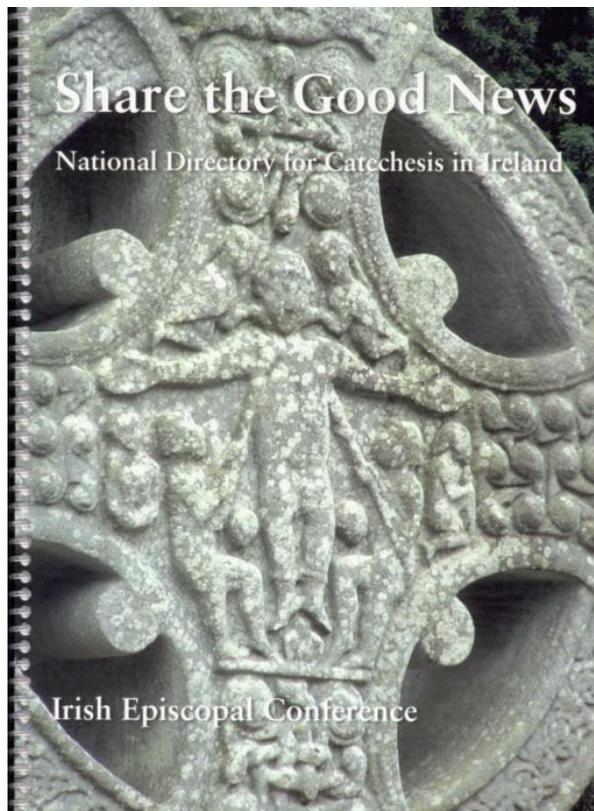


A Review of

Share the Good News

National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland



Éanna Johnson PhD

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INTRODUCTION

Share the Good News (SGN) is presented as the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland¹, and was prepared under authority of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference at the request of the Vatican. Preparation commenced in 2005, with a public launch in January 2011.

The principal document giving guidance for catechetical pedagogy and methodology in the Universal Church is the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC-1997).² The Church recommends the preparation of National Catechetical Directories to assist in implementation of the GDC-1997 at local level. Each National Directory should set out norms and criteria for adequate and appropriate catechesis, and may include an analysis of the local situation in relation to catechesis and a programme of action. Each National Directory must also be in perfect harmony with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).³

Ireland's traditionally strong Catholic catechesis, with good home-school-church partnership, was ready for renewal post-Vatican II. Instead, deficient and defective new religion programmes were introduced into our Catholic schools from the mid-1970s. The past generation and a half of young people have been betrayed, leaving them ignorant and confused about the Faith, vulnerable to conform with the growing secularisation of society, rather than be confident missionary disciples.

Preparation of a National Directory for Catechesis was a golden opportunity for much-needed catechetical reform and renewal. The task of preparation was assigned by the Bishops' Conference to the catechetics establishment, which raises questions of objectivity, conflicts of interest, and track record.

SGN is not actually what it purports to be, a directory for Catholic catechesis. Rather, SGN is a directory for a secularised type of 'Religious Education', in which Catholic catechesis, and its essential context of evangelisation, are marginalised. Some positive elements in SGN and its approval by the Irish Bishops and the Vatican, may give the impression that the document is satisfactory, or at least can be used selectively. However, SGN is so intrinsically flawed that it is better set aside.

Authentic renewal of Catholic catechesis in Ireland remains an urgent need – the little ones hunger for the Truth⁴. Progress will be extremely challenging, given the catechetical failures of the past four decades, the lack of involvement by the institutional Church in Ireland in evangelisation, and our current secularised environment. However, we can take heart that the resources for catechesis were never better, most particularly Sacred Scripture, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – with the help of God all things are possible.⁵

This Review of *Share the Good News* by Dr Éanna Johnson follows on from his interest in the National Directory project since it was announced in 2005. He responded to the initial invitation for submissions (see Appendix A). In 2006 he was one of those invited by the National Catechetical Office in Maynooth to study and comment on the Directory's first Draft. Later he studied and submitted comments on the fourth Draft.

¹ Irish Episcopal Conference. *Share the Good News*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2010.

² Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997.

³ Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, 1999.

⁴ Mt.18:5-7

⁵ Phil.4:13

OVERVIEW

Context. The period after the Second Vatican Council offered exciting opportunities for revitalisation of Catholic catechesis, building on the Council documents and incorporating already existing currents of renewal, such as the kerygmatic and biblical movements. Many good initiatives in Catholic catechesis did emerge in the Universal Church, but paradoxically also seriously flawed developments. Catholic catechesis in Ireland has tended to follow the negative international developments, leading to defective RE school programmes and widespread ignorance about the basics of Catholic faith.

Preparation of 'Share the Good News' (SGN). The initial announcement in 2005 and request for submissions were satisfactory, but subsequently most of the Church was neither consulted nor informed of progress. This consultation deficit and non-transparency were contrary to best practice, the specific advice of *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC-1997), and not in harmony with the promised 'shared partnership' of the 2005 announcement.

Situation Analysis Flawed - Catechetical Failures Endorsed and Extended. A crucial requirement for formulation of plans is a thorough and objective analysis of the current national situation in relation to catechesis. SGN's preparation process did not objectively analyse the current catechetical situation, but instead endorsed and proposed to build on existing failed programmes and policies. This approach could not lead to positive change, but rather to make a bad situation worse.

Deficient Summary of Faith. A National Directory for Catechesis is not required to present a summary of Catholic doctrine, but SGN chose to include such a summary. Unfortunately, SGN's summary is not only unnecessary but also falls short of satisfactory, with significant omissions and deficiencies.

Catholic Evangelisation & Catechesis Supplanted by 'Faith Development' and secularised 'Religious Education'. SGN fails to focus on the Church's understanding of Catechesis as an integral element of Evangelisation, her primary mission. Instead, SGN replaces Evangelisation with its own concept of 'Faith Development', in which prominence is given to a secularised type of 'Religious Education', while Catholic catechesis is marginalised. This strategy of SGN subverts the true purpose of a Directory for Catechesis.

Implementation Plan to Secularise Faith throughout the Church. SGN includes a detailed Implementation Plan, which is good in principle. However, SGN's Plan is based on its own concept of 'Faith Development', covering most of Church life and giving pride of place to secularised 'religious education', while Catholic Evangelisation and Catechesis are downgraded. SGN's Plan could therefore be expected to increase secularisation throughout the Church and accelerate the decline of Faith. To implement its plans SGN proposes an extensive, and unrealistically expensive (€50 + million per year) 'Faith Development' structure of over 1000 personnel, deeply embedded in every parish and diocese, well positioned to be a dominant influence in most of Church life, to be overseen and coordinated by a middle-management Team in Maynooth, with potentiality for usurping and disrupting the rightful lines of episcopal authority and responsibility.

Conclusion. *Share the Good News* presents itself as a directory for Catholic catechesis, but this is false. *Share the Good News* is essentially a directory for promotion of a type of 'religious education' which is a secular perspective on religion, while authentic Catholic catechesis and its context of evangelisation are marginalised. In spite of some satisfactory elements, SGN is so intrinsically flawed that it should be set aside. There is still an urgent need for genuine reform and renewal of Catholic catechesis in Ireland, in which our Bishops should give the lead. Superb resources are available to support authentic Catholic catechesis, and all parties have roles to play.

CONTEXT

Vatican Council II & Catholic Catechesis

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent*⁶ (also known as the *Roman Catechism*) was composed by decree of the Council, and published in 1566. The *Roman Catechism* remained the principal standard of reference for catechesis in the Catholic Church for over four centuries, during which time Catholic catechesis focused on teaching orthodox Catholic doctrine in a carefully structured manner. Linked with this strong catechesis was encouragement of a varied devotional life – Mass, the Sacraments, traditional prayers, missions, retreats, pilgrimages and other devotions. This ‘catechetical-devotional’ model was effective in handing on the Faith and forming Catholics in commitment to God and his Church, strong in faith and moral behaviour.⁷

This ‘catechetical-devotional’ model, with strong home, school and parish linkages, was followed in Ireland prior to and immediately following the Second Vatican Council, as elsewhere in the Catholic world.⁸ The Irish Catholic Bishops’ *‘Penny Catechism’* was the text for primary school catechesis – a concise and well-structured summary of the key truths of the Faith, with the *Roman Catechism* as the standard of reference.⁹ In earlier times in Ireland many children did not progress to secondary school, so the primary school catechesis needed to cover the basics of the Faith to provide as comprehensive a foundation as possible for their future lives.

Ireland’s secondary schools normally had a programme with widely used common text books, building on the basics of the Penny Catechism and covering: doctrine, liturgy, apologetics, and Scripture. Dioceses had Inspectors who visited secondary schools to review progress, and conducted regular written examinations in religious knowledge.

There were movements for renewal of catechesis in the Universal Church before Vatican II. A greater emphasis on Scripture followed from the biblical movement in the Catholic Church – epitomised in the Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XII¹⁰, culminating in the great Dogmatic Constitution of Vatican II on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*.¹¹ The ‘kerygmatic movement’ centred on the good news of our redemption in Christ, with special focus on: liturgy, Scripture, systematic teaching, and the example of Christian living.¹²

The documents of the Second Vatican Council provided rich resources for renewal and development of catechesis – Pope Paul VI considered the Second Vatican Council itself to be ‘the great catechism of modern times’.¹³ At the Second Vatican Council some of the Bishops favoured composition of a new Catechism to succeed the *Roman Catechism*, but instead the Council prescribed that ‘a directory be compiled for the catechetical instruction of the Christian people in which the fundamental principles of this instruction and its organization will be dealt with and the preparation of books relating to it’¹⁴.

⁶ J Donovan DD (translator). *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. London: Baronius Press, 2006.

⁷ George Weigel. *Evangelical Catholicism – Deep Reform in the 21st-Century Church*. New York: Basic Books, 2013. 11-17.

