

Who's Been "Cropped Out" of the Picture?

Often when we take a photograph, we notice that someone has been cropped out of the picture inadvertently. When it comes to faith formation in our parish communities, some people are too often left out.

If someone took a snapshot of your parish faith-formation program(s), whom/what groups might you identify as being "cropped out" for one reason or another?



People/Groups "Cropped Out"	Reasons Why	What Can Be Done to Rectify?

Waking Up “Rip Van Catechist”

In the classic tale of Rip Van Winkle, good ol’ Rip takes a 20-year nap and awakens to a world he does not recognize. Imagine that you came upon a catechetical leader—Rip Van Catechist—who fell asleep decades ago and has now awakened to the present day. What significant changes in the world, in society, in the Church, and in catechesis would you bring to Rip’s attention? What would be most different about Rip’s approach to faith formation today than it was back in the 1960s or 1970s?

Venue	Significant Changes	Implications for Faith Formation
The World		
Society		
The Church		
Catechesis		

The Word Must Become Flesh

Today’s society is ever more multicultural, diverse, and pluralistic. For that reason, it is crucial that the Church, and catechetical leaders in particular, pay close attention to the various cultures within the parish community and seek ways to most effectively proclaim the Gospel within those various cultures. The *National Directory for Catechesis* identifies seven catechetical tasks in inculturation:

1. To discover the seed of the Gospel that may be present in the culture
2. To know and respect the essential elements and basic expression of the culture of the persons to whom it is addressed
3. To recognize that the Gospel message is both transcendent and immanent—it is not bound by the limitations of any single human culture, yet it has a cultural dimension, that in which Jesus of Nazareth lived
4. To proclaim the transforming and regenerating force that the Gospel works in every culture
5. To promote a new enthusiasm for the Gospel in accordance with evangelized culture
6. To use the language and culture of the people as a foundation to express the common faith of the Church
7. To maintain the integral content of the faith and avoid obscuring the content of the Christian message by adaptations that would compromise or diminish the deposit of faith

With these principles in mind, identify the various cultures within your own parish faith community and jot down some of their unique characteristics and traditions. Then brainstorm about the implications for your catechetical efforts.

Cultures	Unique Characteristics and Traditions	Catechetical Implications

Connect, Awaken, and Share

Reaching out to families is a priority for catechetical leaders, but how is that best accomplished? As always, we turn to Jesus and seek to emulate how he reached people. In short, Jesus spread the Good News by employing three steps: **connect**, **awaken**, and **share**. Consider how you can reach those you serve by integrating these three steps every time you gather families together for faith formation.

CONNECT

“As [Jesus] was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” At once they left their nets and followed him.” (Matt. 4:18–20)

Jesus connected with people right where they were. He met them on their turf. He entered through “their door.” As a catechetical leader, you can **CONNECT** with families by

- Engaging them to tell stories of how the faith was passed on to them.
- Tapping into their deep love for their children and their desire that their children have the tools they need to lead successful lives.
- Respectfully recognizing that people take many different paths to faith.
- Paying attention to the power and promptings of the Holy Spirit.

AWAKEN

“They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’” (Luke 24:32)

Jesus knew how to awaken people’s deepest desires and yearnings. He knew how to touch people’s hearts and set them on fire. As a catechetical leader, you can **AWAKEN** families by

- Helping parents see that family life *is* their spiritual path.
- Enabling parents to focus on how God is already present and active in the life of their family.
- Giving parents the “eyes to see” the inherent holiness of daily life.
- Encouraging parents to deepen their own faith and their relationship.

SHARE

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matt. 18:20)

Jesus understood the power of gathering with others and sharing meals and stories. As a catechetical leader, you can invite families to **SHARE** by

- Creating a supportive environment.
- Sharing your own stories, beliefs, and reason for your joy.
- Offering plentiful and safe opportunities for parents to reflect on, talk about, and celebrate what they’ve come to know and believe through their experiences of God in their lives.
- Providing parents with the vocabulary to articulate their inner experience of faith and modeling this behavior for them.

Treating Adults Like Adults

Adult faith formation cannot and should not look like children’s faith formation with bigger people! Adults learn differently than children do. Below are seven adult learning principles. Choose one adult faith-formation effort/program in your parish. Evaluate how each of these principles is being honored in that particular effort/program, as well as what can be done to more faithfully incorporate these principles.

Name of Adult Faith-Formation Effort/Program _____

Adult Learning Principle	We Are Honoring This . . .	What Can We Do to Improve?
Adults are self-motivated—they resist ideas being imposed upon them.	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	
Adults bring life experience that must be respected.	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	
Adults are goal-oriented—they learn in order to cope with life transitions and want to apply what they learn immediately.	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	
Adults demand relevance and practicality, and they need to take ownership.	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	
Adults’ time commitments must be respected.	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	
Adults learn best in relational, interactive, and conversational settings.	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	
Adults like to laugh!	<p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Poorly Exceptionally Well</p>	

Where Are They Looking?

Young adults have drifted away from the Church in large numbers and are seeking answers elsewhere. Below, on the left side of each square, identify how and where young adults are finding help, support, nourishment, and answers in the areas of personal identity, relationships, work, and spiritual life. Then, on the right side of each square, list ways your parish faith-formation program can respond to these needs more effectively from a Gospel perspective.

Personal Identity



Relationships



Young Adults

Work



Spiritual Life



What Does Discipleship Look Like in an Adolescent?

All our efforts in faith formation should be driven by outcomes. In other words, we should have a clear idea of what the “end product,” or the results of our efforts, should look like. According to the National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis, the following list shows the desired outcomes of adolescent faith formation—ways that young people demonstrate their discipleship (adolescentcatechesis.org/resources/niac-published-documents). Reflect on each of these outcomes and identify how your parish is or can be addressing each one.

