



CALL AND RESPONSE

CATECHETICAL DIRECTORY

OF THE

SYRO - MALABAR CHURCH

PUBLISHED BY

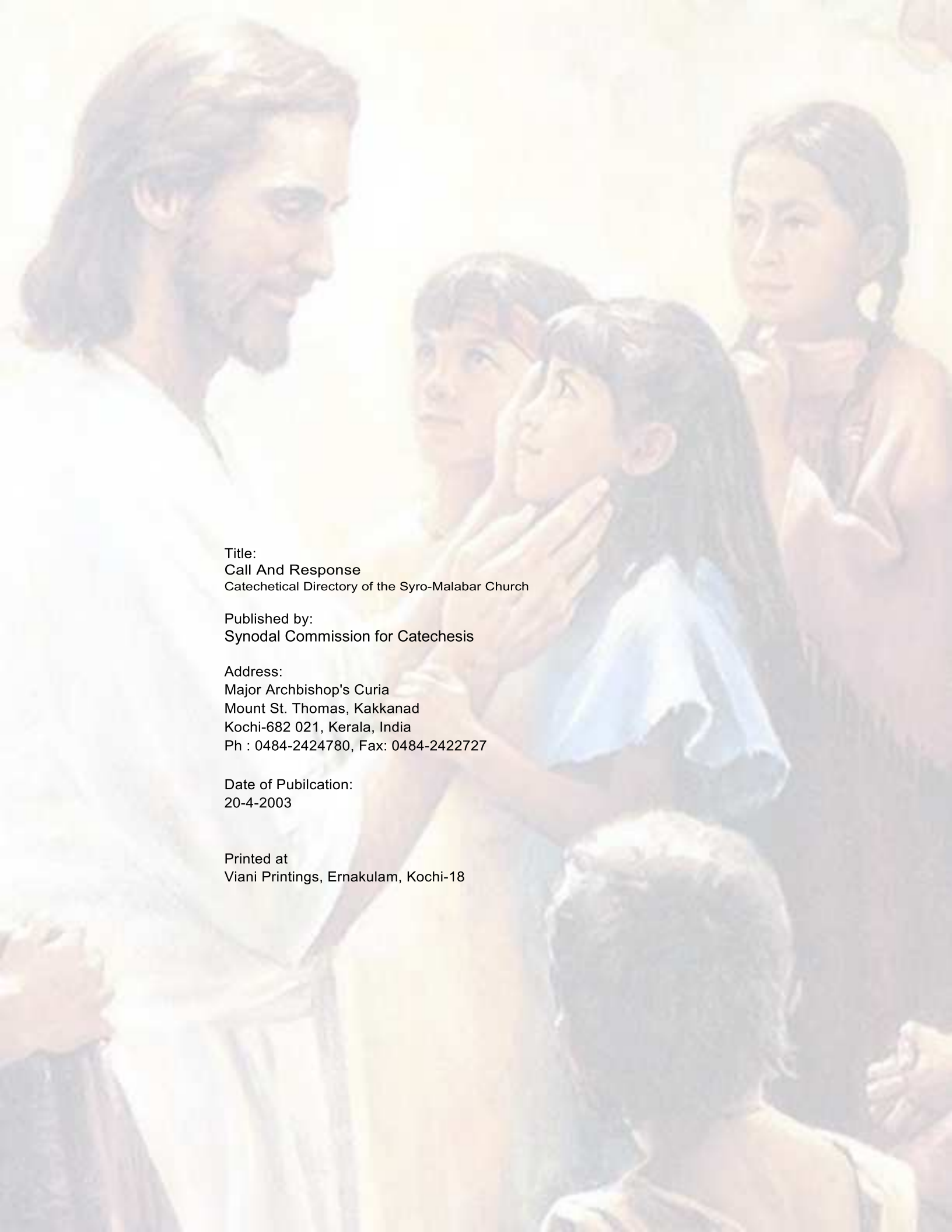
SYNODAL COMMISSION FOR CATECHESIS

MAJOR ARCHBISHOP'S CURIA

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PRESENTATION

The ministry of catechesis holds an important place in the life and mission of the Church and in the faith formation of the People of God. Therefore, the Church considers catechesis as her great responsibility and inalienable right. Jesus, before His ascension into heaven, entrusted to the apostles the mission to proclaim the Gospel to the entire creation and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that He had commanded them (Mk. 16: 15; Mt. 28: 18). Taking up this responsibility from the Lord the Church has always kept the ministry of catechesis in high esteem.

With this responsibility in mind the Church has always striven hard to hand down the faith to the generations with total fidelity to its content. From time to time the Church has also given guidelines for the proper conducting of the catechetical ministry. The Second Vatican Council prescribed that a directory for the catechetical instruction of the Christian people should be drawn up in order to give guidelines for the catechetical ministry of the whole Church (CD 44). In the same way the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches asks the Synod of Bishops of the sui iuris Churches to prepare and publish catechetical directories, catechisms and catechetical text books in order to coordinate and animate the catechetical activities of these Churches (CCEO, c. 621). It is in compliance with this directive that the Synod of Bishops Catechesis to publish a Catechetical Directory for this Church.

According to the decision of the Synod the Catechetical Commission prepared and presented the draft of the Directory in the Synod of Bishops held in November 2001. The Synod after discussion

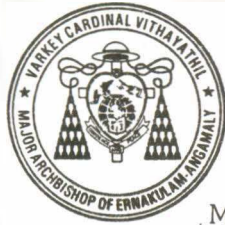
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on the same asked the Commission to publish it with the modifications proposed by it.

In accordance with the decision of the Synod of Bishops and having seen the modified text of the Directory I hereby approve and order its publication to be the guideline for the catechetical ministry in the Syro-Malabar Church as per norms of CCEO, c. 621 #1.

On this occasion I remember with gratitude all those who have contributed towards the publication of this Directory. I also appreciate the priests, the religious and the lay catechists who generously render their service for the faith formation of our children. I wish and pray that this Directory may help to coordinate and animate the catechetical ministry of our Church.

With prayerful wishes,



+ Varkey Vithayathil

Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, C.Ss.R.
Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church

Mount St Thomas
14th April 2003



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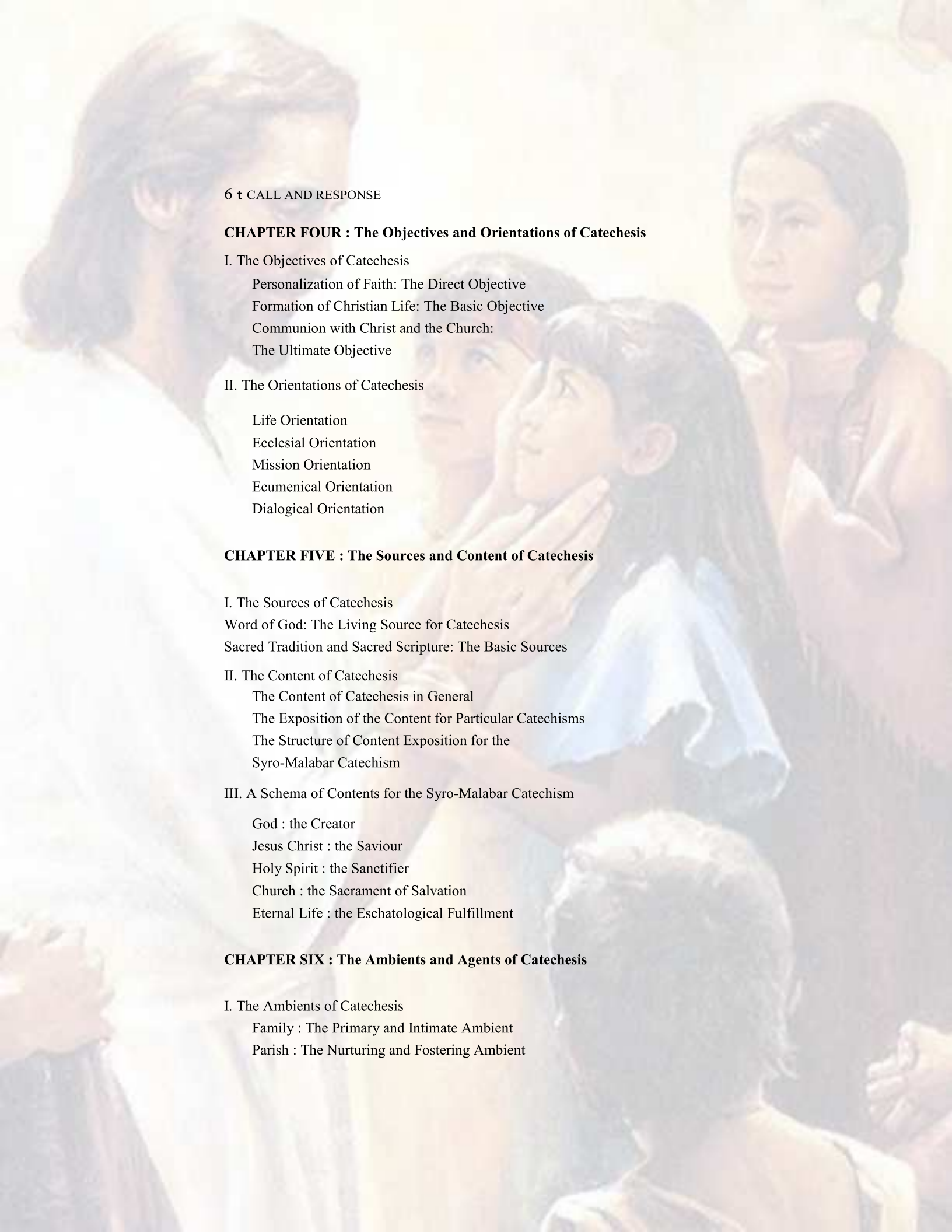
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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
AG	Ad Gentes
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCDE	Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium
CD	Christus Dominus
CTC	atechesi Tradendae
DV	Dei Verbum
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
GCD	General Catechetical Directory
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis
GS	Gaudium et Spes
LG	Lumen Gentium
NA	Nostra Aetate
POP	resbyterarum Ordinis
RMR	edemptoris Missio
SC	Sacra Sanctum Concilium
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
UR	Unitatis Redintegratio
UUS	Ut Unum Sint



PREFACE

1. Catechesis, being a form and part of the Ministry of the Word, holds an important place in the life and mission of the Church. Fully aware of this the Church has provided inspiration in all the countries to devise means and methods for catechesis adapted to the needs of the Particular Churches. In our own times the Second Vatican Council has called for the renewal of the Church, in order that she becomes updated to respond to the needs and face the challenges of the contemporary world. This call for renewal has already affected and still continues to affect all the aspects of the life and mission of the Church. This vision and teachings of the Second Vatican Council have also affected the views and ways of the catechetical ministry of the Church. The Council actually prescribed that a "Directory for the catechetical instruction of the Christian People" be drawn up in order to co-ordinate and animate the catechetical activities of the Church (CD 44). As a result, in order to gear up the catechetical activities of the Universal Church, after a long period of study and consultation the *General Catechetical Directory* was published in 1971 by the Congregation for the Clergy. This document of the Catholic Church has paved the way for the renewal of the catechetical ministry in the entire Church.
2. This move has also helped the local Churches to develop local catechetical directories, catechisms and catechism text books. In order to give a renewed vision of catechesis in the present context the Synod of Bishops in 1977 decided to publish a document on the theology of catechesis. As a result Holy Father Pope John Paul II



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promulgated the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* in 1979. The extraordinary Synod of 1985 discussed the need for a Catechism for the Universal Church and took the decision to publish a catechism comprising all the teachings of the Catholic Church. This decision was realized by the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992. In order to contextualize and adapt the catechetical ministry of the Church within the point of view of the ministry of evangelization, which is the basic mission of the Church (AG.35), in 1997 the Congregation for the Clergy published a new directory named: *General Directory for Catechesis*. This directory envisages the development of particular catechetical directories, catechisms, and catechetical text books (GDC 11).

