

THE KEYS TO THE DEPOSIT

Unlocking Doctrine for Effective Catechesis

- A. The **PREMISE** of the doctrine is the underlying truth upon which the doctrine is based.
- B. The **ESSENTIALS** of the doctrine are those aspects of the truth which, in light of the current catechetical situation, cannot be left to chance for students to discover on their own.
- C. The **COMMONLY HELD ERRORS** in regard to doctrines are those mistaken notions which are currently prevalent and which are unrecognized by most students.
- D. The **SCRIPTURAL DRIVING FORCE** of a doctrine is the affirmation and the power, found in God's Word, which underpins all Revelation in Sacred Tradition.
- E. The **RELATED DOCTRINES** are those truths most closely connected to a doctrine and consequently crucial to understanding it. They are reflections of the **ORGANIC UNITY** of the Faith.

So Much to Learn ...So Little Time!

Teach the **Premise**.

Jesus: From all time God's intention has been to share His life with us. Jesus is the personification of that intention made possible.

Scripture: God has chosen to speak to us in human words. His words have been written and carefully guarded so as to be new for every generation.

Sin: Men and women preferred themselves to God and by that very act scorned Him.

Teach the **Essentials**.

Jesus: 1. Incarnation. 2. Redemption. 3. His Second Coming. 4. Our relationship with Him.

Scripture: 1. Divine authorship. 2. Human authors are true authors. 3. Interpretation by magisterium. 4. Christocentricity.

Sin: 1. The reality of objective evil. 2. The effects of sin. 3. The requisites for sin, culpability. 4. Temptation. 5. Contrition. 6. Forgiveness and penance.

Teach the **Commonly Held Errors**. (These are only some of them.)

Jesus: He only gradually became aware of His divinity. (No!)

Scripture: Some Revelation is "dated." (No!)

Sin: God cannot possibly really allow us to spend eternity in Hell, if He loves us. (No!)

Teach the **Scriptural Driving Force**. (See the accompanying handout on how to determine this.)

Teach the **Related Doctrines**. (These are some of them.)

Jesus: All truth is related to Him, Who is Truth! See especially the Church, sacraments, sin, virtue.

Scripture: Tradition, God's plan, Revelation, Truth.

Sin: Salvation, Sacrament of Reconciliation, grace, mercy.

Faith

Premise:

The God of the "Amen" is the God of Truth and we believe because of His authority. (CCC 156, 1063, 2465)

Essentials:

1. Faith is certain, not a blind leap. It is founded on His authority. (CCC 157)
2. Faith is necessary for salvation. (CCC 161)
3. Faith seeks understanding; it is not antithetical to understanding. It must be active and expressed in charity. (CCC 158)
4. Faith is a gift. We must ask for it and exhort students to pray for it. We do not deserve it. (CCC 153)
5. Faith can be lost and faith can be increased. (CCC 29, 162)

Common Errors:

Faith is relative to experience. Faith is vain or only for weaklings, etc.

Related Doctrines:

All of Revelation!

Revelation

Premise:

God has shown Himself and given Himself to all mankind—He has definitively answered the questions regarding the meaning and purpose of life. (CCC 68)

Essentials:

1. God has made Himself and His plan abundantly clear.
2. God has disclosed all the truths needed by us to achieve our fulfillment and destiny.
3. God has delivered His word through oral and written means using human agents.
4. Revelation is summed up and personified in Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Common Errors:

Revelation is ongoing and ever new, according to our circumstances. We must find God.

Related Doctrines:

Faith, Scripture, Tradition, the Church.

Trinity

Premise:

God is a family, a communion of Persons who live in love, perfectly happy (CCC 261, 253, 2204, 2205). (The doctrines of the Trinity reveal the inner life of God, a wonderful union of three divine Persons, and a most profound mystery. The unity of the Trinity is fundamentally different from created sharing.)

Essentials:

1. God wants us to share in His Trinitarian life (2Pet. 2:4). The intimate secrets of God are ours to know.
2. Explain "mystery." (A mystery is a truth that we cannot know unless God reveals it. This truth is not contrary to reason, in fact it is imminently logical and reasonable because it pertains to God. We can understand it, but not fully. In heaven our understanding will be more complete.)
3. Each Person of the Trinity has a work, a role. It is essential to understand these roles so that it is possible to recognize the work of each Person in one's life.
 - Father—Creator-Initiator-Source-Provider
 - Son—Savior-Lord-Mediator-Judge
 - Spirit—Sanctifier-Guide-Guarantor

Common Errors:

God is too mysterious for us to understand, so don't even try. God is so different from us that He can't really care much about us. Why would we care about Him?

Related Doctrines:

Absolutely everything is related to the Trinity and God's plan for our lives!

Father

Premise:

God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority. He is good and provides loving care for all of His children. (CCC 238-240, 2786-2793)

Essentials:

1. God is "Our" Father. This expresses both our personal relationship with God and with each other. We must be in communion in order to be His children. (CCC 2786-2793)
2. Divine Providence and our need to be abandoned to Him. The question of evil is answered here. (CCC 302, 305, 309)
3. God has a plan for my individual life and for the salvation of all people. (CCC 306)
4. No action of ours can alter God's loving fatherhood.

