‘SHARE THE GOOD NEWS’
A REVIEW BY ÉANNA JOHNSON PhD
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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Introduction

*Share the Good News* is the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland\(^1\), which was publicly launched by the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference in January 2011.

Key components in any National Directory for Catechesis are an analysis of the local situation in relation to catechesis and a programme of action. Relevant principles on pedagogy/methodology and a summary of the content of Faith may helpfully be included. All aspects of the National Directory must be faithful to the Church’s guidance, most particularly, the *General Directory for Catechesis*\(^2\) and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*\(^3\), which are the standards of reference for pedagogy/methodology and content.

This Review of *Share the Good News* (SGN) by Dr Éanna Johnson follows on from his involvement in this project since it was announced in 2005 as ‘Dialogue in Faith’, inviting interested parties to make submissions to help preparation of the new National Directory. He made a submission in 2005, and in 2006 was one of those invited to study and comment on the Directory’s first Draft, then titled *Be Good News*. He submitted comments to the National Catechetical Office in Maynooth, copied to all our Bishops and to Rome. In 2009 he studied and submitted comments on the 4\(^{th}\) Draft.

There were good aspects in the earlier drafts of the Directory which were further improved in the final version. However, it was necessary to draw attention to several core problems in the earlier drafts, including: flawed analysis of the catechetical situation; continuation of failed RE programmes; doctrinal inadequacies; downgrading of Catholic evangelisation and catechesis; embedding of a relativist (all religions & non-religious options equally valid) type of ‘religious education’ into Catholic education and most of Church life through a massive new ‘faith development’ structure.

These problems were not materially changed right through to the final document, which was consistent with a 2005 publication by SGN’s lead-author, which expressed great enthusiasm for relativist ‘religious education’ and an undefined ‘faith development’, shading out Catholic catechesis and evangelisation, and which proposed that the new Directory should build on the secular State’s radically-relativist ‘Religious Education’ syllabuses in secondary schools.

The situation in Ireland in relation to Catholic catechesis is poor, and has been so since the mid-1970s. The past generation and a half of young people have been largely lost to the Faith – unsatisfactory RE programmes in our Catholic schools have been an obstacle to adequate knowledge and formation in the Faith, leaving them defenceless against the growing secularisation of society. There is an urgent need for authentic catechetical reform and renewal, or the next ten years are likely to see the loss of two complete generations, from which it will be hard to recover.

The undeniable good aspects in SGN are frustrated by negative aspects. Some good could be achieved by trying to use the positive elements and ignoring the rest, but this is hardly a satisfactory way to operate. A fundamental strategic re-think and plan of action is needed.

This Review concludes with an outline proposal as a way forward to reform and renew Catholic catechesis in Ireland.


Overview of ‘Share the Good News’

Background. The documents of the Second Vatican Council provided rich and deep sources for revitalisation of Catholic catechesis, building on the solid foundation of what had gone before, and incorporating already existing currents of renewal, such as the kerygmatic and biblical movements. Many good initiatives in Catholic catechesis did emerge, but paradoxically also seriously flawed, even disastrous, developments, especially afflicting the developed world. Catholic catechesis in Ireland tended to copy the negative international developments, leading to unsatisfactory programmes in our schools and the current 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 subsequent consultation was confined, and public information was almost nil up to the formal launch of the completed document in 2011 as a fait accompli. This deficit in consultation and communication was contrary to good practice, and not in harmony with the ‘shared partnership’ of the 2005 announcement, nor with the Bishops’ explicit commitment in December 2009 to transparency in all communications.

Situation Analysis flawed - Catechetical Disasters Praised and Extended. A crucial requirement for preparation of a National Directory for Catechesis is a thorough and objective analysis of the current national situation in relation to catechesis as a basis for formulation of plans. SGN’s preparation process did not objectively analyse the current catechetical situation, but simply endorsed and built on existing failed programmes and policies. This approach could not bring about the much-needed reform and renewal of Catholic catechesis in Ireland, but is more likely to make the situation worse.

Evangelisation & Catechesis Supplanted by ‘Faith Development’ & ‘Religious Education’. SGN fails to reflect the Church’s understanding of catechesis as an integral element of evangelisation, her primary mission. Instead, SGN creates a new concept which it calls ‘Faith Development’ which embraces most of Church life, in which evangelisation and catechesis are just two separate elements of many. Within ‘Faith Development’ SGN introduces a religiously-relativist type of ‘Religious Education’ (all religions and non-religious options equally valid), which gets more attention than Catholic catechesis. SGN then uses ‘Faith Development’ like a Trojan Horse to embed religious relativism into the heart of Catholic education and Church life, subverting the true aim of a Directory for Catechesis.

Doctrine Falls Short of Authentic Catholicism. SGN’s summary of Catholic doctrine should present key elements of authentic Catholic Faith with an appropriate degree of completeness. SGN could also have performed an extremely valuable service by clarifying those elements of the Faith which tend to be omitted, confused or denied today (following the example of Pope Paul VI in composing his Credo of the People of God). However, SGN tends to reflect rather than correct current doctrinal deficiencies, coming up short of authentic Catholic doctrine through omissions principally relating to: creation, revelation, salvation history, the Fall and original sin, redemption in Christ, liturgy and sacraments, the Church’s Magisterium, eschatology (the Last Things).

Implementation Plan to Relativise Faith & Takeover Church Life. SGN fulfils the requirement of a National Directory for Catechesis to include a detailed Implementation Plan, which is good in principle. However, the Plan is based on its own concept of ‘Faith Development’, giving prominence to religiously-relativist ‘religious education’, while Catholic catechesis, which is the Directory’s raison d’être, is pushed to the margins. To implement its plans SGN proposes an extensive, and very expensive (€50+ million per year if fully implemented) ‘Faith Development’ structure of over 1000 personnel, deeply embedded in every parish, diocese and the central offices in Maynooth, well positioned to influence/control most of Church life. A National Directory for Catechesis should significantly revitalise the Faith in Ireland, but SGN’s Plan and ‘Faith Development’ structure are more likely to relativise and accelerate the decline of Faith.
BACKGROUND

Vatican Council II & Catechesis

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (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 tended to focus 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 very effective in handing on the Faith and forming Catholics in commitment to God and his Church, strong in faith and moral behaviour.4

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.5 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.6 In earlier times in Ireland many children did not progress to secondary school, so the aim was that the primary school catechesis should cover the basics of the Faith to provide as comprehensive a foundation as possible for the rest of their lives.

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

Some catechetical professionals in the Universal Church favoured change in the period before Vatican II. The ‘kerygmatic movement’ favoured greater emphasis on the history of salvation and conversion to Jesus Christ. Not unrelated was a call for greater emphasis on Scripture, in line with the positive developments in Scripture study in the Catholic Church – epitomised in the Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XII7, culminating in the great Dogmatic Constitution of Vatican II on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*.8

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’.9 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’10.

So 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.

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5 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 early years in India and Australia.

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


Catechetical Blessings & Disasters in Universal Church

As the Second Vatican Council ended the Catholic Church in general was brimming with optimism about the future of the Faith, the future of catechesis included. Was this optimism justified for Catholic catechesis, was the promise fulfilled? The answer must be: yes and no.

Many blessings followed, many wonderful developments were achieved. The Church’s Magisterium on catechesis took full account of the Second Vatican Council, and also incorporated the best of catechetical developments, such as the kerygmatic movement, and developments in Catholic Scripture studies. But paradoxically there were also failures and problems, some so bad as to merit the description: ‘disasters’.

Blessings.

The 1970s were set for a great flowering of renewed Catholic catechesis. The decade opened with launch of the General Catechetical Directory 17 (GCD) in 1971. The GCD-1971, in harmony with the wishes of the Council Fathers, provided excellent guidance in the conduct of Catholic catechesis, taking full account of the Second Vatican Council. 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), taking into account the contributions of Bishops from all over the world. Evangelii Nuntiandi sets catechesis as an integral component of Evangelisation, the Church’s primary mission.12

Catechesis itself was the theme for the 1977 Synod of Bishops, after which Pope 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 catechesis.13

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

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 1971 was needed. The General Directory for Catechesis 1997 (GDC-1997)14 is a comprehensive updating of the earlier Directory, though the GCD-1971 still has

12 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.’
13 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’.
value as a reference document. Differences between the GCD-1971 and the GDC-1997 are summarised in Appendix A.

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 expresses the 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-1997.\(^\text{15}\)

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).

**Disasters.**

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, seeking to destroy the work of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Truth and Light. Pope Paul VI noted serious doctrinal problems, and said that the smoke of Satan had entered the Church. This affected all aspects of Church life, catechesis not excluded. In response to the 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.\(^\text{16}\)

In relation to catechesis, alongside good developments in Catholic catechesis which have been noted above, there were also widespread problems of the utmost gravity.

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’.\(^\text{17}\) This new catechism was approved and promoted by the Bishops of the Netherlands, who wrote that it attempted ‘to render faithfully the renewal which found expression in the Second Vatican Council’, but did not claim that the catechism was faithful to the Second Vatican Council itself. 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 noted serious 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...

