

CATECHETICAL PROGRAMMING

A Course for Orthodox Catechists

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E-Quip Course of Studies in Catechetics

MODULE 2

CATECHETICAL PROGRAMMING

What is programming? Who programs?

1. Definition of Programming

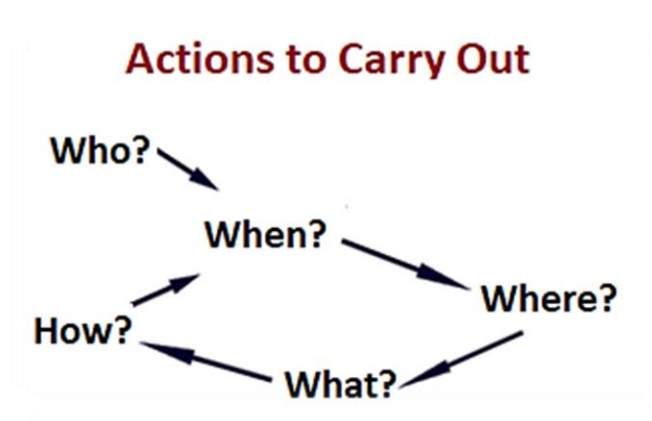
Programming is the anticipated and structured vision of an activity and all the elements involved in its realisation. These would be:

- Develop the action plan to be carried out
- Foresee all the elements that are needed to carry it out
- Seek coordination between objectives, content and means, in order to achieve a specific result.

Answers to some questions

Programming is usually thought of as an answer to the following questions:

1. **What** is the action to be taken?
2. **Who** is going to do it?
3. **What content** is going to be developed?
4. **Where** are you going?
5. **When** will it take place?
6. **Where** will it take place?



The Passage to the Catechetical Field

These questions can be answered as follows from the catechetical task:

- What is the action we want to take?
The task of catechesis because it includes many more concrete actions.
- Who is going to do it?

The church or Christian community in its various expressions: The Diocese, the Parish, the group of catechists.

- What content will this action have?

The *what* is the content that is transmitted in catechesis: The Orthodox Christian Message.

- Where is it headed?

Towards the confession of the Orthodox faith and communion with Christ in his Church and the tasks and objectives that are set to achieve this more global goal.

- When does it take place?

The *when* refers to the itinerary that is followed, the process of catechesis and its various stages. This itinerary is carried out through catechetical sessions or events.

- How is it performed?

The *how* can be identified with the various methods, media, and materials we use to impart catechesis.

- Where does it take place?

In the Christian community itself, in the bosom of the Church, which is the proper place of catechesis. This includes the family, the "little church" in which the first catechesis of children takes place.

Fundamental Principles

The fundamental principles that we must consider for any activity are these:

1. The programming depends on the educational purpose to be achieved. In the pastoral field of catechesis, it must collect in an orderly and methodical way the needs it intends to satisfy.
2. Programming is at the service of people, and must therefore reflect their psychological, social and spiritual needs.
3. The program must include the internal structure of the topics and subjects, which, in this case, will be that of the catechetical process that is carried out.
4. Only what can be evaluated is programmable, in order to observe the change that occurs in the learning process.

Programming Features

A well-done program has these characteristics:

1. **Clarity:** a schedule is clear when it perfectly defines the objectives it aims to achieve and the way to achieve them. It is not simply a matter of using clear language, but of the fact that in addition to the language, the planning ideas are coherent and precise. The programming as a whole, and in each of its parts, must be perfectly intelligible to those who offer it and to those who have to carry it out. The reason for the failure of many programs is that people do not know what to do or how to do what they are trying to achieve.

