Strategies for Catechesis

Developmental Theories

In the following brief reflections on developmental theories, it is important to note that although stages may be identified with a particular age, there is no assurance that the age guarantees that level of development.

Styles of Faith, John Westerhoff

These styles of faith are developmental, one builds on the other and incorporates the previous stage. Ideally, the mature disciple achieves owned faith as an adult.

Experienced Faith: Characteristic of young children who imitate and respond to the faith actions of others; experienced faith is primarily an effective experience.

Affiliative Faith: Affiliative faith is a belonging faith rooted in a community. It too is rooted in feelings; is nurtured by awe, wonder and mystery; and is characteristic of young children. Being part of the community through prayer, ritual, gestures, signs and symbols is vital.

Searching Faith: Searching faith, which often begins in adolescence, involves the cognitive capacity of the person. These persons need to question and to test the community's faith story and practices in order to interiorize them, make them their own, and commit to them.

Owned Faith: Owned faith is the calumniation of growth, characteristic of the mature disciple. Persons witness faith by word and action and struggle to eliminate any gap between believe and action.

Stages of Faith, James Fowler

Fowler's stages of faith describe the way people view their relationship with God as they mature.

Pre-stage: Developing basic trust of care givers and the world. Infancy
This trust or the lack thereof serves as the foundation for all
the other stages.

1. Intuitive-Projective Faith: the faith of imitation   Early Childhood
2. Mystic Literal Faith: the faith of joining   School aged children
3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith: faith of trusted authorities   Adolescence
4. Individuative-Reflective Faith: faith of one's own   Young adulthood
5. Conjunctive Faith: faith of commitment   Mid-life
6. Universalizing Faith: faith of gospel living   Maturity

Cognitive Development Theory, Jean Piaget

Pre-operational Thinking   The process of a four to six year old child: vivid, concrete images; isolated events, stores with an inability to make connections.

Concrete Thinking	The process of a seven to ten year old person: clear, concrete images with a better ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality.
Formal Operational Thinking	The process of a person at early adolescence. Has the ability to draw conclusions from concrete facts to derive meaning from facts.

Psycho-social Development Theory, Erik Erikson

This theory describes eight crises of human growth as we move from the dependency of infancy to the generativity of adulthood. Each of these developmental tasks describes relational tasks in relation to self, others, and the world.

Trust vs Mistrust	Infancy
Autonomy vs Shame	Toddler
Initiative vs Guilt	Pre-Schooler
Industry vs Inferiority	School-aged child
Identity vs Role Confusion	Adolescence
Intimacy vs Isolation	Adulthood - early
Generativity vs Stagnation	Adulthood - mid
Integrity vs Despair	Adulthood - mature

Moral Development Theory, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan

This theory describes peoples' stages of moral decision making which is affected by their cognitive and affective skills. Kohlberg's theory is based on research only with men; Carol Gilligan has done similar research with women.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Preconventional: motivated by fear of punishment and self interests
Conventional: motivated by the community, its rules, and its need for order
Post-conventional: motivated by principles of justice and the common good

Gilligan's Theory of Moral Development

Individual Survival
        Transition: becoming responsible
Desire to avoid hurting others
        Transition: balancing personal needs with the needs of others
An Ethic of non-violent care

Applications of Cognitive Theory Relative to Learning & Retention

In addition to the research findings on development, other research assists in helping catechists understand how to increase retention and integration of the learning experience.

Multiple Intelligence Theory, Howard Gardner

People learn differently. Consequently, to meet various individuals needs, various learning styles need to be incorporated into every gathering.

1. Word smart = Linguistic Intelligence
     reading, storytelling, word games
2. Music smart = Musical Intelligence
     making and listening to music
3. Number smart = Logical-Mathematical Intelligence
     logic problems, board games, category and pattern activities
4. Picture smart = Spatial Intelligence
     art, models, diagrams, maps
5. Body smart = Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence
     motor skills, bodily movement, 'hands-on' activities
6. People smart - Interpersonal Intelligence
     leadership and caring activities, role-play and drama
7. Self smart = Intrapersonal Intelligence
     organizing activities, goal-setting and deadlines, self-evaluation

Retention Theory

People retain information at different rates. In general, the more senses that are engaged in the learning experience, the higher rate of retention; the fewer senses, the lower rates of retention.