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\(^\text{15}\) General Directory for Catechesis 1997, 10, 284. The wording here is carefully chosen and vitally important. ‘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.

\(^\text{16}\) Pope Paul VI. *Solemnii 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, because of the disquiet which agitates certain modern quarters, a passion for change and novelty, many certainties being disputed and discussed, giving rise to disturbance and perplexity in many faithful souls.

be a negative influence for many in international catechetical circles, especially in the developed world\textsuperscript{18}.

A number of Church documents drew attention to these serious problems in Catholic catechesis. The *General Catechetical Directory* 1971 warned of potential problems\textsuperscript{19}. *Catechesi Tradendae* 1979 deplored actual problems that were taking place.\textsuperscript{20} Tragically, these warnings were widely ignored, especially in the developed world, and the problems continued – as evidenced by the need for the *General Directory for Catechesis* 1997 to draw attention to the same sort of significant problems in Catholic catechesis around the world\textsuperscript{21}, problems which mirrored the deficiencies found in the *Dutch Catechism* 1966 and those noted by *Catechesi Tradendae* 1979.

This corruption of Catholic catechesis, affecting both faith and morals, caused heart-breaking distress among the faithful – clergy and laity, especially parents/grandparents.

The response of the Church in the USA has been particularly interesting in relation to Catholic catechesis. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) set up a Committee to examine catechetical texts for conformance to the CCC. The USCCB Committee initially found extensive and serious problems in school catechetical texts\textsuperscript{22}, which largely repeated the problems found in the *Dutch Catechism* 1966, and those noted in *Catechesi Tradendae* 1979 and the GDC-1997. However, the USCCB Committee has been able to report good response from publishers, who have amended catechetical texts, enabling the Committee to approve a growing list of texts as being in harmony with the CCC.

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. So it seems paradoxical and inexplicable that this same period has seen such unsatisfactory catechetical materials produced, some even sanctioned under Church auspices.

**Which Path Did Ireland Choose – Blessing or Disaster?**

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


\textsuperscript{19} *General Catechetical Directory* 1971. 5, 7-9, 36, 39, 69.

\textsuperscript{20} *Catechesi Tradendae*. 17, 30, 49, 61. ‘Limitations or even deficiencies have been recognised in what has been achieved to date. These limitations are particularly serious when they endanger integrity of content’. ‘The person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive the word of faith, not in mutilated, falsified or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigour and vigour. Unfaithfulness on some point to the integrity of the message means a dangerous weakening of catechesis’. ‘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’. ‘The Church is living through an important but hazardous time of theological research. The Synod fathers spoke of the danger of an unstable balance passing from theology to catechesis and they stressed the need to do something about this difficulty’.

\textsuperscript{21} *General Directory for Catechesis* 1997. 2, 9, 28, 30, 181/2

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 example that comes to mind was the 300,000 wildly enthusiastic youth and young adults (most of whom would have experienced the pre-Vatican II model of Catholic catechesis) who greeted Pope 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 our catechetical programmes greatly strengthened, benefiting from Vatican II’s insights and from new communications technologies, and to see our RE teachers better educated, trained and enthused, stronger in knowledge and practice of the Faith. One would have expected to see 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/grandparents.

Common experience tells us that the reality in Ireland is radically different to the above, and is more expressive of catechetical disaster. 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’.

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 Universal Church, leading on to renewed and more effective religious education programmes, and a strengthening of the Faith throughout our beloved land. A second choice was to copy those programmes and approaches in other countries that were not faithful to the Church’s Magisterium. Programmes that deviate from the teaching of the Church have power to corrupt the faith and morals of the pupils.

Tragically, catechesis in Ireland since around the mid-1970s has consistently followed the path of unfaithfulness to the Church’s Magisterium, leaving us most definitely in the catechetical disaster category.

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 ignored. At secondary level the good RE programme was simply abandoned, and nothing of substance put in its 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. It was heart-breaking that this heaven-sent opportunity for catechetical renewal in our Catholic schools was not merely lost, but was counteracted.

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23 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 their pagan parents to the Faith.


25 2Corinthians 11:3-4.
What about adult catechesis? There had been little formal ‘adult catechesis’ so designated, but a considerable amount of adult catechesis actually took place in a variety of ways. The principal way was the Sunday homily, or sermon, which usually had a significant catechetical content. Retreats, missions and sodalities also had much catechesis. But in the 1970s and 1980s most of this adult catechesis was lost. Sodalities virtually disappeared, missions became much less frequent. Retreats lessened in popularity, and the catechetical input also diminished, with a 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 the homilies tended to lack real substance.26 Priests lacked deep knowledge of Scripture, and were unaccustomed to that kind of preaching. There seemed to be a perception that the pre-Vatican sermon focused on fear of God, and now all that was needed was to tell the people that God loved them. Preaching the love of God is of course essential for authentic Christianity, but to stop at that, and not give the fullness of authentic Christianity, is to preach only some kind of benevolent theism.

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 extraordinary 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 were among those who responded negatively to the CCC27.

Veritas also published the new General Directory for Catechesis in 1997. If one expected our catechetics establishment to embrace the CCC and GDC-1997, and then use these superb documents for catechetical reform and renewal, then one was doomed to disappointment. Key catechetical initiatives have not followed the CCC and GDC-1997, but instead have taken our catechetical programmes even further away from the Church’s Magisterium.

In Ireland’s primary schools the Children of God series was replaced by the even less satisfactory Alive-O Programme28. At secondary level the ‘solution’ to the chaos created by the catechetics establishment has been to hand over leadership in religious education to the secular State (ROI) for radical religiously-relativist Syllabuses for public examinations in Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations in ‘Religious Education’.

26 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.


28 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 in the Library in Maynooth, and can be accessed at http://eprints.nuim.ie/3076/. The analysis showed that the Alive-O Programme, despite some attractive features, was not satisfactory, pedagogically or theologically, as a Catholic religious education programme, and should not be used in Catholic primary schools. These conclusions were supported by an extensive Learning Assessment Survey of pupils who had completed the 8 years of the Alive-P Programme, which showed seriously deficient levels of pupil religious knowledge. The survey results can be seen at www.eannajohnson.org
There used to be a good partnership in catechesis between home, school and parish but this was largely lost following the RE programme changes 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*.  

Starting in the mid-1970s over 2 million pupils in Ireland, a generation and a half, have experienced the problematic catechetical programmes in Catholic schools, and this tragic situation still continues today with no signs of improvement in sight.

In 2002 the Bishops’ Commission on Catechetics announced the preparation of a new Syllabus / Curriculum for a new primary level RE programme. This opportunity for reform and renewal appears to being lost, and might make a bad situation even worse. Two unacceptable drafts have been produced, in 2008 and 2011. A possibly amended version of the 2011 Draft Curriculum was approved by the Bishops in March 2013 and sent to Rome for approval, but without public information; request for sight of the document was refused.

In 2004 the Vatican asked the Irish Bishops to produce a National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland. Work started in 2005, and an unsatisfactory 6-year preparation process finally produced *Share the Good News*, also unsatisfactory.

Our Bishops have all appeared orthodox in Faith and committed to serve the Church and their people. Bishops have a special responsibility for catechesis, and all the necessary authority to discharge their responsibility, so it is a complete mystery as to how unsatisfactory catechetical programmes and publications were put in place in Catholic schools. How could this have happened? How could those responsible be seemingly oblivious to what has been obvious to so many of the faithful? According to the published testimony of one of the catechetics establishment, this was due to negligence on the part of the Bishops, aided by deception on the part of the catechetics establishment.

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29 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.


31 Shirley Kelly. ‘A New Start for Religion’, *Books Ireland*. 1997, 321. In an interview Clare Maloney, a member of the writing team for all eight years of the *Alive-O Programme 1996-2004*, said that the Bishops were sent drafts of the philosophy and content of each lesson, but most bishops hadn’t time to read the drafts, and passed them on to junior clerics who returned them without comment. Other ways of getting things through included putting in deliberate clangers, which would be rejected outright, but would distract attention from ‘the stuff that really matters’.
IRELAND’S NATIONAL DIRECTORY – ‘SHARE THE GOOD NEWS’

Preparation of ‘Share the Good News’

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.32

Local *Catechetical Directories* should principally include the following: a thorough analysis of the situation relevant to evangelisation and catechesis; a programme of action, including the goals to be achieved and the means to be used; a clear and effective distribution of tasks and responsibilities; guidelines which clarify the nature of catechesis, its object, tasks, contents, method and those to whom it is addressed, so that there will be an adequate and effective catechesis at the local level.33

The *General Directories* differ somewhat in roles of the Bishops’ Conference and the Diocese. The GCD-1971 recommends that both analysis and action programme should be prepared by the Bishops’ Conference and included in its Directory for Catechesis. The GDC-1997 puts the responsibility on the Diocese to carry out the analysis and prepare its own plan of action, while the Bishops’ Conference should focus on principles and guidelines in its Directory.34

In recommending to start with an *Analysis of the Situation*35 the *General Directories* echo accepted best practice in preparation of any programme or project, and offer specific advice on analysis of a local situation relevant to evangelisation and catechesis.

The analysis 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.