With regard to the catechetical ministry of the Sui Juris *Churches* the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches says: "Each Church Sui Juris and particularly their bishops have the serious duty of providing catechesis, by which faith matures and the disciple of Christ is formed through a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the teachings of Christ and through an increasingly stronger commitment to the person of Christ" (CCEO. 617). The same Code again prescribes "The Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church or Council of Hierarchs is competent to issue norms on catechetical formation arranged in a catechetical directory, within the territorial boundaries of their own Church; they are to observe those things prescribed by the supreme authority of the Church" (CCEO 621 § 1). It further says: "Synods of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church or Councils of Hierarchs are to see to it that catechisms suited to various groups of faithful are prepared along with corresponding aids and means," (CCEO 621 § 3).

4. All these documents of the Church emphasize the possibilities and explore the need for developing particular catechetical directories, catechisms, and catechetical text books. They also serve as a guideline for the composition of local directories, catechisms and catechetical text books. Based on the vision and directives of the documents of the Church and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church, held in November 1999, entrusted to the Catechetical Commission the task of making the catechetical directory, catechism, and the catechetical text books for the Syro-Malabar Church. Subsequently the Catechetical Commission of the Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church began the preparation for the Catechetical Directory in 1999. The draft of the directory prepared by the Syro-Malabar Catechetical Committee was presented at the Synod of Bishops held in November 2001. The Synod discussed the draft and gave its own suggestions and additions to the text; and asked the Catechetical Commission to publish it incorporating the modifications.

5. Accordingly the commission modified the text and presented to the Major Archbishop for approval. Having received the due approval from the Major Archbishop we hereby publish this catechetical directory of the Syro-Malabar Church under the title **CALL AND RESPONSE : THE CATECHETICAL DIRECTORY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH**. Faith is a response to the call of the Lord and catechesis is the formation of the faithful enabling them to give this response in their life context. Hence the title of this directory: Call and Response. This directory is valid for the Syro-Malabar Church as per norms of CCEO, c.621#1. We hope



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and pray that, this may help the Church to co-ordinate all the aspects and to animate all the activities of the catechetical ministry of the Church.

On this occasion, we extend our sincere thanks to all those who have worked hard and co-operated for the completion of this work. We express our special thanks to all the members of the drafting committee and the Syro-Malabar Catechetical Committee. We wish and pray that this directory becomes a source of inspiration and a guideline for all the catechetical activities of the Syro-Malabar Church.

From Mount St. Thomas
on Easter Sunday, April 20, 2003

Mar George Alencherry
Chairman
Synodal Commission for
Catechesis

Mar Jacob Manathodath
Member
Synodal Commission for
Catechesis

Mar Simon Stock Palathara
Member
Synodal Commission for
Catechesis



CHAPTER ONE

THE LIVING SITUATION OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

6. Before going in to the details of this directory, a clear idea about the living situation of the Church seems to be necessary. The attempt made here is to define the modes and modalities of catechesis in the Syro -Malabar Church. Hence we present below a brief history, the catechetical heritage, and the socio-religious and ecclesial situations of the Syro-Malabar Church.

I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

7. The Syro-Malabar Church is an Apostolic Church, which originated in India from the preaching of St. Thomas, the Apostle. Ancient and living traditions, both ecclesial and local, testify to his apostolate in India. According to tradition, in 52 AD St. Thomas landed in Kodungalloor (Muzirts), one of the important trade centres of the time. By his preaching of the Gospel, he established seven churches (Christian communities) on the Malabar Coast, and suffered martyrdom in 72 AD at Mylapore near Chinnamalai. According to the living tradition the seven churches or Christian communities are Kodungalloor, Kollam, Niranam, Chayal, Paravur (Kottakavu), Palayoor, and Kokamangalam. The presence of the Jewish communities on the Malabar Coast at the time of the arrival of the Apostle was an additional reason for the coming of St. Thomas to India. Those who were baptized by the Apostle and their descendants are called St. Thomas Christians. Their way of life based on the apostolic heritage, including their customs and practices, liturgical



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celebrations, spirituality, system of church administration, etc. is known as the *Mar Thoma Margam* or the Law of Thomas.

8. From early times, St. Thomas Christians had contact with the Church of Persia officially known as the East Syrian Church. By the fourth century, this contact became closer and as a result St. Thomas Christians imbibed many liturgical, spiritual, and ecclesial traditions from the East Syrian Church. The relationship of St. Thomas Christians with the East Syrian Church continued till the arrival of the western missionaries in the beginning of the sixteenth century.
9. The missionaries, on their arrival, were really happy to see the presence of a Christian community on the Malabar Coast. But it was difficult for them to understand the liturgical and ecclesial traditions of the St. Thomas Christians, since they were different from those of the Roman Catholic Church. Hence the missionaries tried to make them more attuned to the customs and traditions of the Roman Church. This move reached its culmination at the Synod of Diamper held in 1599, in which many customs and traditions of the St. Thomas Christians were altered and adapted to the those of the Roman Catholic Church. Slowly the hierarchical relationship of the St. Thomas Christians was also cut off from the East Syrian Church and they were placed under the direct jurisdiction of the Roman Church.
10. A group of St. Thomas Christians resisted this move and separated themselves from this jurisdiction by an oath taken at Mattanchery on 3rd January 1653, which is known as the *Koonan Cross Oath*. Thereafter the St. Thomas Christians were divided into two communities: the Pazhayakootu and the Puthenkootu. Later, the Puthenkootu was further divided into different Churches like: Jacobite, Orthodox, Mar Thomites, etc .. Of these, a group of Christians re-united with the Catholic Church in 1930



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and their community is known as the Malankara Church. The Pazhekoottu is at present known as the Syro-Malabar Church. From this also, a small group got themselves separated in 1860, and they are known as the Church of the East.

11. This situation of Latin Jurisdiction continued till 1887, when Pope Leo XIII gave partial autonomy to the Malabar Church by establishing two Vicariates of Kottayam and Trichur. In 1896, they were re-organized into three Vicariates of Ernakulam, Kottayam and Trichur with local hierarchs. The Syro-Malabar Hierarchy was established by Pope Pius XI in 1923, with Ernakulam as the Archdiocese and Mar Augustine Kandathil as the Archbishop. In 1992, Pope John Paul II elevated this Church to the status of a Major Archiepiscopal Church, with Cardinal Antony Padiyara as its first Major Archbishop and Archbishop Abraham Kattumana as the Pontifical Delegate. The elevation of the Syro-Malabar Church to the status of Major Archiepiscopal Church has made it equivalent to a Patriarchal Church with its own Synod of Bishops with legislative, judicial, and executive powers. At present, this Church has a strength of 3.5 million faithful, spread all over the world. It has 25 eparchies in India and one eparchy in the United States-of America.

II. THE CATECHETICAL HERITAGE OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

12. The catechetical heritage of the Syro-Malabar Church is as old as this Church itself. As was the case with all other Churches, among the St. Thomas Christians also there existed a system of catechesis by which faith was handed down from generation to generation. However there is no comprehensive and chronological exposition of the history of catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Church. Hence, many things have to be traced from the historical documents and living traditions of the Church.

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13. The early Church, just after the apostolic period, developed a system of Christian formation or catechesis known as the catechumenate. **In** this catechumenate, the newcomers were given proper instruction in Christian faith and suitable formation in Christian life and subsequently initiated into the Christian community through the sacraments of initiation. This catechumenate system of Christian formation took different forms and shapes in accordance with the particular context of each Church. As was the case with all other Churches, there was a catechumenate system for the faith formation among the St. Thomas Christians also. But it was not as formal as the catechumenate systems in other Churches.
14. **In** the early times of the Church, faith was handed down from one generation to the next mainly through community and family-centered catechesis by means of liturgical celebrations, catechetical instructions, and customary practices. At that time, the catechesis of the St. Thomas Christians was not formal and systematic; it was mainly informal and liturgical. Liturgy was the principal means, mode, and source of catechesis among the St. Thomas Christians. Catechetical instruction was given to adults along with the liturgical celebrations, while children were given special instruction either before or after the Holy Qurbana on the mysteries of faith, and were asked to recite and memorize the basic prayers of the Church. Another means for catechesis was the customary practices of the St. Thomas Christians both in the family and community level. These are the ways by which faith was handed down, preserved, and propagated for centuries among the St. Thomas Christians.
15. Among the liturgical celebrations, the celebration of Feasts also played an important role in the transmission of the faith. The feasts were usually celebrated both at the community and family level. Of these, the feasts of our Lord such as the Anunciation,

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the Nativity, the Danaha, the Great Fast, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Glorification of the Cross, etc. were given greater importance than any other feasts. Of the feasts of the Saints, those of St. Mary and St. Thomas were given special importance. The faithful prepared themselves for the feast with fasting and prayer. According to tradition, the Syro-Malabar Church had more than 180 days of fasting. During the days of fast, the faithful abstained from meat, fish, egg, milk products, the chewing of betels and conjugal relationship. Such abstinence was observed also on all Wednesdays and Fridays of the year.

16. The commemoration of the dead was also given special importance. When a person died, his body was washed, dressed and anointed with perfumed oil before it was exposed before the community to pay due homage. Usually, the dead body was placed facing the East. Till the purification of the house after the burial, no food was prepared or eaten in the house. After the burial service, the members of the family would gather in the house in the presence of the parish priest and say special prayers for the dead and sprinkle holy water to purify the house. There were also special observances for the commemoration of the dead on the 7th, 16th, 28th, and 41st day after the demise. The annual ceremony to commemorate the dead is known as *sradham* or *chattam*. Till the commemoration on the 41st day only vegetarian meals were served in the house.
17. During the Holy Week (Great Week), besides the liturgical celebrations in the church, there were also family liturgical celebrations. On the Fridays of the great fast and during the days of the Holy Week the family members would sit together and read the *Pana*, the passion narrative of the Lord. On Maundy Thursday (*Pesaha Vyazham*), as a part of the family celebration of the Passover Feast, a special unleavened bread was made in



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the families. After special prayers, the eldest member of the family would share this bread with the other members of the family. This bread represented the bread used by Jesus during the Last Supper. Together with this, a special drink was also prepared with rice flour, coconut milk, and jaggery which represented the wine of the Last Supper. All these things were done with great respect and reverence. It was patterned after the Jewish mode of celebration of the Passover in the family.

18. Most of the pious customs and practices of the St. Thomas Christians were biblical. Holy Scripture and the Cross were held in high veneration. Practices like whispering the name of Jesus in the ears of the new born, tying palm leaves with biblical verses to the body of the sick, fixing the sign of the cross on the *Tali*, (the ornament in the form of a petal worn by the bride in the marriage ceremony), drinking of water mixed with the soil taken from the tomb of St. Thomas at Mylapore by the sick and the dying, lighting of lamps around the foot of the cross in front of the church, etc. are the pious customs among St. Thomas Christians. The customs and ceremonies related to birth and death were also means for the transmission of faith from one generation to the next. The *Kathanars* who had their training from the *Malpans* were the main catechists among the St. Thomas Christians. The *Ashan Kalaries* were also centres for the catechetical instruction of children. Here, the children were taught the fundamental prayers and principles of faith, even by non Christian *Ashans*.
19. After the coming of the western missionaries, the catechetical system of the St. Thomas Christians began to develop into a formal and systematic one. In this period the catechism-centered catechesis began to gain prominence in the Syro-Malabar Church. Some of the main catechisms used in the Malabar

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Church before the synod of Diamper were: the *Doctrina Christiana*, 1542 (the small catechism prepared by St. Francis Xavier); the *Cartilha*, 1554 (the first printed catechism for India in Portuguese and Tamil); *Doctrina Christam*, 1578 (the catechism printed in Tamil at Quilon); the *Dodrina Christam*, 1579 (the catechism published from Cochin); etc ..

20. The Synod of Diamper (1599) further reformulated and systematized the catechetical systems among the St. Thomas Christians in accordance with the direction of the Council of Trent (1545-1562). The informal way of handing down the faith was changed to a formal and systematic one, and the liturgy-centered catechesis was changed to an instruction-oriented one. After the Synod of Diamper (1599), Archbishop Menezis also prepared a catechism known as the Menezian Catechism and he insisted that every parish of the Malabar Church should have a copy of this catechism. In the eighteenth decree of the eighth session of the Synod of Diamper, some guidelines for catechesis of the Malabar Church are given. The parish priests were asked to teach the people catechism by reciting the prayers and articles of faith. They were asked to teach the people the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Ten Commandments of God, the Commandments of the Church, the Articles of faith and the other essential items of the catechism. Instead of teaching catechism in Syriac, the priests were asked to do it in Malayalam, the vernacular. The priests were asked to give special instructions to the people, young and adults on Sundays, by using the method of repeated recitation. They were also asked to conduct catechism classes exclusively for the children on Sunday evenings. These mandatory regulations of the Synod of Diamper contributed much to the systematic development of the catechetical system of the Syro-Malabar Church.

