

The Indispensability of Catechesis in Evangelization

Donald Uchenna Nwosu, PhD^{1*} & Charles Ikechukwu Okoro, PhD²

¹Department of Pastoral Theology, Faculty of Canon Law, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

²Department of Philosophy, Seat of Wisdom Institute of Higher Learning, Owerri, Imo State Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author: Donald Uchenna Nwosu, PhD

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2307885>

Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Catechesis plays a crucial and indispensable role in evangelization by providing individuals with the knowledge and understanding necessary to live and communicate the Christian faith. Through catechesis, people are equipped with the means to deepen their relationship with God and to share their faith confidently with others. The role of catechesis in evangelization is twofold. First, it seeks to deepen the faith of those who have already made a commitment to Christ by providing them with a fuller understanding of the teachings of the Church, the sacraments, and the Christian moral life. Catechesis enables individuals to know and love God more fully and to apply their faith to every aspect of their lives. Second, catechesis reaches out to those who have not yet encountered Christ or who have fallen away from the faith. It provides a systematic and organized approach to teaching the fundamental truths of Christianity and leads individuals towards a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. The Church understands catechesis in evangelization not merely as the transmission of religious information, but as formation for communion with Jesus Christ and participation in the life and mission of the Church. Furthermore, catechesis in evangelization is a collaborative effort involving the entire Christian community. It employs various methods and approaches to address the particular needs and challenges of different individuals, communities, and cultures, thereby ensuring that the Gospel message is effectively communicated and understood. This paper examines the indispensable role of catechesis in evangelization, the challenges confronting the Church in providing effective catechetical programmes, and possible recommendations for overcoming these challenges.</i> Keywords: Catechesis, Evangelisation, Indispensability, Catechetical Formation, Christian Formation.
Received: 02-08-2026	
Accepted: 07-09-2026	
Published: 01-10-2026	
Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	
Citation: Donald Uchenna Nwosu, PhD & Charles Ikechukwu Okoro, PhD. (2026). The indispensability of catechesis in evangelization. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2(10), 01-11.	

Introduction

The mission of the Church is fundamentally missionary. Through the command of the risen Christ, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15), the Church receives the mandate to communicate the Good News of salvation to every human person and culture. Evangelization is therefore not an optional activity added to the life of the Church; rather, it belongs to her very identity. The Second Vatican Council presented the Church as missionary by her very nature, while subsequent papal teaching has consistently emphasized the responsibility of every Christian to participate in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Within this missionary vocation, catechesis occupies a particularly important position. The Church cannot

evangelize effectively without forming people in the faith that she proclaims. Initial proclamation may awaken faith and invite conversion, but believers require sustained formation if their faith is to become mature, coherent, lived, celebrated, and communicated to others. Catechesis therefore accompanies the individual from an initial openness to the Gospel towards a deeper communion with Christ and active participation in the Christian community.

The connection between catechesis and evangelization has not always been properly understood within pastoral practice. In some settings, evangelization has been interpreted primarily as missionary preaching to those who are not Christians, whereas catechesis has been viewed

largely as classroom-based religious instruction for children preparing to receive the sacraments. Such interpretations are too restrictive because they do not fully reflect the scope and complementary character of the two concepts. Paul VI described evangelization as a “rich, complex and dynamic reality” involving a number of essential elements and stages. Within this broader process, he explicitly recognized catechetical instruction as an important instrument of evangelization that should not be overlooked (Paul VI, 1975, p. 34). John Paul II later provided further clarification by explaining that catechesis and evangelization are inseparably related, while also stressing that they should not be regarded as identical. Rather, catechesis represents an important stage within the wider evangelizing mission of the Church, particularly because it assists believers in developing and deepening their initial faith through an organized understanding of Christ and his teaching (John Paul II, 1979, pp. 13–14).

This understanding has continued to evolve within the contemporary Church. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) situated catechesis explicitly within the Church’s broader mission of evangelization, and the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) subsequently reinforced the close interconnection between the two. The 2020 Directory approaches catechesis in relation to the Church’s evangelizing mission, the catechetical process itself, and the particular circumstances of individual Churches. Pope Francis has likewise stressed that catechesis should remain closely linked to the first proclamation of the Gospel, known as the *kerygma*. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he maintains that the *kerygma* should occupy a central place in both catechetical and evangelizing activities. Consequently, catechesis should not be reduced to the intellectual transmission of Christian doctrine alone; rather, it should remain oriented towards the transforming encounter with Jesus Christ that gives Christian teaching its essential purpose (Francis, 2013, p. 129).

