

# Dispositions of a Catechist



## 1. Be A Joyful Messenger.

*Jesus teaches us "I have told you all this so that my own joy may be in you, and that your joy be complete." John 15:11*

Sometimes this means digging deep. Pope Francis is joyful despite the challenges he faces and the responsibilities he carries. Our task is to recognise that the people we are serving won't believe in our words if we act like we carry the world on our shoulders. Joy is in any encounter with Jesus.

## 2. Be prayerful.

*St Paul teaches us "I can do all things through the one who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13*

Sometimes we try to do things by determination. The Gospel's remind us again and again that will power won't get you there. Ask the Holy Spirit to be evident in your planning, in your car journey to Church and in the sessions. Don't be afraid to show people what prayer looks like when you do it.... and as Pope Benedict reminds us, use silence as much as words.

## 3. Approach tenderly.

*St Paul teaches us "Be generous to one another, sympathetic, forgiving one another, just as God forgave you in Christ." Ephesians 4:32*

Pope Francis reminds us that tenderness is not softness. Tenderness is a strong inclination not to pass judgement quickly. Allow people to be real around you and do your best to accept their endless inconsistencies, unreliability and occasional ingratitude. The Church knows that most people have a very odd idea about what this is all about and it will take time to convince them that holiness is the key to their happiness.

## 4. Be patient.

*Jesus is not afraid to walk with people, even in the wrong direction. He inquires of the disciples "What are you discussing as you walk along?" Luke 24:17.*

This means avoiding the temptation to look for immediate results and a quick catch-up. The pastoral strategy of Pope Francis is accompaniment. It means we join people where they are as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus. Then, we gently guide them through the Gospels and the tradition towards their fulfilment. The real skill here is to discern their pace and walk at it. If you walk too slowly you will bore them. If you walk too quickly you will frighten them. The skill here is the art and skill of practicing accompaniment.

## 5. Two-way Conversation.

*Jesus listens to people. In Marks Gospel he asks the blind man "What do you want me to do for you?" Mark 10:51*

In following Jesus' example we should have a conversation with the world but that means we must listen as well as talk, so we can learn as well as teach, and deepen our own faith as much as that of others.

# Guiding Principles



## 1. Healing the Domestic Church.

*The Church teaches us “The family is defined as a domestic Church” GDC 255*

The first principle is reconnecting with the domestic church. Our challenge is to engage with the whole family. That doesn't mean telling parents to bring children to Mass but entering genuinely into family relationships supporting parents to converse meaningfully with their children around *the things of God*. In many families the domestic church is broken and this priceless conversation is lost. Our task is to help revive such a conversation so that it continues without us and builds up the entire family. This also means welcoming them into the programme and the community and celebrating their participation rather than making them feel inadequate because they haven't been quite 'holy' enough in the past.

## 2. Missionary Discipleship.

*The Church teaches us that “The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” LG64*

The second principle is to see yourself as a missionary more than a teacher. Your role in catechesis is to be in communion and intimacy with Jesus so that when people meet you, they meet Jesus. This of course sounds very scary because we are human and we fail. The skill here is to put your trust in Jesus, ask him to be closely at your side and invite others to do likewise. You are not teaching people a set of intellectual propositions the Church teaches. That takes a lifetime. Essentially you are introducing families to Jesus, who loves them, died for them and is present to them. Everything else builds on that and takes a lifetime to discover. *“To teach means not only to impart what we know, but also to reveal who we are by living what we believe. It is this latter lesson which tends to last the longest.”* St Pope John Paul II

## 3. Accompaniment.

*Fr Vincent Donovan wrote “In working with young people do not try to call them back to a place they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as that place might seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you or they have ever been before.” Christianity Rediscovered.*

The final principle is to look for ways to see and develop what you do as accompaniment. What does this mean? Firstly, it means genuinely engaging with peoples' struggles as a starting point, so we have to listen carefully. Secondly we have to walk with them as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus, seeking not destinations but next steps. Thirdly we discern with them what is right for them. In the end, we are here to help them make their own decisions, as Jesus did. We cannot do it for them.