

**'PROPOSING JESUS CHRIST TODAY'**

# **Presenting a follow-up to the Evaluation**

**By: THE EVALUATION COMMITTEE**

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## INTRODUCTION

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!"(Matt. 28:19) The command to go out on mission has resounded in the heart of the Church since her beginning. It is the reason for her being. The Church exists to evangelize<sup>1</sup>; to proclaim, like Jesus did, that God is a loving God, One Who wants to communicate love and who desires to be encountered personally. [...] For this to continue [...] this shift in catechetical approach becomes vital if the Gospel is to echo in people's lives, and nurture their quest for meaning. It is necessary in order to lead people to a life-giving encounter with Jesus [...]. The launching of this enterprise therefore concerns all Christians, of all ages; it concerns all those who are called to become Christians, and even those, whose numbers are steadily increasing, who may not even be aware that they are being called by Jesus Christ. For all of these reasons, our diocesan project needs to be characterized by a missionary zeal for the new evangelization.*

*(Excerpt from Proposing Jesus Christ Today as the way to freedom and responsibility. A Diocesan Faith Education Project for All Ages, p. 5.)*

Since May 2003, this mission statement has mobilized the entire Church of Montreal. Women and men, animated by their faith, and in keeping with their charisms and the concrete means available within their milieu, have had the courage to respond to this call from Jesus Christ. The members of the evaluation committee of the diocesan project '*Proposing Jesus Christ Today*' have had the privilege, through the online survey and regional visits, of hearing about these various responses. This is a working document and the goal of this brief summary is to focus on some concrete *actions* which may be undertaken so that proposing Jesus Christ may continue, based on what is already taking place. But first, let us recall a few statements which, from the beginning, were the impetus for the *actions which were singled out*.

### Some Facts

Following the evaluation of the diocesan faith education project '*Proposing Jesus Christ Today*', some facts emerged:

- 1) This project is winning unanimous support in the milieus visited and among the pastoral agents who responded to the survey. It touches the very heart of the Church's mission, that of proposing Jesus Christ to people of all ages so as to enable them to encounter Him and to live His Life.
- 2) The energy which has been so generously spent on the 6-12 year old age groups by the pastoral agents and especially by the PCLs, following the end of the teaching of religion in schools, brought about new needs:
  - What can we propose in addition to (faith awakening) and on-going (adolescents) for this age group?
  - What form could Christian Life Formation take?
  - What might we offer to parents and families who are accompanying their children, 'to young adults 18-25 years of age', to adults and to seniors?

- What could we offer, so that Jesus Christ is concretely proposed to everyone and at all stages of their lives?

3) Some parishes, inspired by the catechumenal spirit in which '*Proposing Jesus Christ*' is essential, have demonstrated encouraging and creative initiatives. These initiatives have taken into account the needs and the resources of the milieu. Considerable effort still needs to be made in '*Proposing Jesus Christ*' beyond the 6-12 year old age bracket.

## Some actions to be promoted

### 1. Responsibility of Proposing Jesus Christ

#### ***Acting in solidarity***

*To attain the goals that we have set for ourselves requires that we remain united; that we respect each other's areas of competency and that we act in a spirit of solidarity. [...] In a parish it is normal that everyone, including every member of the pastoral team, should feel concerned about Christian initiation and do their part. If young people are to develop their Christian identity, then they must be in contact with people who will show them the various facets of Christian discipleship. Let us be inspired by the mystery of the Visitation and learn from Mary's encounter with Elizabeth, that when people meet and speak to each other about God, something happens; faith is proclaimed and everyone concerned grows in faith. It is important at this present time therefore, that a spirit of solidarity be fostered among the parishes, just as it should be fostered within every parish.*

*(Excerpt from the Pastoral Letter: Christian Initiation, A Heartfelt Adventure)*

The evaluation of '*Proposing Jesus Christ Today*' and the analysis of the results show that proposing Jesus Christ to people of all ages, is the responsibility of a few people; the pastor and/or those responsible for children (PCLs). This practice raises questions in a Church where all are responsible for proclaiming and catechising<sup>1</sup>. Proposing Jesus Christ necessitates cohesive action among the pastors, the members of the pastoral teams, PCLs, catechists and all the pastoral services. **It involves the entire Christian community.**

The evaluation of the project shows new needs so as to assure that the person of Jesus Christ is proposed in an innovative way to adolescents, young adults (18-25 years of age) and other adults.