This work examines the indispensability of catechesis in evangelization from both theological and pastoral perspectives. It seeks to establish that catechesis is neither a substitute for evangelization nor an activity peripheral to it. Rather, catechesis is an essential moment through which the Gospel is deepened, appropriated, embodied, celebrated, and transmitted from one generation to another. The discussion is divided into six major sections: the concepts of catechesis and evangelization; catechesis as an integral transmission of faith; the relationship between catechesis and evangelization; the tasks of catechesis in evangelization; the challenges of catechesis in evangelization; recommendations for overcoming these challenges; and the conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

Catechesis

Catechesis is a word that entered English usage in the early seventeenth century and is derived from the Greek language, along with related terms such as catechism, catechetics, catechumen, and catechist. These terms are rooted in the Greek verb *katēchein*, which refers to the teaching mandate of the Church (Samuel P. Gwimi, 172). The term is also used to signify teaching or instruction in the law of God (Acts 18:25; Romans 2:18; Galatians 6:6). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews distinguishes this form of instruction from *kerygma* and *didaskalia*, comparing it to feeding children with milk rather than with the solid food of righteousness (Hebrews 5:12–14; 1 Corinthians 3:1–3).

“Catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith which includes especially the teaching of Christian Doctrine imparted, usually organically and systematically, to initiate the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (John Paul II, 1979, n. 18). Such an understanding presents catechesis as a constant process of formation in the faith, in the course of which believers come to a deeper understanding little by little of the religion that they aspire to confess, of the faith that they profess, and of the faith that they wish to live out in their whole existence. This formation is not limited to one stage of Christian development; it begins with the initial inquiry, it develops through the catechumenate and mystagogical formation, and it remains a vital component of the whole Christian journey of the believer.

Similarly, James Akpaamo underscores the formative and preparatory role of catechesis, observing that “catechesis helps to make the person so catechised and grounded in the faith, preparing him/her for encountering and overcoming the challenges that abound in the person’s future faith journey” (James Akpaamo, 13). In this view, catechesis gives Christians theological foundations and spiritual formation necessary to maintain their faith among the problems that emerge during Christian life. This understanding is consistent with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which explains catechesis as “the name given to the totality of the Church’s efforts to make disciples, to help men and women believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the Body of Christ” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 4). Catechesis is therefore a total ecclesial service that not only deals with the transmission of the Christian message but also deals with the formation of believers as disciples and members of the Body of Christ.

In the early Church, catechesis, as reflected in the Epistles of Paul, Peter, and James, assumed a dual meaning. First, it involved instruction given to converts from Judaism, based on the holiness code of Leviticus 17–19 and the apostolic decree of the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:19–21. Emphasis was placed on accepting the Word of God as truth and rejecting idolatry. For example, in Colossians 3:5–9 and Ephesians 4:22–24, Paul instructs believers to put away their former vices, including sexual immorality, anger, and lying, and to put on new virtues such as compassion, humility, and kindness. Similarly, 2 Peter 1:5–7 presents a sequence of virtues, urging converts to supplement their faith with goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. James 3:1–12 warns believers about the destructive power of speech and offers practical moral instruction on the proper use of words.

The expansion of Christianity into Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece created a further need to instruct converts from pagan and Hellenistic backgrounds. In addition to various forms of abstinence, further moral instructions based on the Psalms, Proverbs, and Jewish ethical traditions were introduced. During the first five centuries of the Church, catechesis was primarily understood as pre-baptismal instruction given to adults. With the conversion of the Germanic tribes and the rapid increase in the number of Christians, a new understanding of catechesis emerged. The Church became concerned with educating large numbers of converts who were often unlettered and unfamiliar with the Christian faith they had embraced. Pastoral treatises written by bishops and monks became important resources for catechetical instruction. Examples include St Augustine's *De Catechizandis Rudibus* (On Catechising the Uninstructed), St Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis* (The Book of Pastoral Rule), and St Benedict's *Regula Sancti Benedicti* (The Rule of St Benedict). These works became important references for catechesis because they provide principles for teaching the faith, addressing different categories of learners, and guiding people towards moral and spiritual growth.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* explains the nature of catechesis as “the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian Community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways” (n. 105). This understanding is further reflected in *Catechesi Tradendae*, where John Paul II describes catechesis as “an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian Doctrine imparted, generally speaking, organically and systematically, to initiate the hearers into the fullness of Christian life” (John Paul II, 1979, n. 18). Taken together, these definitions present catechesis as a structured and comprehensive process through which the

Christian faith is transmitted, understood, celebrated, lived, and progressively integrated into the lives of believers.

2.2 Evangelisation

Miller explains that the English term *evangelization* originates from the Greek root *euangelion*, a biblical term used in both nominal and verbal forms and associated with the announcement or transmission of good news (Miller, 1993, p. 43). Wenhain likewise traces the concept to *euangelion*, which denotes “good news,” and to the related verb *euangelizomai*, signifying “to proclaim good news” (Wenhain, 1980, p. 196). Similarly, Onwuka (2017, pp. 266–267) identifies *euangelion* as the Greek expression for “good news” or “good tidings” and relates evangelization to the verb *euangelizesthai*, meaning “to proclaim good news.” In the Christian theological context, the Good News encompasses God's saving work accomplished through Jesus Christ, through whom humanity is called back into a reconciled relationship with God. This missionary responsibility is reflected in Jesus' command to his disciples to proclaim the Good News to all creation (Mark 16:15) and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). Evangelization consequently encompasses the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the formation of disciples, and the encouragement of believers to embody and apply Christ's teachings in their lives.