⁸ Such a model was also the experience of the young Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, growing up in Bavaria. See Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. *Salt of the Earth – The Church at the End of the Millennium; An Interview with Peter Seewald*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997. 41-50. Éanna Johnson had similar experience of education in Catholic faith during his school days in India, Australia and Ireland.

⁹ Texts similar to the ‘Penny Catechism’ were used in other countries, e.g. In USA the ‘*Baltimore Catechism*’.

¹⁰ Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*. 1893. Pope Pius XII. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. *Dei Verbum*. 1965.

¹² Michael J Wrenn. *Catechisms and Controversies – Religious Education in the Postconciliar Years*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991. 89-91.

¹³ John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae – On Catechesis in Our Time*. 1979. 2.

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council. Decree of the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, 1965. 44.

Catechetical Blessings & Failures in Universal Church

At the close of Vatican Council II in 1965 the scene was set for substantial and exciting developments in Catholic catechesis worldwide, building on the solid foundation of what had been achieved since the Council of Trent. Was this optimism justified for Catholic catechesis, was the promise fulfilled? The answer must be: yes and no.

Many blessings followed, significant developments were achieved. The Church's Magisterium on catechesis took full account of the Second Vatican Council, and also incorporated the best of other relevant developments, such as the biblical and kerygmatic movements. But paradoxically there were also failures, some extremely serious.

Blessings that flowed from the Second Vatican Council.

The 1970s were set for a great flowering of renewed Catholic catechesis. The decade opened with launch of the *General Catechetical Directory*¹⁵ (GCD-1971), which provided excellent guidance in the conduct of Catholic catechesis, taking full account of the Second Vatican Council, in harmony with the wishes of the Council Fathers.

The decade of the '70s saw two more Magisterial documents that were vitally important for catechesis. The 1974 Synod of Bishops considered the theme of Evangelisation, after which Pope Paul VI issued the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World* (EN). *Evangelii Nuntiandi* sets catechesis as an integral component of Evangelisation, the Church's primary mission.¹⁶

Catechesis itself was the theme for the 1977 Synod of Bishops, after which Pope St John Paul II wrote *Catechesi Tradendae – On Catechesis in Our Time* (CT), issued in 1979. This document gave extensive and specific guidance on catechesis in the context of evangelisation, incorporating the experience and recommendations of the world's Bishops. *Catechesi Tradendae* also noted promising developments in Catholic catechesis¹⁷.

A number of other excellent Magisterial documents, relevant and helpful to catechesis, were issued in the 1980s.

The publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) in 1992 was arguably the greatest event for Catholic catechesis in over 400 years, ever since the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* of 1566. Though the Bishops at the Second Vatican Council had decided for a catechetical directory, rather than a new standard Catholic Catechism, by the 1980s things had changed. The 1985 Synod of Bishops proposed that the time was ripe for a new universal catechism, Pope John Paul II took up the call and entrusted the task to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. The preparation was comprehensive and thorough, involving all the Bishops of the world, along with experts in relevant fields. Worldwide response to the CCC has been overwhelmingly positive.

Publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, along with other documents and developments in Catholic catechesis since 1971, meant that revision of the *General Catechetical Directory* was needed. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC-1997)¹⁸ is a comprehensive updating of the earlier Directory.

¹⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 1971.

¹⁶ Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World*, 1975. 14. 'Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.'

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae – On Catechesis in Our Time*, 1979. 17, 49. 'The synod fathers recognised an undeniable advance in the vitality of catechetical activity and promising initiatives'. 'Numerous very successful works have been produced and are a real treasure in the service of catechetical instruction'.

¹⁸ Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997.

There are many excellent Magisterial documents that are helpful to Catholic catechesis, but the CCC and GDC-1997, along with Sacred Scripture, are the most important standards of reference today – the CCC focuses on content, *what* should be taught in catechesis, while the GDC-1997 expresses *how* catechesis should be carried out, the pedagogy, methodology and organisation. For all Catholic catechisms the Church requires: *perfect harmony* with the CCC, and *due consideration for the norms and criteria* contained in the GDC-1997¹⁹. 'Perfect harmony' with the CCC means in relation to the content of the Faith: no deviations, incompleteness, confusions, errors, or extraneous additions. 'Due consideration' for the GDC means that not all parts of the GDC have the same importance; some of the 'norms and criteria' are mandatory and universally valid, while others are to be understood more as good advice, indications or guidelines.

Publication of the CCC and GDC-1997 has also been the catalyst for preparation of National Directories for Catechesis (including France and Ireland), or revision of existing National Directories (like the US National Directory for Catechesis, originally prepared in 1978 and revised in 2003).

Paradox of Catechetical Failures after the Second Vatican Council.

While the graces and blessings of God were poured out in abundance at and after the Second Vatican Council, as might be expected, the Evil One – the Father of Lies and Spirit of Darkness – was also very active in opposition²⁰ to the work of the Holy Spirit– the Spirit of Truth and Light.

In response to doctrinal problems afflicting the Church Pope Paul VI in 1968 issued his *Credo of the People of God*, which was a restatement and development of the Nicene Creed, highlighting those aspects of the Faith which were being denied, omitted or confused.²¹

However, the problems continued, leading Pope Paul to state in 1972:²² 'The smoke of Satan has entered the Church: it is doubt, uncertainty, questioning, dissatisfaction, confrontation. There is no confidence in the Church; instead people put their trust in the first secular prophet who comes along.²³ Doubt has entered our consciences, and it entered through windows that should have been open to the light. The school becomes the gymnasium of confusion and sometimes of absurd contradictions. It was thought that after the Council a day of sunshine would dawn for the history of the Church. What dawned instead was a day of clouds and storms, of darkness, of searching and uncertainties. How could that have happened? ... It has been the action of Satan, to disturb, to suffocate the fruits of the Ecumenical Council, and to prevent the Church from breaking into the hymn of joy at having renewed in fullness her awareness of herself'.

Catholic catechesis did not escape these doctrinal problems in the Church. Alongside excellent developments which have been noted above, there were also failures, some grave.

¹⁹ *General Directory for Catechesis 1997*, 10, 284.

²⁰ This recalls a wise saying: 'If Satan can't stop a parade he'll try to lead it'. Having failed to stop the 'parade' (Vatican Council II) Satan focused on leading the implementation astray.

²¹ Pope Paul VI. *Solemni Hac Liturgia - Credo of the People of God*, 1968. 3, 4. The *Credo* 'repeats in substance, with some developments called for by the spiritual condition of our time, the creed of Nicea, the creed of the immortal tradition of the holy Church of God'. Pope Paul affirmed the need for theological research, but warned that it should do no injury to the teachings of Christian doctrine.

²² Pope Paul VI, *Homily given in St Peter's Basilica, 29th June 1972*. Quoted in Robert Cardinal Sarah, *God or Nothing*, p.221-222. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015.

²³ 2 Tim.4:3-4. St Paul warns Timothy that people will have 'itching ears' for false teaching.

A series of six International Study Weeks were organised over the period 1959 to 1968 with venues in a number of different cities around the world, which were to prove highly influential in the direction taken by Catholic catechesis in the post-conciliar era. The Study Weeks initially focused on the kerygmatic movement, its aims and principles and its fourfold presentation of the faith. All would have been well had this direction been maintained, but tragically the later Study Weeks shifted away from Christ to the world and its concerns. The 'anthropocentric movement', focusing on human experience as the foundation for catechesis contrary to Church teaching, took over from the kerygmatic movement, with disastrous results for Catholic catechesis.²⁴

In the Netherlands, without waiting for the guidance of the *General Catechetical Directory 1971*, a new catechism for adults was published in 1966, generally known as the '*Dutch Catechism*'²⁵. This new catechism was approved and promoted by the Bishops of the Netherlands. In response to complaints, mostly from laity, Pope Paul VI appointed a Commission of Cardinals to study the *Dutch Catechism*; the Commission praised the Catechism's good features, but also listed doctrinal errors and deficiencies requiring correction. The text of the *Dutch Catechism* was never corrected, (though some editions included the Commission's report as an appendix), and it went on to be a significant and enduring negative influence in international catechetical circles²⁶.

A number of Church documents drew attention to failures in Catholic catechesis. The *General Catechetical Directory 1971* warned of potential problems²⁷. *Catechesi Tradendae 1979* deplored actual problems that were taking place.²⁸ Tragically, the problems continued, as evidenced by the need for the *General Directory for Catechesis* to draw attention to the same sort of significant problems in Catholic catechesis that were still occurring in 1997.²⁹ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) set up a Committee to examine catechetical texts for conformance to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; the Committee reported in 1997 and 2003 on finding extensive and serious problems in school catechetical texts³⁰, which largely repeated the problems found in the *Dutch Catechism* in 1966.

This corruption of Catholic catechesis, affecting both faith and morals, caused heart-breaking distress among the faithful – clergy and laity, especially parents/grandparents. In the period since Vatican II the resources available for authentic Catholic catechesis have probably never been better in the history of the Church: a wide range of superb materials, readily available throughout the world, much of it at no cost at the touch of a screen or click of a mouse. It is paradoxical that this same period has seen such harmful catechetical materials produced, reflecting Pope Paul VI's view that this was the work of the Evil One.

²⁴ Michael J Wrenn. *Catechisms and Controversies – Religious Education in the Postconciliar Years*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991. 92-99.

²⁵ Higher Catechetical Institute, Nijmegen. *A New Catechism - Catholic Faith for Adults*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.

²⁶ *Catechisms and Controversies*. 140-148.

²⁷ *General Catechetical Directory 1971*. 5, 7-9, 36, 39, 69.

²⁸ *Catechesi Tradendae*. 17, 30, 49, 61. 'Limitations or even deficiencies have been recognised in what has been achieved to date.' 'Catechetical renewal has brought with it articles and publications which are ambiguous and harmful to young people and to the life of the Church. ... catechetical works which bewilder the young and even adults, either by deliberately or unconsciously omitting elements essential to the Church's faith, or by attributing excessive importance to certain themes at the expense of others, or, chiefly, by a rather horizontalist overall view out of keeping with the teaching of the Church's Magisterium'.