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

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34 The US Bishops’ 2003 National Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, does not contain a programme of action, leaving that to the Dioceses, but does have significant analysis of the situation relevant to catechesis. The French Bishops’ 2006 document, *Texte National pour l’Orientation de la Catéchèse en France*, concentrates on norms, principles and guidelines, and leaves analysis of the situation and programme of action to the Dioceses. Because the population of the territory of the Irish Bishops’ Conference is not large, and some Dioceses are quite small, it seems reasonable for the Irish National Directory to contain an analysis of the situation and programme of action for the entire territory, prepared by the Bishops’ Conference.
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.

The entire Christian community should share in the study of the situation, so that the people may be made aware of the questions and be disposed to action. This initial analysis is a primary and essential working instrument in the preparation process of a Directory for Catechesis. If the analysis is flawed or deficient the subsequent programme of action cannot help but be deficient, at best, and potentially counter-productive.

After the situation has been carefully examined, it is necessary to develop a Programme of Action, which will determine the objectives or goals, the tasks and responsibilities of all those involved, and the necessary resources. The 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 to carry out its Christian duties; the Christian presence exerts an influence on the work of social transformation. 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. Transparency should be a central characteristic. 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.

37 GCD-1971. 104; GDC-1997. 80, 82.
38 The Bishops 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’.
Preparation Process of Ireland’s National Directory:

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’.39 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. Because of the size of Ireland and of individual dioceses, it was appropriate for the analysis of the catechetical situation and programme of action to be prepared for Ireland as a whole, and included in the National Directory for Catechesis.

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 the great majority of the members of the Catechetics Commission were not bishops, and some had conflicts of interest in relation to objective analysis of the existing and past situations on catechesis in Ireland.

The task of preparation and writing of the Directory required persons with appropriate qualifications and experience in the field of Catholic catechesis, orthodox in Faith and committed to follow the Church’s Magisterium.

The task of preparing the new Directory was given in 2005 by the Episcopal Commission on Catechetics to Rev Dr Gareth Byrne (Mater Dei Institute of Education). Around that time Fr Byrne published some views on education in faith,40 expressing approval and enthusiasm for a religiously-relativist type of ‘religious education’, treating all religions and non-religious options as having equal value, which had supplanted Catholic catechesis in Irish secondary schools. Fr Byrne’s writings did not evidence interest in Catholic evangelization, catechesis or the Church’s ‘pedagogy of God’. 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 relativist ‘religious education’ (which is exactly what happened with SGN). These writings called into question Fr Byrne’s suitability for the task of preparing a Directory for Catholic catechesis.

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 of not more than 500 words, but allowing a very limited response time of about three weeks.

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

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’.
terms of reference. The great majority of the members of the Church – clergy, religious, parents, young people and other laity – were excluded from participation and kept uninformed about what was happening.

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, allowing about ten days for comment, which was unreasonably short to study a 200-page document and submit a considered response. This author had responded to the initial invitation for submissions\(^41\) and was one of those invited to comment on the Draft\(^42\); however he is aware of other interested persons, including some who had made submissions, who contacted the National Catechetics Office requesting a copy of the Draft, but were refused.

Public information on the ensuing five-year preparation process was virtually nil. Requests for copies of drafts and for information on progress were refused. It would have been easy and inexpensive 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.\(^43\) Every possible encouragement and guidance should have been given to the faithful to help them in studying the document and responding,\(^44\) and in the process achieved involvement, education, and enthusiasm of the faithful for Catholic catechesis and evangelisation, resulting in the best possible Directory for future guidance of Catholic Catechesis in Ireland.

The actual process of preparation of *Share the Good News* was characterised by non-transparency and even an impression of secretiveness. This lack in consultation and communication was contrary to good practice, and 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 Episcopal Conference follows the very 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, which also indicates a similar pattern of non-transparency in preparation of a new Syllabus/Curriculum for Primary School Religious Education).

\(^{41}\) See Appendix C for a copy of the submission, which was also published in *The Irish Catholic*, Thursday June 30, 2005; p.13.

\(^{42}\) The author also made requests to see copies of later drafts, but was refused. He was, however, sent a copy of the 4th Draft, clearly by mistake. SGN shows several improvements over the 1st and 4th Drafts, but the core problems (analysis, doctrine, ‘faith development’ and relativist ‘religious education’ supplanting Catholic evangelisation and catechesis, implementation strategy to dominate Church life) remained essentially unchanged. His Comments on the Drafts were sent to the National Catechetics Office in Maynooth, copied to all Irish Bishops and the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy.

\(^{43}\) 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.

\(^{44}\) 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. Full and meaningful participation was encouraged by including Response Forms for each of 36 sub-sections in the Draft document.
Situation Analysis Flawed – Disasters Praised & Extended

Both the GCD-1971 and the GDC-1997 recommend that in preparing a National Directory for Catechesis there should be a thorough and objective analysis of the current national situation in relation to catechesis as a basis for formulation of plans. SGN undertakes and presents some reasonable analysis in relation to the Irish situation in general, but substantially fails to objectively analyse the catechetical situation, which is essential for a Catechetical Directory. SGN accepts and endorses the catechetical situation as perfectly satisfactory, when even the most casual of studies shows that the catechetical situation is seriously problematic. This means that there is no realistic basis for future planning. SGN's blindness to catechetical problems and shortcomings carries through to its Implementation Plan, which is based on: 'Supporting that which is already in place' and 'Building on what has already been achieved'. By endorsing and building on existing failed programmes and policies SGN's plans can only make the situation worse, instead of the much-needed reform and renewal of Catholic catechesis in Ireland.

The Preface and Introduction to Share the Good News give unqualified praise for the current situation in Ireland in relation to catechesis. Everything is presented as wonderful and successful, no catechetical problems, no failures, no need for any reforms or corrections. 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 Today seeks to ‘provide a starting point, presenting an initial socio-cultural analysis which highlights the changing context in Ireland, within which we seek to make the Gospel real and alive to one another today’. Such a socio-cultural analysis has a place in a Directory for catechesis, provided it is realistic and insightful, and the implications for catechesis are brought out. Some aspects of the analysis are reasonable, others not. Implications for catechesis, and evangelisation, are not brought out.

There is a minimal reference to decline in Faith in Ireland, but greatly understating the extent of the problem and not seeking the causes. Indications are that secularisation within the Church, her ministries and agencies, has contributed significantly to the decline of Faith, and to the secularisation of Irish society in general. There is no recognition that Ireland is now firmly in the category of those countries of established Christian tradition where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel – the category of countries needing the ‘New Evangelisation’, identified by Pope John Paul II.

The presentation on ‘The Irish Christian Tradition’ 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’, but the analysis is limited, in particular failing to bring out the massive contribution of Christianity in general, Catholicism in particular, to the development of the sciences. The section on the ‘Challenge of Inculturation’ misses out on the potential, and serious, dangers of secularisation and syncretism.

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45 GCD-1971 99-102; GDC-1997 279-280. See also pages 11-12 above.
46 SGN Chapter 7, 129.
47 SGN 1-6.
48 SGN 7-24.
49 SGN 8, 11.
51 SGN 9-11.
52 SGN 15.
53 SGN 63-64. GDC-1997. 113, 202, 205.
Chapter 4: Adult Faith Development has little analysis of the current situation in relation to catechesis of adults in Ireland. SGN does note that, ‘Adult education in religion is one of the urgent religious needs in Ireland in our time’, but does not acknowledge or attempt to analyse the massive and continuing deficit in Catholic catechesis among adults. This deficit, especially those under 50, follows naturally from the poor catechetics programmes in Catholic schools since the 1970s. The catechetics establishment has never attempted to assess this situation, but common experience, and a survey of religious knowledge of adults in Ireland (Republic and Northern Ireland) carried out by the Iona Institute in 2007, confirm that knowledge of faith is seriously deficient.

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. Special programmes in catechesis and related topics put on by parishes tend to attract only a very small percentage of those who attend Mass, so the Sunday homily is an unrivalled opportunity to connect with all of those who are still interested enough in the Church to attend Mass, adults, youth and children. Unfortunately the level of Catholic catechesis given in Sunday homily in Ireland tends to be poor. Any analysis of the catechetical situation in Ireland should give serious attention to the homily, but SGN does not even 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, Accord’s own website and much anecdotal evidence raise concerns as to the degree to which Accord is giving authentic Catholic teaching, especially to couples preparing for marriage. An objective study and analysis is needed of this situation, which SGN could helpfully have undertaken or at least called for such a study to be done.

SGN helpfully draws attention to the special needs of men in relation to spiritual study and religious practice, and that active participation of men is of paramount importance for parish life and the Church as a whole. However, having raised this vital issue, SGN does not attempt any analysis of the nature and causes of this situation.

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 and

54 SGN 68-90.
55 Religious Knowledge Poll carried out by Lansdowne Market Research 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.
56 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’.
57 SGN 84.
movements, especially important considering the dearth of good catechesis coming from official Church sources⁵⁸.