Furthermore, Thompson in, *the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism* described evangelisation as:

According to Scripture, evangelisation is the proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ as the one and only Redeemer of humanity (Thompson 1968, p. 37). It is to call all separated from God to put their faith in Him by receiving Christ as Saviour by the power of the Holy Spirit. Evangelisation also means to invite persons to confess Christ as Lord and to respond to that acknowledgement in every facet of life and active participation in the communion of the Church, as they await his coming in glory. Therefore, evangelisation is not only the delivery of a religious message. It is the proclamation of the core truth of Christ and the invitation to a personal faith that effects spiritual development.

Evangelization, however, should be distinguished from evangelism when the latter is understood narrowly as proclamation alone. According to Shorter, evangelism often places particular emphasis on verbal proclamation, preaching, and teaching as means of winning people to Christ. Such an understanding may imply that once people hear about Jesus Christ and accept him as their personal Lord and Saviour, the process is complete. Although verbal proclamation, preaching, and teaching are essential components of evangelization, they do not exhaust its meaning. Hearing about Jesus Christ and accepting him as

Lord and Saviour is an important stage in evangelization, but being evangelized involves much more. Evangelization can therefore be understood as the proclamation and communication of the Good News to every sector of the human race so that, through its power, it may enter the hearts of men and women and renew humanity (Paul VI, 1975, n. 18).

Evangelisation is a basic element of Christian mission, and Michael A. Ogunewu emphasises that it is the will of Christ for His Church to develop perpetually through the ages. Ogunewu opines that such expansion is expected both quantitatively and qualitatively through the missionary commitment of Christ's disciples. The major means offered for this aim is evangelisation (Ogunewu, 2014, p. 67). From this perspective, evangelisation can be seen as an indispensable means for the Church to broaden its mission and foster the expansion of the Christian community. Hunter gives a similar understanding when he defines evangelisation as "the reproductive process by which Christianity expands and fills the earth" (Hunter, 1989, p. 72). Both views, then, stress the importance of evangelisation in the continuation, expansion, and transmission of the Christian faith.

Catechesis as an Integral Transmission of Faith

The full passing on of the faith – catechesis – is of capital importance for the life of the Church as a community and for the life of every Christian. It is the process whereby children and adults are introduced to the faith and grow in their knowledge of the Catholic tradition. When the hunger for Christ is awakened in a person, catechesis in the precise sense must be provided to strengthen the faith infused into that person's life. This is systematic, integral, organic, and comprehensive formation in religion. Those who have received the Good News through pre-evangelization and have been touched by evangelisation and conversion, must be shaped in all the dimensions of the Catholic religion.

Integral faith formation means introducing people to the Gospel message and providing them with the knowledge and understanding necessary for growth in faith. Catechesis promotes spiritual growth, moral formation, and communal formation; develops a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith; and empowers Christians to live out their faith in the world.

One of the principal roles of catechesis in evangelization is to provide systematic and comprehensive education in the Catholic faith. It is a means through which faith is transmitted from one generation to another. Catechesis teaches the doctrines, practices, and values of the Catholic faith and provides a solid foundation for lifelong Christian formation. This education is essential to evangelization because it enables believers to articulate their faith

effectively and give a reasoned account of their Christian commitment. Catechesis also provides a framework for developing a personal relationship with God and deepening one's spiritual life. It teaches prayer, Scripture reading, and other spiritual disciplines that are essential components of Christian growth. Through catechesis, believers develop a deeper relationship with God and a stronger commitment to the Gospel.

Furthermore, catechesis enables Christians to develop a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. It teaches fundamental doctrines such as the Trinity, the sacraments, the person of Christ, the Church, and the Christian understanding of the human person. Such knowledge is essential for effective evangelization because it provides a sound foundation for apologetics and Christian witness. Catechesis also empowers believers to live out their faith in the world. It provides a framework for ethical decision-making, social action, and service to others. It helps believers understand the relationship between faith and action and therefore promotes a holistic approach to evangelization. By empowering Christians to live out their faith, catechesis contributes to the transformation of society and the world.

The Relationship between Catechesis and Evangelization

John Paul II states that, "Catechesis and Evangelization are so related that they could be seen as the two sides of the same coin; they integrate and complement each other" (Catechesi Tradendae, n. 18). Supporting this position, Samuel P. Gwimi maintains that catechesis and evangelization are not only complementary but are both contained in the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ to his apostles:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). Furthermore, Amobi S. Omeayo affirms that this missionary mandate consists of three basic functions: the evangelizing function, the liturgical or sacramental function, and the catechetical function. In the evangelizing function, which is the first concern of the missionary mandate, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," the Church proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ with the aim of eliciting a response of faith from those who hear it (Omeayo, p. 429).