²⁹ *General Directory for Catechesis 1997*. 2, 9, 28, 30, 181/2

³⁰ *Reports of USCCB Standing Committee on Catechesis*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 1997, 2003.

Which Path has Ireland followed – Blessing or Failure?

How has Catholic catechesis fared in Ireland since Vatican Council II? We were starting from a very strong base – an extensive network of Catholic schools, dedicated teachers, supportive parents/grandparents and clergy, tried and proven catechetical programmes that only needed updating and renewal faithful to Vatican II. We were by no means perfect, but nevertheless examples abound which point to the general success of our Catholic religious education; one of many examples that come to mind was the 300,000 wildly enthusiastic youth and young adults who greeted Pope St John Paul II at Ballybrit Racecourse in 1979.

Given this strong starting point one would have expected Ireland to be a shining example of post-Vatican II Catholic catechetical *blessings*, especially as the Irish Church did not stint on pouring resources into religious education. One would have expected to see strengthened catechetical programmes, with better educated and trained teachers. One would have anticipated our churches overflowing with young people, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their faith, and eager to share the new things about faith they learned at school with their peers and parents/grandparents³¹.

Common experience tells us that the reality in Ireland is radically different to the above. What parishes, especially urban, cannot relate to Fr Peter McVerry's summing up: 'When I look at the last forty years of Catholic education in Ireland, I am led to the conclusion that Catholic education has completely failed. ... First Communion could be renamed not quite Last Communion but Second Last Communion because there is one more day in church and that is Confirmation. ... Yes children, welcome to adulthood'³². (Catholic pre-adolescents ceasing Church attendance after Confirmation is sadly common in the developed world³³).

Two very different paths faced Catholic catechesis in Ireland in the 1970s. On the one hand the choice could have been to follow the excellent and comprehensive guidance of the Church's Magisterium, leading on to renewed and more effective religious education programmes, and a strengthening of Faith. A second choice was to copy those programmes and approaches in other countries that were not faithful to the Church's Magisterium. Scripture indicates that deviations from the teaching of the Church derive from a combination of ignorance and arrogance, with power to corrupt faith and morals.³⁴

Pope St John Paul II on the final day of his visit to Ireland, 1st October 1979, in an address in Limerick specially for lay people, said Ireland was at a point of decision in her history, and must choose between the way of Christ and the way of the world³⁵. Tragically, new secularised RE programmes in our schools since the mid-1970s have prepared our Catholic people to follow the way of the world. It was heart-breaking that this golden opportunity for catechetical renewal in our Catholic schools was not merely lost, but was counteracted.

The *Penny Catechism* was replaced in the primary schools by the unsatisfactory *Children of God series*. A group of concerned Catholics (known as 'Pro Fide'), mostly laity, studied the new programme and found it reflected more the *Dutch Catechism* than the Church's Magisterium, but their carefully researched report was rejected.

³¹ Children from Catholic schools teaching parents may seem utopian, but it was the actual experience in Catholic mission schools, such as in Nigeria, where Catholic schools played a key role in Bishop Joseph Shanahan's evangelisation strategy. Children in mission schools often helped bring animist parents to Faith.

³² Peter McVerry SJ in *Reimagining the Catholic School*, 231. Editors: Ned Prendergast & Luke Monahan. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2003.

³³ *General Directory for Catechesis 1997*. 181.

³⁴1 Timothy 6:3-4; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4.

³⁵ *The Visit. John Paul II in Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas Publications & ACW Art Publishers, 1979. 83-88.

At secondary level the good RE programme, along with the system of inspection and examination, was simply abandoned, and nothing of substance put in their place, leaving a free-for-all, with many classrooms having unstructured discussions on topics of the day, others following some chosen text, still others doing nothing.

What about adult catechesis? There had been little formal 'adult catechesis' so described, but a considerable amount of adult catechesis actually took place in a variety of ways. The principal way was the Sunday sermon, with significant catechetical content. Retreats, missions and sodalities also had much catechesis. But from the 1970s most of this adult catechesis was lost. Sodalities virtually disappeared, missions became much less frequent, while retreats had less catechetical input with greater emphasis on reflection and meditation.

After Vatican II the Sunday catechetical sermons became the homily breaking open the Word of God from the Scripture readings of the Mass, excellent in principle, but in practice homilies have tended to lack real substance³⁶. Priests lacked deep knowledge of Scripture, and were unaccustomed to that kind of preaching.

Having started in the mid-1970s, this sad state of affairs in Catholic catechesis in Ireland continued on through the 1980s. Surely the 1990s would bring a turn-around with publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?

The Irish Bishops' publishing house, Veritas, was one of the publishers of the English language edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1994. For many Catholics in Ireland the CCC was eagerly awaited and welcomed with open arms, but not by all. Some of our prominent theologians, with significant influence in catechetical circles, were among those who responded with criticism of the CCC³⁷.

Veritas also published the excellent *General Directory for Catechesis* in 1997. However, the replacement for the *Children of God* series in Ireland's primary schools, the *Alive-O Programme*³⁸, proved even less satisfactory and not faithful to the CCC and GDC-97.

At secondary level the 'solution' to the post-1970s chaos has been to hand over leadership in religious education to the secular State (ROI) for public examinations in Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations in '*Religious Education*'³⁹. The examination Syllabi express a secular perspective on all religions and atheism, with an impoverished presentation of a generic Christianity, while being constructively anti-Catholic because the Catholic Church is never mentioned, not even in the Section: 'Religion, the Irish experience'. This kind of '*Religious Education*' encourages a secular mind-set, not authentic Catholic Faith. The uptake is far from successful, with less than half of pupils taking 'Religious Education' in the Junior Cert and only 5% in the Leaving Cert.

³⁶ J Anthony Gaughan. *At the Coalface – Recollections of a City and Country Priest*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2000. 183: Based on a lifetime of pastoral experience in Dublin Archdiocese, Fr Gaughan identified three paramount factors responsible for the decline in Faith among the people: affluence, the influence of the media, and the unsatisfactory nature of catechetical programmes in the pulpit and in the school.

³⁷ Michael J Walsh, ed. *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1994. Most of the twenty five contributors to this Commentary were critical of the CCC, including prominent Irish theologians, Rev Dermot A Lane (Archdiocese of Dublin and Mater Dei Institute), Rev Gabriel Daly OSA (Trinity College, Dublin), and Rev Gerald O'Hanlon SJ (Milltown Institute, Dublin). Quoted in, Michael J Wrenn & Kenneth D Whitehead. *Flawed Expectations – The Reception of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996. 211, 217, 219, 221-25, 231, 237-38.

³⁸ Éanna Johnson carried out a theological and pedagogical analysis of the *Alive-O Programme*, for which he was awarded a PhD in Theology by the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth. (The thesis is accessible in Maynooth Library, or at <http://eprints.nuim.ie/3076/>). The analysis showed that the *Alive-O Programme*, despite some attractive features, was not satisfactory, pedagogically or theologically, for use in Catholic primary schools. It also lacked approval by the Holy See, as required in Canon Law CIC775.

³⁹ National Council for Curriculum & Assessment. *Religious Education Syllabi: Junior Certificate 2000, Leaving Certificate 2003*. Dublin: The Stationery Office, Dublin.

There used to be an effective partnership in Catholic catechesis between home, school and Church but this was largely lost resulting from introduction of deficient and defective programmes since the 1970s. A study carried out in 1999 on the *Children of God series* found that parents and parish clergy were like separate islands, so disconnected from the school religion programme that the Report was titled, '*Islands Apart*'.⁴⁰

From mid-1970s a generation and a half of pupils in Ireland (c. 2million), have experienced the problematic catechetical programmes in Catholic schools. Many appear to have been so 'inoculated' with defective Catholic teaching that they are 'immune' to the real thing.

In 2002 the Bishops' Commission on Catechetics announced the preparation of a Syllabus for a new primary level RE programme to succeed the *Alive-O Programme*. This author was one of those invited to comment on a draft Syllabus in 2008, which he found unacceptable. Subsequently the Syllabus project was dropped without explanation. It appears that a 'Curriculum' is now in preparation by the catechetics establishment, but the non-transparent process excludes the faithful, clerical and lay, who have neither been consulted nor kept informed of what is happening.

The Church sees catechesis as an integral component of evangelisation, her principal mission.⁴¹ In order to thrive catechesis needs an environment of dynamic Catholic evangelisation. It is astonishing then that no commission, department, council or agency of the Irish Bishops' Conference is devoted to evangelisation. A new Commission for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development was set up by the Bishops' Conference in 2005, but this would make a negative contribution to catechesis because its role was seen as extending the defective schools programmes to adults.⁴²

Learning Assessment is accepted by education professionals as an essential component of all education projects. However, no learning assessment has been carried out by our catechetics establishment for education in faith since introduction of new programmes in the mid-1970s. This author carried out a nationwide Learning Assessment Survey of pupils who had completed the 8years of the *Alive-O Programme*, which showed seriously deficient levels of pupil religious knowledge⁴³. The Iona Institute in association with the Evangelical Alliance commissioned surveys of the general population of the island of Ireland in 2007, which showed deficient levels of basic Christian Knowledge, with a pattern of decreasing knowledge the younger the age group.⁴⁴

The situation in relation to teacher training is not encouraging, with Catholic colleges being increasingly ceded to secular control by incorporation into State universities.

⁴⁰ Martin Kennedy. *Islands Apart – Consultation Report regarding the 'Children of God' series for senior primary-school children involving parents, children, teachers and priests*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2000. The *Children of God* series had been in use for over twenty years, yet of the parents surveyed 77% said they knew a little or nothing about the programme, and 86% of priests reported knowing a little or nothing about the programme. The *Alive-O Programme* could only drive the three islands further apart, because of the lack of content in the Pupils Books, which parents and priests might see, while the programme is essentially contained in the Teachers Books, which parents and priests are unlikely to see and unlikely to learn much if they do see because the Teachers Books are so voluminous, complex and confusing.