2. **Coherence:** a program is coherent when there is coordination, interdependence and balance between the different parts or phases of the project to be carried out: the objectives must be programmed in coherence with the contents, means and activities, and vice versa. On the other hand, programming must be consistent with the reality of the recipients and the characteristics of the environment for which it is programmed. The programming is always based on the psychosocial, cultural and spiritual needs and needs of the recipients, since it is oriented towards the service of the people being educated.
3. **Continuity:** the project itself, and its different steps or moments that compose it, constitute a total unity. There should be no gaps in the process.
4. **Progression:** The unity of programming should follow a progressive and graduated sequence from the easy to the difficult, from the simple to the complex. Each piece of content and activity should help the following.
5. **Flexibility:** Programming should be flexible, i.e. it should be open to modification and change as it develops. Circumstances may arise that make it necessary to make some modifications. The catechetical plan must not be rigid and unalterable. Scheduling is flexible when it facilitates:
 - a. Freedom and creativity
 - b. The possibility of readapting the contents
 - c. The use of different types of methods and procedures
 - d. The possibility of being evaluated and reformed
6. **Openness:** programming must be open to interrelation with other groups that are going through a similar process. The rhythm of maturation in the process of faith is personal; therefore, the programming must be adapted to meet the needs of each individual.

Catechetical programming consists of a set of interrelated elements that, at the same time, are functionally focused on specific objectives and contents.

Factors and Types of Educational Programming

The following factors are to be considered when planning or planning Orthodox Christian educational action: the place or setting where the educational action takes place, the time of the process and the content.

Place or Area

The place or area for which a program is carried out determines or conditions the same programming. In the case of catechesis, it can be the local church or Orthodox parish, a mission, a youth group, etc.

Time

It marks the duration of the process that is planned, resulting in a longer or shorter schedule.

Content

It supports the extension of the programming, offering you a specific body or field.

In a parish, programming must be carried out harmoniously and jointly, considering the above elements and the different areas:

1. Specific groups and specific activities of each of the pastoral actions: Evangelization, Liturgy and Diakonia
2. Global pastoral action of the parish itself and in the context of the Vicariate or the Archdiocese

Types

In programming we can differentiate different types depending on the level of specificity in which we are situated, and the development time of that level. Programming can be short or by units, or long (joint).

Both types of programming, short and long, must be included in any catechetical pastoral planning project, since their purpose is different:

1. That of programming units (short) delimits the learning process of the catechised, which in this case is Christian
2. Joint (long) programming emphasizes the design of the activity

Programming Units or Short Programming

They are programs with a unitary sense of their own. Its content is concrete and precise, and it is developed in a short period of time. Catechetical sessions can be thought of as units of programming, or to use technical terms, they are often called catechetical acts.

These units should show:

1. The specific objectives to be pursued
2. The content that is transmitted
3. Materials related to the activities
4. The methodology for each unit and activity
5. Evaluation to verify the proposed objectives

Joint or long programming

It collects all the programming units or short programs. It is scheduled in one go for the entire course. It is of a more general nature, but presents greater global clarity. It raises:

1. The General Objectives
2. The contents of the entire course or even the entire process
3. The methodology to be followed
4. The activities, without detailing the modality
5. The materials we intend to use
6. And the types of assessment

Phases of programming

Catechesis seeks a specific educational and pastoral process. This project articulates various levels of indications and operational options. To develop this project, we need to consider and articulate five moments or phases, which are the ones that determine and enable its execution:

1. Base-ideas

2. Analysis of the situation
3. Operating Options
4. Implementation of the project
5. Evaluation

Ideas base

They are also usually considered as ideal orientations or ideas-forces that substantiate, push and energise the entire project to be carried out. We can consider as basic ideas the concept or image of God, of Christ and of the Trinity, the concept or image, or type of person, of the Church and of the world that we have. A fundamental basic idea is the clarity of the concept of Holy Tradition, which constitutes the heritage that transmits the faith within the Church.

Analysis of the situation

Specific situation of the recipients or catechised, the environments in which they live and develop, and the situation of the group of catechists themselves.

Operating Options

They allow us to move from the given situation in which we find ourselves, and which has been offered to us by the previous analysis, to the desired situation. Some call this aspect proper programming. It is the most operative moment of the entire programming process and it is basically about determining three elements:

1. The objectives to be achieved
2. The most suitable means
3. The agents who are going to perform the scheduled action

Implementation of the project

It consists of the concrete execution of the programmed objectives, by means of the selected means, and carried out by the agents indicated.

