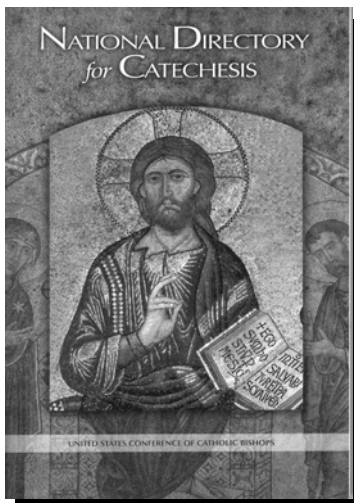


National Directory for Catechesis

NDC... What's in it for you?



The new National Directory for Catechesis sets the context for catechesis firmly within the nexus of U.S. culture – for better or for worse.

Chapter 1 lists general characteristics of U.S. culture as Freedom, Religious Freedom, Economic Freedom, Pragmatism, Interest in Science and Technology, Globalization, and Mobility. These are the blessings of living in America. They are also the challenges.

To summarize: Freedom is not always equal, Religious Freedom can separate religion from public life, Economic Freedom is not always equally distributed, Pragmatism can encourage egotism, Interest in Science and Technology open up new moral dilemmas, Globalization extends US citizens' responsibility to the poor of the world, and Mobility, as those of you in the field well know, affects faith community and catechesis.

The NDC also names the challenges of diversity – Cultural Diversity, Religious Diversity, and Diversity within the Catholic Church – Ethnic Diversity, and “Autonomous Churches” such as the Eastern Catholic Churches. Then, there are the regional diversities – Church looks the same, yet different, in the Northeast, the Midwest, the South and other areas of the nation.

Profiling U.S. Catholic demographics, the NDC mentions not only cultural and ethnic differences, but differences in outlook between old and young as further challenges to catechetical ministry. Other challenges include the scale and complexity of parish life, the ratio of the faithful to the clergy, and the declining number of children in Catholic Schools, with the associated increase in the number in parish religious education programs nationwide. Mass in other languages is also named as a development based on demographics.

Then, there is the presence and growth of the number of active lay ecclesial ministers in the parishes in the United States and the increase in responsibilities they share with clergy.

The last factor in this chapter is the state of family and home in the USA – the growing movements to support family life in the private and public sector are noted, along with demographics on marriage, divorce, remarriage, decline in nuclear families, working parents, singles, cohabitation, declining birth rate, single parent households, grandparents raising children, poverty and more, all of which have led to an erosion of “traditional values”.

Sure, you say, you know all this! Now, the NDC says, we have the challenge of “boldly proclaiming the Gospel” in this culture. The NDC is to be our guide on this bold venture. Stay tuned for the NDC's tips on how to do this, beginning in next month's issue.