In order to continue responding to the current needs, and to be open to those which may emerge, it is suggested that:

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *General Directory for Catechesis, Congregation for the Clergy, n° 225; Proposing Jesus Christ Today as the way to freedom and responsibility. A Diocesan Faith Education Project for All Ages*, third point, p. 18-20 ; *Christian Initiation, A Heartfelt Adventure, Pastoral Letter from Jean-Claude Cardinal Turcotte.*

Beginning in the autumn, pastoral teams<sup>2</sup> and all involved in faith education review individual responsibilities and together adapt their pastoral project so as to continue to be open to proposing Jesus Christ to all ages but specifically to adolescents and adults.

- That the various diocesan services concerned, in conjunction with the Office for Faith Education, combine their expertise and specific competencies in order to support the communities in updating their pastoral projects with the help of human resources and tools that exist or are under development.

## 2. The consolidation and development of the catechetical journey

*An approach where we come to search for the faith together; where we walk together on the same road as companions for the journey [...] Open to All [...] Inter-generational [...] Emphasis on the Person [...] An Ongoing Concern [...] Modeled on the Baptismal Catechumenate [...]*

*(Excerpt from Proposing Jesus Christ Today as the way to freedom and responsibility. A Diocesan Faith Education Project for All Ages, p. 17-24.)*

At the heart of the diocesan faith education project, and with the aim of offering a catechesis in which we walk together on the same road, some important changes are suggested: move from following courses to journeying, move from sacramentalisation to Christian Initiation, move from catechesis for children to catechesis for all.

The last five years have shown that significant progress has been made in this regard. However, the experience also shows that there is still much to do to assure that catechesis becomes an authentic journey for people who wish to know Jesus Christ.

Two major difficulties have garnered special attention. 1- To offer catechesis as an experience which connects *all areas of Christian life*. 2- To offer a welcoming atmosphere *and accompaniment* to adolescents, catechumens, future confirmands and adults.

### a. Integration of all areas of Christian life

Despite considerable efforts, some Christian communities, are still having trouble offering experiences which promote the integration of the different aspects of Christian life in which the whole community catechetizes and in turn is being catechized. Divisions still exist: no relationship between the catechism being offered and the life of the

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<sup>2</sup> Priest, PCL, pastoral agent in charge of the project or file.

Christian community, catechism where only children are present, courses offered solely with the aim of receiving the sacraments.

Concretely, *Christian communities*

- Must develop events which touch families in particular, and that are sensitive to all generations; based on the needs and the concrete experiences of the people; and will better integrate the liturgical, social justice and the evangelical dimensions of Christian life.

To support Christian communities in this undertaking the *Diocesan Services*:

- Will explore possibilities which might offer liturgy as faith education at the level of faith awakening, of catechesis and as continuing formation for Christian life.
- Will propose scenarios within the framework of the Lord's Day.
- Will develop scenarios for Sunday Eucharistic celebrations designed for families.
- Will accompany Christian communities in examining and establishing courses for faith awakening which already exist: *A petits pas and P'tite Pasto.*

To help Christian communities put the sacraments back into their rightful context on the journey for Christian life initiation, and to enable a genuine faith experience, it is suggested:

- That the main points of the journey for the immediate preparation of the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation be emphasized by using pastoral materials gathered for this purpose by the Office for Faith Education and the teams working with them.
- That communal faith experiences continue to be organized by the Diocesan Services involved, such as visits (diocesan, regional, sectorial) to the Mary Queen of the World Cathedral, for the future confirmands and their families, and family days (diocesan, regional, sectorial) for future first communicants centered on the Eucharist within the framework of the Lord's Day.

#### b. Places of Welcome and Accompaniment

What can be proposed for adolescents who have completed or who will complete their Christian Initiation? What form could a follow-up take? What might be offered to adults who wish to complete their Christian Initiation? What accompaniment (mentoring) might be offered to those who have just discovered God and wish to

embark on a faith journey? These are the many challenges with which Christian communities are faced.

To respond to these challenges and to offer places of welcome and accompaniment, it is suggested:

- That in reassessing their responsibilities, pastoral teams entrust to one person or to a few people (members of the team or others) the management of Christian life formation for adolescents and adults.

To support the pastoral teams, it is suggested that the Diocesan Services involved with the catechumenate, and/or Youth Ministry, share their expertise and competencies.