Evaluation

After having established the objectives, the means and the agents available, the programmer-catechist must foresee the way in which he is going to evaluate the catechetical pastoral action. This evaluation should be periodic. Evaluation must consider all the elements that make up catechetical educational action, both in its planning and in its development and results, especially at the end of each of the stages of the programmed action.

In reality, evaluation is the review of the results obtained, i.e. the verification of whether or not the objectives have been achieved.

The Orthodox Christian Community, place of catechetical programming

Catechetical programming does not make sense, like the catechesis of which it is a part, but within the Orthodox Christian Community.

The Orthodox Christian Community, the local Church, gathered around the Bishop and centred on the celebration of the Divine Eucharist and the other Mysteries is the origin, the subject-agent, the place and the goal of catechesis.

The Church, the Body of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit, transmits what she has received from Christ, from the Fathers and the Saints: the faith that she herself lives.

The transmission of this faith is not done intellectually. The Orthodox Faith is not addressed only to human reason. It is an experiential experience that is actively experienced within a community: The Church.

Catechesis takes place within the Orthodox therapeutic community, the family of the Church, which through prayer and the celebration of the Mysteries unites itself with the Saints of all times in the One Body of Christ that heals our bodies, souls and spirits with the aim of the deification in Christ of all suffering humanity.

Base ideas for programming

In all programming, and therefore also in catechetical programming, we have an "idea", an image, of what we must transmit. Catechesis does not seek to educate in anyone's particular ideas, it is not the opinion of anyone no matter how good, educated or prepared they may be. Catechesis transmits a deposit: the faith that was given once and for all to the saints, the living faith of the Church which, as the Body of Christ and animated by the Holy Spirit, treasures this deposit: Holy Tradition.

This Tradition must be received in the heart of a community that lives the faith, in the heart of a community centred on prayer and the celebration of the Mysteries. Any catechesis that is carried out separately from the life of the community is an intellectual teaching devoid of content. There is no theology without prayer, without celebration, without asceticism...

Catechesis revolves around basic ideas that give meaning to the learning of the faith as it has been lived throughout the centuries and today.

The Revelation

God's initiative. God reveals Himself.

Humanity has always sought God, moved by its sense of infinite thirst, by its need to feel safe, by its search for justice... and God, many times without us being aware of it, God has enlightened and sustained us, has sown the seeds of the Word in all nations.

God has taken the initiative and revealed Himself: "God is Lord and has revealed Himself to us..." God has revealed Himself as One who has taken the initiative to communicate with humanity.

Revelation is the fruit of God's love, and it is a project of love, it is the manifestation of God's mercy, of God's love for humanity.

Christ Reveals the Father

In the fullness of time God revealed Himself to us in the Person of Christ, Who is the fullness and perfection of God's self-revelation.

- Christ reveals himself as Master – the first title given to Jesus by the people; He teaches God's will and makes God known to mankind; It fully reveals the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Christ did not show Himself simply as a spokesman for God's words, but He Himself is the Living Word of God in human flesh, the eternal and uncreated LOGOS, but who became man like Jesus of Nazareth so that God might be known in the world (John 1).
- This revelation, this Incarnation, took place to bring us to union with God; to make us partakers of His Divine Nature. "God the Son became man so that we might become god" (St. Athanasius).

The Holy Tradition

Tradition as a word means "that which has been passed down and handed down from one to another."

Holy Tradition is, therefore, that which has been passed down and handed down in the bosom of the Church from the time of Christ's Apostles to the present day.

1. It is by no means limited to what is written; it is not merely a body of literature.
1. The total life and experience of the entire Church transferred from one place to another and from generation to generation.
2. The very life of the Church itself, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Sources of the Holy Spirit-led Orthodox Christian Tradition: "He (the Holy Spirit) will guide you into all truth" (John 6:13) are:

1. The Bible
2. The liturgical life of the Church; His Mysteries and His Prayers
3. Dogmatic Decisions (Doctrines)
4. The Approved Councils
5. The Writings of the Holy Fathers
6. The Lives of the Saints
7. Canon Law
8. The iconographic tradition along with other inspired forms of creative artistic expression such as music and architecture.

All the elements of Holy Tradition are organically linked, in real life none of them is independent. As the Church continues to live by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Tradition of the Church continues to grow and develop.