Chapter 5: Sharing Our Faith with the Young ⁵⁹ fails to objectively analyse the situation in relation to catechesis of the young in Ireland. There is minimal recognition of any problems or deficiencies, and the existing programmes and practices are deemed perfectly satisfactory. The reality is radically different, as has already been noted above. The RE programmes in Catholic primary and secondary schools are gravely deficient and defective, and the levels of knowledge of the Faith are very poor. ⁶⁰ SGN commendably refers to the particular needs of pre-adolescents, but does not mention that most Irish pre-adolescents cease meaningful participation in the Church after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, nor that this is also true internationally, especially in the developed world.⁶¹

One of the resources recommended for parish use is Do This in Memory. ⁶² However, SGN makes no attempt to objectively analyse this resource or the effectiveness of its use in parishes. This resource has an attractive structure, but it also has significant doctrinal problems⁶³, which would undermine its effectiveness for Catholic sacramental preparation.

Chapter 6: Reaching out in Christ's Love to All ⁶⁴ is mostly helpful through recognising the need to adapt catechesis for people in special situations: those experiencing social disadvantage; people with special needs; the deaf community; the Travelling community; migrant workers and other newcomers to Ireland; people living with illness.

Catholic Evangelisation & Catechesis Supplanted by Relativist ‘Faith Development’ & ‘Religious Education’

Catechesis was clearly established as an integral element of evangelisation by Pope Paul VI in Evangelii Nuntiandi,⁶⁵ 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.

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⁵⁸ Such organisations and movements include: Legion of Mary, Charismatic Renewal, Focolare, Youth2000, Marriage Encounter, Christian Family Movement, Teams of Our Lady, Retrouville, Opus Dei, Neocatechumenate, and many more.

⁵⁹ SGN 91-111.

⁶⁰ See Iona Institute religious knowledge surveys (www.ionainstitute.ie) and Dr Éanna Johnson’s Learning Assessment survey of pupils after completion of the Alive-O Programme (www.eannajohnson.org).

⁶¹ SGN 96; GDC 181.


⁶³ Janine Müller-Green. (Director of Courses for the Formation of Catechists at Maryvale Institute). Book & Resource Reviews: Do This in Memory. In The Sower, January 2006. Published by the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, UK. ‘By far this resource’s greatest strength lies in its organization, revolving as it does around Sunday Worship. ….. The weakness of this resource lies in the text. Many of the statements are of questionable truth, ……. 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’.

⁶⁴ SGN 112-128.

Evangelisation is the primary mission of the Church; she exists in order to evangelise.\(^{66}\) To understand the Church’s evangelizing activity one must keep in view all its essential elements.\(^{67}\) Any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it.\(^{68}\)

SGN does have references to evangelisation and catechesis, but also introduces two new terms with huge implications for this Directory. These terms are ‘faith development’ and ‘religious education’. These two terms appear at the very beginning of SGN in the Preface, the terms feature prominently right through the document, and then in the final Chapter 7 we find that the Implementation Plan (the most important part of the document) is all about ‘faith development’, in which ‘religious education’ enjoys a prominent position, while evangelisation and catechesis play minor roles.

Therefore, it is misleading to describe SGN as the ‘National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland’. SGN would be more accurately described as a ‘Directory for Faith Development’ or a ‘Directory for Religious Education’. But what are ‘faith development’ and ‘religious education’ as understood by SGN? The answers are crucial to an understanding of SGN, its nature and purpose.

The term ‘religious education’ can have many different meanings. However, as understood by SGN ‘religious education’ is essentially religiously-relativist, treating all religions and non-religious options as equally valid, meaning that there is no objective religious truth. This is diametrically opposed to Catholic catechesis, which stands with Jesus, who is truth\(^{69}\), while relativist ‘religious education’ stands with Pilate who rejected the notion of truth when confronted by Jesus\(^{70}\).

The term ‘faith development’ is not used in Magisterial documents in relation to catechesis. ‘Faith development’ is a term that appears in other contexts, but does not have any official or generally accepted meaning. Therefore, SGN is free to choose a particular meaning for ‘faith development’ to suit its own strategy.

SGN initially defines ‘faith development’ as having six elements\(^{71}\), but subsequently widens out the description of ‘faith development’ as ‘an all-inclusive term’\(^{72}\) which embraces most of Church life.\(^{73}\)

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\(^{66}\) EN 14.
\(^{67}\) GDC-1997. 46-57. Evangelization can be understood in terms of: 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.
\(^{68}\) EN 17.
\(^{69}\) John 14:6. ‘Jesus said: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life’.
\(^{70}\) John 18:37-38. ‘I came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.’ ‘Truth?’ said Pilate ‘What is that?’.
\(^{71}\) SGN 3, 31, 130.
\(^{72}\) SGN 43
\(^{73}\) ‘Faith Development’ as set out in SGN 130-169, Chapter 7: Resources & Implementation, includes: 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/etc, chaplaincy, press and media, and more.
Selecting ‘Faith Development’ as the foundation for SGN leads to many problems:

- It creates a foundation for this Directory which is contrary to the Church’s approach (as set out in GDC-1997), which sets catechesis as an integral element of evangelisation, not of ‘faith development’.
- ‘Faith Development’ serves as a ploy, like a Trojan Horse, to introduce a radically religiously-relativist type of ‘religious education’ into the heart of Catholic education and Church life.
- Evangelisation, the Church’s principal mission, is downgraded and obfuscated, by making it subservient to ‘faith development’.
- Catechesis, which should be centre-stage, the raison d’être of a Directory for Catechesis, is sidelined in favour of relativist ‘religious education’.
- ‘Faith Development’ facilitates upscaling the catechetics establishment into an extensive, and very expensive, ‘faith development establishment’ with potential to influence/control most of Church life (a virtual takeover bid), in parish, diocese and Episcopal Conference offices in Maynooth.
- Much confusion is sown in relation to the meaning of evangelisation and catechesis.
- Confusion and potential conflict are also sown around authority, roles and responsibilities in the Church.
- Catholic evangelisation and catechesis are effectively supplanted by ‘faith development’ and relativist ‘religious education’, thereby subverting the authentic nature and purpose of a National Directory for Catechesis.

The six elements initially defined as ‘faith development’ are presented in SGN Chapter 2: Evangelisation, Catechesis and Religious Education, as follows:

- Initial Proclamation;
- Christian Initiation;
- Catechesis;
- Religious Education;
- New Evangelisation;
- Theological Reflection.

Presenting ‘New Evangelisation’ 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 John Paul II. He identified three basic situations requiring particular responses.

A. The situation where people do not know Christ and where the Gospel must be proclaimed for the first time (mission ad gentes); catechesis is developed within the baptismal catechumenate.
B. Christian communities with adequate & solid ecclesial structures, requiring Church pastoral action, where catechesis matures faith to make evangelisers of the evangelised.
C. 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. Such situations require a ‘new evangelisation’, or ‘re-evangelisation’, where primary proclamation and basic catechesis are priorities.

SGN has some reasonable information about New Evangelisation but fails to recognise that Ireland as a whole substantially comes under category C above, and therefore that New Evangelisation is not only required for some individuals and groups that have lost their faith,

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74 SGN 40-41.
75 John Paul II. Redemptoris Missio, 33. GDC-1997. 58.
76 SGN 40-41.
but must be the predominant strategy employed by the Church for Ireland in general. There are certainly some signs of hope and green shoots of faith, but this should not blind us to the fact that baptised Catholics under 50 who really know the Faith are a dwindling minority.

SGN has some reasonable material on Initial Proclamation and Christian Initiation\(^{77}\), including an emphasis on the RCIA Programme, but falls short in bringing out the key relationship with catechesis, divine Revelation and evangelisation, which is so well presented in the *General Directory for Catechesis*.\(^{78}\)

SGN’s section on Catechesis\(^{79}\) contains much good material, but also significant omissions, which detract from an authentic presentation on Catholic catechesis. 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 catechesis\(^{80}\) and that this is the case for the vast majority of Catholics in Ireland.

There is reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is good, but not so good is omission of recommendation to use the CCC as a resource in catechesis. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is truly a wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, one of the greatest of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council. The CCC should be a crucial resource in reforming the current unsatisfactory RE programmes in Catholic schools, and providing catechesis for adults to remedy the massive catechetical deficit.

Another omission is commitment to faithfulness to the Magisterium, the authoritative teaching office of the Church, most particularly requiring for Catholic catechesis perfect harmony with the CCC, and due consideration for the norms and criteria in the GDC-1997.\(^{81}\) 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 enough\(^{82}\) -- an explicit commitment to follow the Magisterium is required, a commitment which is then put into practice.

SGN’s presentation on catechesis has just one passing reference to ‘revising methods’ (there is brief treatment of content and method in SGN46), but no reference to pedagogy, which falls well short of the major emphasis given to pedagogy and methodology in GDC-1997, Part Three. The GDC-1997 understands ‘pedagogy’ as the basic educational strategy and approach for catechesis, and 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.\(^{83}\)

SGN has a passing reference to the ‘pedagogy of God’\(^{84}\), but out of context, and does not recommend the ‘pedagogy of God’. SGN does not recommend any pedagogy, but by endorsing the current RE programmes in Catholic schools, SGN effectively endorses the ‘anthropological-experiential approach which has guided the Irish National Catechetical

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\(^{77}\) SGN 32-33.
\(^{78}\) SGN 32, 33; GDC 36-45, 50-54, 60-68.
\(^{79}\) SGN 34-37.
\(^{80}\) GDC-1997. 61-68.
\(^{81}\) GDC-1997. 284.
\(^{82}\) Matthew 4:6. Satan quoted Scripture in trying to tempt Jesus to sin.
\(^{83}\) GDC-1997. 137-147.
\(^{84}\) SGN 3.
Programme since 1973’. This ‘anthropolical-experiential approach’ harmonises with religious relativism, which is intrinsic to SGN’s recommended type of ‘religious education’.