Adolescent Catechesis Outcomes	How Our Parish Is or Can Be Addressing This Outcome
Sustaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ supported through regular prayer, faith sharing, and Scripture reading	
Sharing the Good News through words and actions, through Christian stewardship, and through working for peace, justice, and human dignity	
Participating fully, consciously, actively, and regularly in the celebrations of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church	
Articulating the fundamental teachings of the Catholic faith and demonstrating a commitment to learning and growing in this faith	
Applying Catholic ethics, virtues, principles, values, and social teaching to moral decision making, to life situations, and in interactions with the larger culture	
Discerning and using their gifts to actively belong to and participate in the life and mission of the parish, school, and larger community	
Celebrating cultural, racial and ethnic diversity as gifts from God and pursuing the development of Christian community across cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds in their parishes, schools, and broader communities	
Exploring God’s call to vocation through prayer, reflection, and discernment	

Entering Through THEIR Door

St. Ignatius of Loyola believed that the most effective way to “win over” people with your idea, argument, or teaching was to “enter through their door” while remaining sure to “leave through your door.” In other words, we need to connect with people where they are. With children, this is especially important because they are rapidly progressing through stages of their development. Here is a chart of various teaching techniques and strategies organized according to the age groups for which they are most effective. Write down any new ideas or suggestions you have for strengthening these techniques in your parish.

Age Group	Effective Strategies, Techniques, and Activities	Additional Ideas/Suggestions
Pre/K/Primary (preschool through grade 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling • Rituals • Drawing/making crafts • Dramatizing • Games • Memorizing (learning “by heart”) • Music, singing, dancing, movement • Puppet shows • Learning stations • Activity sheets/blackline masters 	
Intermediate (grades 4–6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Hands-on activities/field trips • Creating dioramas • Technology/AV/digital • Bible stories • Guided reflections • Singing and making music • Cooperative learning • Learning stations • Activity sheets/blackline masters 	
Junior High (grades 7–8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemporary music • Technology/social media • Ball toss for reading the text • Small-group discussions • Icebreakers • Props • Mature crafts • Presentations • Current events • Jigsaw activity 	

Resources for Serving Those with Special Needs

When it comes to serving people with special needs, one of the most important resources to assist you is the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD). This organization was established in 1982 to implement the 1978 *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities* in parishes and dioceses throughout the United States. NCPD works collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society. Be sure to visit www.ncpd.org. In addition, NCPD identifies the following links as key resources for assisting those with special needs.

- **Catholic Celiac Society**—<http://www.catholicceliacs.org>
- **Catholic Coalition for Special Education**—<http://www.ccse-maryland.org>
- **CUSA: An Apostolate of Persons with Chronic Illness or Disability**—<http://www.cusan.org>
- **Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at the University of Dayton**—
https://www.udayton.edu/artssciences/ctr/ipi/inclusive_catechesis_resources/web_links.php
- **International Catholic Deaf Association—United States Section**—<http://www.icda-us.org>
- **Mental Illness Ministries of the Archdiocese of Chicago**—<http://miministry.org>
- **National Catholic Educational Association**—<http://www.ncea.org>
- **National Catholic Office for the Deaf**—<http://www.ncod.org>
- **National Conference for Catechetical Leadership**—<http://www.nccl.org>
- **Network of Inclusive Catholic Educators**—<http://udayton.edu/artssciences/ipi/index.php>
- **The Victorious Missionaries**—<http://www.vmosfera.org>
- **USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)**—<http://www.usccb.org>
- **Xavier Society for the Blind**—<http://www.xaviersocietyfortheblind.org>

Helping Catholic School Teachers Instill Catholic Identity

As a parish catechetical leader, you may be called upon to work with the faculty and staff of the parish Catholic school in a variety of ways. You can make a significant contribution by assisting teachers (who do not teach religion class) to think of ways to integrate and reinforce Catholic identity in their particular subject area. Here are 10 such ways:

1. Begin your class each day with a ritual greeting, such as “This is the day the Lord has made./Let us rejoice and be glad!”
2. End your class each day with a traditional Catholic prayer, such as the Memorare, Prayer to the Holy Spirit, *Pater Noster* (Latin for “Our Father”), *Ave Maria* (Latin for “Hail Mary”), Prayer of St. Francis, or Hail, Holy Queen.
3. Sing a refrain or hymn with your students to begin class. For example, science teachers might consider hymns that praise God for creation, such as “All Creatures of Our God and King.”
4. Decorate your classroom with quotes from saints that are related to your field of study. For example, an art teacher may post this quote attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “He who works with his hands and his head and his heart is an artist.”
5. Place in your classroom pictures of saints and Catholic figures related to your field of study. For example, the following Catholics were scientists: St. Albert the Great, St. Hildegard of Bingen, Gregor Mendel, and Pope Francis (he was a chemist before becoming a priest). The following saints and blessed were artists: Blessed Fra Angelico and St. Catherine of Bologna. St. Hubert was a mathematician. Blessed Marie-Elisabeth Péliissier and St. Cecilia were musicians.
6. Pray a novena (nine days) with your students in preparation for an exam, a major project, or even a major athletic event.
7. Every day, ask a different student to mention the name of a deceased loved one and pray for him or her, and for all members of the Communion of Saints.
8. Find themes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that pertain to the subject matter you are studying (historical events, literature, etc.).
9. Do a 3-Minute Retreat (see www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer) with your class before moving on to your subject matter.
10. Invite students to prayerfully share a sign of peace as they leave your classroom.

(Adapted from *Catechist's Journey*—www.catechistsjourney.com)