The evangelisation and catechesis relationship can be seen in the sense that evangelisation is the initial proclamation

of the Gospel and catechesis is subsequent. In this way, evangelisation is the first step of the process of conversion, and catechesis is the second step that deepens the original conversion. Thus, for example, the General Catechetical Directory of 1971 states that evangelisation wakes "the beginning of faith," and afterward catechesis helps this initial faith to become "living, conscious and active, through the light of instruction" (n. 108).

But other texts of the Catholic Church give a wider perspective of the place of catechesis in evangelisation. Catechesis can be seen as one part in the complete process of evangelisation. The Church's overall mission is evangelisation, and catechesis is one important aspect of that mission. This view was expanded by Paul VI in his 1975 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelisation in the Modern World). He wrote: "There is no true evangelisation if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed" (Paul VI, 1975). "Evangelization is the proclamation of the Gospel through which people come to know Jesus Christ personally," he said. Paul VI, for his part, cautioned of the danger of restricting too much evangelisation to specific parts, even if these are particularly vital (Paul VI, 1975, n. 18).

Four years later, in 1979, John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (On Catechesis in Our Time), clarified the distinctive role of catechesis:

Catechesis possesses a particular function that distinguishes it from the initial proclamation of the Gospel that leads a person towards conversion. Its principal purposes are to strengthen and mature the faith initially received and to form committed disciples through a deeper, organized, and systematic understanding of the person, teaching, and mission of Jesus Christ. John Paul II identifies several interconnected dimensions within the evangelizing mission of the Church, including the transformation of humanity, Christian witness, explicit proclamation of the Gospel, personal interior adherence, incorporation into the Christian community, acceptance of the signs of faith, and apostolic commitment. Within this broader framework, he specifically recognizes catechetical instruction as a "means of evangelization that must not be neglected" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 18). Catechesis therefore contributes to the development of faith beyond the initial encounter with the Gospel by helping believers progressively understand and live the Christian message.

Evangelization should consequently be understood as a comprehensive process involving multiple complementary dimensions, including Christian witness and the explicit proclamation of the Gospel. These dimensions do not function independently; rather, they support and reinforce

one another within the Church's mission. Through catechesis, the process of conversion is sustained and deepened as believers acquire a more comprehensive understanding of Jesus Christ, his message, and the manner of life to which he calls his followers. Catechesis thus occupies an integral position within the wider process of evangelization. While evangelization encompasses the Church's broader missionary responsibility, catechesis performs a distinctive role by developing and deepening the faith established through initial proclamation. In this regard, John Paul II explains that evangelization is "made up of elements, or one could say moments, that are essential and different from each other," and identifies catechesis as "one of these moments—a very remarkable one—in the whole process of evangelization" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 18).

Catechesis is therefore a moment, or a series of moments, within the overall process of evangelization. Evangelization should not be understood simply as the first stage, followed by catechesis as a completely separate second stage. Rather, evangelization encompasses the entire process, within which catechesis constitutes one or several essential moments. These catechetical moments, together with other elements identified by the Church, constitute the complete process of evangelization.

A further helpful metaphor for illustrating the relationship between catechesis and evangelisation is that of a painting. A painting is made up of materials like canvas, colours and individual brushstrokes. Completing a painting is a process, just as the complete process of evangelisation consists of a variety of aspects or moments. Catechesis is an indispensable part of evangelisation, because it gives depth and clarity to the whole activity. This encourages people to know Christ more deeply and to grow in their knowledge and love of him.

Catechesis helps people to see the Christian message more clearly, and to appreciate its beauty and unity. It also allows people to see how the Gospel invites them into a richer communion with the Triune God. In this concept evangelisation and catechesis are not simultaneous or separate activities but are interwoven. Each contributes to the fulfilment of the complete objective. Following the line of thinking of Matthew Halbach, the interaction between catechesis and evangelisation can also be seen as a "symbiosis of mutualism. Mutualistic symbiosis in nature is the relationship in which two species are linked but separate, mutually beneficial, orientated toward a similar aim and continually develop together (Halbach, 2014, p. 189). These features, Halbach says, are also found in the interaction between evangelisation and catechesis. Another aspect he points out is that they share the same content, i.e., the kerygma (Halbach, 2014, p. 183).

This example helps us to comprehend the relationship between evangelisation and catechesis. They are closely similar, but they are not the same thing. Each is controlled by its own laws, says the General Catechetical Directory (GCD, n. 105). It is consequently necessary to keep a conceptual separation between them, while recognising that they are strongly intertwined in concrete pastoral ministry. “The symbiotic relationship between evangelisation and catechesis means that there is overlap and mutual benefit between them,” Halbach argues. Both have the same objective, the transformation of individuals and civilisations to Jesus Christ (Halbach, 2014, p. 185). They share the same goal of making disciples of all nations, bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ and to a personal commitment to follow him. “Evangelization is the specific act of introducing a person to Jesus Christ; catechesis is the act of leading people to a mature faith in him” (Halbach, 2014, p. 185).