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

It is significant that SGN’s section on *Religious Education* has no Magisterial references, because the type of ‘religious education’ promoted here by SGN is radical religious relativism, which is not part of Church teaching. ‘Religious education helps people to develop religious ways of thinking, feeling and doing, which give expression to the spiritual, moral and transcendent dimensions of life and can lead to personal and social transformation. Religious education can also teach people to think profoundly, allowing them to make free and consistent choices in the way they lived their religious, and other, commitments.’

One of the references given by SGN in relation to the meaning of ‘religious education’ also supports the view that ‘religious education’ in essence is radically relativist. ‘Religious education is the educational process by which people are invited to explore the human religious traditions that protect and illuminate the transcendent dimensions of their lives’. This source approaches religious education from the perspective that all religions are of human origin, and may or may not contain something of value. Religious education should encourage people to criticize religions and religious beliefs, to make their own choices and decisions to accept or reject any religious teachings, to construct their own religion or to choose to be non-religious.

SGN also favours the State Syllabi for religious education in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations in the Republic of Ireland. These syllabi are radically relativist, and even 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 Section, ‘Religion: the Irish Experience’.

SGN states that, ‘Religious education, should always be carried out in a way that supports the faith life of the Catholic student.’ This statement is either naïve or disingenuous, because the Catholic Church believes that the Catholic faith is the truth whereas SGN’s favoured ‘religious education’ encourages pupils to conclude that there may be no truth whatsoever in the Catholic faith, indeed the Catholic faith may even be harmful.

SGN further states that, ‘religious education and catechesis are distinct but complementary activities’. Some types of religious education may well be complementary to Catholic catechesis, but certainly not the SGN-favoured radically relativist type of ‘religious education’, which could only undermine, confuse and destroy the work of Catholic catechesis.

This is not to deny a valid place within Catholic catechesis for teaching about other religious beliefs and non-religious options. This should only happen when pupils are mature enough to handle the information, and when they have received a good grounding in the truths of the Catholic faith. Information on other religions should be given from a Catholic perspective, which is the only way of teaching the full truth about other religions and non-religious options.

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87 SGN 38-39.

88 SGN 38.


An authentic Directory for Catholic Catechesis should give an explanation of what relativist ‘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 Catholic pupils. A Directory for Catholic Catechesis should not be promoting this type of religiously relativist ‘religious education’ for Catholic schools.

It is not clear why SGN includes a section titled Theological Reflection, because the term does not occur 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. It would also have been appropriate for SGN to endorse the GDC-1997’s recommendation for deeper study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which contains a wonderful richness and breadth of theology, along with copious references to other works which could be followed up to give a very wide ranging study indeed of many dimensions of theology.

**Doctrine Falls Short of Authentic Catholicism**

It is worrying to see in the Preface a statement 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 teaching.

The General Directory for Catechesis 1997 does not specify 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, while also including several important doctrinal statements. Therefore, it was not essential for Share the Good News to include a summary of Catholic Faith, but it did choose to do so in Chapter 3: Our Faith: The Gospel Alive, along with several other doctrinal statements throughout SGN.

SGN chose a difficult task in attempting to present a summary of Catholic Faith – information given must be authentic Church teaching with an appropriate degree of completeness. This is quite challenging because the summary must be brief and cannot cover everything, and

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91 SGN 42.
93 GDC-1997. 119-130.
94 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’”. In an analogous manner the Dutch Catechism claimed faithfulness, not to Vatican II itself, but rather to a renewal – ‘to render faithfully the renewal which found expression in the Second Vatican Council’. A New Catechism – Catholic Faith for Adults. New York: Herder & Herder, 1967; p.V.
95 The General Catechetical Directory 1971 did include a summary of the Faith, which seems reasonable considering that the Church’s standard catechism at time, the 400 year-old Catechism of the Council of Trent, may have been unfamiliar to many readers.
96 Neither the US nor French Bishops included a summary of Catholic Faith in their National Directories for Catechesis.
97 ‘Authenticity’ and ‘Completeness’ are the two key criteria in the US Bishops’ Protocol for Assessing the Conformity of Catechetical Materials with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. USCCB Office for the Catechism, 3211 4th Street, Washington DC 20017.
yet must have a balanced presentation of the most important dimensions of Faith – imbalances or omission of essential elements could undermine the presentation. SGN could have performed an extremely valuable service by clarifying in its summary those elements of the Faith which tend to be omitted, confused or denied today (following the example of Pope Paul VI in composing his Credo of the People of God). However, SGN’s presentation does in fact omit vital dimensions, tending to reflect rather than correct doctrinal deficiencies often currently encountered (e.g. in relation to priesthood, Eucharist, Original Sin).

The General Directory for Catechesis 1997 prescribes Salvation History and the four pillars of the CCC as the basic structure for Catholic catechesis. Salvation History is intrinsically connected with the four pillars, most especially with the Profession of Faith – the Creeds are expressions of salvation history. A proper understanding of salvation history is essential for authentic Christianity.

SGN presents a summary of the Faith, structured on the four pillars of the CCC, in SGN Chapter 3. Our Faith: The Gospel Alive, which is analysed below:

Profession of Faith (SGN 47,51-52): 102

The corresponding Part One of the CCC initially gives a thorough presentation on Revelation, which is essential for Catholic Faith. SGN has good information on Scripture, Tradition and the Church’s Magisterium, but unsatisfactorily omits teaching on revelation itself, which is the foundation for Scripture and Tradition. In the absence of teaching on revelation there are other statements in SGN which are open to misunderstanding that there is no essential difference between natural and supernatural revelation, and that divine Revelation did not end with Christ but is still going on today.

SGN could have helpfully included Church teaching on public and private revelations, because of the huge importance the latter play in the life of Catholics in Ireland (Lourdes, Fatima, Knock, Medjugorje, Miraculous Medal, Divine Mercy and many more).

In its presentation on The Apostles’ Creed, SGN adds little to the text of the Creed itself, missing the opportunity of an adequate presentation of salvation history, consistent with its non-recognition of the pedagogy of God.

Salvation History begins with creation. ‘Creation is the foundation of all God’s saving plans, at the beginning of the history of salvation that culminates in Christ’. Catechesis on creation is of major importance, as it concerns the very foundations of human and Christian

98 John Paul II highlighted the harm caused by ‘deliberately or unconsciously omitting elements essential to the Church’s faith, or by attributing excessive importance to certain themes at the expense of other’. Catechesi Tradendae, 49. The legal system also recognises the importance of omissions, requiring witnesses to swear to tell, not merely the truth, but explicitly the ‘whole truth’. The courts of justice know that testimony which omits key elements may be worthless, or even counter-productive.

99 Pope Paul VI. Solemnii Hac Liturgia - Credo of the People of God, 1968. See also page 6 above.


101 GDC-1997. 16, 115, 117; Gaudium et Spes, 2; CCC 389.

102 This relates to Part One of the CCC, The Profession of Faith, 26-1064.

103 CCC 31-73.

104 SGN 47.

105 SGN 2: ‘To know Christ ... revealed to us in our time by the kindness of the Holy Spirit’. SGN 3: ‘God’s love is revealed to the world in every time and place’. CCC 65-66.

106 CCC 67.

107 SGN 51-52.

108 CCC 280
life.

SGN barely touches on creation (‘we come to know the goodness of our created nature’), lacking an adequate teaching on creation, with complete omission of God’s invisible creation – the angels, both faithful and fallen; the human soul; heaven & hell.

Salvation history continues with the Fall of the rebellious angels (Satan and the demons), and their casting out of heaven by the Archangel Michael and the angels that remained faithful. There follows the temptation by Satan of our first parents, their Fall, original sin and its consequences, and the promise of a redeemer. SGN only refers to ‘the corruption of sin’ and ‘our need for salvation, forgiveness and love’, which falls far short of Church teaching on original sin and salvation, thereby undermining the mystery of Christ.

The time of preparation for the coming of the Redeemer is a vital part of salvation history. God called Abraham out from his own land and gave him and his descendants the Promised Land of Israel. For about eighteen centuries God prepared his Chosen People, an eventful and often turbulent time, during which the people were often unfaithful, and were called back to faith by the prophets of God. The Covenants between God and his people were key to understanding this time – with Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, culminating in the New Covenant in Christ. SGN says nothing of this period or the Covenants, falling short of an adequate teaching on salvation history.

