

## Message from Archbishop Simon Poh - TC August 2025

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Malaysian Catholic Bishops is dedicating this whole month of August to the Catechetical Ministry, with the theme: **“We Can Make the World a Better Place”** - *“Let each of you not only look to his interest, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2: 4)*. What we learned and received in faith formation must always be lived out with hope to make society and the world a better place.

### Planting the seeds of Faith from young

In the 1970s, Catholic teachers in St Joseph's Primary School, Kuching introduced me to the Catholic Faith. In the Malaysian Catechetical Book Series, there were plenty of pictures and activities for children to draw and colour. My favourite pictures were a young man climbing down a rock looking for a lamb, and an elderly man embracing a son in tattered clothes. Even though I was not yet baptised, I did believe that my God watches over me and I can talk to Him as my heavenly Father and that Jesus comes to look for me when I am lost. I am eternally grateful to the Catholic teachers for this CATECHESIS.

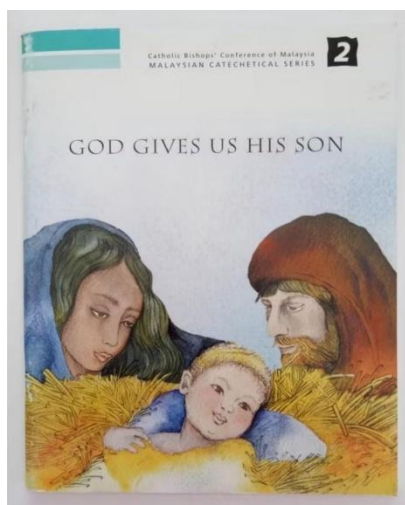
### What is Catechesis?

The word "catechesis" originates from the Greek word "katēkheis" (κατήχησις), which means "instruction by word of mouth". This was derived from "katēkhein" (κατηχεῖν), meaning "to echo" or "to sound (something) in someone's ear", and hence "to teach by word of mouth".

### Catechesis during the time of the Apostles

Scriptures record that “the believers remained faithful to the **teaching of the Apostles (catechesis)**, to the fellowship, the **breaking of Bread (eucharist)** and to the prayers” (Acts 2:24). In the early Church, the apostles passed on the Faith orally. New believers were instructed by word of mouth, to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to have life in His name and to build the Kingdom of God on earth as the disciples of Jesus.

## The Catechism of the Catholic Church (n.4-5) on Catechesis



Over the centuries, these teachings became organised and were compiled into a book entitled, "Catechism of the Catholic Church". "**Catechesis** is an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life."

The Catholic Church in Malaysia uses the Malaysian Catechetical book series to pass on the faith through systematic instruction. There are 10 volumes corresponding for each school year.

- Primary 1 - Book 1 : God loves us
- Primary 2 - Book 2 : God gives us His Son
- Primary 3 - Book 3 : God gives us His Life
- Primary 4 - Book 4 : God gives us Joy (for First Holy Communion)
- Primary 5 - Book 5 : God calls us to be Holy
- Primary 6 - Book 6 : God forms His people
- Form 1 - Book 7 : God saves His people
- Form 2 - Book 8 : God is with us
- Form 3 - Book 9 : God gives us Church (for Pre-Confirmation)
- Form 4 - Book 10 : God's Spirit empowers us (for Confirmation)

And a supplement that addresses Ecology, Social and Moral issues.

### Goal of Catechesis for Christian Living and Witnessing

Catholic Faith & Christian Living are the goal of our Catechesis. Instructed to be faithful disciples, we are to be living witnesses of our Lord Jesus. It is most important that in our catechetical instruction, teaching or session, every child and RCIA candidate, must encounter the Risen Lord in a personal experience.

This way, they are already disciples even before receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, First Communion or Confirmation. The Catechism session becomes boring when students are only memorising facts to pass tests. Our Catechism session becomes truly alive when we pray, and experience our Risen Lord present within us.

### **Family Home is the first place of Catechesis; later Sunday School**

At home, parents pass on the faith by offering their children for baptism, and teaching them to pray at meals, at night, reading bible stories with them and going together as a family to Church on Sunday. Education and catechesis must begin at home where parents play the role of primary educators and are the first catechists of their children. Parents teach children by practising and living the Faith at home.

1. Set up a house altar
2. Teach children the Sign of the Cross
3. Read the Bible especially Gospel of the day or Sunday
4. Pray together at meals
5. Come together as a family to Church
6. Bring the child for Baptism
7. Send children to Children's Liturgy of the Word at Mass
8. Ensure children attend Sunday School for 1<sup>st</sup> Communion and Confirmation
9. Be faithful Catholic parents

### **Jesus sends us forth as His disciples**

*"Go, Make Disciples, Baptise and Teach."* (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus sends us forth to go out and witness our Faith in our Christian living. We attract and invite others to experience Jesus. And then accompany them in the RCIA journey.

*"You are light for the world. Your light must shine in people's sight, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven."* (Mt 5:14-15).

**+ Archbishop Simon Poh**