⁴¹ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, 14, 17, 44, and confirmed in subsequent Magisterial documents.

⁴² Press Release after Bishops' Conference meeting of 7th December 2005. *Launch of the Bishops' Commission for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development*.

⁴³ Detailed survey results can be seen at www.eannajohnson.org. Summary results were published in the Irish Catholic, July 19th 2007.

⁴⁴ The surveys were professionally carried out by Lansdowne Market Research and Millward Brown. Details can be accessed at www.ionainstitute.ie

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS - NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS IN IRELAND

Preparation Process Unsatisfactory

What is a National Directory for Catechesis?

Both the *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD-1971) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC-1997) recommend and provide guidelines for Conferences of Bishops to draw up *Catechetical Directories* for their territories.⁴⁵

The main purpose of a National Directory for Catechesis is to assist the implementation of the GDC-1997 at local level. Each National Directory should provide guidelines clarifying the nature of catechesis, its object, tasks, contents, and method, to achieve an adequate and effective catechesis at the local level.⁴⁶

A National Directory for Catechesis may also include a thorough analysis of the situation relevant to evangelisation and catechesis at local level, along with a programme of action, including the goals to be achieved, the means to be used and an effective distribution of tasks and responsibilities. The *General Directories'* recommendations for analysis of the situation and programme of action reflect accepted best international practice for any programme or project, with specific advice relevant to evangelisation and catechesis.

Teaching the faith is the first of every bishop's three main tasks – teach, sanctify, govern; 'The Bishops are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis and catechists par excellence'.⁴⁷ A National Directory for Catechesis is the responsibility of the entire Episcopal Conference, with due respect for the authority of individual bishops in their own dioceses.

The task of preparation and writing of the Directory requires persons with appropriate qualifications and experience in the field of Catholic catechesis, orthodox in Faith and committed to follow the Church's Magisterium. The entire Christian community should be involved as far as possible, so they can understand the situation and be disposed to action. *Transparency* should be a central characteristic of Analysis of the Situation, and of the subsequent Programme of Action, and indeed of all aspects of the preparation of the National Directory for Catechesis.⁴⁸

The Analysis of the Situation⁴⁹ should be thorough and objective, seeking to become aware of reality from the point of view of catechesis: how, in fact, it is situated in the process of evangelization; a distinct balance between the various catechetical sectors (children, adolescents, young people, adults); the co-ordination of catechesis with Christian education in the family, in schools and elsewhere; its internal quality; the contents imparted and the methodology used; the characteristics of catechists and their formation.

The analysis should include the religious situation: the *situation of the faith*, in the light of the various types of believer and the *moral situation* as lived. There is also need to analyse the sociological, cultural, and economic conditions, to the extent that these factors can greatly influence the success of evangelisation.

⁴⁵ *General Catechetical Directory 1971*. 103, 117; *General Directory for Catechesis 1997*. 11, 282.

⁴⁶ GCD-1971. 99-107, 116-117; GDC-1997. 279-282.

⁴⁷ *Code of Canon Law, 1983*. 375, 386. CCC 888-896. GDC-1997 222-223. Acts 6:2-4.

⁴⁸ The Bishops of Ireland made an explicit commitment to transparency in a statement after their Winter General Meeting in December 2009: 'Charity, truthfulness, integrity and transparency must be the hallmark of all our communications'.

⁴⁹ GCD-1971 99-102; GDC-1997 279-280.

The analysis should aim at bringing out to what extent the Church's evangelising activity is attaining the goals that have been set for it. Careful study must be made of the way in which catechesis and other ways of presenting the Christian message are being practised and of the results which have been obtained. This analysis should bring to light the more effective activities and pave the way for the undertaking of them, both by intensifying the works and undertakings that have already been proved effective and by promoting others that are foreseen to be effective in the future.

If the analysis is flawed or deficient the subsequent programme of action cannot help but be deficient, at best, and potentially counter-productive.

Based on a careful analysis of the situation a Programme of Action⁵⁰ may be developed, which will determine the objectives or goals, the tasks and responsibilities of all those involved, and the necessary resources. Any programme of action must be in harmony with the objectives and norms of the Universal Church and at the same time fully responsive to local needs.

The goals to be attained must pertain to the growth of faith and morality among Catholics and to a strengthening of their relationships with God and neighbour. Objectives should include: children and youth are taught the Catholic Faith and prepared for worthy reception of the Sacraments of the Church; adults achieve a mature faith; the family is able in carry out its Christian duties; the Christian presence exerts an influence on the work of social transformation.⁵¹

Attention must be given to a clear and effective distribution of tasks and responsibilities, including: Christian families, associations of the faithful, the clergy, catechists, catechetical institutes, dioceses, parishes, religious orders / congregations, schools and other educational institutions.

The programme of action should not be limited to the distribution of forces already existing, but should also stimulate involvement of all Catholics. Catechesis is not something just for teachers and experts, it concerns the entire Church. The entire Catholic community should always be informed at the proper time about what things are to be done, and also that all be invited to take an active part in the undertaking of projects, in the making of decisions, and in the carrying out of what has been decided.

The action programme should also address the necessary resources, including catechisms, catechetical programmes, texts, and other materials. All catechetical materials and aids must follow the Church's fundamental principle of fidelity to God and man, that is, to marry perfect doctrinal fidelity with a profound adaptation to human needs. All catechetical activities should be provided with appropriate financial support.

Experience confirms the usefulness of such a programme of action for catechesis. By defining certain common objectives it encourages various interests to work together with a common purpose. Thus realism should be the first characteristic of a programme of action, then simplicity, conciseness and clarity. Because of its nature, it is usually drawn up for a specific period, at the end of which it is revised, taking into account new emphases, objectives and means.

⁵⁰ GCD-1971. 103-107; GDC-1997. 281, 283.

⁵¹ GCD-1971. 104; GDC-1997. 80, 82.

Preparation Process of Ireland's National Directory:

Responsibility for preparing the new Directory for Catechesis was delegated by the Bishops' Conference to the Episcopal Commission on Catechetics. It would have been better delegated to a publicly named team of Bishops, because few Commission members were bishops, while some members' conflicts of interest and track record would hinder objectivity and commitment to the Church's Magisterium.

Preparation of the new Directory was assigned to the catechetics establishment, with the lead role given to Rev Dr Gareth Byrne (Mater Dei Institute of Education). Around that time Fr Byrne published some views on education in faith,⁵² expressing approval and enthusiasm for the secularized type of '*religious education*', which had supplanted Catholic catechesis in secondary schools. Fr Byrne's writings did not evidence interest in Catholic evangelization, catechesis or the Church's essential educational strategy of the '*pedagogy of God*'⁵³. Fr Byrne stated that the new National Directory for Catechesis should be based, not on Catholic catechesis in the context of evangelization as required by the Church, but on an undefined '*faith development*' and secularised '*religious education*'. This is what subsequently happened.

Preparation of Ireland's National Directory for Catechesis was publicly launched in May 2005, with a consultation process, titled 'Dialogue in Faith', promising a 'new vision in shared partnership in catechesis'. A website was set up with some limited information about the new National Directory for Catechesis. Submissions were invited from interested parties.

This was a good start, but subsequently open dialogue, consultation and communication were minimal. No information – numbers received, content, sources, etc. – was ever disclosed about the submissions received. The website was never updated. Fr Byrne was assisted by a committee, but information was refused on the committee's members and terms of reference.

In February 2006 copies of a Draft of a new Directory were posted by the National Catechetical Office to a number of people inviting comments. This author had responded to the initial invitation for submissions⁵⁴ and was one of those invited to comment on the Draft⁵⁵; however he is aware of others who made submissions and requested copies of the Draft, but were refused.

⁵² Gareth Byrne. *Children's Religious Education: Challenge and Gift*. In *Nurturing Children's Religious Imagination*. Editors: Raymond Topley & Gareth Byrne. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2004. 237-251. The approach treated all religious traditions and experiences as of equal value.

Gareth Byrne. *Religious Education Renewed – An Overview of Developments in Post-Primary Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005. 5-6, 19-20. 'Religious Education as a subject is in the process of being redefined within the post-primary curriculum in the Republic of Ireland. ... with energetic and enthusiastic developments in the subject. ... a choice that has been made to facilitate people of a variety of religious faith traditions and those who embrace a non-religious interpretation of life in Ireland today'. 'The preparation of a National Directory for Catechesis ... would set in place a strategy for the religious development of all members of the Catholic Church in Ireland ... building upon the Religious Education syllabuses in schools. Participation and commitment to faith development should be the hallmark of all who belong to the Church'.

Gareth Byrne. *Lifelong Faith Development in the Home, Parish and Other Educational Environments*. 35-41. In *Exploring Religious Education*. Editors: Patricia Kieran & Anne Hession. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2008.

⁵³ GDC-1997, 137-147.

⁵⁴ See Appendix A for a copy of the submission, which was also published in *The Irish Catholic*, Thursday June 30, 2005; p.13.

⁵⁵ The author made requests to see copies of later drafts, but was refused. He was, however, sent a copy of the fourth Draft, clearly by mistake. His Comments on the Drafts, noting both positive elements and serious problems, were sent to the National Catechetics Office in Maynooth, copied to all Irish Bishops and the relevant Vatican Dicastery, the Congregation for the Clergy.

Public information on the six-year preparation process was virtually nil. Requests for copies of drafts and for information on progress were refused. It would have been easy to put drafts and other progress information on the website, but this was not done – unlike the commendable precedent set in preparation of the Youth Ministry document under the Chairmanship of Bishop Donal McKeown.⁵⁶ Every possible encouragement should have been given to the faithful to help them in studying drafts of the Directory and responding,⁵⁷ but this did not happen.

Following the initial project launch the preparation of *Share the Good News* was characterised by non-transparency. The great majority of the members of the Church – clergy, religious, parents/grandparents, teachers, young people and other laity – were excluded from further participation and kept uninformed about progress. This lack in consultation and communication was contrary to good practice and the specific guidelines in the GDC-1997, and also did not deliver on the promise of a ‘new vision in shared partnership in catechesis’ in the 2005 announcement of the National Directory for Catechesis.

