Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)
What is a “Catechism”? A summary of instruction for the faithful.


A- John Paul II’s legacy – responding to the need for universal catechesis
- 1985 Extraordinary Synod (20th Anniversary of Vatican II)
- Role of Cardinal Ratzinger (Now Benedict XVI)

B- First universal Catechism in 400 years since Council of Trent
- Major vs. Minor catechisms. (Baltimore Catechism, a minor catechism)

C- A building block for the “New Evangelization”

II. Architecture/Structure of the Catechism

A- Structure, like great architecture, beautiful as it is functional.
- Analogy: cathedral.
- Analogy: “Where is Thumbkin?” Song

B- Organic synthesis of essential doctrines
- The heart of all catechesis: The Person of Jesus Christ [CCC 426]

C- Prologue
- God is first in the Christian life. Central mystery of CCC=Trinity
  - Know God First!
- First word of the Catechism sets the tone: “Father”= relationship
- CCC 1, First paragraph, The Trinity and Us
- All CCC teachings are meant to lead us to Eternal Love

  Memory aid: “Thumbkin”
  Thumb: One God=Trinity
  Trinity-central mystery- touches all parts of the Catechism
  “Thumbs up!” = our “yes” to God

D- Four Parts, Four Pillars

- Part one: Profession of faith (The Creed) Beliefs
  Explores how we are made for relationship with God; plus major beliefs
  
  Memory aid: “Pointer”
  ▪ Pointer points to our beliefs
  ▪ Index finger points to the index (list of beliefs, the creed
  ▪ Alternate idea: first finger (starts with f) = faith = foundations.

- Part two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery Sacraments
  Explores redemption, grace and the Sacraments
  
  Memory aid: “Tall Man”
  ▪ “Tallness”= What stands out about Catholicism in the world? The Sacraments.
  ▪ Second finger (starts with “s”) = sacraments

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- Part three: Life in Christ
  Life
  Explores Christian vocation; moral values and Ten Commandments

  Memory aid: “Ring Man”
  • Ring=marriage=life
  • R-i-n-g (four letters) = l-i-f-e
  • Ring finger is the weakest finger; Christian life “surrounded” by sacraments and prayer

- Part four: Christian Prayer
  Prayer
  Explores what prayer is; The Lord’s Prayer examined

  Memory aid: “Pinky”
  • Pinky (starts with “p”) = prayer
  • Leading edge of a karate chop, prayer = power
  • Pinky finger seems small and vulnerable, yet it is not, it is necessary to the full function of the hand. God creates all things with purpose.
  • In coming before the Lord God each day in prayerful humility, you will hold more wisdom in your little pinky finger than an entire catechism could hold.

III. Practice How-To on Using the Catechism

  Separate hand out.

IV. Resources

  Catechism of the Catholic Church, second edition
  United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
  YOUCAT
  Catechism online at the Vatican: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM
  Catechism online at St Charles Borromeo (very searchable): http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm

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