Furthermore, the content of the evangelisation and catechesis is the same, the kerygma or Gospel message (Halbach, 2014, p. 183). Catechesis is the methodical exposition of the Gospel which deepens a person’s knowledge and allegiance to the faith, but it must always be rooted in the kerygma. Catechesis cannot be reduced to the transmission of facts, to instruction. Ultimately everything must be interpreted in terms of Jesus Christ. As John Paul II says, the fundamental goal of catechesis is to establish contact, communion, closeness with Jesus Christ (*Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 5).

Catechesis is not the whole of evangelization. Evangelization includes proclamation to those who do not yet believe, witness through Christian life, dialogue with cultures and religions, social transformation, liturgical celebration, Christian initiation, and ongoing formation. At the same time, evangelization cannot reach its fullness without catechesis. Those who encounter the Gospel require formation if they are to understand what they have received and live it faithfully. John Paul II expresses this balance by presenting catechesis as a particular stage within the wider process of evangelization. Its distinctive task is to mature initial faith and educate disciples through a deeper and more systematic knowledge of Jesus Christ and his message (John Paul II, 1979, pp. 13–15).

The relationship can therefore be represented as follows: Proclamation → Conversion → Catechesis → Sacramental Incorporation → Christian Maturity → Mission. This sequence should not be understood as rigid or mechanical. In practice, these different moments overlap. Mature Christians may need renewed proclamation; catechized Christians continue to require conversion; and evangelizing communities constantly deepen their own faith. Pope Francis therefore insists that the first proclamation must

continue to resonate within catechesis rather than being treated as something that belongs only to the beginning of Christian life (Francis, 2013, p. 129).

The Tasks of Catechesis in Evangelisation

All authentic catechesis must be Christocentric—that is, centered on Christ. To catechize is to lead men and women to know and understand the mystery of Christ in all its dimensions. It is to help people recognize God’s plan revealed and fulfilled in Christ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:9, 18–19; *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 18). The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “to catechize is to reveal in the person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and the signs worked by him” (CCC, n. 426).

The entire forms of catechesis carried out within the Church ultimately serve this purpose: the evangelization and formation of people through the proclamation and deepening of the Good News. Catechesis deepens the faith that individuals have embraced through the initial proclamation. According to Sultana C. M., catechesis has the specific objective of helping the individual enter into a personal relationship with Christ. This objective can easily become obscured if catechists place excessive emphasis on only one aspect of the catechetical process. The objective of catechesis—leading people into a personal relationship with Christ—is pursued through six principal tasks: promoting knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, teaching people to pray, education for life in the community, and missionary initiation (GCD, n. 85).

Promoting Knowledge of the Faith

When asked what catechesis seeks to accomplish, many of Christ’s faithful would probably respond that its primary purpose is to provide knowledge and information about the Catholic faith. This is true to a certain extent. However, catechesis would be seriously weakened if it were confined merely to the transmission of information. Simply transmitting doctrinal formulas does not necessarily enable people to understand or put them into practice. Sultana observes that “simply transmitting doctrinal formulae does not mean that people will be able to put them into practice” (Sultana, 2012, pp. 423–425).

On a human level, when one seeks to encounter and establish a relationship with another person, it is necessary to know that person. One learns about the person’s character, interests, values, and aspirations. A similar principle applies to catechesis. A person who has encountered Christ seeks to know him more deeply and to enter into a genuine relationship with him. Catechesis therefore seeks not only to communicate information about

Christ but also to deepen the individual's encounter with Christ as a living person. This requires the catechist to have a deep personal relationship with Christ in order to minister effectively and help others enter into communion with him.

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, emphasizes that there can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord. If catechetical sessions fail to help participants encounter Christ personally, valuable opportunities for evangelization may be lost. It is through encountering Christ that the human person is enabled to profess faith in him as Lord. Within catechesis, Christians learn the fundamental principles of Christian life and are helped to develop intimacy with Christ. They also learn how to journey with others in communion and to participate actively in the Church's mission of evangelization.

Liturgical Education

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, teaches that one of the aims of the Council was to help the faithful live a more vigorous Christian life. One means of achieving this was through the reform of the liturgy, accompanied by appropriate catechesis and liturgical formation. Such formation is not reserved exclusively for priests in seminaries but is also necessary for lay faithful who desire to participate fully in the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 17).

This demonstrates that liturgical education should constitute an integral part of catechesis. Catechesis and liturgy require one another if they are to develop harmoniously and lead the faithful closer to God. The liturgy requires catechesis because catechesis helps the faithful understand the rites, symbols, and forms used in worship. Symbolic actions can lose much of their meaning when they are not properly explained, particularly in the celebration of the sacraments through which grace is communicated to the believing community. Catechesis enables individuals to enter more deeply into the mystery represented and celebrated through the liturgical rites.