21. In 1606, Archbishop Ros reformulated the Menezian Catechesis and issued new statutes on catechesis. In 1700, the Carmelite Missionaries published a catechism known as *Catechismus Doctrinae Christianae in Lingua Malabarica*. Then, in 1772, they published a new catechism known as *Samkshepa Vedartham* which is the first printed book in Malayalam. By the beginning of 20th century, in 1917, came the *Valiya Vedopadesham* which is the translation of the Catechism of Pope Pius X and the *Cheriyā Vedopadesham* which is the shortened form of the *Valiya Vedopadesham*. These catechisms prevailed in the Syro-Malabar Church until the Second Vatican Council.
22. An important development during the first half of the 20th century is the introduction of catechesis in the regular schools. The Catholic Bishops took great interest in the catechesis for the regular schools. As a result special catechetical instruction for the Catholic students in the regular schools was started. In 1940, a text book series named *Matha Tathwa Bodhini* was published for the school catechism. Later, moral education was introduced for the non Catholic students in the regular schools. At present, the system of catechism for the Catholic students and moral education for the non Catholic students is in practice in most dioceses, while in some, instead of catechism, only moral (value) education is given to all the students of the school irrespective of religion.
23. After the Second Vatican Council, there took place radical developments in the field of catechesis. At the all India level, under the guidance the of CBCI (Catholic Bishops' Conference of India), the N.B.C.L.C. (National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, Bangalore) gave leadership to develop a catechism text book series for all the dioceses of India. Later, the regional episcopal councils also developed catechisms in their

own vernacular languages, which are more relevant to their particular needs and culture. In Kerala, the P.O.c. (Pastoral Orientation Centre); under the guidance of the K.C.B.C. (Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council) in 1970 prepared a common text book series for all the three Catholic Churches of Kerala.

24. The first common text book series published by the KCBC Catechetical Commission is known as *Pithavin Pakkalecku* (Towards the Father). After a period of experiment and experience they decided to publish a new series of catechism texts called *Kristhuvinte Pinnate* (In the Foot Steps of Christ). This was published during the period 1980-1983. These texts, meant for the Sunday catechism classes, are still being used in most of the dioceses of the three Catholic Churches of Kerala. Although, this system of common catechism text books for all the three Churches contributed in some way to foster unity among the Catholic Churches in Kerala, one serious drawback of this catechetical series was that it could not pay sufficient attention to the particular characteristics and traditions of the individual Churches. In between, a catechetical series named *Deivam Nammodukoode* (God With Us) was prepared and published by the Inter-eparchial Catechetical Committee of Changanassery which is being used in some of the dioceses of the Syro-Malabar Church.
25. From 1968 to 1999, the KCBC was in charge of the Catechism for the Kerala Catholic Church. However, in the meeting held in January 1999, the KCBC, having taken into account the mind of the Universal Church and following the provisions in the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO 621 § 1, 621 § 3) decided to entrust the responsibility of catechesis to the catechetical commission of each of the Individual Churches. Thereby, the catechetical commission of the Syro-Malabar Church

became responsible for the co-ordination and animation of the catechetical ministry of the Syro-Malabar Church. Therefore, it is now the responsibility of the Syro-Malabar Church to draw up the catechetical directory, the catechism, and the catechetical text books for the faith formation of the members of the Church.

26. A person who is either born in or made a member of a particular Church has to be given formation in the traditions of that particular Church. He/She should see, hear, touch and experience the way of life of that particular faith community. He/She should be introduced to and integrated into the liturgy, spirituality, discipline, and customs of the particular Church. The Syro-Malabar Church, being a *sui juris* Church in the Catholic communion, should have a catechesis of its own in order to integrate the faithful into the particular traditions of this Church.

III. THE SOCIO - RELIGIOUS AND ECCLESIAL SITUATION

27. The basic intention of this catechetical directory is to give proper orientation and guidelines for the coordination and animation of the catechetical activities of the Syro-Malabar Church, a Church rooted in the Indian soil. Therefore, a consideration of the religious, socio-cultural, and ecclesial situations of the Church is of paramount importance. India is a developing nation with a population of over one billion, of which only three percent are Christians. The existence of religions like Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, etc. with their deep rooted philosophy, theology and traditions constitutes the context which influences to a great extent the life and mission of the Church. In such a situation, the Syro-Malabar Church has the onerous task of upholding her faith and the unique mission of sharing it with others. Together with this, the existence of social evils like the caste system, class divisions, discriminations based on creed and sex, economic and educational inequalities,

injustice, poverty, untouchability, etc. are also factors challenging the real life and mission of the Syro-Malabar Church, and which call for our special attention. Nevertheless, it is to be remembered that unity in diversity is the basic characteristic feature of Indian society. Even though her diversity extends from religion to language, one can trace a culture which threads all these together.

The Religious Situation

28. The constitution of India gives great importance for the freedom of religion. Openness to all religions is a characteristic feature of the Indian mind.
 - a. According to the Indian mind religion means mainly a *view of life*, a *law of life*, and a *way of life*. In India, the terms used generally to denote religion are *Matham*, *Dharmam*, and *Margham*. *Matham* means the opinion or view of life; *Dharmam* means the law or duty of life; and the *Margham* means the way of life. All three are inter-related, because in every religious view of life or way of life there are three basic aspects: *Matha-darshanam*, *Matha-niyamam*, and *Matha-acharam*. In spite of the differences in the views and ways of religion, they all aim at the self-realization or God-realization of man. It is known as the *Yoga* or union of the human self (*Jeevathma*) with the divine self (*Paramathma*).
 - b. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of man, Hinduism proposes three different paths known as: i) *Jnana Marga* (way of knowledge); ii) *Bhakti Marga* (way of devotion); and iii) *Karma Marga* (way of service). The *Jnana Marga* proposes the way to God-realization through the acquisition of knowledge by meditations, reflections, etc .. The *Bhakti Marga* proposes the way to God-realization through devotions like *poojis*, *crchends*, *prarthana*, etc.. The *Karma Marga* proposes the way to God-

realization by the service to fellow men through social and charitable works. According to the teachings of the modern Indian philosophers and religious leaders however, an ideal religious life consists in the harmonious blending of all the three *Margas*.

- c. The presence and power of these religions have influenced and continue to influence greatly the way of life of the Christian faithful. Hence, the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church has to take in to account this factor in the formulation of its catechism and catechism text books.

The Socio-Cultural Situation

29. India is a land of many ancient and modern civilizations and cultures, as mentioned earlier. Down the centuries, this land has accepted and tolerated different religions, cultures, and languages. Hence we see a harmonious blending of different religions, cultures, and languages in India. Tolerance, hospitality, religiosity, nonviolence, etc. are the hallmarks of Indian culture. Moreover, India is the largest democratic country in the world.

- a. Although there are so many positive values and systems in Indian society, we can also see the presence of many social evils. Some of the main social evils are the discrimination based on caste, sex, race, class, etc., and the problems of illiteracy, poverty, and injustice. The caste system is one of the major social evils in India. Caste is something determined by birth. Hence, one cannot change one's caste. Untouchability, social disapproval of inter-caste marriage, etc. are also some other evils associated with the caste system, which prevail even now in various parts of India.
- b. Another important feature of the Indian society is poverty and illiteracy of the masses. The great majority of the Indian population is still under the poverty line. Although the

government is striving to eliminate poverty, it persists as a great problem in the Indian society. Illiteracy of the masses also affects the social, cultural and economic development of India. Besides, the discrimination against the female, the poor, and the tribals remains as a great evil in the Indian Society.

- c. The impact of secularism on Indian society needs special mention. Even though it is a recent phenomenon, it influences to a great extent the life and attitudes of the people in India. The technological developments especially in the field of communication have a tremendous impact on the life and attitudes of Indians. The power of the mass media affects the religious life of the people in general. The impact of liberalization, privatization, and globalization are posing problems for the religious life of the people. All these factors have to be taken in to consideration, while preparing the catechism for the Syro-Malabar Church.

The Ecclesial Situation

30. In India, there exist several Churches and ecclesial communities. Within the Catholic Church itself there are three individual Churches: Syro-Malabar, Latin, and Malankara. Besides these, there are other Churches and ecclesial communities like Jacobites, Orthodox, Mar Thoma, Church of South India, Church of the East, etc. An awareness about this ecclesial situation of the Syro-Malabar Church is also essential for drawing up the catechetical directory of the Syro-Malabar Church.
- a. As the three individual (*Sui Juris*) Churches have in common the same faith, sacraments, and hierarchy there is an organic bond of communion among these Churches (OE 2). It follows that in the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church, due emphasis should be given to fostering good relationship with the Churches in the Catholic Communion. All the more, special emphasis

needs to be given to the nurturing of the missionary spirit of the members of the Church, since the Church is missionary by her very nature and evangelization is her basic mission. The Syro-Malabar Church has preserved this missionary zeal from the very beginning by safeguarding her faith against all counter influences and by sharing her faith with others. The number of priests and religious sisters working in different parts of India and abroad is a clear proof for the missionary dynamism of the Syro-Malabar Church. At present about 60% of the missionary personnel in India comes from the Syro-Malabar Church.

- b. Apart from the relationships with these individual Churches, the relationship with other ecclesial communities also counts very much. Especially, in the present context of the Indian society, such a relationship and common endeavours have great significance. It will also be a great witness to the unity of Christians in India. The document on Ecumenism says: "Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in God, one and three, in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope" (UR 12). Before the 16th century, there was only one Church in India, the Church of St. Thomas Christians. Thereafter, the St. Thomas Christians got themselves separated into different Churches as we see today. Hence, it is our duty to make the bond of communion with these Churches more intensive and close. It is also the prayer and wish of Jesus, the Lord (In. 17: 20). Hence, in the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church these aspects have to be given due importance in order to foster the ecumenical activities of the Church.



CHAPTER TWO

CHURCH AND CATECHESIS

31. Catechesis being an essential ministry of the Church, a clear view about the life and mission of the Church is indispensable in order to understand the role of the catechetical ministry within the Church. As we draw up this catechetical directory for the Syro-Malabar Church, such a vision would be of great help in our understanding of the place and function of catechesis in the Church.

I. THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

32. God in His goodness, wisdom and plan reveals Himself gradually in human history. It is actually known as the history or economy of salvation. Revelation is the call of God to share in His life; while faith is the response of man to this divine call. The Second Vatican Council says, "His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit and thus become sharers in the Divine nature (Cf. Eph. 2:18; 2 pet. 1:4)" (DV 2). This revelation reached its fullness in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Heb. 1: 1-2), who is the source and summit of this revelation. God continues this revelation through the Church, the body Christ, through her proclamation, celebration, and witnessing. The Church is an organic reality with a life and mission. The life of the Church is closely related to her very nature and being, while the mission is more related to her function. In the Bible there are numerous similes and parables like body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12-13), the people of God (1 Peter 2: 9-10), the sheep of God (In. 10: 1-11), the

house of God (1 Cor. 3:9), etc .. All these refer to the various dimensions of the mystery of the Church. Some of them are considered here in order to explain and foster an understanding of the basic nature of the Church.

Church: The Body of Christ

33. The Second Vatican Council, which is known for its ecclesiology, gave a new and fresh awareness about the nature of the Church. The whole ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council develops from the one basic awareness of the Church, *the Body of Christ*. It is the organic concept of the Church rather than the institutional one. This organic concept has its origin in the theology of St. Paul. In his letter to the Romans he says: "For, as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:4-5). In the letter to the Corinthians we read: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ"; and "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body- Jews, Greeks, slaves or free- and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (*1Cor. 12:12-13*). Hence, according to St. Paul, we are made to become members of one body in Christ by sharing in His Spirit through baptism.

Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Mistici Corporis* (1943) explains in detail the concept of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. This encyclical calls for unity in the Church. It says that, if the Church is a body, there must be an unbroken unity among the members of the Church. This bond of unity is preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Second Vatican Council also highlights the mystical body concept of the Church in its document *Lumen Gentium* (LG 7). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also considers the Church as the mystical body of Christ (CCC

771). This concept envisages the Church as an organic unit with Christ as the head and the Holy Spirit as the unifying power and establishes the importance of Baptism and other sacraments in the life of the Church, ~

Church: The Community of the People of God

34. The Second Vatican Council also highlights the concept of the Church as a community of the people of God. *Lumen Gentium* explains the nature of the Church as the people of God, a community or fellowship of people gathered together by God (LG 9-17). In the Acts of the Apostles, the Church is called the community of believers: "The community of believers was of one heart and one soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). St. Paul's understanding of the Church as the body of Christ also helps us to understand the communitarian dimension of the Church (1Cor. 12:24-27). The catechetical documents like *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT 15), and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 771) also consider the Church as a community of the faithful. The Greek name for the Church *eklesia* means, those who have been called out or those who have been gathered together. This understanding of the Church helps us to contextualize better the ministry of catechesis in the life of the Church.
35. The Church is also a worshipping community. As members of the Church we are called to participate in the divine liturgy, which is the source and summit of Christian Life. The Second Vatican Council says: "Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows" (SC 10). It is also the manifestation of the divine mysteries. The council says: "It is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, the work of our

redemption is accomplished and it is through liturgy, especially the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (SC 2). All the activities of the Church are directed towards the divine liturgy. The Council says: "The goal of apostolic endeavour is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper" (SC 10).

36. The concept of the Church as the community of the people of God also helps us to understand the communion or fellowship which exists among the people of God. In the early Church, *eklesia* was considered as a Koinonia, which means the Church is a communion or fellowship of persons who are called together by God through Jesus Christ. Koinonia means communion or fellowship. Church is a Koinonia in the Spirit of the risen Lord. With this understanding, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: "Christ, the unique mediator, has constituted on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible organization" (CCC 771). Again it says: "The Church is the visible society and the spiritual community" (CCC 771). All these point to the fact that the Church is a community of the people of God rather than a mere group of persons or an institution.

Church: The Community with a Mission

37. The Church which is the body of Christ is called to continue on earth the same mission of Jesus, the Saviour. Having prepared a community of disciples through His earthly ministry, Jesus entrusted to them the mission of proclaiming the Good News to the entire creation (Mk. 16:16). He said to His apostles: "As my Father sent me so also I send you" (In. 20: 21) to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God all over the world. The Church

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has to continue this mission till the end of the world. Just before His ascension into heaven, Jesus said to His apostles, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe what I have commanded you. I will be with you till the end of the age" (Mt 28: 18-20). He also calls us to be His witnesses on earth (Lk. 24: 48). All these teachings of the Lord explain the missionary nature of the Church.

38. The documents of the Second Vatican Council and the post Vatican documents, namely *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Ad Gentes*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Redemptoris Missio*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, etc. emphasize not only the inner life of the Church but also its functional aspects. All these documents confirm the fact that the Church is missionary by her very nature. In *Ad Gentes* we read "The Church is missionary by her very nature" (AG 2). Citing from *Ad Gentes* 35, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says: " ... The whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is the basic duty of the people of God" (EN 59). All these reflections answer the basic question, "what is the place and function of the Church in this world?" This thinking led to the understanding that the Church is not only the people of God or community of believers, but also a community sent with a mission, a mission to evangelize the whole world. Evangelization is the process of establishing the kingdom of God by witness and proclamation (EN 59). In other words, it is the process of bringing the Good News to all the strata of humanity and transforming it from within by its influence (EN 18).

In short, the Church is a community of persons called together and sent by God to the world with a mission. This concept of the Church implies mainly the following: the Church is a community

of people called and sent by God, sent with a mission and sent to evangelize all the nations of the world.

Evangelization: The Basic Mission of the Church

39. The documents of the Church are unanimous in explaining the basic mission of the Church. The Second Vatican Council and the catechetical documents of the Church say that evangelization is the basic mission entrusted to the Church by the Lord (LG 1, 5; AG 23, 35; AA 2,30; EN 14,18,59; RM 1, 2; GDC 34,46 etc.).
 - a. The Second Vatican Councils says: "Since the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization the fundamental task of the people of God, this sacred Synod invites all to undertake a profound interior renewal so that being vitally conscious of their responsibility for the spread of the Gospel they might play their part in missionary work among the nations" (AG 35). In *Lumen Gentium* we read, "Henceforth the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing His precepts of charity, humility, and self denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom" (LG 5).
 - b. The Church being the body of Christ, the mission entrusted to the Church is the same as the mission of Christ. In *Gaudium et Spes* we read: "The Church is not motivated by an earthly ambition but is interested in one thing only, to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (GS 3). The basic mission of Christ was to establish the kingdom of God among all people, through the proclamation of the Gospel (LG 5). He inaugurated the Kingdom of God here on earth, by announcing the Gospel of God, mainly through preaching and teaching, followed by signs of healing and miracles.

c. After the earthly life of Christ, He continues His mission in and through the Church. The Church realizes this mission by the power of the Holy Spirit and as per the commandment of Jesus, the Lord (In. 20: 21-22; Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:16; Lk. 24: 49). After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Church received the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of God (LG 5). Hence the mission entrusted to the Church is known as evangelization, the mission to continue the mission of Christ by the power of the Spirit. And evangelization is actually the act of proclaiming the Gospel to all people, with a view to establishing the kingdom of God by the power of the Gospel; or the act of bringing the Good news to the entire strata of humanity with a view to transforming them by the spirit of the Gospel (LG 5; EN 18).

d. This new understanding of the mission of the Church is becoming more and more prevalent today. The extraordinary interest of Pope John Paul II for evangelization has also paved the way for a new understanding of the ministries of the Church from the point of view of evangelization. The *General Directory for Catechesis* has also tried to contextualize catechesis from this point of view, and to give new enthusiasm for the evangelization oriented activities of the Church (GDC 34-76).

II. CATECHESIS IN THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

40. "The Church exists in order to evangelize" (EN 14; GDC 34); and she realizes this mission through the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministries. This part of the directory explains the place of catechesis in the life and mission of the Church, especially in its relation with the basic ministries of the Church.

Different Ministries in the Church

41. The Church continues the mission of Jesus, the prophet, priest, and king through the three basic ministries of the Church namely *ministry of the word*, *ministry of worship*, and *ministry of service* which correspond to the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministries of the Church respectively (GCD 10-17). All these ministries are there to serve the Church as a means to realize her basic mission to evangelize the world. Referring to the different ministries of the Church St. Paul says: 'And to some His 'gift' was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some evangelists; to some pastors and teachers; to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself' (Eph.4: 11-13). All these ministries come under the ministry of the word, of worship, and of service.
42. The ministry of the word is the continuation of the prophetic ministry of Christ. It is the pioneering ministry among the ministries of the Church because in the process of making disciples of Christ, it is through the ministry of the word that the Kingdom of God is proclaimed and introduced. The ministry of worship serves to establish the kingdom of God by the administration of the sacraments to those who are converted through the ministry of the Word. And finally the ministry of service is an expression of the life according to the Word of God, which becomes a real witness to the proclamation of the Gospel (GDC 50).

Ministry of the Word and Catechesis

43. Ministry of the Word takes different forms like evangelization or primary proclamation, catechesis or education of faith, liturgy or homily, and theology (GCD 17; GDC 51). All these forms serve as means for the realization of the basic mission of the Church.



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- a. The first form of the ministry of the Word is called evangelization or missionary preaching or the primary proclamation (GCD 17, GDC 51). This has as its purpose, the arousing of the beginnings of faith so that one will-adhere to the Word of God (GCD 17). The *General Directory for Catechesis* says: "This function is the most immediate expression of the missionary mandate of Jesus. It is realized through the 'primary proclamation' directed to the non-believers, those who have chosen unbelief, those Christians who live on the margins of Christian life, and those who follow other religions. The religious awakening of the children of Christian families is also an eminent form of this function" (GDC 51). According to these documents the function of primary proclamation is to initiate faith among the non Christians and to arouse the faith of the nominal Christians.
- b. The second form of the ministry of the Word is catechesis. It is intended to make men's faith more living, conscious, and active (CD 14; GCD 17). The *General Directory for Catechesis* says: through catechesis "those who are moved by grace to decide to follow Jesus are < < introduced into the life of faith, of the liturgy and of the charity of the people of God> > (AG 14)" (GDC 51). According to this understanding, the ministry of catechesis serves to introduce the baptized into the faith and life of the Church. Formerly, catechesis was considered as an instruction in faith given to children or catechumens alone, while now it is understood as an ongoing process in the life of Christians which fosters their faith till the end of their life (GDC 51).
- c. The third form of the ministry of the Word is known as homily, which is the liturgical form of the ministry of the Word. It consists of the homilies or instructions given in the context of and as a part of the liturgical celebrations like, the Eucharist, sacraments, liturgical feasts, sacramentals, etc. (GCD 17; GDC 51). Such homilies and instructions help the faithful to sustain their faith

and faith life. The homilies given by the fathers of the Church like St. Augustine, Theodora of Mapsustia, Cyril of Jerusalem, etc. are good examples of this type of the ministry of the Word. Apart from the homilies, the liturgical celebrations like the Eucharist, sacraments, liturgical feasts of the year, sacramentals and pious traditions, etc. also become a form and part of the ministry of the Word when they help to arouse, develop, and sustain the faith of the people of God.

- d. The fourth form of the ministry of the Word is known as theology. The main function of this form is to help the faithful to understand the reasons for their faith. It is the systematic treatment and the scientific investigation of the truths of the faith (GCD 17). This sort of learning, besides deepening one's faith, helps one to explain the faith through the language of reason.
- e. Among the above mentioned forms of the ministry of the Word, catechesis, the second form, helps the faithful to develop and maturate their faith and faith life. These forms may seem to us as phases of faith development coming one after the other. Although it has a sequence, as mentioned above, in the life of the faithful all these aspects have to be recapitulated at all the age levels or stages of his faith life. Only then can one be continually awakened, maturated, and sustained in ones faith and faith life.



CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPT OF CATECHESIS

44. The Church, which is the body of Christ and the community of the people of God is missionary by her very nature (AG 2), and her basic mission is to evangelize the world (AG 35). With the final commands: "As my Father sent me so also I send you" (John 20:21); "Go therefore and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (MK. 16:16); "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28.18), Jesus entrusted His mission to the Church, to continue His salvific or evangelizing mission till the end of the world. The Church continues this mission of evangelization through her prophetic, priestly and kingly ministries. Of these, catechesis forms the part of prophetic ministry or the ministry of the Word.

On the basis of the catechetical documents of the Church, catechesis can be understood as an *ecclesial act* or *ministry of education* or *instrudion* in *the Christian faith* or *faith doctrine imparted to the baptized* or *catechumens, generally in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiate and lead them to the maturity of faith and fullness of Christian life* (GCD 21, CT 18, CCC 5, GDC 30).

I. THE MEANING OF THE TERM CATECHESIS

45. The word catechesis comes from the Greek word *Katekein* or *Katecheo*, which means to resound *from above* (TDNf, Vol. III, p. 638). In the Greek context this word is used to refer to the address of the poets to their hearers, from a stage. But in common usage, it has two meanings: i) "to recount something to someone

or to inform someone of something"; and ii) "to instruct someone about something or to te_ash someone something" (*TDNf*, Vol. III, p. 638). The later refers to the teaching, especially the teaching about the rudiments of a skill; or to the imparting of an instruction.