The Irish Episcopal Conference follows the commendable practice of issuing Press Releases promptly after each of their Quarterly General Meetings. During the six years of preparation the only reference to the Directory was a brief statement in June 2007 giving advance praise for the Directory and saying that preparation was ongoing. However, after the launch of *Share the Good News* as a *fait accompli* the Quarterly Press Releases give it generous attention and praise (see Appendix B).

In SGN’s Preface p.ix it is ominous to read that *Share the Good News* seeks to encourage renewal, not in accordance with the Second Vatican Council itself, but ‘in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council’. This ‘spirit’ is nebulous and undefined, and has been invoked to support doctrines and practices at variance with the Second Vatican Council itself, and Church teaching⁵⁸. It is also disturbing to read that SGN accords only a vague ‘pastoral attentiveness’ to the Church’s catechesis – which commits SGN to nothing specific – rather than the precise ‘perfect harmony’ with the CCC, and ‘due consideration for the norms and criteria’ of the GDC-1997, as mandated by the Church for Catholic catechisms.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ A Draft Youth Ministry document was posted on a website (March 2008) and a public request was made for all interested persons to respond with comments. This formed part of the consultation and preparation process for: *Called Together. Making the Difference – A Framework Document for Youth Ministry in Ireland*. Redemptorist Publications, on behalf of: The National Committee of Diocesan Youth Directors (NYDYD) & the Commission for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development of the Irish Bishops’ Conference. May 2009.

⁵⁷ By way of comparison, the US Bishops in 2002 made a Draft of their revised National Directory for Catechesis available to all the faithful, allowing 4 months for responses. The Bishops of Scotland are currently preparing the Senior Phase of their *National Syllabus for Religious Education in Catholic Schools – This is Our Faith* and they have put the Draft up on their website, www.bcos.org.uk

⁵⁸ This ‘spirit’ was well described by Michael Kelly in *The Irish Catholic*, Sept.19 2013; p.2. “The ‘spirit of Vatican II’ too often refers to a way of endorsing one’s own particular vision of reform, invoking the Council as a way of trying to make those who disagree think they are on the wrong side of history. ... They rarely, if ever, cite the actual teaching of Vatican II preferring instead to invoke the vague ‘spirit’”.

⁵⁹ GDC 284.

Situation Analysis Flawed – Failures Endorsed & Extended

As noted above, both the GCD-1971 and the GDC-1997 recommend that prior to preparing a plan for Catechesis there should be a thorough and objective analysis of the current situation *in relation to catechesis* as a basis for formulation of plans.⁶⁰ It is therefore reasonable for *Share the Good News* to include an analysis of the catechetical situation, which is addressed in the Preface, Introduction and in Chapters 1,4,5,6.

SGN substantially fails to objectively analyse the Irish *catechetical situation*. SGN accepts and endorses the current situation as substantially satisfactory, meaning that there is no realistic basis for future planning, which is reflected in SGN's problematic Implementation Plan (Chapter 7), which is analysed below.

Confusion could arise in SGN Chapters 4,5&6 where, mixed in with the analysis of existing situations, there are many references in the present tense to situations that are in fact wishful aspirations about future outcomes of SGN's recommendations.

SGN's Preface and Introduction⁶¹ give generous and unqualified praise for the current situation in Ireland in relation to catechesis. A similar view is taken for the Universal Church: positive developments are noted, but there is no mention of the catechetical failures identified in Church documents.

Chapter 1. Living the Gospel in Ireland Today⁶² seeks to provide a socio-cultural analysis, some of which is reasonable, but implications for catechesis, and evangelisation, are not brought out.

There is a minimal reference to decline in Faith in Ireland⁶³, but greatly understating the extent of the problem and not seeking the causes. There is no recognition that substantial numbers of baptised Catholics live a life far removed from Christ and his Church, putting Ireland in the category of countries needing the 'New Evangelisation'.⁶⁴

The presentation on 'The Irish Christian Tradition'⁶⁵ is weak in relation to the Catholic Church. The relationship between the sciences and religion is rightly described as 'one of the great challenges of our times'⁶⁶, but the analysis is again weak, in particular failing to bring out that there is no conflict between Christianity and true science, and that Christianity in general, the Catholic Church in particular, has made massive contributions to the development of the sciences.

Chapter 4: Adult Faith Development⁶⁷ has little analysis of the current situation in relation to catechesis of adults. There is no reference to the survey of religious knowledge of adults in Ireland (Republic and Northern Ireland) carried out by the Iona Institute in 2007⁶⁸, revealing that knowledge of faith is significantly deficient, and that the younger the age-group the

⁶⁰ GCD-1971 99-102; GDC-1997 279-280.

⁶¹ SGN 1-6.

⁶² SGN 7-24.

⁶³ SGN 8, 11.

⁶⁴ GDC-1997. 58-59. John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio – The Mission of the Redeemer*. 1991. 33.

⁶⁵ SGN 9-11.

⁶⁶ SGN 15.

⁶⁷ SGN 68-90.

⁶⁸ Religious Knowledge Poll carried out by Lansdowne Market Research and Millward Brown for the Iona Institute and the Evangelical Alliance, 2007. See www.ionainstitute.ie. Results were published – Michael Kelly, *Religious Knowledge Shock – Are we failing our children?* The Irish Catholic, Thursday 12 April 2007. P.1, 8-12. One would have expected Church authorities to welcome this objective survey, especially in the absence of any assessment of religious knowledge carried out by the catechetical establishment, but the Survey was criticised by bishops. Patsey McGarry, *Christian survey may have had agenda, say bishops*. The Irish Times, Thursday, June 14, 2007. P.11.

greater the deficiency, which is a natural consequence of the defective RE programmes in our schools since the mid-1970s.

There is reference to the use of the RCIA programme for adults coming into the Catholic Church, which is good.

The homily is the principal way that parish clergy can give catechesis to the faithful, especially adults. Unfortunately the level of Catholic catechesis given in the Sunday homily in Ireland tends to be poor⁶⁹; hopefully the Vatican's new *Homiletic Directory* will improve matters⁷⁰. SGN should give serious attention to the homily, but does not mention it.

The reference to World Youth Day is good because WYD does offer a real opportunity for young adults to experience the faith of their peers from all over the world, and receive the kind of authentic Catholic catechesis which they rarely hear from the Church in Ireland.

In relation to marriage and family SGN approves without question the services offered by Accord. However, much anecdotal evidence raises concerns that Accord counselling, marriage preparation courses and talks to schools are unduly 'horizontal' or secular. SGN could helpfully have undertaken an objective analysis of Accord's position or at least called for such a study to be done.

SGN commendably draws attention to the lack of involvement by men in spiritual matters, and notes that active participation of men is of paramount importance for parish life and the Church as a whole⁷¹, but offers no analysis of why the Church is failing to engage men.

A major lack in analysis is the omission of the very significant contribution made in relation to catechesis of adults of various ages and stages of life by voluntary organisations, ecclesial movements and associations of lay faithful – confirmed in the Bishops' Conference document on evangelisation, *Evangelise Today*⁷².

Chapter 5: Sharing Our Faith with the Young⁷³ fails to objectively analyse the situation in relation to catechesis of the young in Ireland. The existing programmes and practices are deemed perfectly satisfactory, but the reality is radically different, as already noted above.

One of the resources recommended for parish use is *Do This in Memory*.⁷⁴ However, SGN does not objectively analyse this resource or the effectiveness of its use in parishes. This resource has an attractive structure, but it also has doctrinal weaknesses⁷⁵, which would undermine its effectiveness for Catholic sacramental preparation.

Chapter 6: Reaching out in Christ's Love to All,⁷⁶ is mostly helpful through recognising the need to adapt catechesis for people in special situations.

⁶⁹ J Anthony Gaughan. *At the Coalface*. Dublin: The Columba Press, 2000. 183, 190. 'Three factors seem to be paramount in lessening the faith among Irish people today: affluence, the influence of the media, and the unsatisfactory nature of catechetical programmes in the pulpit and the school'. 'How essential it is to utilise to the full the presence, attention and goodwill of the Sunday Mass congregations to deepen the knowledge of the Faith of the parishioners. How difficult it is to persuade parishioners, apart from a relative few, to attend discussions, talks, lectures on religious topics'.

⁷⁰ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Homiletic Directory*. 2014.

⁷¹ SGN 84.

⁷² *Evangelise Today – Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ*. Prepared for the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development by the Task Group of Evangelisation. Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2014. 58-59.

⁷³ SGN 91-111.

⁷⁴ SGN 95; M Mahon and M Delaney, *Do This in Memory: a Parish-Based Preparation Programme for First Eucharist*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2004, 2005, 2006.

⁷⁵ Janine Müller-Green. (Director of Courses for Catechists, Maryvale Institute). *Book & Resource Reviews: Do This in Memory*. The Sower, January 2006. 'The resource remains doctrine-shy which in the long run is unlikely to form Catholics, mature in the knowledge, love and practice of the Faith'.

⁷⁶ SGN 112-128.

Deficient Summary of Faith

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC-1997) does not recommend that a National Directory for Catechesis should include a summary of Catholic doctrine. The GDC-1997 did not itself include such a summary of the Faith, but instead referred readers to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It would have been wise for SGN to follow the lead of GDC-97 and refer readers to the CCC, and its excellent summary, the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCCC).⁷⁷

Though unnecessary, *Share the Good News* did choose to include a summary of Catholic Faith in Chapter 3: Our Faith: The Gospel Alive, along with several other doctrinal statements throughout SGN. In this SGN chose a difficult task – a summary must be brief and cannot cover everything, yet information given must be *authentic* Church teaching with an appropriate degree of *completeness*, because imbalances or omission of essential elements could undermine the presentation.⁷⁸

It would have been better if SGN had not presented a summary of Faith, because several vital dimensions of Catholic Faith are omitted or given deficient attention, importantly:

Revelation; creation; the Fall of the angels; the Fall of Adam and Eve; original sin, its effects and sin in general; salvation history (the *kerygma*); the divinity and humanity of Christ; salvation won by Christ through his death on the cross and that Jesus' salvation is more than his teaching and example; identity of Jesus as priest, prophet and king; liturgy; sacraments in general, especially Holy Orders, Eucharist and Penance; moral life in general and its connection with our spiritual destiny; neglect of the spiritual with an overly 'horizontal' (this-world only) perspective; authoritative status of Church's teaching, especially moral; eschatology, the Last Things.