The Holy Scriptures

The Bible is the written record of God's revelation to mankind:

1. It is the primary written source of divine doctrine since God Himself inspired its writing through His Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20)

2. The centre of the Bible as the Word of God written in human form is the Person of the Word of the living God in human form, Jesus Christ
3. All parts of the Bible are interpreted in the Orthodox Church in the light of Christ since everything in Scripture leads us to Christ and speaks to us about Him (Luke 24:44)
4. The Bible Is Not a Book of Science
5. An icon full of grace; A Theophany
6. Many Christians concentrate on what the Bible says, but the Orthodox emphasise what the Bible means, for the Bible does not explain itself. It requires interpretation. But the question is: whose interpretation?
7. We interpret the Scriptures in the context of the living Tradition of the whole Church, as St. Vincent of Lérins put it: "that which has been believed in all times and by all" - 2 Peter 1:20 - "no prophecy of Scripture is of particular interpretation."
8. The Scriptures possess sacramental power, conveying the grace, truth, and power of God to the believing reader. The Bible brings us all into a personal encounter with the living God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Liturgy

When the Church, the assembly of the People of God, comes to worship all together, this gathering is called the Liturgy of the Church:

1. "Common Work"
2. Old Testament Liturgy - in the Temple, according to the Mosaic Law, with annual feasts, fasts, private prayers, and services held by the Israelites at home or in synagogues.
3. New Testament Church - The Liturgy is centred on the Person of Christ and is fundamentally a "Christianisation" of Old Testament liturgical life.
4. From the basic foundation of the liturgical life of the Old Testament, the Church developed her own sacramental life.
5. The living experience of the Orthodox sacramental and liturgical life is a primary source of Christian doctrine.
6. In addition to the living experience of the Liturgy, the texts of prayers, services, and sacraments provide a written source of doctrine that can be studied and contemplated by those who wish to understand the teachings and to experience and know God.

The Church, Councils and Dogmas

The Church throughout the centuries has solved difficulties and made decisions through a consensus of opinion among all believers, inspired by God and guided by his appointed authorities.

1. Acts 15 - the model for future councils and decision-making
2. The Seven Ecumenical Councils
3. The dogmatic definitions (dogmas) and canon laws of ecumenical councils are implied to be inspired by God; therefore, they are essential sources of Orthodox Christian Doctrine.

The Holy Fathers

The Holy Fathers of the Church are a source of Christian Doctrine because they are the theologians and spiritual teachers who defended and explained the doctrines of the Christian Faith.

1. Apologists (against those outside the Church)
2. The Defenders Against Heresy
3. The Teachers - Ascetics and Mystics
4. All the Holy Fathers gave their teachings from the sources of their own living Christian experience
5. The writings of the Fathers are not infallible.

The Saints. The desired model or type of humanity

The doctrine of the Church is made alive in the lives of true believers, the saints who literally share in the holiness of God.

A. Different Kinds of Saints

1. Apostles
2. Evangelists
3. Prophets
4. Confessors
5. Martyrs
6. Saints
7. The Righteous
8. Fools for Christ

B. Devotional reading of the lives of the saints can be used fruitfully to discover the deep meaning and application of Christian Faith and Truth to our lives. It is necessary, however, to read them carefully in order to distinguish the essential points from the ornaments they contain.

The Canons of the Church

The canons of the Church are a source of Christian doctrine because they convey the norms for Christian doctrine and practice (literally: rule, norm, measure of judgment).

1. Dogmatic and practical canons; those that can be changed and those that are immutable.
2. Dogmatic and practical canons that cannot be changed.
3. Practical canons that can be changed.
4. It is not always clear which canons express the essential marks of the Christian life and which do not.
5. Taken on their own, the Church's canon laws can be misinterpreted and frustrating.

The Artistic Tradition of the Church: Icons and Music

The artistic tradition of the Orthodox Church is founded on the Christian doctrine of human creativity that has its origin in the image of God and in his love for humanity and the world in creation.

1. The Icon – the Expression of Eternal and Divine Reality
2. Musical expression – a source for discovering the orthodox Christian worldview
3. Orthodox architecture – expresses "God with us"