46. Although the word catechesis is not used in the Old Testament, it is used with a special meaning in the New Testament. Here catechesis means to instruct someone in the way of the Lord or in the teachings of the Lord (*TDNf*, Vol. III, P. 638). In the Bible, there is also another commonly used word - *didakein* or *didache* - (which means to teach or the teaching) to refer to the teaching act of Jesus. In the Greek context the word *didakein* is used to refer to the authentic teaching act of the philosophers or prophets, who have some inspiration or revelation (*TDNf*, Vol. II, P. 143). Hence, *didakein* is an authentic teaching while *Katekein* is an instruction given to someone in the teachings of an authentic person.
47. In order to make a distinction between the teachings of Jesus and the teaching act of the Apostles, St. Paul uses the word *Katekein*. According to him catechesis means the instruction given by the apostles in the teachings of the Lord. In his letters he uses this word in three places, Rom. 2:18; 1 Cor. 14:19; and Gal. 6:6 where it refers to that sort of instruction in the law of Moses, in the Christian doctrine, or in the Christian faith. Based on this understanding, the Church uses this word to refer to that particular mode of Christian instruction, imparted to the believers, either baptized or aspiring for baptism, in the teachings of the Lord, by an authorized person of the Church.
48. In the Syro-Malabar Church, besides the term catechesis, two other *Malayalam* terms are also in use: *Mathabothanam* and *Viswasaparishelanam*. Although both these words have the

same meaning as catechesis, there is a slight difference in the emphasis given to certain particular aspects. *Mathabothanam* emphasizes the instructive dimension, while *Viswasaparisheelanam* emphasizes the formative dimension of catechesis.

II. A DEFINITION FOR CATECHESIS

49. The concept of catechesis as understood by the Catholic Church can be traced from the official catechetical documents of the Church. They are mainly *The General Catechetical Directory* (1971), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), and *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997). According to these documents, catechesis is basically a ministry of the Church, a part or form of the ministry of the Word (GCD 21). The *General Catechetical Directory* says, "Then there is the catechetical form, which is intended to make men's faith become living, conscious, and active, through the light of instruction" (GCD 17). It defines further: "Within the scope of pastoral activity, catechesis is the term to be used for that form of *ecclesial* action which leads both communities and individual members of the faithful to maturity of faith" (GCD 21).

Catechesi Tradendae says, "Catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers to the fullness of Christian life" (CT 18). According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Catechesis is an education of children, youth and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating them into the fullness of Christian life" (CCC 5). The *General Directory for Catechesis* considers catechesis as a "moment in the process of evangelization"

(GDC 63); as a "period of formation and apprenticeship in the whole Christian life" (GDC 30, 63); as a means, "it promotes and matures initial conversion, educates the convert in the faith and incorporates him into the Christian community" (GDC 61).

50. Based on the above mentioned definitions given by the Catechetical documents, we define catechesis as an *ecclesial ministry of education in the Christian faith, given to the baptized, generally in an organic and systematic way, with a view to leading them to the maturity of faith and the fullness of Christian life.*

An Ecclesial Ministry

51. The understanding of catechesis as an ecclesial ministry means that it is a ministry of the Church, by the Church, and for the Church. The *General Catechetical Directory* clearly says that catechesis is an ecclesial action within the pastoral activity of the Church (GCD 21). Regarding the place of catechesis in the life of the Church *Catechesi Tradendae* says, "To begin with, it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as her sacred duty and an inalienable right" (CT 14). With the words, "Finally, catechesis is closely linked to the responsible activity of the Church and of the Christians of the world" (CT 24) it confirms that catechesis is the responsibility of the Church. The *General Directory for Catechesis* also considers catechesis as the responsibility of the entire Christian community (GDC 220).
52. Another concept of this understanding is that catechesis is an action by the Church; that is, it is the Church that catechizes or teaches her members officially. She does it also through her members, mainly through her pastors, catechists, and parents. According to *Catechesi Tradendae*, the catechists are the bishops, priests, men and women religious, lay catechists and parents (CT 62-66). And it has to be given in the context of the parish,



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family, school and associations. It is the responsibility of every Christian, according to the duty entrusted to him by the Church (CT 16, 24).

53. The third concept is that it is a ministry for the Church (CT 18, 42). Catechesis is always oriented towards the maturation of faith and to the initiation and integration of the members into the beliefs, values and customs of the ecclesial community. By this the individual Christians are slowly made active members of the Church. In this sense catechesis is considered as a ministry for the Church.

A Process of Education

54. The second aspect of catechesis is that it is an education in the Christian faith. *Catechesi Tradendae* considers catechesis as a process of education (CT 18), while the *General Catechetical Directory* considers it as an instruction (GCD 17). Catechesis in its original meaning, is an instruction given to the catechumens in the teachings of the Lord. In all the catechetical documents, except the recent ones, *Catechesi Tradendae*, and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, catechesis is considered as an instruction. But these two recent documents consider it as a process of education (CT 18, CCC 5). Further, the latest document *General Directory for Catechesis* considers catechesis as a schooling or apprenticeship in Christian faith and faith life (GDC 30,63).
55. There is a distinction between education and instruction. Education is more general and inclusive, while instruction is more particular and limited. Education includes both formal and informal teaching, while instruction is mainly formal. Instruction is more in a class room setting, while education includes both the teaching in the class room and in the context of a community. Therefore education is a broader concept which includes both

instruction and apprenticeship. According to the documents of the Church, there is a gradual development in the understanding of catechesis from a process of instruction to the process of education. According to the present understanding, catechesis is not limited to the mere instruction in the context of a school, but it also includes the informal ways of teaching like liturgical celebrations (Eucharist, liturgical year, sacraments etc.), religious traditions (rituals, fasting, prayers, etc.), family practices (family prayers, rituals related to marriage, child birth, etc.), popular pieties (way of the cross, rosary, etc.), life witness, etc.

56. Catechesis is also an education in an organic and systematic way. In this sense it is an ongoing process of growth in faith which continues throughout one's life. In the same way, catechesis can also be formal and informal. Formal catechesis is one which is given in an organic and systematic way, while informal catechesis is the natural way of personalizing the faith within the context of a faith community. In the same way, formal catechesis is an intentional one; while informal catechesis is more unintentional.

An Education Given to the Baptized

57. The third aspect of catechesis is that it is an education given to the baptized. According to *Catechesi Tradendae*, the beneficiaries of catechesis are the baptized members of the Church (CT 35-44). Hence, it is education meant for the members of the Church, not for non-Christians.
58. The proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching (*Kerygma*) is oriented to non-Christians; while catechesis for the baptized. The basic objective of proclamation is to initiate faith in the non-Christians and to arouse the faith of the Christians, while the objective of catechesis is to lead the Christians to maturity of faith. Formerly catechesis was meant only for beginners or a specific age group, particularly for children; but now it is seen as



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an ongoing process, throughout the life of a Christian. *Catechesi Tradendae* says that everybody needs to be catechized: infants, children, adolescents, youth and adults (CT 34-35).

An Education in the Christian Faith

59. Catechesis is not a simple education about religion or faith, but it is an education in the Christian faith. Faith is often identified with the doctrines, the official teachings of Church, which include mainly the beliefs, commandments, sacraments, and the prayers of the Church. It is also known as the deposit of faith, since it is the sum total of the Christian faith. In former times, to have faith meant the acceptance of the doctrines or dogmas of the Church. But the contemporary understanding of faith is deeper and all inclusive. Faith has three main aspects: faith-experience, faith-understanding, and faith-praxis. They are the emotional, intellectual, and actional aspects of faith respectively. Psychologically speaking, they are the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of faith.

The actual content of catechesis proper, according to *Catechesi Tradendae*, is the Christian doctrine, which is the systematically organized form of the teachings of Christ as well as the Church. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* systematically explains this content of catechesis in four parts, namely the profession of faith (the creed, the revealed truths, dogmas, etc.); the celebration of faith (the liturgy, sacraments, sacramentals, etc.) the life of faith (the ten commandments, commandment of love etc.); and the Christian prayer (the Our Father, and other prayers of the Church (CCC.3).

An Education for Formation in Christian Life

60. Another important and basic aspect in the understanding of catechesis is its objective. Before the Second Vatican Council,

catechesis was understood as the process of handing down the Christian faith or deposit of faith through instruction. In such an understanding, the objective of catechesis is the same as that of instruction or teaching, i.e., to cause learning of the imparted Christian doctrine. This understanding of catechesis was taken from St. Thomas Aquinas. According to him religious instruction or teaching is the process by and through which learning is caused in an individual. But the objective of catechesis is much more than the mere causing of the learning or understanding of the Christian doctrine. According to the catechetical documents, after the Second Vatican Council, the basic objective of catechesis is to lead the faithful (hearers) to the maturity of faith (GCD 21), and to the fullness of Christian life (CT 18).

- a. Regarding the maturity of faith, the *General Catechetical Directory* has a comprehensive and holistic understanding. About the objective of catechesis it says, "It is intended to make men's faith become living, conscious, and active through the light of instruction" (GCD 17). According to it, catechesis is oriented towards the maturing of faith in all its three aspects namely, faith-experience, faith-understanding; and faith-praxis.
- b. The *Catechesi Tradendae* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* consider that the basic objective of catechesis is, "to lead the faithful to the fullness of Christian life" (CT 18, CCC 5). Here the emphasis is on Christian life (faith-life) rather than on mere faith understanding. This document derives its inspiration from the final command of the Lord, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you*" (Mt. 28: 19-20). According to this, catechesis is understood as a ministry of teaching the commandments of the Lord to the baptized with a view to leading them to the observance of Jesus' teachings.



CHAPTER FOUR **THE OBJECTIVES AND ORIENTATIONS OF CATECHESIS**

61. The efficacy of the catechetical ministry of a Church depends a lot on its objectives and orientations. A clear idea regarding these objectives and orientations is helpful both to the catechists and to the catechized in order to motivate and activate the catechetical process.

I. THE OBJECTIVES OF CATECHESIS

62. Catechesis in general, is a means to lead the faithful into the faith and faith life of the Church. On further analysis, we can see a gradation in the objectives such as *direct, basic, and ultimate*. The direct objective of catechesis consists in the sharing of Christian faith in such a way as to lead the faithful to the personalization of faith. The basic objective consists in doing the same sharing of faith by helping the faithful to lead a life according to the teachings of Christ. As far as the ultimate objective is concerned it consists in doing the same function so as to lead them to a personal communion with Christ and the Church.

Personalization of Faith: The Direct Objective

63. The direct objective of catechesis is to help the faithful, the recipients of catechesis, to the personalization of Christian faith. About this there is no difference of opinion. Catechesis actually begins from the confession of faith of the Church and leads to the confession of faith by the catechumens (GDC 82). The personalization of faith leads to the profession or proclamation of faith through words and deeds.



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Faith is a human response to the Divine revelation, which is an open call to share the Divine life. In general, faith has three dimensions: the affective, cognitive, and behavioral. In relation to these three dimensions, faith is understood as an act of trusting, believing, and obeying.

- a. First of all faith is a relationship of trust in God. This is the affective aspect of faith that consists in the experience of God who reveals Himself in and through different ways and means. The revelation of God reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ the Son of God (Heb. 1: 1-2). The Church or the community of faith, which is the custodian of this divine revelation, shares her experience of God in various ways. The faithful imbibe this experience of faith and enter into relationship with God through a process of personalization. This helps the faithful to develop an attitude of trust in God. By this personalization, the faith experience of the community becomes the faith experience of an individual faithful.
- b. The second dimension of faith is that it is an act of believing. This is the cognitive aspect of faith. The personalization of this aspect of faith helps the faithful to develop their own conscience. Conscience plays an important role in the life of the faithful. It is formed by personalizing the beliefs, values and customs of the faith community. These beliefs, values, and customs are formed according to the Word of God. As a result of this personalization, the conscience of an individual gets formed according to the conscience of the community of faith, and in turn it guides him through out his life.
- c. The third dimension of faith is that it is an act of obedience. It is the total obedience and surrender to the Will of God. It consists in following a life according to the Will of God, which is revealed through the Word of God. By personalizing this dimension of faith, the Christian character of the faithful is formed. This helps



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them to do the Will of God that is to say, to lead a life according to the Word of God in all the situations of their life, and thereby to realize the Kingdom of God in their lives (Mt. 7: 21).