In relation to the time of Christ SGN mentions the Incarnation, the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the human need for salvation, and that human life is brought to fulfilment in the Redemption offered by the Cross and Resurrection. This is all good, but the following omissions detract from a proper understanding of salvation history: God chose Mary to be the mother of his Only Son, preserving her free from Original Sin (the Immaculate Conception); through Mary’s freely given assent Jesus became incarnate in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit; from his many disciples Jesus chose twelve Apostles, to be the foundation of the Church; he gave us the Eucharist to continue his very presence among us for all time; only Jesus who is both God and man could redeem the human race, which he did through his sacrificial death on the cross, reversing the sin of Adam, making us sons of the Father, breaking the power of Satan, and opening to us the gates of heaven (SGN’s reticence on a full and clear expression of salvation in Christ is consistent with its non-recognition of Original Sin); expression of identity of Jesus as priest, prophet and king; Jesus ascended to heaven, before which he promised to send the Holy Spirit and he gave the apostles the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

In relation to the final stage of salvation history, in which we currently live, SGN’s presentation adds little to the text of the Apostles’ Creed, missing the opportunity to present a full Catholic understanding of salvation history. SGN omits eschatology, the Last Things: specifically that for each individual at death there will be a particular judgement by Christ, who is both infinitely merciful and infinitely just, leading to an eternity of happiness with God in heaven (perhaps preceded by the time of purification in Purgatory), or eternal separation from God in hell; the end of time (just when is known to God alone), which will see the Second Coming of Christ, a general resurrection of all human race, the General Judgment, and restoration of all creation in Christ. If eschatology is missing, salvation history is truncated and deprived of meaning.

SGN has many other doctrinal statements about Christ in parts of the document other than Chapter 3, reflecting a commendable effort to be Christocentric. However, these statements do not develop the understanding of Christ as the centre of salvation history

109 CCC 282.
110 CCC 389: ‘The Church knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ’.
111 Christ is presented as one who through his example and teaching would lead us to be committed to one another and to whole-hearted service of our neighbour, which can change our lives, convert our hearts and
(the kerygma). The predominant impression conveyed by these statements is that the essence of Jesus' mission is his teaching and example of love, which we are invited and inspired to follow, and which constitutes 'salvation'. What comes across is an image of Jesus as a great and godly prophet/teacher, rather than our divine saviour from sin. In this way Christianity can appear as a kind of benevolent theism, little different in essence to many other religions, which could encourage religious relativism.

Celebration of the Christian Mystery (SGN 53-56): 112

The corresponding Part Two of the CCC deals with the liturgy and the sacraments. SGN deals only with the sacraments, and omits liturgy – the treatment of Eucharist has a liturgical dimension but the terms 'liturgy' and 'Mass' are not used. This falls short of an authentic Catholic presentation.

SGN's presentation on the Sacraments also falls well short of authentic Catholic teaching, because, even though there is some good information, there are also vital omissions.

SGN says through the sacraments we receive the gift of grace113, which is good, but omits that the sacraments are the fruit of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus on the cross 114. This omission is further compounded in treating of the Eucharist; SGN in unclear on the redemptive nature of Christ's death on the cross, omitting any spiritual effects and only referring to 'horizontal' or this-world effects of Jesus death, which is consistent with SGN's non-recognition (or denial-by-omission) of the Fall and consequences of original sin115.

SGN's treatment of Holy Orders omits the sacred powers conferred by the sacrament116: for all priests the spiritual power to bring about the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ; the power to forgive sins in Confession and the power to conduct the Anointing of the Sick; also the additional sacred power given to the Bishop to administer Confirmation and Holy Orders, and for the Bishop's key tasks: to teach, sanctify and govern, imaging Jesus as priest, prophet and king.

SGN's treatment of the sacraments of Eucharist, Confirmation, Penance and Anointing of the Sick also omits any reference to the necessary spiritual power of Ordination. Through these crucial omissions SGN effectively eliminates the Sacraments of Holy Orders, Eucharist, Confirmation, Penance and Anointing of the Sick, which also effectively eliminates transform our world (SGN 1). Jesus Christ invites us into personal relationship. His teaching and example can transform our lives, our culture, our value systems. Calvary showed how great was his love for us. Jesus is the one who calls us to live our lives inspired by his life, his truth, his way, bringing us beyond ourselves into a whole new world of loving relationship with God, with our neighbour, our community, with society and with all of creation (SGN 7-8).

We experience the love of God in Jesus Christ and in one another, transforming the way we live. 'The Christian message, after all, begins and ends with the command to live and preach love' (SGN 23-24). We are loved by God for all eternity, and seek to know and love Christ, following as disciples in his footsteps. God calls us to become, together, one family, working in common purpose, in communion with God and one another (SGN 25-27). When our understanding of humanity is based in relationship with God and with one another, we will be open to hear the liberating, saving and loving Word of God. The Gospel sets us free, inviting us to carry the light of Christ to others (SGN 28-29). Evangelisation is the message of God's love for us in Jesus Christ (SGN 112). Jesus is to be known, loved and imitated; he is our inspiration, giving us new energy and enthusiasm (SGN 129).

112 This relates to Part Two of the CCC: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery, 1066-1690.
113 SGN 53
114 CCC 1211; CCC 250.
115 SGN 54; CCC 389: 'The Church knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ'.
116 CCC 1536-1600.
the Catholic Church. To say this falls short of authentic Catholic teaching is true, but also a considerable under-statement.

While SGN addresses the question of sin in Baptism and Anointing of the Sick, there are significant deficiencies in relation to the Eucharist and Penance, i.e. omission that in the Eucharist venial sins are forgiven and there is strengthening against mortal sin; in relation to Penance omission that all mortal sins must be confessed, the sacrament confers grace to avoid sin in the future, and the Church advises frequent confession of sins.

Life in Christ: The Beatitudes and Commandments (SGN 57-60). 117

SGN’s principal focus is on the Beatitudes, the new commandment of love and the Decalogue, which is reasonable. However, there are several other important topics addressed in the corresponding Part Three of the CCC, which do not appear here in SGN. It may not be reasonable to include all these CCC points in a brief summary of the Faith, but some omissions seem particularly unfortunate, especially in the context of the challenges to Catholic morality in modern society.

The completeness of SGN’s presentation on ‘Life in Christ / Morality’ suffers from omissions, including the following: sin, its nature, kinds and gravity of sins (mortal/venial); virtues & social justice; the consequences of original sin and the salvation won by Christ 118; the connections between our spiritual destiny and the moral life (SGN’s perspective tends to be ‘horizontal’, this world only) 119, the authoritative status of the Church’s moral teaching 120 (often aggressively attacked by secular society and even disputed by some in the Church 121, leaving many Catholics confused and/or misinformed).

SGN rightly highlights the great commandment from the Old Testament that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, and we must love our neighbour as ourselves 122. SGN also rightly notes that the fulfilment of the second part of this commandment in the New Testament is to love one another as Jesus has loved us 123. However, the fulfilment of the first part is stated as ‘to live in the love of God as Jesus has done’, but this is not authentic Christianity, more like some kind of benevolent theism. The New Testament is clear that the fulfilment of the first part of this great commandment is to have faith in Jesus, to accept him as our God and Saviour 124, which is absolutely essential for authentic Christianity.

Prayer in the Christian Life: The Lord’s Prayer (SGN 57-61) 125

SGN gives a reasonable presentation on Christian Prayer, with emphasis on the Lord’s Prayer, as in the CCC. However, it would have been helpful to follow the lead of the CCC in drawing out the meaning of the different parts of the Lord’s Prayer. It would also have been helpful to say something about the many other prayers that are a vital part of Catholic life in Ireland, e.g. the Rosary.

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117 This relates to Part Three of the CCC: Life in Christ, 1691-2557.
118 CCC 1714.
119 CCC 1715, 1721. The moral life is to reach its fulfilment in the glory of heaven. God put us in this world to know, to love and to serve him, and so to come to paradise.
120 CCC 1785.
121 ‘Nothing gets the Church into trouble like its stance on sexual morality. .... Sometimes the official Church teaching will be systematically undermined in schools and centres of theology’. David Quinn, Finding a third way between rigorism and laxity. The Irish Catholic, October 10, 2013, p.9.
122 SGN 59; Matthew 22:34-40.
123 John 13:34.
125 This relates to Part Four of the CCC: Christian Prayer, 2558-2865.
Implementation Plan to Relativise Faith & Takeover Church Life

SGN’s Chapter 7: Resources and Implementation sets out its Implementation Plan for ten years, based on the material that has been presented in the earlier chapters.

As has been noted above, SGN failed to carry out an objective analysis of the situation in relation to catechesis, and gave unqualified praise to current catechetical programmes and developments. SGN now proceeds to build 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 a solid and reliable foundation is absolutely essential. Building on the current disastrous catechetical situation in Ireland is like building a house on sand as in Jesus’ parable\(^\text{126}\), if not building on quicksand. The current situation on the Faith is bad enough, but continuing our catechetical failures for another ten years will complete the non-catechesis of a second generation, from which the Church in Ireland will find very hard to recover.

Structure of the Plan.