Teaching Prayer

Catechesis in the process of evangelization also has the task of teaching people how to pray. This task involves much more than teaching Christians prayers that they should memorise and recite. Catechesis must introduce people to prayer and, especially, to the attitudes necessary for a fruitful relationship with God. Glavich affirms that "Catechesis needs to introduce the person to prayer, and especially to the attitudes which are required for a truly fruitful relationship with God through prayer" (Glavich, 2016, p. 47). Prayer is not merely the recitation of formulas learned by heart; it is a deep and intimate relationship with God.

According to Glavich, teaching prayer through catechesis involves helping people experience different forms of prayer, including vocal and mental prayer, formal and spontaneous prayer, and liturgical prayer (Glavich, 2016, p. 49). Similarly, Singer-Towns maintains that catechesis can help people experience prayer through blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise (Singer-Towns, 2008, p. 314).

Moral Formation

The General Directory for Catechesis states that "the moral formation of Christians constitutes one of the tasks of catechesis in the process of evangelization" (GCD, n. 85). Catechesis contributes to the formation of individual consciences because a properly formed conscience enables people to make sound and informed moral decisions. The person who discovers a treasure naturally seeks to live according to the value of that treasure. Likewise, the Christian who encounters Christ and learns from him the way of Christian life is called to live according to the implications of the Gospel. This requires thorough and continuous moral formation.

Moral formation concerns living the Gospel in everyday life rather than merely observing religious practices for a limited period. Through catechesis, Christians learn to embody the values of the Gospel in their relationships, decisions, responsibilities, and service to others. They are called to "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

Education for Life in the Community

Fostering a community founded on love is another important task of catechesis in the process of evangelization. Human beings are relational by nature and are called to live in relationship with one another. The Christian community fosters a particular form of relationship that transcends mere sympathy, biological relationships, or ordinary forms of human association. Believers in Jesus Christ are united because they share common values centered on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospel. This Christian lifestyle is strengthened through catechesis, which creates awareness of the importance of communal living among the faithful.

The communitarian dimension of catechesis is also central to Christian initiation. In Christian initiation, the person seeking membership in the Christian community is not merely given a set of rules or principles upon which the community is founded; rather, he or she is gradually introduced into the life of the community.

Missionary Initiation

Missionary initiation is the final task of catechesis discussed here. It involves preparing the faithful for a

missionary way of life. The idea of missionary activity may be confusing to some people because it is sometimes associated exclusively with mission territories or foreign lands. Following the broader understanding of mission developed by the Second Vatican Council, missionary initiation includes witnessing to Christ through everyday life. It does not necessarily mean leaving one's homeland to evangelize people in another country. Rather, every Christian is called to bear witness to Christ within his or her ordinary circumstances.

The Christian who comes to know Jesus Christ through catechesis is called to bear witness to him through daily life and not only within the Church or other explicitly religious settings. Being a Christian involves bearing witness to one's faith through words, actions, decisions, relationships, and service. Missionary initiation therefore enables Christians to become witnesses of the Gospel wherever they find themselves.

The Kerygma as the Foundation of Catechesis

One of the most significant developments in contemporary catechetical theology is the renewed emphasis on the kerygma. The kerygma refers to the fundamental Christian proclamation of God's saving action in Jesus Christ. It announces that God loves humanity, that Christ died and rose for salvation, and that the human person is invited to respond through faith and conversion. Pope Francis insists that catechesis must retain this kerygmatic character. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he states that the first announcement must remain at the centre of evangelizing activity and Church renewal (Francis, 2013, p. 129).

This is significant because catechesis can easily become excessively academic. A catechetical programme may contain correct information about doctrine, Scripture, morality, and sacraments while failing to lead people into a living relationship with Christ. Kerygmatic catechesis avoids this problem by constantly asking: Who is Jesus Christ, and what difference does an encounter with him make in human life? The kerygma gives catechesis its centre. Doctrine explains the faith proclaimed by the kerygma. Moral teaching demonstrates how the Gospel transforms life. Sacramental catechesis explains how Christ continues to communicate grace through the Church. Ecclesial catechesis introduces believers into Christian community. Missionary formation teaches Christians how to communicate the Gospel to others. The kerygma therefore does not replace catechesis. Instead, it animates catechesis.

Challenges of Catechesis in Evangelization

Catechesis faces numerous challenges in the process of evangelization. Among the most significant are the following:

Demographic and Cultural Changes

Society is constantly changing. Time influences both culture and social structures, and cultures evolve from one period to another. There is sometimes a tendency to assume that activities, forms, and methods that were effective in the past remain equally effective everywhere and at all times. This assumption is not always correct. The Church must therefore remain attentive to changing social realities in the exercise of catechesis. Catechetical methods must be dynamic and adaptable while remaining faithful to the Gospel. S. N. Adiele observes that although the message of the Church is ageless, the audience and methods of communicating it are subject to change according to time and place. He notes that many strategies that were relevant in the past have been overtaken by changes in time and civilisation (Adiele, 1990, p. 87). The Christian message remains constant, but society changes. There is therefore a need to develop appropriate and effective means of communicating the Gospel in changing circumstances.