64. Personalization of faith is realized in all its dimensions through a process of *acquisition, appreciation and assimilation*. Be it in the affective or cognitive or behavioral realms, these three processes are essential for the personalization of faith. Hence, due regard should be given to these three processes in the faith formation. Any piece of information is first *acquired* by the recipient by going through an experience, for example, participating in a liturgical celebration, listening to a class, getting involved in an activity, etc.. Then the recipient, either personally or with the help of someone else *appreciates* or estimates the worth of the acquired experience through some kind of reasoning. After the reasoning, the recipient *assimilates* or integrates in to himself all that he has appreciated from the acquired experience through the act of reasoning. Hence the formators of faith should give due attention to helping the faithful to *acquire, appreciate* and *assimilate* the shared beliefs, values, and customs of the Church. This process of personalization is repeated in all the aspects and moments of learning, and continues till the end of one's life.
65. As a result of personalization, the human conscience is formed according to the Christian faith. Conscience is the very core of a human being, which helps him to do good and avoid evil (CCC 1777). It is the self directive system vested in every human being by God Himself. It helps the human person and guides the human reason to reach one's ultimate goal, the God-realization. This conscience also becomes a corrective force when one deviates from his goal of life. Although conscience is an inborn reality in the life of every human being, it needs to be formed according to the Word of God, revealed in and through the history

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of salvation (CCC 1785). The self revelation of God reached its fullness in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Hence, the Christian faith contains the revelation of God in its fullness. Once the conscience is formed according to the revealed Word of God, then it will help the human persons to reach their ultimate goal, the God-realization. In this way catechesis also helps the formation of conscience according to the Christian faith.

Formation of Christian Life: The Basic Objective

66. The direct objective of catechesis, as we have already said, is to help the baptized to personalize the faith of the Church. This can be understood also as the immediate objective of catechesis. Very often catechesis is limited to this immediate objective only. But at present the Church lays great emphasis on the basic objective of catechesis that is, to enable and to help the faithful to lead a life according to the Word of God. The Lord told the apostles at the moment of their mission: "Teach them to observe whatever I have commanded (taught) you" (Mt. 28:20). Therefore, the objective of catechetical teaching is not mere feeding of information, but the formation of Christian life (AG 14). In catechesis, information plays an important role; but it should be for the promotion and formation of Christian life.
67. Christian life consists mainly in proclamation, celebration, and witnessing. In and through our life, the faith is being proclaimed, celebrated, and witnessed. Hence, catechists should give due attention to fostering proclamation, celebration, and witnessing of faith life. This formation of faith life, like personalization, is also an ongoing reality. It extends from the very beginning till the end of one's life and there are certain stages or levels for the faith formation. They are mainly three: initiation, maturation, and sustaining. Each and every individual faithful passes through these stages and realizes the fullness of Christian life. In the first



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stage one is mainly initiated into the Christian life, in the second one is helped to become mature in the Christian life and in the third one is helped to sustain one's Christian life.

Communion with Christ and the Church: The Ultimate Objective

68. Although personalization of faith is the direct objective, and formation of Christian life the basic objective, there is also an ultimate objective for catechesis, the communion with Christ and the Church. Christian life consists in the communion with Christ. This communion implies also the communion with the Church, the body of Christ. Hence the communion with Christ and the Church is to be considered as the ultimate objective of catechesis.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* considers communion with Christ as the ultimate objective. It says: "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ" (GDC 80). It also considers integration into faith community as one of the objectives of catechesis (GDC 61). Communion with Christ is realized by knowing (In. 17:3) and experiencing (1 In. 1: 1-4) Christ personally, while communion with the Church is realized by personalizing the beliefs, values, and customs of the faith community, and by integrating themselves into the faith and faith life of the Church. All the more, in the case of catechesis in an Individual Church, the aspect of community integration is very important because it is through catechesis that one is introduced and integrated into the spirituality, liturgy, customs, traditions, discipline, etc. of one's own Individual Church.

II. THE ORIENTATIONS OF CATECHESIS

69. Apart from the objectives, the catechesis of an individual Church should have some particular orientations. It is actually the orientations which contribute to the identity and particularity of



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the catechesis of the individual Churches. Some of the main orientations are the following:

Life Orientation

70. Catechesis leads people to the fullness of Christian life. The fullness of Christian life depends not only on the fullness of faith understanding but also in leading a life according to the teachings of Christ. This is because Christianity is not merely a faith (doctrine) to be believed, but a life to be lived. Jesus said: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). Again, Jesus says: "If you wish to enter in to life, keep the commandments" (Mt. 19:16-17). Here too, Jesus emphasizes the importance of a life according to the Word of God in order to obtain the eternal life.

The life orientation of catechesis also means the sensitivity to the particular problems in the living context of the faith community. Therefore, the catechists should take into consideration the life situation of the catechized, and help them to encounter the problems of life, with the help of the Word of God. There are ever so many problems in our life situations. The problems and social evils may change as the place and time changes. Hence, it is up to the catechist to consider the life situations of the catechized and give catechesis in such way as to help them to face those situations in the light of the teachings of Christ.

Ecclesial Orientation

71. As we have already noted, the ultimate objective of catechesis is the communion with Christ and the Church. The communion with the Church means an integration and incorporation of the faithful into the faith and faith life of the faith-community. Hence the catechesis of an individual Church should give due emphasis



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to its particular traditions in order to integrate the faithful into the faith-community.

- a. In the Catholic Church there exist different individual Churches (OE2). Therefore, the catechesis of an individual Church should give proper care to foster ones relationship with other individual Churches. Such an inter-ritual or inter-ecclesial relationship is essential for the wellbeing of the Church. The faithful should be taught about the identity and special characteristics of their own individual Church, in order to help them to accept and respect the particular traditions of their own individual Church.
- b. The Church which is the body of Christ and community of the people of God is above all a worshipping community. Worship is actually the centre of Christian life, which is the celebration of the faith of the Church. The Second Vatican Council says that it is the source and summit of Christian life (SC 10). Therefore, the catechesis given to the faithful of an individual Church should be one which introduces them into the liturgy of the Church, and one which enables them to participate in it actively. Thus the faithful of an individual Church can be easily introduced and integrated into the spirit and life of the Church.

Mission-Orientation

72. The Church is missionary by her very nature and evangelization is her basic mission (AG 2, 35). Since evangelization is the basic mission of the Church it is also the primary duty of every Christian. Hence the catechesis given to the members of the Church should help them to become conscious of their missionary vocation and take up their responsibility as a missionary of Chris! in the world. Therefore, the catechesis of the Syro-Malabar Church should be one which gives a mission oriented formation to the members of the Church.

In order that the members of the Church may become real evangelizers, they need to be evangelized and made aware of their missionary vocation. About {his *Catechesi Tradendae* says:

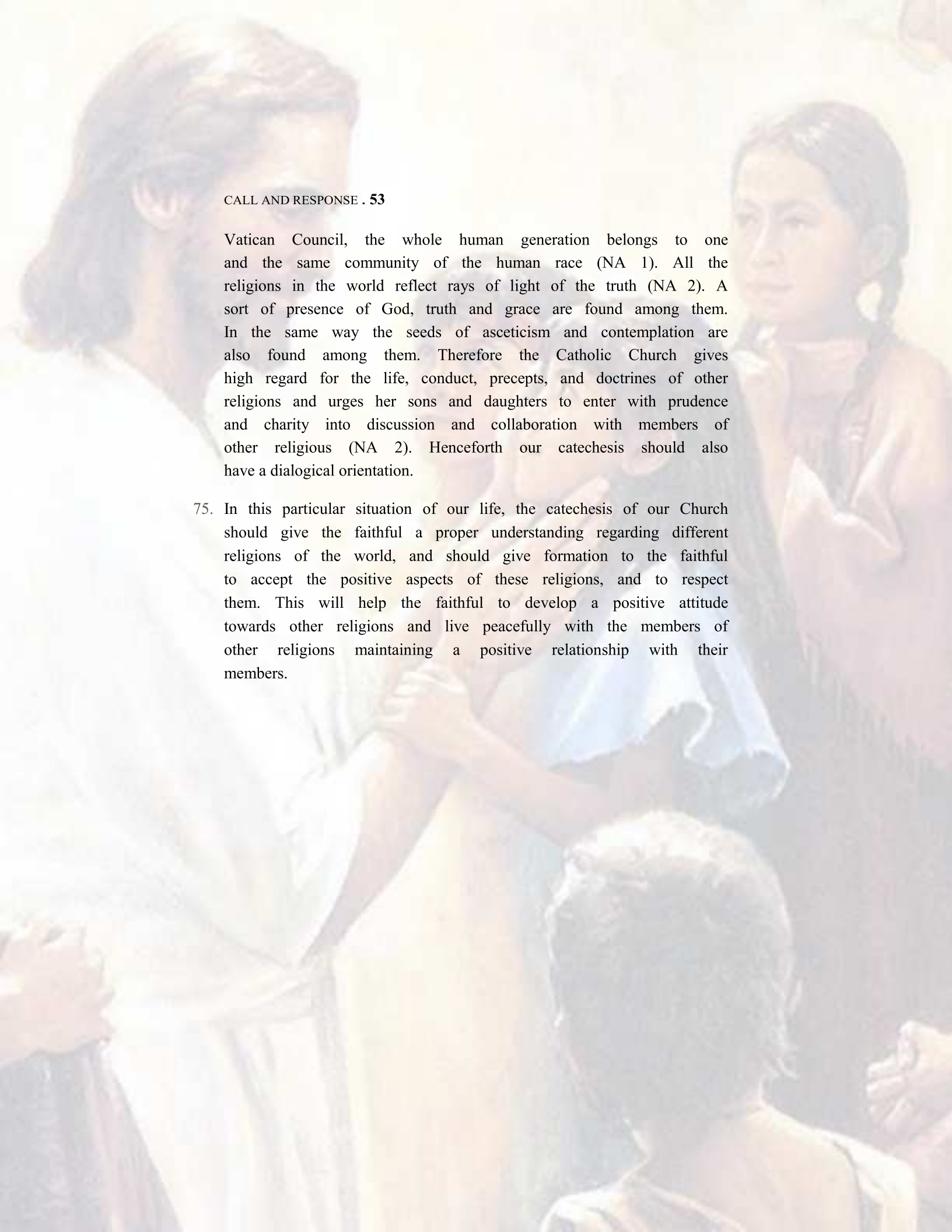
"Catechesis is likewise open to the missionary dynamism. If catechesis is done well, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it on to their children, to make it known to others, and to serve the human in every way" (CT 24). Such a catechesis will also help to foster vocations to religious and missionary life.

Ecumenical Orientation

73. Besides the missionary orientation an ecumenical orientation is also important for our catechesis, since our Church has an ecumenical context. Division in the Church is a counter witness to the Christian faith. All the more, it is the wish and prayer of Our Lord that all His disciples be united in Him (In. 17:20). In India, and even out side, we are living with other ecclesial communities. Hence our faithful should be given proper understanding regarding these ecclesial communities in order to help them foster good relationships with the members of these communities. We should also teach the faithful to highlight the unifying elements rather than the differences. Apart from the conciliar Decree on Ecumenism, the directions given in the documents like *Orientalis Lumen, Ut Unum Sint*, the *Ecumenical Directory*, etc. are to be followed while giving catechesis to the faithful of the Church.

Dialogical Orientation

74. Another important aspect to be taken care of in our catechetical action is the dialogical dimension. We live in a multi-religious context. Whether in Kerala, India, or even outside, we are in a multi-religious context. According to the vision of the Second



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Vatican Council, the whole human generation belongs to one and the same community of the human race (NA 1). All the religions in the world reflect rays of light of the truth (NA 2). A sort of presence of God, truth and grace are found among them. In the same way the seeds of asceticism and contemplation are also found among them. Therefore the Catholic Church gives high regard for the life, conduct, precepts, and doctrines of other religions and urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religious (NA 2). Henceforth our catechesis should also have a dialogical orientation.

75. In this particular situation of our life, the catechesis of our Church should give the faithful a proper understanding regarding different religions of the world, and should give formation to the faithful to accept the positive aspects of these religions, and to respect them. This will help the faithful to develop a positive attitude towards other religions and live peacefully with the members of other religions maintaining a positive relationship with their members.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOURCES AND CONTENT OF CATECHESIS

I. THE SOURCES OF CATECHESIS

76. **In** the catechetical directory of an individual Church, a special mention regarding its sources is very important. When we prepare the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church a clear vision about the specific sources of catechesis will be of great help in order to work out its content. Regarding the sources of catechetical instructions the Second Vatican Council say: "it should be based on holy scripture, tradition, liturgy and on the teaching authority and life of the Church" (CD 14). Actually all these sources are the expressions of the revealed Word of God which is the living source for catechesis.