As has been noted above, both the GCD-1971 and GDC-1997 recommend the preparation of a programme of action or implementation plan, setting out the objectives or goals, the tasks and responsibilities of all those involved, and the necessary resources. The 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.\(^\text{127}\)

The SGN implementation plan leads with Objectives grouped in seven different areas, which is reasonable in principle. However, in each of the seven areas the Objectives are designated for ‘faith development’, not for catechesis, which should be expected in a Directory that claims to be for Catechesis. In SGN’s objectives there is only one reference to conversion to Jesus Christ, and one reference to growing in Christian faith,\(^\text{128}\) which poorly reflects the objectives and goals recommended by the Church for Catholic catechesis.

After its Objectives SGN gives ‘Indicators of Achievement’. The term ‘Indicators of Achievement’ is normally taken to mean norms or yardsticks by which one can gauge the extent to which the objectives are being achieved, or not achieved. However, under the heading ‘Indicators of Achievement’ SGN does not actually give any indicators of achievement, but sets out tasks, responsibilities and resources. It is a serious failing that SGN omits real indicators of achievement, and also omits provision for 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.

An obvious indicator of achievement for a catechetical Implementation Plan would be knowledge of Catholic faith. Other important indicators of achievement could include: Mass attendance; participation in missionary activities; levels of moral behaviour; state of the Catholic family (cohabitation, single parents, divorce, marriage breakdown,); vocations to the priesthood and religious life; the attendance of youth at World Youth Day, and more.

\(^{126}\) Mt.7:24-27.

\(^{127}\) 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.

\(^{128}\) SGN 133, 156.
Implementation of quality control and real measures of achievement would be particularly relevant now, because the catechetics establishment has not attempted an assessment of knowledge of Catholic faith nor any other objective assessment or quality control in the past 35 years. Some surveys of knowledge of the faith have been carried out by other people, which have tended to show very low levels of knowledge among Catholics.

Supplanting of Catholic Evangelisation and Catechesis by Relativist Faith Development and Religious Education.

Attention has already been drawn above to the supplanting of Catholic evangelisation and catechesis by a religiously-relativist type of ‘religious education’ in the context of ‘faith development’. This supplanting is brought to fulfilment in SGN’s Implementation Plan, in which everything is couched in terms of ‘faith development’, prominence is given to religiously-relativist ‘religious education’, while Catholic evangelisation and catechesis receive scant attention. This is particularly noticeable in relation to Catholic schools, where SGN proposes no Catholic catechesis, only ‘religious education’.

Faith Development Structure.

As the means to achieve its Implementation Plan SGN proposes the creation of an extensive, and very expensive, Faith Development structure, with the potential to influence/control most of Church life at parish, diocese and national levels. The effect will be to upscale the catechetics establishment into a new ‘faith development establishment’, with a sphere of influence expanded from school catechesis to most of Church life in Ireland, and deeply embedded into every Parish, every Diocese, and at national level in Maynooth.

SGN proposes that a 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. The annual cost of one of these Faith Development officers we would estimate that not less than €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.

SGN refers to the need for ‘significant financial resources’, but makes no attempt to quantify the financial consequences of its proposals, not even the most approximate of estimates, which is unprofessional.

SGN proposes that these Faith Development staff should be appropriately qualified and trained. Given the all-encompassing range of activities that are considered by SGN to be part of Faith Development, these people would have to be very able, qualified and experienced. A major problem arises in relation to third level institutions in Ireland, where the new Faith Development personnel are likely to be educated. We do not have any institution that is, as a whole, reliably orthodox in faith and committed to follow the Magisterium of the Church, even though we have many good individual staff members in various colleges who are themselves orthodox in Faith, committed to follow the Magisterium of the Church, and fully qualified and competent.

The Maryvale Institute in Birmingham could be recommended without reservation, and its distance learning programs could be of tremendous benefit to the Church in Ireland. Many Irish students have already studied at Maryvale, especially for the two-year program for Parish catechists.

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129 e.g. Survey of knowledge of the basics of Christian Faith carried out by the Iona Institute in 2007, see www.ionainstitute.ie; survey in 2007 of knowledge of pupils who had completed the Alive-O Programme, see www.eannajohnson.org.
Parish/Diocese/National.

SGN puts its principal focus on the Parish, and secondarily on the Diocese. This is contrary to the GDC-1997, which puts the principal emphasis on the Diocese. In making its case to focus on the Parish SGN quotes from the GDC-1997\textsuperscript{130} on the importance of the Parish. However, the GDC-1997 does not actually give such prominence to the parish in referring to the important Christian communities: the family; parish; Catholic schools; Christian associations and movements; basic ecclesial communities.\textsuperscript{131}

The SGN Implementation Plan has some useful elements at parish and diocesan levels, but the overall effect will be negative because everything is set in the context of ‘faith development’ and relativist ‘religious education’, not as the Church requires Catholic catechesis in the context of evangelisation. As a result, Catholic evangelisation and catechesis will be downgraded, obfuscated and confused. Introducing relativist ‘religious education’ into every parish and diocese is like introducing a virus into a computer system – all programmes are undermined and corrupted.

The GDC-1997 focuses principally on the Diocese and the Bishop as leader of the Diocese, with responsibility for organisation of catechetical pastoral care.\textsuperscript{132} 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 other 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.\textsuperscript{133}

The parish priest, with the cooperation of assistant priests and deacons, exercises pastoral care of the parish under the authority of the Bishop. The parish priest has a particular responsibility for instructing the faithful in the truths of the faith, and with catechetical formation. Experience bears out that the quality of catechesis in the community depends heavily on the presence and activity of the priest.\textsuperscript{134}

In relation to the Parish the SGN Implementation Plan has some useful elements, but these are undermined and compromised by the emphasis on religiously-relativist ‘religious education’. The other major problem is the power and influence granted to the Faith Development Coordinator, who will run virtually everything in the parish with the Parish Priest. If the current crisis in priestly vocations continues it won’t be too long before we see priest-less parishes, with the prospect of the Faith Development Coordinator with the authority to run the parish on her or his own.

In relation to the Diocese we have a repeat of the problems that Parish level. There are some reasonable elements in the SGN Implementation Plan, but the problem is that everything will be confused, and corrupted because the whole context is not Catholic evangelisation and catechesis, but ‘Faith Development’ and relativist ‘Religious Education’. The diocese is to have a Diocesan Director of Faith Development and a team of Faith development personnel to be designated as the Diocesan Faith Development Services. As the SGN understanding of Faith development is so very broad as to encompass most of the activities of the diocese, the Director of Faith Development will be positioned to exercise extensive power and influence in the running of the Diocese.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{130} GDC-1997. 257.
\item \textsuperscript{131} GDC-1997. 253.
\item \textsuperscript{132} GDC-1997. 222-223, 265.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Code of Canon Law (CIC): 375, 386, 391.
\item \textsuperscript{134} CIC 519, 5 to 8. GDC-1997, 224-225.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
At national level the building of a new influential ‘faith development’ structure is to be completed through a new National Faith Development Team (none of whom will be bishops, some may be clerics or religious, any could be laypeople) which will oversee Faith Development in all Dioceses and parishes, which by the SGN definition means most of Church life. This has major implications in relation to the responsibility and authority of individual Bishops in their Dioceses, and the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference. One can anticipate extensive chaos, confusion, and conflict to arise as a result of the SGN proposals. There will be no improvement in knowledge of Faith, and the most likely outcome is an acceleration of the decline of faith in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Faith Development in the Catholic Schools.
The SGN proposals here are extremely problematic. The record of Catholic catechesis in Catholic schools since the 1970s has been poor, a progressive record of failure. SGN proposes continuation of the situation at second level, which involves following the secular State’s Religious Education programme, which treats all religions and non-religions options as equal. At primary level SGN proposes following up the Alive-O Programme with a new curriculum and programme, which will be ‘religious education’, not Catholic catechesis (see further comment below).

Much attention is given to Catholic schools having a Mission Statement and Ethos Policy reflecting a Catholic spirit, but there are problems here. 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. There is also the recommendation that individual Boards of Management in Catholic schools should take responsibility for developing 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 Movements.
The Objective here is mostly well expressed, except for the problem that ‘Indicators of Achievement’ are all couched in terms ‘faith development’, not as in the Church’s vision, Catholic catechesis as a vital and dynamic element of evangelisation. 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 Training.
This section of SGN is highly problematic, because the record of education and training by the catechetics establishment has been poor. It has been noted above the dearth of third level colleges in Ireland that could be relied upon to be fully orthodox in Catholic faith and loyal to the Magisterium of the Church. The Objectives and Indicators of Achievement are all expressed in terms of Faith Development and Religious Education, not Catholic catechesis and evangelisation, with consequent problems. SGN’s Implementation Plan should call for an objective analysis of these educational institutions as a matter of priority. However, SGN accepts these institutions as they are, approves everything they are doing and recommends that they should continue.

Provision of Materials for Faith Development Activities.
Materials that have been produced up to now by the catechetics establishment have generally fallen short of satisfactory, but SGN endorses all these materials. SGN also endorses the religiously-relativist syllabuses produced by the secular State for religious education at second level. This is seriously problematic.