### 3. Formation

*Those called to be catechists will require a solid university level, theological formation, with a catechetical component. This training, along with their experience and commitment to the faith, will contribute inner consistency, personal credibility, and pastoral stability to the catechetical task. With regards to the training of volunteer catechists required for this project, the parishes can count on the support and competence of mandated persons such as the D.R.E's, and the Office for Faith Education, who at various intervals will offer training sessions for volunteers.*

*(Excerpt from Proposing Jesus Christ Today as the way to freedom and responsibility. A Diocesan Faith Education Project for All Ages, p. 34.)*

A wide consensus showed that Christian communities are preoccupied with the changes in faith education. Faced with emerging new needs, they are concerned about the initial and ongoing formation of those who are involved in faith education - catechists, parents and adults.

#### **Catechists:**

The Church relies on catechists! They are of utmost importance to the faith education project. Moreover, catechists who are working in the area of the catechetical journey of children have manifested a certain unease at fully integrating all of the catechetical suggestions (content, training, experiences) and of managing work, family and commitment as catechist.

To provide pastoral care of catechists who are working with the 0-12 year old age bracket and to support them in an on-going way in their mission, it is proposed:

- That the PCL pay special attention to accompanying the catechists (both personally and as a group).
- That the model of formation sessions in the parish, sector or region and diocesan conferences be maintained and developed. These sessions and conferences will integrate the components of theology, pedagogy and spirituality.

- That initial formation sessions be offered annually in the parish, sector or region for all new people who are becoming catechists.
- That the Diocesan Services and the coordinators offer to support all concerned.

To offer pastoral care to the catechists who are working in other areas (adolescents, young adults, adults, seniors), it is suggested:

- That the model of formation sessions in the parish, sector or region, and diocesan conferences be maintained and developed. These sessions and conferences will integrate the components of theology, pedagogy and spirituality.
- That initial formation sessions be offered annually in the parish, sector or region for all new people who are becoming catechists.
- That the Diocesan Services, and the coordinators offer to support all concerned.

### **The Parents:**

Parents are the primary faith educators of their children. Initiatives in which the parents are, by nature, involved have been undertaken in many places even if at the beginning, the emphasis was on catechesis for children. How can we accompany them in this responsibility knowing the difficulties they have in managing work, family, leisure activities and educational responsibilities? How can we help them in considering their own spiritual experience?

Within the dynamic of making suggestions for and enabling realistic accompaniment of parents, many paths may be followed in keeping with the local milieu. A few suggestions:

- A time for catechesis with parents and children.
- A time for catechesis among parents with content that is adapted to them and linked to that which is proposed for the children.
- A time for adult catechesis based on the experience and the needs of the parents.
- Participation in family Masses or in festive gatherings to celebrate events along the catechetical journey.

### **Adults:**

The Diocesan Faith Education Project '*Proposing Jesus Christ Today*' has from the beginning, been intended for people of all ages. The evaluation has revealed a number of initiatives for example accompanying the sick, faith sharing groups, social justice commitments. The evaluation surfaced the real needs of adults.

To move forward, it is suggested that

- Christian communities (parishes, sectors, units) consider what has already been done in their milieu regarding the faith education of adults.
- The Diocesan Services concerned make an inventory of the courses already in existence for the Christian life formation of adults, make them known, and, if necessary, develop sessions for formation and adopt them in partnership with those who have designed and used them.
- Christian communities, supported by the Diocesan Services involved, decide on the path to be followed in keeping with the needs and resources of their milieu.
- Christian communities, supported by the Diocesan Services involved, choose and empower members to accompany adults in their Christian life formation.
- That to this end, Christian communities and the Diocesan Services involved, develop formation inspired by the document *Chemins de foi*, a guide suggested for those involved in one way or another in the area of the Christian Life formation of adults<sup>3</sup>.

## Conclusion

Following the evaluation of the diocesan faith education project for all ages, three major challenges will be addressed during **the next 5 years**:

- All Christian communities assume fully their responsibility of proposing Jesus Christ to all.
- The consolidation and development of catechetical courses be provided for people of all ages.
- That formation be developed and provided for catechists, parents and adults.

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<sup>3</sup> This guide was designed and drawn up through the joint initiative of the Christian Education Committee of the Assembly of Quebec Catholic Bishops and the Regroupement des responsables diocésains for Christian Life Formation in the dioceses of Quebec.