Lack of Effective Catechetical Programmes

The provision of effective catechetical programmes is crucial to the success of evangelization in the Catholic Church, particularly in the Archdiocese of Owerri. However, the Church faces several difficulties in providing such programmes, including insufficient interest in catechesis and weaknesses within some catechetical teams. Without effective catechetical programmes, the evangelizing mission of the Church cannot bear the desired fruit. There is therefore a need for parishes and dioceses to develop structured, consistent, and contextually appropriate programmes of catechetical formation.

Lack of Qualified Catechists

One of the significant challenges facing catechesis in the process of evangelisation is the shortage of qualified catechists. Many parishes within the Archdiocese of Owerri struggle to find catechists who possess adequate theological knowledge, pastoral maturity, and pedagogical skills. This challenge requires the Church in the Archdiocese to invest substantially in the training and formation of catechists so that they can provide effective catechetical programmes for the faithful.

Lack of Engagement in Catechesis by the Lay Faithful

Another challenge is the limited participation of some lay faithful in catechetical programmes. Many Catholics may view catechesis merely as an obligation rather than as an opportunity for spiritual growth and deeper communion with Christ. The Church therefore needs to develop catechetical programmes that are engaging, relevant, practical, and transformative. Such programmes should respond to the needs of different groups, including children,

adolescents, young adults, and older adults, and should be adapted to different local contexts.

Secularization, Non-Christian Religious Movements, and Contemporary Ideologies

Many societies in the twenty-first century are becoming increasingly secular, with values that may conflict with or challenge Catholic teaching. A new generation is emerging with new cultural patterns, value systems, and forms of communication that challenge traditional approaches to catechesis. One contemporary intellectual and cultural movement that presents challenges for catechesis is postmodernism. Some Christians influenced by postmodern thought may approach religious claims with skepticism and uncertainty. Questions may arise concerning the existence of God, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the divine inspiration of Scripture, life after death, and eternal life.

These challenges require the Church in the Archdiocese of Owerri to provide catechetical programmes that engage contemporary questions intelligently and pastorally. Such programmes should provide a sound theological and moral foundation for addressing issues such as gender identity, marriage and family life, single parenthood, internet-related fraud and other forms of cybercrime, euthanasia, and other contemporary ethical questions. Catechesis should equip Christians to respond to these issues with both truth and charity.

Recommendations for Overcoming the Challenges

The Church can address the challenges of providing effective catechesis through several strategies.

Priests as the Principal Catechists of Their Parishes

Priests in different dioceses and religious congregations should be encouraged by their bishops and superiors to recognise catechesis as one of their principal pastoral responsibilities. Priests are called and equipped by the Church to teach and shepherd the People of God. Pastors should therefore avoid administering the sacraments without adequate catechetical preparation. The faithful should not merely receive the sacraments; they should also be helped to understand their meaning and significance in Christian life.

Training and Formation of Catechists

The Church at the diocesan level should provide theological education and practical training for catechists so that they can effectively assist pastors in the work of catechesis. Dioceses should also encourage the establishment and development of catechist associations that can provide continuing support, formation, and professional development. Catechists play a crucial role in transmitting

the teachings of the Church and accompanying individuals on their journey of faith. Regular training programmes, workshops, seminars, and educational opportunities should therefore be provided to deepen their knowledge of the faith and improve their teaching and pastoral skills.

Investment in the formation of catechists will enable them to communicate the Gospel more effectively and to engage Christians at different stages of their faith journey. Consequently, the quality of catechesis will improve, contributing to a more fruitful process of evangelisation.

Development of Accessible Catechetical Materials

Each diocese should develop comprehensive and accessible catechetical materials appropriate to the needs of the local Church. In doing so, attention should be paid to the local language or dialect, culture, traditions, social circumstances, and levels of education. Catechetical resources should be made available to people of different ages and backgrounds. Such materials should be doctrinally sound, pastorally relevant, easy to understand, and capable of connecting the Gospel with the concrete realities of everyday life.

Embracing New Technologies in Catechesis

The Church should also embrace new technologies as instruments for catechetical formation. Digital technologies, including online resources, mobile applications, social media, podcasts, videos, and other multimedia platforms, can make catechetical materials more accessible and engaging. Technology can enable the Church to reach people who may not regularly participate in traditional catechetical programmes. When used appropriately, digital tools can make catechesis more interactive, flexible, and accessible while complementing rather than replacing personal pastoral accompaniment.

Involvement of the Laity in Catechesis

Pastors should actively involve the laity in the catechetical mission of the Church. Lay Christians who possess the necessary formation and gifts can assist priests and other catechists in teaching, mentoring, and leading catechetical programmes. This approach promotes the active participation of the laity in the Church's mission of evangelisation. It also creates opportunities for Christians to build meaningful faith communities through small-group discussions, prayer groups, mentoring programmes, and other forms of Christian fellowship.

Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment for Catechesis in Parishes

Parishes should create welcoming and inclusive environments that foster genuine Christian relationships. Such environments can enable individuals to grow in faith

and feel accepted, supported, and encouraged as they respond to the Gospel. Hostile environments, harsh pastoral attitudes, and inadequate attention to the concerns of the faithful can discourage people from participating in Church activities and catechetical programmes. Pastors, catechists, and parish leaders should therefore promote an atmosphere characterized by charity, patience, respect, dialogue, and genuine Christian hospitality.

Conclusion

This work has examined the role of catechesis in the process of evangelization and has established that catechesis is indispensable to the Church's evangelizing mission. Catechesis and evangelization are closely related pastoral realities that complement one another. While evangelization proclaims the Gospel and invites people to conversion, catechesis deepens, develops, and sustains the faith that has been awakened through the Gospel proclamation. The Church is mandated by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that he has commanded. This mission cannot be accomplished effectively without adequate catechetical formation. Catechesis enables Christians to deepen their knowledge of the faith, develop a personal relationship with Christ, participate meaningfully in the liturgy, grow in prayer, develop a properly formed conscience, live in communion with others, and become witnesses to the Gospel.

The discussion has also shown that catechesis faces several challenges in the contemporary world. These include demographic and cultural changes, inadequate catechetical programmes, a shortage of qualified catechists, limited engagement by the faithful, secularization, and the influence of contemporary religious and ideological movements. These challenges require deliberate and context-sensitive responses. The Church must therefore invest in the formation of priests and catechists, develop accessible catechetical materials, make appropriate use of new technologies, encourage the active participation of the laity, and create welcoming parish environments. Catechetical programmes must remain faithful to the deposit of faith while also responding intelligently to the questions and circumstances of contemporary society. There is no single solution to all the challenges facing catechesis. The conversion of hearts and the deepening of Christian faith require time, study, patience, commitment, and perseverance. Nevertheless, irrespective of the difficulties involved, catechesis remains a *sine qua non* of effective evangelization. The Church cannot fulfill her missionary mandate adequately without forming those whom she evangelizes. Catechesis is therefore not merely an auxiliary activity of evangelization but an indispensable

means through which the Gospel is understood, lived, celebrated, and transmitted from one generation to another.

References

1. Adiele, S. N. (1990). "Early Strategies of Proselytization in South-Eastern Nigeria." *Journal of Religious Studies*, XXII/2
2. Amobi, S. Omeayo. "Between Catechesis and Catechetic." Unpublished article.
3. Augustine, St. *De Catechizandis Rudibus* (On Catechizing the Uninstructed).
4. Benedict, St. *Regula Sancti Benedicti* (The Rule of St Benedict).
5. Catechism of the Catholic Church. Ibadan: St Pauls, 2004.
6. Francis, Pope. *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013).
7. General Directory for Catechesis. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.
8. Glavich, M. K. (2016). *The Six Tasks of Catechesis: Key Principles and Practice for Forming Faith*. New London: Twenty-Third Publications.
9. Gwimi, Samuel P. (2017). "New Media, Handmaiden of New Evangelisation in Catechesis: A Pastoral Approach to Catechesis through the New Media." In *Theology, Catechesis and New Media in Africa Today: Proceedings of the 28th CIWA Theology Conference*, edited by Benjamine Bala and Cosmas Okechukwu Ebebe. Port Harcourt: CIWA.
10. Halbach, Matthew. (1997). "The Conceptual Evolution of 'Evangelization' and 'Catechesis,' from the General Catechetical Directory (1971) to the General Directory for Catechesis Tracing the Path towards the 'New Evangelization.'" PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2014.
11. Hunter, K. R. *Foundation for Church Growth*. New Haven: Leader Publishing Company, 1989.
12. John Paul II. (1979). *Catechesi Tradendae* (Catechesis in Our Time). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
13. Ogunewu, Michael A. (2014). "The Church and Effective Evangelisation in the 21st Century: Contemporary Challenges and New Approaches." *Asia-African Journal of Mission & Ministry*, Vol. 9. Mission and Society Research Institute, Sahmyook University.

14. Onwuka, Peter. (2017). "Nigerian Church Becoming a Family of God: Greater Commitment to Evangelisation and Inculturation." In *Theology, Catechesis and New Media in Africa Today: Proceedings of the 28th CIWA Theology Conference*, edited by Benjamine Bala and Cosmas Okechukwu Ebebe. Port Harcourt: CIWA.
15. Paul VI. (2010). *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelisation in the Modern World). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
16. Singer-Towns, B., ed. (2008). *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*. Winona: Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publication.
17. Sultana, C. M. (2012). "Catechesis in Europe during the 20th Century." In G. Bonney and R. Vincent, eds., *Sophia—Paideia e Educazione* (Sir 1:27): *Miscellanea di Studi Offerti in Onore del Prof. Mario Cimosà*. Rome: LAS.
18. Thompson, D. P. (1968). *Aspects of Evangelization. Barnoak, Scotland: The Research Unit*, 1968.
19. Wenhain, W. (1980). *The Elements of New Testament Greek*. London: Cambridge University Press.