Verbal presentation = 30% retention	The role of the presenter = lecturer
Visual presentation = 50% retention	The role of the presenter = mediator
Simulated presentation = 75% retention	The role of the presenter = discussion leader
Direct presentation/engagement = 90% retention	The role of the presenter = facilitator

Basic Principles for Memorization

Memorization can be an effectively learning tool if used wisely. People need to be encouraged to memorize:

The gestures, signs, and symbols that link them with the faith community
The essential prayers of the faith community e.g. The Lord's Prayer, Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Glory Be..
The parts of the liturgy that will enable them to participate more fully e.g. responses, prayers, acclamations, creed
Key beliefs of our faith community: the commandments, the beatitudes
Favorite passages and lines from Scripture that will nourish their relationship with God

Other prayers, devotions, practices are available in books of prayer.

Cross Cultural Context

Ways to Heighten Awareness

"I have become all things to all people to win all to Christ." St. Paul

1. Be aware of yourself:

- · Your personal attitudes, values, stereotypes
- · Your vocabulary
- · Your degree of commitment to learn about, directly experience other cultures
- · Your body language

2. In the catechetical environment:

- · Create an atmosphere of mutual respect; be clear and consistent in expectations of verbal and non-verbal behavior
- · Create a multicultural environment: pictures, stories, art, posters, examples, prayer, music which represent all peoples
- · Know the participants and their styles of learning, communicating, relating
- · Know your teaching, communicating, relating style to be able to adapt
- · Be familiar with your materials; if they lack cultural sensitivity and diversity, plan to enrich them
- · Provide positive models from diverse cultures through speakers, experiences

3. As a Church institution:

- · Evaluate policies: Are they culturally sensitive?
- · Evaluate boards and committees; evaluate staffs; evaluate participants: Do they represent diversity? If not, why not? If not, what can be done to make up for the loss? Who will be the voice of those not represented until they are represented?
- · Raise the question in preparing for any celebration/activity/performance: Is this culturally sensitive? Is it inclusive in its content as well as in the people involved?
- · Plan celebrations that foster cultural diversity:
  - -Christmas program with stories, carols, traditions from around the world
  - -Liturgies, prayer services that use African American, Spanish, Asian, Native American forms of prayer, music, gesture, dance
  - -Develop a calendar with celebrations, heroes, saints of diverse cultures

Celebrations that are special, are just that, special. Diversity needs to be woven into the fabric of daily life so that it becomes part of life itself.

Strategies for Catechesis: Interactive and Learning Styles

People interact and learn in different ways. In general, European and Asian cultures tend to be more cognitive while African and Latin cultures tend to be more affective. This diagram is intended to highlight major differences; it is not intended to stereotype or to identify one as better than the other. Nor is each characteristic completely applicable to each group. However, each of these characteristics has implications for catechesis particularly in pedagogy.

Cognitive/Field Independent Participants	Affective/Field Sensitive Participants
Prefer to work independently	Like to work with others on a common goal
Prefer quiet background	Prefer background noise
Like to compete	Like to assist others, cooperate with others
Focus on task; is inattentive to social	Is sensitive to feelings and opinions of others environment when working
Formal; interactions are limited to task at hand	Ask questions about facilitator's tastes, personal experience
Like to try new tasks without help Impatient to begin new tasks	Seek guidance and demonstration
Seek rewards which strengthen relationships	Seek non social rewards
Is highly motivated when working individually	Is highly motivated when working with facilitator
Is object oriented	Is person oriented
Written tradition is primary	Aural/oral tradition is primary
Prefer structure/order; order over activity	Prefer improvisation/spontaneity; activity over order
Speak in a serialized, one-at-a-time form	Speak in stacked-multiple speakers-at-a-time form
Engage in passive, non-interactive listening	Engage in active, call-response listening
Restrict interaction/passive attention; reaction/feedback	Participate/give feedback continually; Aural/oral participation
Compartmentalizes response: mind/body/emotion separate	Integrates response: mind/body/emotion united