

MISSION INTENTIONS

DECEMBER 2021 - 2022

Let us pray for catechists called to teach the Word of God: may the Holy Spirit give them courage and creativity in their ministry of sharing the Gospel with others.

Country Focus: Mexico

On December 9, 1531, near Mexico City, the Blessed Mother appeared to Saint Juan Diego as Our Lady of Guadalupe, resulting in the conversion of thousands of people to Catholicism. Today, Mexico remains home to the second largest Catholic population in the world. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) estimates that approximately 90 percent of Mexican citizens are baptized Catholics. This includes almost 300,000 catechists who are responsible for passing on the faith to the young Church.

Although Catholicism is the most practiced religion in Mexico, that does not mean the Church has been without struggle.



Violence and corruption in the country can make it dangerous to be a priest or even a catechist. Let us join in prayer with Pope Francis this month and pray for the safety of all catechists, particularly those in Mexico, so they may continue to spread the Word of God to others.

Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

What do you think of when you hear the word “catechesis?” Many of us might think of our religious education or faith formation classroom, taught by a volunteer teacher called a catechist. But catechesis is more than a lesson from a religion textbook. According to the Directory for Catechesis, relationship is also an important part of catechesis:

“A dynamic and complex reality at the service of the Word of God, catechesis is accompaniment, education and formation in the faith and for the faith, an introduction to the celebration of the Mystery, illumination and interpretation of human life and history” (no. 55).

Saint Spotlight

Saint Robert Bellarmine

It is thought Pope Clement VIII once said that Saint Robert Bellarmine “had not his equal for learning.” Certainly, Saint Robert Bellarmine was considered a leader in Catholic teaching and study during his time, and in 1931, was declared a Doctor of the Church. He is also the patron saint of catechists.

Robert was born into a devout family, the third of 10 children. One of his uncles was even Pope Marcellus II. As a child, Robert received his education from the Jesuits, and then entered the order himself in 1560, when he was 18 years old.

He was ordained a priest in 1570, in Belgium. As a young priest, his sermons drew crowds of people, leading to his eventual appointment as rector of the Roman College in



1592. He was named a Cardinal in 1598, and appointed Archbishop of Capua, Italy in 1602.

Throughout his priesthood, Robert wrote several works defending the Catholic faith. His most famous was titled Disputations on the Controversies of the Christian Faith. He served as the advisor to several popes before retiring due to health issues in 1621.

Even though some of Robert’s works caused debates within the Church, he never stopped trying to share the faith of Christ to the best of his ability. Robert was canonized in 1930. As we remember Saint Robert Bellarmine each year on September 17, his feast day, let us strive to follow his example and always share our faith with others.

Formation for Life in Christ

Have you ever wondered how your catechist or religion teacher decides what topics to cover in class, or why your religion textbook focuses on certain themes? All catechesis is guided by the Pope and the Bishops (Magisterium), and they have written several documents to help direct the Church in how to pass on the faith. The most recent of these documents is the Directory for Catechesis, published in 2020.

The Directory of Catechesis names five “tasks,” or responsibilities, of catechesis: leading to knowledge of the faith; initiating into the celebration of the Mystery; forming for life in Christ; teaching prayer; and introduction to community life. The directory states these are the areas in which the learner should be formed during religious education.

Leading to knowledge of the faith involves encounter with and learning about Scripture and Tradition. Instruction and experience of the liturgy and sacraments initiate learners into the celebration of the Mystery the Faith. Forming for life in Christ encourages believers to live a moral life, using the Beatitudes as guidelines.



Jesus in personal, liturgical and community prayer, with an emphasis on the permanent forms of prayer: blessing and adoration; petition; intercession; thanksgiving; and praise. Introduction to community life nurtures our sense of belonging to the Church and helps us live in communion with the Body of Christ.

The Directory of Catechesis also teaches us about the relationship between catechesis and evangelization. All believers are in constant need of evangelization, of a reminder of the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ, so that we can continue to grow, and help others to grow in faith as missionary disciples. This is the ultimate goal of catechesis.

Saint Robert Bellarmine dedicated his life to teaching the faith. In this month’s video, we’ll learn more about Saint Robert Bellarmine, and reflect on how we might follow his example in our daily lives.

Teaching prayer helps us learn to pray with and like

Celebrating the Mystery

Where else besides faith formation or Catholic school can you receive catechesis?

Every time we go to Mass, we receive catechesis. At Mass, we are taught more about our faith, Scripture and Tradition. This happens primarily during the Liturgy of the Word, where, according to the USCCB, we “are guided and instructed in faith and in how to live in right relationship with God, others, ourselves, and creation.” This catechesis happens as we hear readings from the Bible and listen to the homily. When we hear God’s Word and listen to the lessons in the homily, we encounter Christ and are able to be more faithful Catholics.

Teaching Prayer: Nicene Creed

Each week at Mass, we pray the Nicene Creed during the Liturgy of the Word. But did you know the Nicene Creed is both prayer and catechesis? The Nicene Creed is a summary of our Catholic beliefs. As you pray it each week, you are also learning about the Catholic faith. To pray the Nicene Creed, [click here](#).

Introduction to Community Life

The Legacy of St. Robert Bellarmine



- ✚ How has what you’ve learned so far about the Catholic faith made you a better member of your family? School? Church?
- ✚ How has your learning encouraged you to become more involved in your parish?

- ✚ How has your Catholic faith inspired you to build up your community?
- ✚ What is the relationship between catechesis and evangelization? How do both help us to become better missionary disciples?



CENTER for MISSION

Society for the Propagation of the Faith / St. Paul and Minneapolis