Common Errors:

Poor fathering here can make it impossible for us to have a relationship with the Father. He is stern and essentially removed.

Related Doctrines:

Mercy, justice, Providence, blessing, sacramental economy.

Holy Spirit

Premise:

He is the Lord and Giver of Life.

Essentials:

1. He is a Person and a relationship with the Holy Spirit is necessary for all believers.
2. Holy Spirit is the Protector and Guarantor of the Church.
3. He is best known by His titles and works. (Advocate, Paraclete, Guarantor, etc.)
4. His role in the sacraments, especially Confirmation. (CCC 1308)
5. His authority is absolute.

Common Errors:

Because He does not have an anthropocentric name we can tend to relate to Him as a thing, a power, a force.

Related Doctrines:

Sacraments, the Church, prayer, the moral life, etc.

Made in the image and likeness of God

Premise:

We are persons called to enter freely into a relationship with God. No other creature can do that in the way that human beings can. (CCC 357)

Essentials:

1. The soul, or spiritual principle, can have its origin only in God. (CCC 362-364)
2. We possess the desire and the capacity for God. (CCC 27).
3. Male and female He created them. Procreation is the height of our participation in God's creative work. (CCC 369-373)
4. We image God as His children and as a communion of persons.
5. God created everything for us. (CCC 377).
 - We can exercise dominion like a father who provides and protects.
 - Jesus is our model of self-mastery.
 - Self-giving love is the essence of Trinitarian life.
6. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) This is our responsibility in light of being in God's image and likeness. (We are the crown of creation.)
 - Human Dignity.
 - Work and Worship: activities which make us more like God.

Common Errors:

Human beings are the measure for themselves, the center of the universe. Life is ours to control and to manipulate, etc.

Related Doctrines:

Creation, holiness, Incarnation, the moral life, prayer, holiness, grace, etc.

Creation

Premise:

Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened God's hand. He did this in order to share His being, wisdom, goodness and glory. (CCC 293, 295)

Essentials:

1. God creates "out of nothing" (CCC 296-8).
2. God created human beings "in His image." (CCC 356-361)
3. It was not necessary for God to create us; yet He loves so much that He is the "Hound of Heaven" and the Good Shepherd in search of the lost one. (CCC 293, 295)
4. Human beings participate in God's creative work and the crown of this participation is procreation. (God is Truth, Beauty and Goodness.)
5. Providence: "in Him we live and move and have our being." (CCC 300) (This is the basis of our relationship with God and the foundation of the whole moral life.)
6. From the beginning, God envisaged the glory of the new creation in Christ and He will carry out His plan. (CCC280)

Common Errors:

Usually this doctrine is only taught in the primary grades and never referred to again; it is neglected. The various theories about the details of creation are frequently proposed as fact.

Related Doctrines:

The moral life, the glory of God, the purpose of our existence, love, hope, the last things, the dignity of human life, the social teaching of the Church, etc.

Mary

Premise:

In order to accomplish His plan for our salvation God intended to employ the free cooperation a daughter of Israel. (CCC 488)

Essentials:

1. Mother of God (CCC 466, 495)
2. Immaculate Conception (CCC 490-493)
3. Assumption (CCC 966)
4. Perpetual Virginity (CCC 499-501)
5. Mother in the Order of Grace (CCC 967-970) (As Jesus is our Brother in the order of grace.)
 - Mary participates in the mediation of grace. (Without this she is a mere historical figure).
 - Mary is a type and model; she is the New Eve.
6. Marian devotions.

Common Errors:

Failure to teach Marian doctrine in light of Jesus, the only way that they make sense. Over emphasis on devotions / private revelations.

Related Doctrines:

Jesus, the Church, grace, prayer, Incarnation, etc.

Social Teaching of the Church

Premise:

There is a certain resemblance between the union of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love. Love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God. (CCC 1878)

Essentials:

1. The transcendent dignity of human life. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him. Christian life must be ordered to fraternal charity and to God. (CCC 1929, 2401)
2. An end to sinful inequalities. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race and we only have a right to what we need. Each person must be given their due. (CCC 1947, 2402, 2437)
3. The authority of parents and government is a share in God's authority. (See the duties of authority under "society" in CCC index.) The Church, not the government, must take care of the poor. (CCC 1897, 1898, 1918 – 1921)
4. Subsidiarity: we do not have the right to do for others what they can do for themselves. (CCC 1883-85, 1894)
5. The common good: presupposes the good of the person (respect), social well-being, development (prosperity), peace and security. (CCC 1907 ff.)
6. This is intrinsic to the universal call to holiness and the life of charity.

Common Errors:

This is a "liberal" cause. This is only for those who are "called" to this kind of service. (No!)

Related Doctrines:

The moral life, love, holiness, mercy, image and likeness of God, etc.