Word of God: The living Source for Catechesis

77. The Word of God is the living source and its expressions - Sacred Tradition and Scripture - are the basic sources of catechesis proper (GCD 27; GDC 94). Hence, the Catechesis of an individual Church has to draw its content from the living source of the Word of God which is transmitted in and through the tradition and scriptures, for they make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God which is entrusted to the Church (GDC 94).
- a. About the predominance of the Word of God the Second Vatican Council says: "Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence since they form one sacred deposit of the Word

of God, which is committed to the Church" (DV 9,10). According to the *General Catechetical Directory*: "The content of catechesis is found in God's Word, written or handed down" (GCD 45). It continues to say that, while using these sources the catechist must first and always look to the unquestionable preeminence of revelation, written or handed down, and to the authority of the Magisterium of the Church in matters connected with faith (GCD 45).

- b. According to *Catechesi Tradendae* an "Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of Himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in the Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living, active *traditio*" (CT 22). Therefore, the catechesis of an individual Church has to draw its content from the living source of the Word of God transmitted in and through the tradition and scriptures, and has to be nourished in holiness through the Word of Scripture (CT 27). For, the catechesis originates in the Church's confession of faith and leads to the profession of faith of the catechumens and those to be catechized, and it is nothing other than the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways (GDC 105).

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture: The Basic Sources

78. The basic expressions of the Word of God, the Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture, are the basic sources of catechesis of an individual Church. The "Word of God contained in Sacred Tradition and Scripture is mediated upon and understood more deeply by means of the sense of faith of all the people of God, guided by the Magisterium, which teaches with authority; is celebrated in sacred liturgy, where it is constantly proclaimed,

heard, internalized and explained; shines forth in the life of the Church, in her two thousand year history, especially in Christian witness and particularly in that of the saints; is deepened by theological research which helps the believers to advance in their vital understanding of the mysteries of faith; is made manifest in genuine religious and moral values which, as *seeds of the Word* are sown in human society and diverse cultures" (GDC 95).

- a. The Sacred Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the Apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit (DV 9); while the Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit (DV 9). Sacred Tradition includes all the aspects, especially the liturgy, spirituality, theology, and discipline of the Church expressed in patristic writings, magisterial teachings, history of the Church, iconography, hagiography, living customs and practices of the Church, etc.(CCEO 621 § 2).
- b. The Sacred Scripture is the written Word of God canonically accepted, preserved, and propagated by the Church. It is a specific source of inspiration for the Christian teaching as well as the source of content for catechesis in all the Churches. Sacred Scripture itself is the result of the proclamation of the Gospel and catechesis of the Church based on the revelation of the Word of God. It is also the basis for the continued proclamation and catechesis of the Word of God in the Church. Thus the Sacred Scripture remains one of the basic sources of catechesis.
- c. Besides the above mentioned basic sources, the particular customs and practices of our Church like the celebration of feasts and fasts, the parish administration systems, the particular family traditions, etc. can be considered as sources for the catechesis of our Church. With regard to the formulation of the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church, all these sources should be properly utilized and developed.

II. THE CONTENT OF CATECHESIS

79. The main content of catechesis is the Word of God revealed in and through the history of salvation. This revelation reached its culmination in Jesus Christ the incarnate Word of God. The Gospel lived, proclaimed, and handed over to the Church by Jesus, the Lord, is the actual content of the catechism of the Church. It is this living Gospel that the Church communicates in different ways taking into account the particular situations and needs of each and every individual and local Church.

The Content of Catechesis in General

80. In the history of the Catechisms of the Church the content of catechesis in general is known as the deposit of faith. Usually, it is divided into four sectors: the creed (our faith), liturgy (our celebration), commandments (our values), and prayer (our prayer). This is the manner in which the content of the deposit of faith is exposed and explained in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The first section explains the creed of the Apostles, the magisterial teachings, and the other beliefs of the Church; while the second exposes the Eucharistic liturgy, celebration of sacraments, liturgical year, liturgical feasts, liturgy of hours, para liturgical services, etc.; the third one explains the commandments of God, teachings of the Lord, and the precepts of the Church; and the fourth section exposes the theology of prayer and the explanation of the Lord's prayer. These are the contents of catechesis in general for the catechism of the Churches in the Catholic Communion.

The Exposition of the Content for Particular Catechisms

81. There is a general understanding regarding the content of catechesis for the universal Church. This understanding is

applicable to all the Individual Churches. But the documents of the Church do not prescribe any particular structure to be followed regarding the exposition "of the content of catechism for an individual Church. This is left to the responsibility of each Individual Church (GDC 131-136). However, the documents say that proper consideration is to be given to the particular tradition and living situation of each Individual Church, before deciding the structure and the mode of exposition of the content of its catechism.

82. On the structure and exposition of content of particular catechisms, the *General Directory for Catechesis* says: "With regard to the structuring of contents, different episcopates publish catechisms of various structures and configurations; as has been said, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is proposed as a point of doctrinal reference, but, does not impose on the entire Church a determined structure on other catechisms. There are catechisms with a trinitarian structure; others are planned according to the stages of salvation; others again are organized along a biblical or theological theme (Covenant, Kingdom of God, etc.); some are structured around an aspect of the faith; while others again follow the liturgical year" (GDC 135). Therefore, as we prepare the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church, it is our duty to present the content of catechism taking into consideration the particular tradition and living situation of our Church.

The Structure of Content Exposition for the Syro-Malabar Catechism

83. Having considered the particular tradition and living situation of the Syro-Malabar Church, we propose a model of content exposition in the order of the *history of salvation*. This system of content exposition, which is more inclusive and comprehensive, will help the catechized to go through all the faith experiences of the people of God and to personalize their faith experience.

- a. Further more, this model is biblical, chronological, and integral.
One can say that the history of revelation is the same as the history of our faith itself, since the history of salvation is the same as that of the history of God's revelation, which is gradual and developmental. The history of God's revelation started from the time of creation and has reached its culmination in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God.
- b. The apostles followed this scheme in their preaching. The evangelists followed this structure in the writing of the Gospels. They have presented the mystery of Christ as the fullness of revelation and the realization of the salvific work of God. The Apostles Creed and other confessions of faith and baptismal formulae also have the same structure of the history of salvation. The Fathers of the Church mainly followed this structure in order to introduce and to interpret the faith of the Church.
- c. According to the eastern catechetical and theoro methodology, the economy of salvation is considered to be the core of their faith proclamation, liturgy, and theology. Another reason to adopt this system and model is that it is consistent with the structure and order of the Holy *Qurbana* (Eucharistic Liturgy) and the liturgical year of the Syro-Malabar Church. Both of them follow the logic and order of the history of salvation. In the Holy *Qurbana* of the Syro-Malabar Church, we see a gradual and living commemoration of the entire history of salvation. In the liturgical year it is recapitulated in and through nine seasons: Annunciation, Nativity, Epiphany, Great Fast, Easter, Apostles, Summer, Elias - Cross - Moses, and Consecration of the Church.
- d. All these refer to the fact that the best way for the exposition of the content of the catechism of the Syro-Malabar Church is to present it in the structure of the history of salvation. Moreover, it will help the catechized to get into the faith experience, understanding, and praxis of the Syro-Malabar Church.

III. A SCHEMA OF CONTENTS FOR THE SYRO-MALABAR CATECHISM

84. For a better understanding of this model, we present below, a schema of content exposition according to the structure of the history of salvation. And this schema basically includes three dimensions: Trinitarian, Ecclesial, and Escatological.

a. **God, the Creator**

Self-revelation of God

The mystery of the Holy Trinity

The stages of revelation

Creation as revelation

The creation of man in the image and likeness of God

The fall of man and the reality of sin

The call to be a new generation: the call of Abraham

The creation of the people of God: the call of Israel

The covenant and the ten commandments of God

The prophets and the promise of the Saviour

b. **Jesus Christ, the Saviour**

Christ: the fullness of revelation

Christ: the only begotten Son of God

The mystery of the incarnation

Christ: Born of the Virgin Mary

The public life and teachings of Christ

The new commandment of love

Christ's suffering and death

Christ's resurrection and ascension

Christ's Second Coming and the final judgement



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c. Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier

Holy Spirit in the Old Testament
Holy Spirit in the New Testament
Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father
Jesus Christ: the giver of the Holy Spirit
Holy Spirit: the Life Giver and Sanctifier
The mission of the Church and the Holy Spirit
The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit

d. Church: the Sacrament of Salvation

The Nature of the Church

The Church: the body of Christ
The Church: the community of the people of God
The life and mission of the Church
The history of the Church
The basic qualities of the true Church
The hierarchy and ministries in the Church
Mary, the mother of the Church

The Liturgy of the Church

The Church as a worshipping community
Holy *Qurbana*, the sacraments, and sacramentals
The Liturgical Year, feasts, and fasts
The prayers of the Church and family prayers
Devotions in the Church
Commemoration of the dead
Liturgical art, architecture, and music

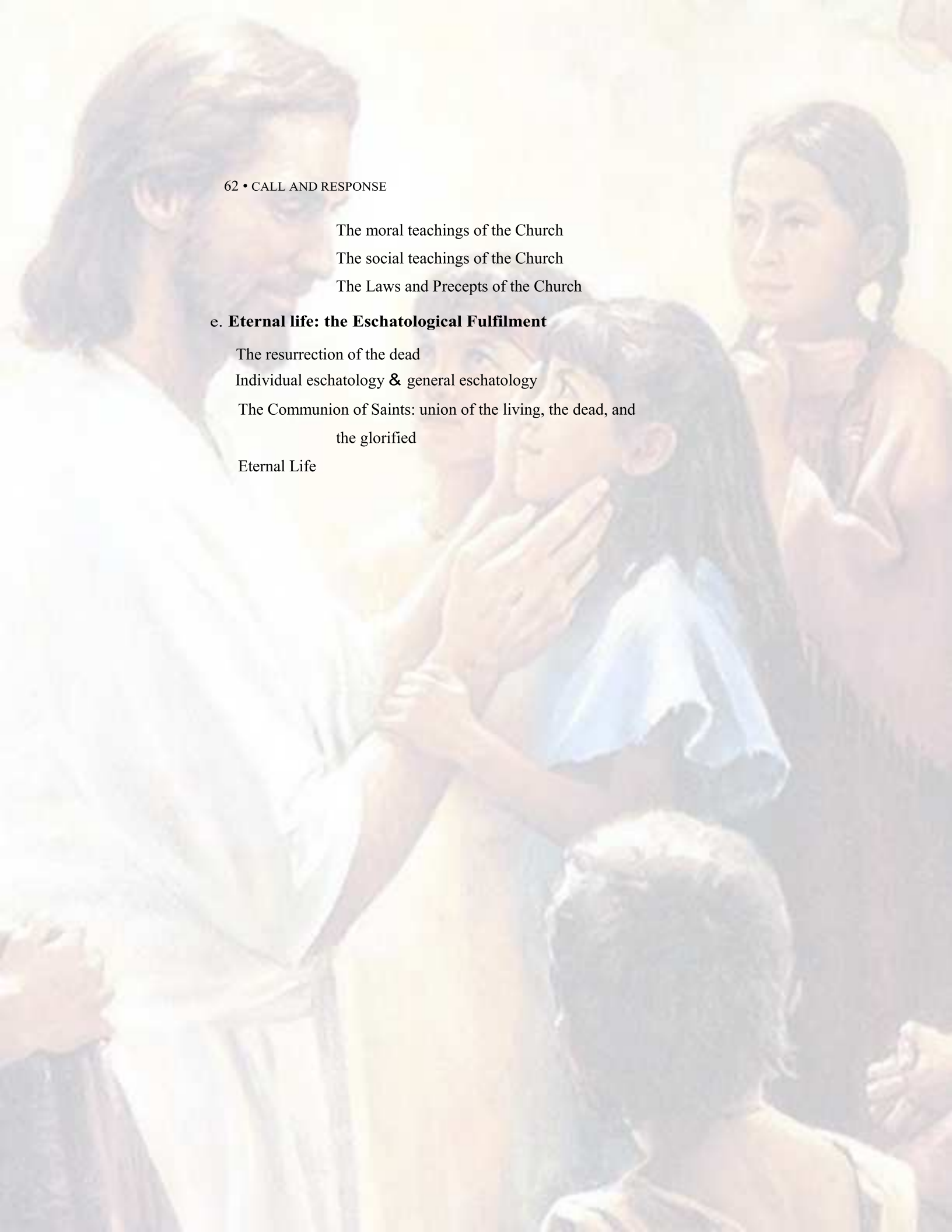
The Life of the Church

The Church and the *Magisterium*

- The moral teachings of the Church
- The social teachings of the Church
- The Laws and Precepts of the Church

e. Eternal life: the Eschatological Fulfilment

- The resurrection of the dead
- Individual eschatology & general eschatology
- The Communion of Saints: union of the living, the dead, and the glorified
- Eternal Life





CHAPTER SIX

THE AMBIENTS AND AGENTS OF CATECHESIS

I. THE AMBIENTS OF CATECHESIS

85. The Christian formation takes place within the living ambient of an ecclesial community and by the collective action of the faith-community. Hence, the faith-community is considered both as the ambient and agent of catechesis. This community of faith becomes the ambient of faith at three levels: the family, parish community, and ecclesial community. The educational institutions also play an important role in the faith formation of the children and youth.