Catholic Evangelisation & Catechesis Supplanted by 'Faith Development' & Secularised 'Religious Education'

Share the Good News is prepared by the catechetics establishment, that is those professionals with primary influence over religion programmes in Catholic schools and over education and training of religion teachers.

The first core strategy of SGN is to praise, endorse and continue the deficient and defective school programmes that have spectacularly failed to pass on authentic Catholic Faith since the mid-1970s. SGN's second, and more ambitious, core strategy, is to extend secularised '*religious education*' beyond the schools and right through the Church in Ireland.

Catholic catechesis in the context of evangelisation should be the heart and foundation of a National Directory for Catechesis. The means by which SGN seeks to achieve its two core strategies is to supplant⁷⁹ Catholic evangelisation with its own concept of '*Faith Development*', in which secularised '*Religious Education*' is favoured, while Catholic catechesis is marginalised.

⁷⁷ Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Catholic Truth Society, 2006.

⁷⁸ Pope St John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae – On Catechesis in our Time*, 1979. 49.

⁷⁹ 'Supplant' – to dispossess and take the place of, especially by underhand means. *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press, 1982. 1072.

Catholic Evangelisation and Catechesis:

Catechesis was clearly established as an integral element of evangelisation by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,⁸⁰ a principle the Church has strongly endorsed ever since. Catechesis in the Church's mission of evangelisation is the overarching theme of the *General Directory for Catechesis 1997*, and therefore should also be foundational for every National Directory for Catechesis.

Evangelisation is the primary mission of the Church; she exists in order to evangelise.⁸¹ The Church's understanding of evangelisation is inspiring and far-reaching, involving:

Proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him; Christian witness; preaching the Gospel; call to conversion and faith; catechumenate and Christian Initiation; catechesis; inner adherence to living the Christian life; conferring Baptism and the other sacraments; entry into the community; formation of Christian communities and building up the Church; continuous education in the faith and theology; continuing conversion; apostolic initiative and the renewal of humanity.⁸²

Evangelisation does not appear to be a priority for the Church in Ireland. There is no Department, Council or Commission of the Irish Bishops' Conference that is charged with the task of Evangelisation. *Evangelise Today*, the report of the Bishops' Conference Task Group on Evangelisation, noted evangelisation initiatives of ecclesial movements and associations of lay faithful, but none from the institutional Church.⁸³

Catechesis⁸⁴ is one of the forms of the Ministry of the Word. The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.

The principal function of catechesis is leading to maturity of faith, through acquiring a more profound living knowledge of God and of his plan of salvation centred in Christ. Catechesis involves educating the disciple of Christ by means of an organic and systematic teaching of Christian doctrine, the knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One may distinguish between initiatory catechesis and catechesis for ongoing formation in faith. Initiatory catechesis matures initial conversion, educates the convert in the faith and incorporates him into the Christian community. Initiatory catechesis should be: a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith; education in both knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith; centred on the most fundamental and essential truths, laying the foundation for further growth in the faith and life of the Christian community. However, initiatory catechesis often serves to bring people to conversion, in which role it is sometimes called 'kerygmatic catechesis'.

Catechesis for ongoing formation deepens knowledge of the faith, and may include study of: Sacred Scripture; the social teaching of the Church; liturgy; apologetics; help in performance of duties of faith; liturgical and private prayer; a Christian light on human existence; integration into the Christian community; fostering the unity of Christians; helping to spread the Gospel in the world; preparing for eternal life in heaven, while also working for the improvement of human society.

⁸⁰ Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975 (EN), 17. This document remains a foundational expression of the Church's vision for Evangelisation. Catechesis as integral to evangelisation is endorsed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 425-429.

⁸¹ EN 14.

⁸² GDC-1997. 46-57.

⁸³ Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. *Evangelise Today*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2014. 58-59.

⁸⁴ *General Catechetical Directory 1971*. 17-30; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 24, 44; *Catechesi Tradendae*, 18-20; *General Directory for Catechesis*, 61-72, 85-87.

Catechetical activity may include: religious instruction given to children and adolescents in or outside schools; catechetical programmes for adults; catechumenate programmes for those who are preparing themselves for the reception of baptism, or for those who have been baptised but lack a proper Christian initiation. Catechesis for adults must be considered the chief form of catechesis; all the other forms are in some way oriented to it. The fundamental tasks of catechesis are: Promoting knowledge of the faith; Liturgical education; Moral formation; Teaching to pray; Education for Community Life; and Missionary initiation.

The pedagogy, or basic educational strategy, of catechesis is the 'pedagogy of God', which is the pedagogy of Christ and the Church.⁸⁵ Various methodologies can be used in catechesis (including an appropriate place for human experience), faithful to the content of the Faith and adapted to those receiving catechesis.⁸⁶

'Faith Development':

The term '*faith development*' is introduced in the Preface of SGN, and subsequently features prominently, with the whole document (especially the Implementation Plan, arguably the most important part of the document) structured around '*faith development*', not around Catholic Catechesis, which is supposed to be central to a National Directory for Catechesis.

But what is '*faith development*' as understood by SGN? The term '*faith development*' is not used in Magisterial documents in relation to catechesis. The term appears in other contexts, but does not have a generally accepted meaning. SGN's own particular meaning for '*faith development*', is initially defined as six elements⁸⁷: Initial Proclamation; Christian Initiation; Catechesis; Religious Education; New Evangelisation; and Theological Reflection.

Subsequently SGN broadens out '*faith development*' to embrace most of Church life,⁸⁸ including: liturgy, community events, parish buildings, migrants, the sick, people with special needs, helping those with financial problems, ecumenism, inter-religious outreach, schools and colleges, marriage and family life ministries, IT and websites, finance, religious education programmes and texts, ecclesial movements and communities, training of priests / deacons / seminarians / teachers / catechists / *et al*, chaplaincy, press and media, and more.

SGN justifies using its concept of '*faith development*' on the grounds that it is all-inclusive⁸⁹, but this is not a valid reason because the Church's understanding of 'evangelisation' is already more than comprehensive enough.⁹⁰

Selecting '*Faith Development*' instead of Evangelisation is key to SGN's core strategies:

- Evangelisation itself, the Church's primary mission and the context for catechesis, is omitted from '*faith development*'. Evangelisation is further confused, obfuscated and diminished in a number of ways. SGN puts 'New Evangelisation', which is a dimension, not the fullness, of evangelisation,⁹¹ as subsidiary to '*faith development*'. Initial Proclamation, Christian Initiation, and Catechesis are all considered by the Church to be integral parts of Evangelisation, but SGN instead detaches them from evangelisation and makes them subsidiary elements of '*faith development*'.

⁸⁵ GDC-1997, 137-147.

⁸⁶ GDC-1997, 148-214

⁸⁷ SGN 3, 31, 130.

⁸⁸ SGN 130-169, Chapter 7: Resources & Implementation.

⁸⁹ SGN 43

⁹⁰ GDC-1997. 46-57.

⁹¹ John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*, 33. GDC-1997. 58. A '*new evangelisation*', or '*re-evangelisation*', is required in countries of established Christian tradition where entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith and are removed from the Church and from Christ.

- SGN sets aside the Church's foundation for a Directory for Catechesis (which is evangelisation, the Church's primary mission, in which catechesis is an integral element, as clearly expressed in GDC-1997), and substitutes its own chosen foundation, which is '*faith development*'.
- SGN uses '*Faith Development*' to give a central place in our National Directory to a secularised type of '*religious education*'. Because '*faith development*' has been so broadly defined, it is then used by SGN as the vehicle to extend secularised '*religious education*' throughout the Church.
- SGN's Implementation Plan uses '*Faith Development*' to create an extensive, and very expensive, 'faith development establishment', well positioned to strongly influence most of Church life, in every parish and diocese, to be overseen and coordinated by a middle-management team in Maynooth, thereby sowing confusion and potential conflict around authority, roles and responsibilities in the Church.
- In conclusion, '*Faith development*' facilitates the supplanting of Catholic catechesis by secularised '*religious education*', thereby subverting the authentic nature and purpose of a National Directory for Catechesis.

Elements of SGN's '*Faith Development*'

As noted above, the six elements initially proposed by SGN as elements of '*faith development*' are: Initial Proclamation; Christian Initiation; Catechesis; Religious Education; New Evangelisation; and Theological Reflection. Below are some comments on each.

SGN has some reasonable material on Initial Proclamation and Christian Initiation⁹², including an emphasis on the RCIA Programme, but is unsatisfactory in detaching them from evangelisation. SGN falls short in bringing out the key relationships between catechesis, divine Revelation and evangelisation, which is so well presented in the *General Directory for Catechesis*.⁹³

SGN's section on Catechesis⁹⁴ includes some good material, but problematically presents Catechesis as an element of SGN's '*faith development*', and not as the Church teaches an integral part of Catholic evangelisation. There are also significant omissions:

There is a commendable emphasis on the aim of catechesis to bring people to maturity of faith after initial proclamation and initiation. Omitted, however, is that often initial proclamation, conversion and initiation are integral to catechesis⁹⁵ and that has been normal in Ireland.

The CCC and the GDC-1997 are the Church's principal standards of reference for catechesis, so it is good that SGN includes quotations from these documents, but this is not enough⁹⁶ -- SGN lacks an explicit commitment to faithfully follow the Magisterium, a commitment which is then put into practice.