SGN has an Objective for a new syllabus/curriculum and programme for Catholic primary schools, which is good in principle because the existing programme for the primary schools, the Alive-O Programme, is very unsatisfactory. However, SGN’s Objective says the new programme is to be ‘religious education’, not Catholic catechesis, which is likely to make matters worse. SGN’s Objective speaks of the new syllabus/curriculum being developed ‘in the light of the teaching of the Church, indicated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church’. This may appear reasonable from a Catholic point of view but it is not, because ‘in the light of’ commits to nothing specific. What the Church requires is quite different and specific, and that is ‘perfect harmony with the CCC’, and ‘due consideration for the norms and criteria for the presentation of the Gospel message contained in the General Directory for Catechesis’.135


Comparison of the *General Catechetical Directory 1971*, with the *General Directory for Catechesis 1997*.
Principal differences highlighted in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Catechetical Directory 1971</th>
<th>General Directory for Catechesis 1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part 1: Background</td>
<td>Introduction: Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2: Revelation and Catechesis</td>
<td>Part 1: Revelation &amp; Catechesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>in context of Evangelisation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms for Presentation;</td>
<td>Norms for Presentation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Summary of the Faith.</td>
<td><em>Catechism of Catholic Church</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4: Elements of Methodology</td>
<td>Part 3: <em>The Pedagogy of God</em></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Elements of Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 5: Catechesis by Age</td>
<td>Part 4: Catechesis by Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ <em>Special Groups &amp; Situations</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Emphasis on Bishops’ Conference</em></td>
<td><em>Emphasis on Diocese (‘Particular Church’)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Appendix B: National Directory & Syllabus/Curriculum in Press Releases

References in Press Releases after the Quarterly Meetings of the Irish Bishops’ Conference to the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland, *Share the Good News* (SGN), and to the new Syllabus/Curriculum for Primary School RE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Press Release</th>
<th>Share the Good News</th>
<th>Syllabus/Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 October 2013</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 June 2013</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 March 2013</td>
<td>Promoting SGN as resource for Year of Faith</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 December 2012</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 September 2012</td>
<td>SGN to be key resource in Year of Faith</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 May 2012</td>
<td>Progress on implementation of SGN</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 March 2012</td>
<td>SGN praised; will be framework for response to Year of Faith.</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June 2011</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Dec. 2010</td>
<td>Publication announced, with great praise.</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Oct. 2010</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June 2010</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March 2010</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Jan. 2010</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Dec. 2009: Statement of commitment to ‘charity, truthfulness, integrity &amp; transparency in all communications’</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Oct. 2009</td>
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<td>Nil</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 June 2009</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>12 March 2008</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Oct. 2007</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 June ’07</td>
<td>Advance praise; Preparation ongoing.</td>
<td>Advance praise; Draft at advanced stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 March 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Dec. ’06</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Oct. ’06</td>
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<td>15 June 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 March 2006</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Dec.’05 (Council for Pastoral Renewal &amp; Adult Faith Development launched. School catechesis endorsed)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 March 2005</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Oct. 2004</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June 2004</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: 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 catechetics 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 D: Outline Proposal for Renewal of Catechesis in Ireland

This brief Proposal, prepared by Éanna Johnson PhD, is offered for consideration by the Bishops and all others interested in renewal of Catholic Faith in Ireland.

Bishops:
Teaching the Faith is the first of each bishop’s three main tasks: teach, sanctify, govern. He is to teach and preach, and ensure the whole of Christian teaching is transmitted to all in his care, especially through the homily and catechetical instruction. He is the catechist par excellence, and must defend the integrity and unity of the faith. He has all the necessary authority for discharge of his responsibilities. An Episcopal Conference may establish a catechetical office and publish catechisms and other appropriate documents for its territory. (CIC375, 381, 386, 775, 823, 827, 830; GDC222-223).

All Bishops should get personally involved and take responsibility for Catechesis, in their own dioceses and collectively in Ireland as members of the Episcopal Conference. The first step in reform and renewal in catechesis should be to ask the faithful to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit; reliance on human efforts and abilities alone would render the whole exercise worthless, if not counter-productive.

The Episcopal Council for Catechetics should revert to the structure of 2003 and earlier, with Bishops only as members. Other designated persons could serve in an advisory capacity (in catechetics, theology, liturgy, education, etc), but should not be full members of the Council. Designated advisors should first and foremost be orthodox in Catholic Faith and fully committed to the Church’s Magisterium, in addition to their own relevant knowledge, experience and expertise.

Research should be carried out into the knowledge level of the Faith in Ireland, current and ongoing. There should be regular formal assessment in primary and secondary school programme, and periodic professional surveys for the general body of the faithful. Results should be analysed and monitored to see what is working and what is not working, and appropriate action taken.

The unsatisfactory Alive-O Programme in the primary schools should be replaced as soon as possible; every year it remains in place does more harm to the faith and morals of hundreds of thousands of children and their teachers. Any new programme must meet the requirements set out in the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), in particular must be in perfect harmony with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), and give due consideration to the norms and criteria in the GDC itself (GDC284).
In order to phase out *Alive-O* as quickly as possible, the best solution in the short to medium term would be to replace it with an appropriate authentically Catholic programme from another country. (A number of such programmes exist, e.g. *Faith and Life, Image of God*). In the longer term a new programme should be produced for Ireland in both English and Irish languages.

The approach currently favoured for secondary schools is to prepare students to take Religious Education in Public Examinations. This is not a satisfactory strategy for education in Catholic Faith, because the Syllabi are religiously relativist (all religions and non-religious options equally valid), even constructively anti-Catholic, because ‘Catholic’ is never mentioned either Junior or Leaving Syllabi, while pupil uptake is low anyway – less than half at Junior Cert and only 5% at Leaving Cert. Providing Guidelines for Catholic pupils is not a satisfactory solution. An authentically Catholic Syllabus should be prepared for education in Faith at secondary level, with a list of approved text-books, to be followed in all Catholic schools for their Catholic pupils. Diocesan Advisors should provide guidance and support, and also conduct periodic examinations or other formal Learning Assessment, using the approved Catholic Syllabus and the CCC as principal references.

Catholic catechesis programmes should be encouraged / promoted at parish level, the key resources being the CCC (including the *Compendium* of the CCC, and *Youcat*, the Youth Catechism), and the Bible. The revamped Episcopal Council for Catechetics should have a role here in providing advice and resources. It would be desirable to have Diocesan staff on adult catechesis in addition to Advisers for primary and secondary schools.

The Episcopal Conference should commission an independent audit of teacher training institutes, and other relevant institutions, and seek to bring about beneficial change.

Bishops should encourage and support lay associations and movements that are giving authentic Catholic catechesis and formation to the members and to others.

**Priests:**

*Parish clergy share in the Bishop’s first task of teaching the Faith, especially through the homily and catechetical instruction (CIC519, 528; GDC224-225).*

Assuming that satisfactory new programmes for education in Catholic Faith are introduced to Catholic schools (as recommended above), parish clergy should familiarise themselves with the new programmes and encourage/help with implementation in local schools.

Deepen study/knowledge of the CCC and the Bible. Give attention to the need for basic catechesis in homilies (Sunday and daily) and in administering the sacraments, conscious that the past generation and a half lacked proper catechesis in Catholic schools.

Encourage and/or lead catechesis in the parishes, using the CCC (including the *Compendium* of the CCC, and *Youcat*, the Youth Catechism), and the Bible as principal resources.
Parents (and Grandparents, who can help and support parents):

*Catholic parents have primary responsibility for the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teaching of the Church (CIC226; GDC226-227).*

Every Catholic home should have copies of the Bible, the CCC and its *Compendium* (CTS edition is best), and *Youcat* if there are secondary school pupils or young adults in the home.

Study the CCC and Bible, either individually or with groups of other interested people. Be at least familiar enough with the CCC to know where to find answers to questions that will arise.

Have regular prayer in the home. Teach children at home to know authentic Catholic Faith, while modelling and guiding them in living the Faith. Meet and talk with the children’s religion teachers at school to see how school and home can work together.

Assuming new programmes in Catholic Faith are introduced into the schools (as recommended above) read and become familiar with the texts, the better to support encourage children in learning and applying their Faith.

In the absence of new programmes use good Catholic resources to help in teaching children the Faith at home, e.g. for primary level children: Bible Stories, St Joseph Picture Book Series, *My First Holy Communion*; for secondary level pupils: *Youcat*.

Laity:

*Catholic laypeople have the right and duty to acquire an appropriate level of Catholic teaching, with the help of the Bishops, so that they can live, proclaim and defend the Faith (CIC213, 229; GDC230-232).*

Every Catholic layperson should own or have access to copies of the Bible, the CCC and its *Compendium* (CTS edition is best); also the *Youcat* for those who are young or in a position to serve/help secondary school pupils and young adults.

Study the CCC and Bible, either individually or with groups of other interested people. Know the CCC to find answers to questions that will arise. Participation in ecclesial movements and organisations can help build knowledge and practice of the Faith.

Avail of other courses of authentic Catholic study which extend/deepen knowledge of the Faith, and the ability to hand on Faith to others, in particular, training to be a catechist; e.g. courses using distance learning from Maryvale Institute. Retreats, conferences and pilgrimages can also help to deepen and strengthen faith. Seek opportunities to hand on and/or defend the Faith – either informally or formally through courses, study groups, retreats, etc.