme that takes place in Catholic parish schools. A volunteer First communion Team should incorporate a group of committed parents/guardians and they should ensure that all parents/ guardians are involved in the programme.

**Pre-adolescence-** Home and parish catechesis in preparation for confirmation are as significant as the programme that takes place in Catholic schools. Need for a parish volunteer Confirmation Team

It is important to have a professionally qualified and adequately resourced Faith Development Coordinator to support these initiatives. Support and catechesis for parents should be available for parents of children participating in the sacraments of initiation. Such activity should not be seen as imposition on parents but as a help in sharing the faith. Family Mass can lift and benefit all those who attend and can become a form of ministry to the rest of the parish, as well as to young families. Participation of the whole family is important.

**Children's Religious Education in School** The Parish Community is a catechetical community with a deep awareness of the connections between home, parish and school. This is essential in encouraging young children in coming to know who they are and to whom they belong.

**Presenting the Gospel to Adolescents** Young people are to be embraced as active participants in their own religious development, bringing the message of Christ into the world. Looked upon positively, adolescence can be an important opportunity for the young person to search out meaning in life and develop a sense of their true personal identity. Ongoing Faith Development for this age-group is a challenge.

## **Chapter 6 Reaching out in Christ's love to all**

The message of Jesus Christ is for all, beginning with the most disadvantaged. This chapter challenges us to reflect on the breadth of our embrace when it comes to evangelisation – where are the people on the margins?

The perennial process of **evangelisation is a gift offered to all people**. The dignity of the human person demands that justice and solidarity be recognised as key dimensions at the centre of all catechetical efforts. There is the challenge of drawing into this dialogue those who have been forgotten, isolated or treated as outsiders, for whatever reason (important sense here that we do not demand that people live perfect lives before we agree to engage – so outreach to those whose lives are complicated). All faith development processes should be just and inclusive and should be tailored according to the needs of those to whom they are directed.

Some have need of **specific need-appropriate catechetical initiatives** that acknowledge and support them on their faith journey with a sensitivity to particular situations. Others simply need to know that they will be welcome within the faith community – e.g. those who are divorced, remarried etc. There is need for training for those in pastoral and catechetical outreach. "It requires a willingness to enter into dialogue, to be able to respect another person's position, articulate the Church's thinking, and journey together through whatever difficulties may be encountered, valuing

the relationship that is built up together.” Nobody should feel dismissed, patronised or marginalised further.

Evangelisation seen as a two way process – we are called **both to evangelise and be evangelised** by the other. Everyone brings a richness, everyone is a member of the community and has something to offer. Why then do those with special needs or those from minority communities so often feel excluded?

Many experience **social disadvantage and exclusion**. This should not apply to faith community. Evangelisation and catechesis can bring the transformational experience of knowing oneself to be loved – impact of this upon life. Catholic Social teaching urges us to see the world as a place where the gospel must be brought to life, social disadvantage and exclusion to be challenged. Taking evangelisation and catechesis seriously brings mission and solidarity with the poor into a clear focus.

**Access and inclusion are key issues** – to feel welcome, to see my life reflected in the materials used, physical access, use of technology for visually impaired, specialised learning methodologies and pedagogical approaches appropriate to the needs, awareness and valuing of the culture and experiences whether of Deaf Community, Travelling Community, diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Again we must recognise the richness of what we can receive in return, as well as the richness of dialogue in a multi ethnic, multi faith environment. This is mission, the outward orientation of the church.

**Catechetical moments arise** in work with those suffering with physical and mental illness. Even the approach of death offers possibility for catechetical engagement. Importance of people knowing they are not alone and are held in prayer. What is our response to the search for meaning and relationship with God that approaching death may bring? Even the funeral is time of catechetical possibility, formally and informally.

Evangelisation and catechesis are central to who we are as church, in every situation. This chapter challenges us to **move beyond our comfort zone**, to go to the margins and to both evangelise and be evangelised there.

## Chapter 7 Resources And Implementation

The Introduction to *Share The Good News* (n3, p5) refers to this chapter as ‘**the culmination of this Directory**, bringing together, under the format of objectives and indicators, all that has emerged in this reflection’. The objectives (33 in all) ‘set out the policy to be pursued over the coming years, according to local needs and possibilities.’