The GDC-1997 gives a central place to 'pedagogy', understood as the basic educational strategy and approach for catechesis. The GDC-1997 prescribes as model the 'pedagogy of God', which is the way that God himself taught from earliest times, fulfilled in Jesus Christ and continued by the Church, a key element of which is the transmission of divine Revelation in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷

⁹² SGN 32-33.

⁹³ SGN 32, 33; GDC 36-45, 50-54, 60-68.

⁹⁴ SGN 34-37.

⁹⁵ GDC-1997. 61-68.

⁹⁶ Matthew 4:6. Satan quoted Scripture in trying to tempt Jesus to sin.

⁹⁷ GDC-1997. 137-147.

SGN has one out-of-context reference to the 'pedagogy of God'⁹⁸, but does not recommend it. SGN does not explicitly recommend any pedagogy, but by endorsing the *Alive-O Programme* SGN effectively recommends, instead of the Church's 'pedagogy of God', the 'anthropological-experiential approach which has guided the Irish National Catechetical Programme since 1973'.⁹⁹ By also endorsing the State (ROI) 'Religious Education' syllabuses for secondary schools, SGN favours a pedagogy based on a secular understanding of religion.

SGN commendably refers to the four main themes in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but omits the other vitally important theme recommended by the GDC-1997 for the entire structure of Catholic catechesis, which is Salvation History.¹⁰⁰

Contrary to Church teaching, SGN recommends that there should be no Catholic catechesis in Catholic schools, neither primary nor secondary, only in homes and parishes.¹⁰¹ This effectively means no Catholic catechesis at all; most parents of school pupils did not themselves receive authentic Catholic catechesis and therefore cannot give catechesis to their children, while parish clergy are down in numbers, aging and over-worked.

It is significant that the section on Religious Education¹⁰² has no Catholic Magisterial references, because the type of secularised '*religious education*' promoted here by SGN is not recommended by the Church. The term 'religious education' can have many different meanings. SGN's description of what it means by '*religious education*',¹⁰³ is vague and wishful: "*Religious education helps people to develop religious ways of thinking, feeling and doing; teaches people to think profoundly and make choices; encourages engagement with religious questions, facilitates discussion, and helps people grapple with crucial questions*".

A more explicit understanding of what SGN means by '*religious education*' comes from the State Syllabi for Religious Education in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations¹⁰⁴ in the Republic of Ireland, which are enthusiastically endorsed and promoted by SGN. These Syllabi reflect a secular perspective, understanding that religion has an essentially material foundation, the human search for meaning, rather than a religious or transcendent foundation¹⁰⁵. By contrast the Church understands the foundation of religion as the desire for God written in the human heart, the search for God.¹⁰⁶

The secular perspective of the State Syllabi is further emphasised in relation to morality, which is understood as the human need to order relationships. The Syllabi see morality as essentially a human phenomenon, with no necessary connection with religion, indeed the Leaving Cert Syllabus encourages the idea that morality and religion may be opposed by asking pupils to contrast and compare a religious person and a moral person. The Syllabi do not recognise the existence of objective right and wrong, good and evil, and do not recognise any eternal destiny with which morality may be connected¹⁰⁷. In contrast the Church teaches that morality is founded on the dignity of the human person, created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁸ SGN 3.

⁹⁹ Patricia Kieran & Anne Hession. *Children, Catholicism and Religious Education*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005 p.103.

¹⁰⁰ GDC-1997. 16, 98, **108, 115**, 117.

¹⁰¹ SGN 99-111, 131-132, 136-140, 145-152, 158-159, 166-168.

¹⁰² SGN 38-39.

¹⁰³ SGN 38.

¹⁰⁴ National Council for Curriculum & Assessment. *Religious Education Syllabi: Junior Certificate 2000, Leaving Certificate 2003*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

¹⁰⁵ *Junior Cert Syllabus*, p.5; *Leaving Cert Syllabus*, p.5.

¹⁰⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ *Junior Cert Syllabus*, p.38-43; *Leaving Cert Syllabus*, p.41-45.

¹⁰⁸ CCC 16, 1691/2.

Among religions the State Syllabi give most attention to Christianity, not because Christianity is recognised to be true ¹⁰⁹ or better in any way than other religions or non-religious positions, but only because of the historic influence of Christianity in Irish society. However, the presentation of a generic 'Christianity' is deficient, more a secular caricature than the real thing. In addition the Syllabi are constructively anti-Catholic because the Catholic faith, which is the majority faith of the people of the State both now and for the past 1500 years, is never mentioned, not even in the Leaving Cert Section, 'Religion: the Irish Experience'. It is unrealistic for SGN to think that this kind of '*Religious Education*' could be taught in a way that supports the faith life of the Catholic student ¹¹⁰.

In relation to education in Faith of Catholic pupils in second-level schools, SGN only presents a glowing account of what is aspired to or wished for. ¹¹¹ SGN did not carry out or reference research on what is actually happening, e.g. why less than half of pupils take Religious Education in the Junior Certificate examinations, and only 5% take it at Leaving Cert level, and what is happening to the other pupils who don't do RE as an exam subject.

An authentic Directory for Catholic Catechesis should give an explanation of what secularised '*religious education*' really is, and give warnings as to how to handle this kind of '*religious education*' in a way which will not destroy the faith of Catholics. A Directory for Catholic Catechesis should not be promoting this type of secularist '*religious education*'.

Presenting 'New Evangelisation'¹¹² as an element serves to diminish evangelisation by making it subservient to '*Faith Development*', and also confuses the meaning of evangelisation in general, and the New Evangelisation in particular.

The 'New Evangelisation' was a term developed and repeatedly emphasised by Pope St John Paul II, as the type evangelisation required for situations in countries of established Christian tradition where entire groups of the baptised have lost a living sense of the faith and are removed from the Church and from Christ ¹¹³.

SGN has some reasonable information about New Evangelisation¹¹⁴ but fails to recognise the age stratification in Ireland. The over-50s (largely the grandparent generation) received good catechesis in their earlier years and do reasonably well on knowledge and practice of the Faith. The under-50s were badly catechised and therefore particularly vulnerable to the growing secularisation of Church and society; they are in need of the New Evangelisation.

It is not clear why SGN includes a section titled Theological Reflection ¹¹⁵, because the term occurs neither in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* nor in the GDC-1997 as an element or component of evangelisation or catechesis. It would be more helpful to use the relevant section in the GDC-1997, 'Continuing Education in the Faith', because this refers to deepening of knowledge of the faith through study of theology.¹¹⁶ SGN should also endorse the GDC—1997 recommendation for deeper study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ¹¹⁷ which contains a wonderful richness and breadth of theology, along with copious references to other works which could be followed up for study of many dimensions of theology.

¹⁰⁹ This contrasts with real Christianity which understands Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. Jn.14:6.

¹¹⁰ SGN 38.

¹¹¹ SGN 107-111.

¹¹² SGN 40-41.

¹¹³ John Paul II. *Redemptoris Missio*, 33. GDC-1997. 58.

¹¹⁴ SGN 40-41.

¹¹⁵ SGN 42.

¹¹⁶ GDC-1997. 69-72.

¹¹⁷ GDC-1997. 119-130.

Implementation Plan to *Secularise* Faith throughout Church

SGN's *Chapter 7: Resources and Implementation* sets out its Implementation Plan for ten years. It is good in principle to include an implementation plan in a National Directory for Catechesis, and in harmony with the recommendations in the GDC-1997 for a programme of action. However, SGN's plan is problematic in that it does not, as it should, promote Catholic Catechesis but instead it promotes a secularised type of '*religious education*'.

SGN's Implementation Plan is designed to achieve its core strategies:

- The entire Plan is structured around its concept of '*Faith Development*', not, as is should be, around Catechesis as an integral element of Evangelisation.
- Within '*Faith Development*' the central role is given to secularised '*Religious Education*'
- Secularised '*Religious Education*' is consolidated in Catholic schools, and then spread throughout the Church.
- Authentic Catholic Catechesis and Evangelisation are supplanted and marginalised.

SGN's Plan will therefore not support improvement in knowledge and practice of Catholic Faith, but the more likely outcome is an acceleration of the decline of faith in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Structure of the Plan.

SGN's Implementation Plan is wide-ranging, covering objectives, tasks, personnel, resources, education and training, parishes, dioceses, central oversight & coordination, schools, ecclesial movements, groups and organisations.

The programme of action in a National Directory for Catechesis should be in harmony with the objectives and norms of the universal Church and at the same time fully responsive to local needs.¹¹⁸ It is unsatisfactory that all SGN's objectives are expressed in terms of '*faith development*', not Catechesis, and there is only one reference to conversion to Jesus Christ, and one reference to growing in Christian faith,¹¹⁹ which poorly reflects the objectives recommended by the Church for Catholic catechesis.

SGN failed to carry out an objective analysis of the situation in relation to catechesis. SGN builds its Implementation Plan on this flawed analysis, saying that the plans 'support in a strategic way that which is already in place', are 'suggested by what has gone before', and are 'building practically on what has already been achieved'. Building on the current disastrous catechetical situation in Ireland is like building a house on sand, as in Jesus' parable¹²⁰.

SGN's Implementation Plan fails to provide for ongoing quality control, evaluation or assessment on its various proposals, to measure how well they are succeeding or failing to advance the Church's expectations for catechesis. Implementation of quality control based on real measures of achievement would be particularly relevant in a National Directory for Catechesis, because the catechetical establishment has not attempted an assessment of knowledge of Catholic faith nor any other objective assessment or quality control since the introduction of new programmes in the mid-1970s.

¹¹⁸ GCD-1971. 103-107; GDC-1997. 80, 82, 281, 283. The goals and objectives to be attained should include: communion with Jesus Christ; profession of faith in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the growth of faith and morality among Catholics; strengthening of relationships with God and neighbour; children and youth are taught the Catholic Faith and prepared for worthy reception of the Sacraments; adults achieve a mature faith; the family is able to carry out its Christian duties; the Christian presence exerts an influence on the work of social transformation.