Conscience Formation

Premise:

God made a place, a faculty, for man which is his core and sanctuary. There he is alone with God. (CCC 1776)

Essentials:

1. The requirement of interiority. (CCC 1779)
2. The education of conscience is indispensable / required. (CCC 1783).
3. The problem of an ignorant conscience. (CCC 1790 ff.)
4. Elements necessary for formation. (CCC 1785) (This paragraph is invaluable.)

Common Errors:

No acknowledgement of the existence of conscience and so no instruction concerning it.

Related Doctrines:

Sin, mercy, justice, evil, goodness, commandments, etc.

Grace

Premise:

By His gratuitous initiative God intends to give Himself to us. He is impelled to do this in order to bring to completion the work He began when He created us. (CCC 1998, 2001)

Essentials:

1. Grace is God's life in us; it is not a "state" of existence. (CCC 1997)
2. We are uniquely made to receive that grace and we have a right to approach the throne of grace. (CCC 2001)
3. There are different types / forms of grace. (CCC 2000)
 - State in life graces
 - Actual grace
 - Sanctifying grace
 - Providence
4. Grace can be increased and it can be lost.
 - Sacramental graces (CCC 1129, 2003)
 - Response
 - Prayer
 - Loss through sin and / or rejection by a refusal to believe
5. Merit (CCC 2006-16) (Not "earning" heaven!)

Common Errors:

Almost no instruction is given on growing in grace, the pursuit of holiness, or loss of grace.

Related Doctrines:

Trinity, Baptism, virtue, prayer, last things, sin, blessings, salvation, etc.

The Last Things

Premise:

According to each allotted measure the time for rejecting or accepting grace must come to an end, retribution must be given, and eternity begins. (CCC1013, 1021, 1022)

Essentials:

1. God wills all to be saved and so He must make it possible. (CCC55)
2. Death is entrance into everlasting life. (CCC 1011,1020)
-where is thy sting? (CCC1009, 1010) -the Church knows how to help with this (CCC 1012)
3. Particular judgement (CCC 679, 1470) -Christ is the measuring rod
4. Heaven – supreme, definitive happiness (CCC1024) -beatific vision – blessed communion with God and all who are there (CCC 163, 1026, 1028, 2548 – 2550) - purification must be accomplished (CCC 1023, 1030)
5. Hell – place God had to make for definitive self exclusion from Him and from the blessed (CCC1033) -how to get there? –our choice (CCC 1037, 1869)
6. Eternity – time was created, eternity is afterward (CCC 327, 1038)
7. Resurrection of the dead – mortal nature will put on immortality, for happiness or for judgement (CCC 298, 364, 989 – 1003)
8. Prepare for all of this (CCC1014, 1452 – 1453, 2518 – 2519) (Mt. 25: 13 ff.)

Common Errors:

Reincarnation (CCC1013), repentance after death (CCC393), all will go to heaven, no catechesis on the last rites, failure to explain mercy / justice, God sends people to Hell, no instruction in preparation for happy death, etc.

Related Doctrines:

Eternal life, mercy / justice, holiness, purgatory, the Church, last rites, the purpose of life, etc.

The Centrality of Scripture in Teaching for Conversion: How to make Scripture *Drive* your Teaching

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching" (2Timothy 3:16)
"The Word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12)

Pray: In order to enter into dialogue with God.

- ask God to open His Word to your understanding.
- pray that your students will encounter God through your instruction.

"Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For, 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.'" (DV #25)

Study: The footnotes in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

- read *all* the scriptural references for a particular topic.
- make use of a concordance, commentaries, apologetic texts.

"Biblical references are a valuable working-tool in catechesis." (CCC #19, see also #11.)

Read: Scripture.

- immerse yourself in God's Word.
- be open to new insight.
- allow God to dictate the content of your presentation through His Word.

"Therefore, all clerics...and others who, as deacons or catechists, are officially engaged in the ministry of the Word, should immerse themselves in the Scriptures by constant reading and diligent study." (DV #25)

Evaluate: Your students.

- address their needs: scripturally weak, defenders of the Faith, scholars?
- take into account your personal understanding of the topic.

"Methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned." (EN #44)

Select: The scriptural driving force of doctrine.

- decide which passages most effectively unlock a deeper meaning of that doctrine for your students.

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32).

Prepare: Your Presentation.

- read the Catechism on your topic.
- decide where the Scriptures will be placed in catechesis.

Teach: Your lesson.

- read from the Bible as you teach.
- use *Scripture-speak*.
- have them follow along in their Bibles.
- provide materials with the Scriptures clearly cited.
- suggest meditation on the key Scriptures.

"Catechesis must be impregnated and penetrated by the thought, the spirit and the outlook of the Bible and the Gospels through assiduous contact with the texts themselves." (CT #27)

CT: *Catechesi Tradendae*—"On Catechesis in Our Time"

DV: *Dei Verbum*—"Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation"

EN: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*—"Evangelization in the Modern World"



Handwritten scribbles and marks in the upper left quadrant of the page.