Family: The Primary and Intimate Ambient

86. Family is the basic unit of the human society both in the secular and religious level. The Church considers family as the environment of faith formation, school of Christian life, and as the domestic Church (GDC 227). At the family level the home atmosphere is the ambient, and parents are the agents of catechesis. It is the primary faith-ambient for the new born and the children. At the same time, it is an intimate ambient which continues till the end of one's life.
- a. The parents share their faith with their new born within the ambient of the family. There, the children see, hear, touch, and experience the faith that their parents and relatives believe, celebrate and practise. This particular faith-ambient helps the children a lot to imbibe and develop the Christian faith in all its

aspects. Actually, it is in the family that the seeds of faith are sown in the hearts of the infants and children; and it is there itself that their faith is nurtured and developed. Throughout the life of a person the family remains the primary and intimate faith ambient irrespective of his age.

- b. Family is the womb of the society and the community of faith. Hence, it is the place where socialization and religious socialization of the children take place. In this environment, they learn and develop the social, religious, and human behaviour. The family-centered faith practices like family prayer, para-liturgical services in connection with feasts, ceremonies related to birth, marriage, death, etc. should be fostered by the Church in order to safeguard this powerful ambient of faith formation.
87. Family-units or Small Christian Communities are the newly developing realities in the ecclesial life of the Syro-Malabar Church. They are modelled on the early Christian communities who lived their faith in fellowship of families and local communities. The context of the Family-units or Small Christian Communities also can be utilized as the means for faith formation of the believers. It can be done mainly by the sharing of faith through proclamation, celebration, and witnessing. At present they serve as a special occasion for adult catechesis.

Parish: The Nurturing and Fostering Ambient

88. Parish is a community of the Christian faithful of a particular place or territory whose pastoral care is entrusted to a priest by the ecclesiastical authority. It is the basic Christian community in which Christian faith is lived in all its aspects. Besides the context of the family, the children gradually grow in their faith with the help of and within the ambient of the parish faith-community. It is in this community that their faith is developed into its maturity and fullness. Within the context of this community, faith nurturing



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is realized by means of liturgical celebrations, catechetical instructions, and group activities.

- a. It is within this faith ambient of the parish that the faith initiation of the children, faith maturation of the young, and the faith sustaining of the adults are made possible. At the parish level, the faith ambient manifests itself in three ways: liturgical celebrations, instruction of faith, and group-centered activities. The catechists, who are the representatives of the faith community of the parish, share the faith of that community with the children helping them to become integrated into the faith and faith life of the community. Hence, the catechists need to be supported by the members of the faith community.
- b. This faith ambient is very important for the faith formation of the children as well as for the young and adults since the faith development of the individual takes place within the faith ambient of the parish faith community. Such an ambient helps them to imbibe, develop, and sustain their faith till the end of their life.

Church: The Basic and Cohesive Ambient and Agent

89. The Church is a community of the faithful, which has its own beliefs (*view* of life), values (norm of life), and customs (*way* of life). This reality of the Church subsists in a Particular Church or Individual Church or Universal Church. Whether it be in a Particular Church or Individual Church or Universal Church, the Church as a community of faithful remains the basic and cohesive ambient and agent of catechesis in which and by which the faith formation takes place. According to Pope John Paul II catechesis is the right and the duty of the Church (CT 14). The Church is also the custodian and the teacher of the deposit of faith. Christ has entrusted to the Church the task of proclaiming the Gospel and teaching all that has been taught by Him (Mt. 28: 18-20).

Hence she is the basic agent of catechesis, responsible for the faith formation of all her members.

90. The Church has also a religious social influence which helps or even compels her members to become religiously socialized. The faith ambient knowingly or unknowingly influences the faith formation of the children, young, and adults; and by the religious social influence of the Church religious socialization takes place in the life of her members. In a healthy faith ambient the faith of a person sprouts, grows, and remains active. If the faith ambient of the Church or ecclesial community is rotten or vitiated, it will surely affect the faith development of its members. Therefore, the Church should be consciously aware of this ambience. It has to take all steps to preserve and sustain a congenial faith ambient within context of the Church.

Catechesis through Educational Institutions

91. Besides the' ambients mentioned above, another important ambient which helps the faith formation or religious formation of the children and young are the educational institutions. Now a days, educational institutions are becoming more and more secular. Therefore, the role of educational institutions in the faith formation of children in a particular religion is also becoming more and more difficult. Despite of this, we should make a conscious effort to make use of our educational institutions for the faith formation of the Christian students. We should also take positive interest in maintaining the Christian ambient in our schools, especially by highlighting the religious and human values. The authorities and teachers should nurture and foster positive values and qualities in children by approving and appreciating their positive attitudes and behaviours.
92. Apart from the secular context, there exists a multi religious context in most of our educational institutions. Hence, we should

take care to foster inter-religious harmony by encouraging the children to imbibe the noble values of all religions. With this purpose, value education should be imparted in our schools either for the children of the non Christian religions alone, or for all the children of the school together, irrespective of their religion. Such an education will help them to assimilate moral values from every religion, and to foster inter religious harmony by mutual respect and acceptance.

II. THE AGENTS OF CATECHESIS

93. As we have already mentioned, the Church or the ecclesial community is the basic agent and ambient of catechesis proper. Besides the Church as a whole, there are specific persons in the Church who participate in a special way in the ministry of catechesis. They are mainly the bishops, priests, parents, the religious, and the lay catechists.

Bishops

94. Regarding the responsibility of Bishops in catechesis, the Second Vatican Council teaches: "Among the principal duties of Bishops, that of preaching the Gospel excels" (LG 25). In the preaching of the Gospel, missionary preaching and catechesis are considered most important (CD 13). The document *Catechesi Tradendae* says: "You are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence" (CT 63). Again, the Holy Father says: "Your principal role will be to bring about and to maintain in your Churches a real passion for catechesis, a passion embodied in a pertinent and effective organization, putting into operation the necessary personnel, means and equipment, and also financial resources. You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do" (CT 63).

According to the *General Directory for Catechesis*, the concern for catechetical activity should make the Bishops assume the overall direction of catechesis in the Particular Church. This implies the responsibility to look after the proper organization of the catechetical activities of the diocese, to be vigilant regarding 'the authenticity and integrity of the faith transmitted in catechesis, to see that the catechists are properly trained and formed for this ministry, and to see that the catechetical programmes in the diocese correspond to the catechetical programmes of the Individual Church (GDC 223).

Priests

95. The Second Vatican Council has called the priests "instructors of the people in the faith" (PO 6). Referring to this the Holy Father says: "There is no better way for you to be such instructors than by devoting your best efforts to the growth of your communities in the faith. Whether you are in charge of a parish, or chaplains to primary or secondary schools or universities the Church expects you to neglect nothing with a view to a well-organized and well-oriented catechetical effort" (CT 64). The *General Directory for Catechesis* considers catechesis to be the proper function of the presbyterate. "By virtue of his ordination, a priest is anointed by the Holy Spirit to form the Christian communities by fostering their charisms and services. They have to continue this work until the faithful are properly formed and reach true Christian maturity" (GDC 224).

Therefore, the following are to be considered as the catechetical tasks proper to the presbyterate, particularly to the parish priests,:

- to foster a sense of common responsibility for catechesis within the Christian community,
- to organize and co-ordinate the catechetical activities of the parish,
- to recognize and appreciate the catechists for their service,
- to see that catechesis is done in

the parish in accordance with the catechetical programs of the diocese, and to integrate the catechetical activity with the other pastoral activities of the parish (GDC 225).

Parents

96. Besides the bishops and priests, parents are the educators of faith especially for infants and children. The witness of life given by the parents in the context of the family helps the infants and children to imbibe the faith experience of the Church. The role of parents in the religious awakening of their children in the family is an irreplaceable one. Hence parents should take special care to explain in the home the religious content of the family events and festivals (GDC 226). The *General Directory for Catechesis* states that "Parents receive in the sacrament of matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children, to whom they transmit and bear witness to human and religious values. This educational activity which is both human and religious is a true ministry through which the Gospel is transmitted and radiated so that family life is transformed into a journey of faith and school of Christian life" (GDC 227). Since the education of children in faith is an important responsibility of the parents, the Christian community has to see to it that the parents are prepared for the same by means of personal contact, meetings, courses, and adult catechesis (GDC 227).

Since catechesis is a grave responsibility of parents, they should be made aware of their responsibility to educate their children in the Christian faith. They should be given proper training in order to enable them to carry out this religious responsibility. And : finally, the Christian community has to support them with all its means to achieve the goal of educating their children in the Christian faith.

The Religious

97. Like the priests, the religious are also called in a special way to assist the ministry of catechesis. The *General Directory for Catechesis* says: "In a special way the Church calls upon those in consecrated life to catechetical activity and wishes that religious communities dedicate themselves as much as possible of what ability and means they have to the specific work of catechesis. The specific contribution to catechesis of the religious and of members of the societies of Apostolic life derives from their specific condition" (GDC 228). Throughout the history of the Church, the religious communities have played an important role in the Christian formation of the children and young people (CT 65). The religious of the Syro-Malabar Church have always considered and continue to consider it as their important ministry. All the more, the Syro-Malabar Church is really blessed by God for the great number of the religious who whole heartedly involve themselves in the catechetical ministry of the Church.
98. This trend needs to be continued at the parish level and at the level of the educational institutions. The religious sisters and brothers have to involve directly in the catechetical activities of the parish and in the educational institutions under their management or in the institutions in which they serve. The religious have to consider the catechetical ministry as their grave responsibility before the Lord, since evangelization is the basic mission of the religious too. By involving themselves in the catechetical ministry they are actually fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by the Lord: "Go and proclaim the Good News to the entire creation" (Mk. 16:16). Hence, the religious need to be made aware of their great responsibility to catechize the members of the Church. Together with this they should also be given apt training in catechetics, right from the time of their religious formation. At the same time the bishops and parish

priests have to see that the religious is made involved in the catechetical activities of the eparchy and parish.

The Lay Catechists

99. Apart from the priests and the religious, there are also a good number of lay catechists rendering whole hearted service in the field of catechesis in the Syro-Malabar Church. The Church considers their service with great respect and recognizes them as special ministers of the community. According to St. Paul, the Lord has established different ministries in the Church and the ministry of teaching is one among them. All the ministries in the Church are for the building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4: 11-13). Therefore, by their service in the catechetical ministry the lay catechists are actually participating in the building up of the Church.

a. The vocation of the laity to catechetical ministry springs from the sacrament of baptism, and they are strengthened and sent for the same by the sacrament of confirmation (GDC 231). Through these sacraments, they participate in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministries of Christ. Regarding the special call to the catechetical ministry, the *General Directory for Catechesis* says:

"In addition to the common vocation to the apostolate, some lay people feel called interiorly by God to assume the service of catechist. The Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechize. The Lord Jesus Christ invites men and women, in a special way, to follow Him and to be a teacher and formator of His disciples. This personal call of Jesus Christ and one's relationship to Him are the true moving forces of catechetical activity" (GDC 231).

b. Therefore, lay catechists have to consider their role in the catechetical ministry as a Divine vocation. They have to involv