The **Faith Development Objectives** (FDO) are grouped under 7 headings: Parish, Diocesan, National, Schools, Movements, Formation and Resources, and numbered consecutively within each of these headings. Then **indicators** are presented under each objective as bullet points, so that, for example, the 5 FDOs under Parish give rise to 31 indicators in total. The indicators are described as ‘steps along the way which, when achieved, suggest progress toward the realisation of the particular objective.’ Each series of indicators is introduced with the heading ‘*Some Indicators of Achievement*’ (italics mine), thus highlighting the sense that the list does not pretend to be exhaustive. Further, there is a very clearly stated intention in the choice of this formula of objectives and indicators: it is ‘**used in order that implementation is given high priority**’ and to provide a ‘basis upon which **evaluation** can take place locally at regular intervals.’

Turning to Chapter 7 itself, the introductory material takes up two pages. With the reminder that ‘it is Jesus Christ on whom we depend,’ and that ‘the Spirit is always capable of new surprises,’ the introduction draws particularly on John Paul II’s letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, and it quotes in full a key sentence from n29 of that letter:

***It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture.***

The remaining 21 pages set forth the objectives and indicators referred to above, with the use of several photographs and text boxes to promote reflection and internalisation. With this in mind, what is envisaged is ‘**a graduated approach, building practically on what has already been achieved locally and targeting the particular needs of the faith community.**’ There is reference to how measures that are practical along with clearly established and shared responsibility can help to secure positive motivation. The text acknowledges that the needs that are identified will be met in many cases by those who will respond as **volunteers**, but it is unambiguous about the need to have some of the lay faithful ‘further **educated, trained, and paid** appropriately if we wish to offer coming generations the Good News we have been given.’

Clearly, a great task awaits the whole People of God in this area. ‘Each Catholic community of faith is asked to set out short-, medium-, and long-term catechetical goals within its own given situation.’ A **10-year life-span is envisaged for *Share the Good News***. The objectives highlighted in this chapter are to be agreed locally with modifications and **put in place within five years** (by end 2015), and **the following five years are for review, consolidation and further**

**strategic action.** (A summary of the 33 Faith Development objectives follows on a separate page.)

## Conclusion

As members of the Catholic Church in Ireland, we who have heard the Good News wish to encourage and support one another as we travel together on the path outlined in this directory, answering Christ's call: **Live the Good news! Share the Good News! Be the Good News!** This will bring us to discover new vitality and direction in our Christian lives. The quiet, determined efforts of communities and individuals to live the Gospel deserve to be acknowledged, including the prayerful contribution of monastic communities. Renewal takes place both from the bottom up and from the top down. Success depends ultimately on God's Spirit and on Christ, whom we seek to follow. We call on the help of Mary's prayers, who at Cana says to us, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

## The 33 Faith Development Objectives in summary

### PARISH

1. A Stated Mission
2. Priests' commitment
3. Adult Faith Development (FD) is central
4. Youth FD a priority
5. Inclusive of those with specific FD needs

### DIOCESAN

1. A clear vision at the heart of the Diocesan FD plan
2. Strategy of FD as life-long learning
3. Adult FD visible as chief form of FD
4. Youth FD a priority
5. Collaboration with Religious congregations

### NATIONAL

1. Irish Catholic Bishops Conference give priority to FD of adults and young people
2. A National Faith Development Team to support national co-operation

### 3. SCHOOLS

1. Catholic Church in Ireland to develop a holistic understanding of education in schools
2. Catholic schools operate according to mission and ethos statement
3. Catholic schools put key Christian values in action
4. Board of Management/Governors take responsibility for ethos in practice
5. Principal takes special responsibility for the ethos day-to-day
6. Staff understand and sustain the ethos
7. RE and Faith Formation strong in overall schooling

### MOVEMENTS

1. Church organisations, SCCs and Ecclesial movements embrace their own FD role

### FORMATION

2. Educate and train lay personnel in service of FD
3. Teachers in schools informed so they can support dialogue between their students and their local Catholic communities
4. Catholic RE training essential in primary schools
5. RE educators in second level professionally prepared in Theology and RE methodology
6. Post primary chaplains qualified at post-grad level
7. Catholic 3rd-level faculties offer FD opportunities as well as studies

### RESOURCES

1. Adult resources for FD to be made available at variety of levels
2. Renewed Primary school RE curriculum/programme
3. New priority on family FD resources
4. Post-primary RE programmes responding to various syllabuses to be made available
5. Catechetical programmes specifically for parish to be provided
6. Human dignity, J&P in all resources and programmes
7. Contribution of Catholic press and media to support this new approach