¹¹⁹ SGN 133, 156.

¹²⁰ Mt.7:24-27.

Faith Development Structure.

As the means to achieve its Implementation Plan SGN proposes the creation of an extensive, and unrealistically expensive, *Faith Development* structure, designed to be a dominant influence in most of Church life at parish, diocese and national levels. SGN proposes that the *faith development* structure will be overseen and coordinated by a central Team in Maynooth, none of whom will be Bishops but will be made up of executive secretaries of relevant Commissions/Councils. This organisation structure will potentially allow a middle-management Team to usurp the rightful lines of episcopal authority and responsibility, sowing conflict and confusion.¹²¹

SGN proposes that a capable, qualified and experienced Faith Development Coordinator should be employed in every parish (or possibly in some cases a group of parishes). In Ireland there are 1358 Catholic parishes and 26 Dioceses. Given the all-encompassing range of activities that are considered by SGN to be part of '*Faith Development*', these people would cost approximately €50,000 per year, including expenses. Full implementation with a Faith Development Coordinator in every parish that would amount to €68 million per year. SGN recommends three Faith Development staff in each diocese, which would add another €4 million per year for a total of €72 million per year, with significant long-term cost implications of employing staff.

SGN refers to the need for 'significant financial resources', but makes no attempt to quantify the financial consequences of its proposals, nor identify the source(s) for these substantial additional funds. The present and likely future financial state of the Catholic Church in Ireland suggests that SGN's Plan is effectively un-implementable.

Parish/Diocese/National.

SGN puts its primary focus on the Parish, and secondarily on the Diocese¹²², which runs counter to the GDC-1997, which focuses principally on the Diocese and the Bishop as leader of the Diocese, with responsibility for organisation of catechetical pastoral care.¹²³

Bishops are constituted Pastors in the Church, to be the teachers of doctrine, the priests of sacred worship and the ministers of governance. The Bishop is bound to teach and illustrate to the faithful the truths of faith, and to firmly defend the integrity and unity of faith; he is beyond all others the one primarily responsible for catechesis and the catechist par excellence. The Bishop governs his diocese with legislative, executive and judicial power, in accordance with the law of the Church.¹²⁴

In addressing Bishops Pope St John Paul II wrote, "Dearly beloved brothers,You are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence. . . .Let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis yield to no other care whatever in any way.You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do. .. (You will have) the joy and consolation of seeing your Churches flourishing because catechesis is given in them as the Lord wishes"¹²⁵.

¹²¹ SGN 142-144.

¹²² SGN 130-141.

¹²³ GDC-1997. 222-223, 265.

¹²⁴ Code of Canon Law (CIC): 375, 386, 391.

¹²⁵ *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1979, 63.

Faith Development in the Catholic Schools¹²⁶.

The SGN proposals here are extremely problematic. The record of catechesis in Catholic schools since the mid-1970s has been a failure in teaching knowledge of the Faith. SGN proposes continuation of the situation at second level, which involves following the State's secularised Religious Education programme. At primary level SGN proposes following up the *Alive-O Programme* with a new curriculum and programme, which will be secularised '*religious education*', not Catholic catechesis.

SGN emphasises that each Catholic school should have a Mission Statement and Ethos Policy reflecting a Catholic spirit. Catholic spirit and ethos are rather vague concepts, in comparison with the vision of the Church for Catholic schools, which is that the school is a vital part of Catholic evangelisation and handing on of the Faith. SGN also proposes that individual Boards of Management in Catholic schools should develop their own mission statements, codes and policies to reflect their understanding of Catholic ethos. Most aspects of a suitable Mission Statement reflecting Catholic ethos should be the same from one Catholic school to the next. Therefore it should be up to the Church to provide a generic Mission Statement and statement of Catholic vision which would be accepted by all Catholic schools, with only minor variations to suit the particular character of each school.

Church Organisations, Small Christian Communities and Ecclesial Movements¹²⁷.

Catholic organisations, communities and ecclesial movements are generally orthodox in faith, respect the Magisterium of the Church, and many have admirable records in evangelisation and catechesis. Therefore it would be very important for these entities to steer clear of SGN's '*Faith development*' and '*religious education*', and rely directly on the CCC and GDC-1997. Most of the green shoots of lively faith in Ireland come from the lay associations, new movements and ecclesial communities, and the Church has much to learn from them. They have little or nothing to gain from *Share the Good News*, and much to lose.

Education and Training¹²⁸.

SGN's Objectives and Indicators of Achievement are all expressed in terms of *Faith Development* and *Religious Education*, not Catholic catechesis and evangelisation, with consequent problems. It is a matter of concern that Catholic third level establishments are being handed over to secular universities. However, SGN accepts these institutions as they are, approves everything they are doing and recommends that they should continue. A National Directory for Catechesis should seek an objective analysis of these educational institutions as a matter of priority.

Provision of Materials for Faith Development Activities¹²⁹.

Materials that have been produced to date by Ireland's catechetical establishment have generally fallen short of satisfactory, but SGN endorses all these materials. (An exception, which can be recommended, is the recently published *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*¹³⁰, adapted with permission from the US Bishops' Catholic Catechism for Adults).

SGN has an Objective for a new syllabus/curriculum and programme for Catholic primary schools, but proposes '*religious education*', not Catholic catechesis, which could only make matters worse.

¹²⁶ SGN 145-152

¹²⁷ SGN 153-154

¹²⁸ SGN 155-161

¹²⁹ SGN 162-169

¹³⁰ Irish Episcopal Conference. *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2014.

Appendix A: Submission for National Directory for Catechesis

Éanna Johnson, 9th June 2005

A review of Catholic catechesis in Ireland is an opportunity for genuine catechetical renewal in the vision of the Second Vatican Council. However, if the review is not comprehensive and objective, the current unsatisfactory situation could continue, or even deteriorate further (judging by recent Veritas books by catechetical advisors to the Bishops - '*New Directions in Religious Education*', and '*Critical Issues in Religious Education*' - which advocate replacing Catholic catechesis with a secular, relativist type of '*religious education*'; for detailed analysis of these books, visit www.eannajohnson.org).

A wide-ranging consultation is desirable. The first step should be to ask the faithful to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit; if we rely only on our human abilities, the whole exercise will be worthless, if not counter-productive. Then people should be encouraged to study the excellent *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) -- available in Catholic bookshops, or from the Vatican website, www.vatican.va -- because the new National Directory should reflect the norms and criteria in the GDC.

It is to be regretted that the public notice for this consultation defines Catechesis as 'deepening of faith', which is only one element of catechesis (see GDC 235). The Church envisions Catechesis as an integral part of Evangelisation, which is beautifully expressed in several Church documents, starting with *Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelisation in the Modern World*, Pope Paul VI, 1975. Genuine renewal of Catholic catechesis can only be built on fully embracing the teaching of the Church.

In the years since Vatican II the Church has provided a superb range of documents for catechetical guidance, most notably the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the GDC. There has been some excellent progress in Catholic catechesis internationally – but also serious failures, in content and pedagogy, as noted by Pope Paul VI in 1968, Pope John Paul II in 1979, and the GDC in 1997.

Unfortunately, Irish catechesis since the 1970s has tended to copy the negative international trends, rather than be guided by authentic Church teaching. Our secularised catechetical programmes must surely have contributed to the secularisation of Irish society, and certainly have largely failed in passing on the Catholic Faith to a whole generation.

The preparation of a National Directory must include a thorough and objective analysis of the current situation (GDC 279). This is particularly needed because of the absence of pupil learning assessment from school catechetical programmes. The analysis should include an independent audit of teacher training institutes; recent public actions, statements and writings of some staff have raised questions about faithfulness to Church teaching.

The new National Directory for Catechesis should first be issued in Draft form, with ample opportunity for the faithful to give feedback before the document is finalized.

Approval by the Holy See is required before publication of the new National Directory (GDC 282). This wise provision must be followed, unlike a similar provision for a national catechism (GDC 285); the *Alive-O programme* has been in use since 1996 without the required Vatican approval.

(This submission was also published in *The Irish Catholic*, Thursday June 30, 2005; p.13)

Appendix B: National Directory for Catechesis in Press Releases

References to the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland, *Share the Good News* (SGN) in Press Releases after the Quarterly Meetings of the Irish Bishops' Conference.

Press Release	'Share the Good News'
12 March 2014	Nil
4 December 2013	Nil
3 October 2013	Nil
12 June 2013	Nil
6 March 2013	Praise for SGN & seven follow-up Leaflets
5 December 2012	Nil
26 September 2012	SGN to be key resource in Year of Faith
30 May 2012	Report on SGN Implementation Cttee.
8 March 2012	SGN praised; will be framework for response to Year of Faith.
8 Dec. 2011	Nil
16 June 2011	Nil
3 March 2011	Jan. launch of Directory welcomed & praised.
14 Dec. 2010	Publication announced, with great praise.
19 Oct. 2010	Nil
16 June 2010	Nil
10 March 2010	Nil
22 Jan. 2010	Nil
9 Dec. 2009: Statement of commitment to 'charity, truthfulness, integrity & transparency in all communications'	Nil
8 Oct. 2009	Nil
10 June 2009	Nil
11 March 2009	Nil
25 Nov. 2008	Nil
24 Sept. 2008	Nil
11 June 2008	Nil
12 March 2008	Nil
6 Dec. 2007	Nil
3 Oct. 2007	Nil
13 June '07	Advance praise; Preparation ongoing.
14 March 2007	Nil
7 Dec. 2006	Nil
4 Oct. '06	Nil
15 June 2006	Nil
15 March 2006	Nil
7 Dec.'05 (Council for Pastoral Renewal & Adult Faith Development launched. School catechesis endorsed)	Nil
29 Sept. 2005	Nil
16 June 2005	Nil
16 March 2005	Nil
7 Dec. 2004	Nil
6 Oct. 2004	Nil
16 June 2004	Nil