

# Adult Studies of the Catechism

## *Knowledge, Love and Proclamation*

‘Three folds in cloth, yet there is but one cloth.

Three joints in a finger, yet there is but one finger.

Three leaves in a shamrock, yet there is but one shamrock.

Frost, snow, ice, yet the three are but water.

Likewise, three Persons in God, but only the one God.’<sup>1</sup>

This beautiful verse to the holy Trinity, from Irish oral tradition, shows how knowledge of the *truths* of faith leads to love of the *Truth*, the triune God. Contemplation of the mystery leads to its proclamation. The poet is a student and contemplative of the dogma of the Trinity and also an evangeliser, sharing the faith through artistic expression.

To study the Catholic Faith is to deepen in love for Christ, making our own his desire to ‘share the Good News’ with one and all.<sup>2</sup>

## *The Catechism of the Catholic Church: Adult Studies*

Throughout Ireland increasing numbers of adults are studying their faith on a regular basis. As Bishop Brendan Leahy pointed out at the launch of the *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*<sup>3</sup>:

‘A new phenomenon in Ireland in recent years has been the emergence of study groups of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, with many claiming it has been a life-changing experience for them.’

Experience shows that to savour God’s *words* in the profoundly scriptural text of the universal Catechism is to rediscover the ineffable beauty of the Incarnate *Word*, Jesus Christ.

As always, personal communion with Christ deepens unity within the family of the Church, along with the desire ‘to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear’.<sup>4</sup>

The growth of the *Adult Studies of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a source of great hope.<sup>5</sup> These groups meet weekly in their local dioceses and follow a comprehensive, user-friendly course designed by experts at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham.

Each session involves study of the text of the Catechism, followed by discussion and questions. This methodology helps develop the language needed to express the faith, and grow in confidence in the daily evangelisation of ordinary Christians.

## *With Bishop Caggiano at Clongowes*

‘What is the Catechism, if not the memory of God, the memory of his works in history and his drawing near to us in Christ present in his word, in the sacraments, in his Church, in his love?’<sup>6</sup>

The desire to respond to share this memory with others prompted the two study-days held at Clongowes Wood College on the 4 and 5 July. The main speaker for both days was Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Bishop Caggiano is no stranger to these shores, having catechised thousands of young people at *Youth 2000* Summer Festivals in 2008 and 2013. He also attended the International Eucharistic Congress in 2012.

On 4 July the focus was on bringing the Catechism to young people. Bishop Caggiano spoke of the idealism of youth, coupled with the contemporary crisis in society. The advantages and pitfalls of new technologies were explored in the context of finding new ways to transmit the beauty of the Faith to young people.

The following day was for those involved in the study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and brought together people from every corner of the island, enthused by their study and keen to offer it to others.

The Clongowes meetings were a beautiful experience of ecclesial communion, attended by women and men of all walks of life, young and old, laypeople, religious and priests.

The participation of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Charles J. Brown, of Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam, and of Bishops Brendan Kelly, Francis Duffy and Denis Nulty, was hugely appreciated by all.

The link between one’s spiritual life and a personal knowledge of the Faith, between knowing and loving Jesus, was a consistent hallmark of the gatherings. The celebration of Mass and the Prayer of the Church had pride of place.

## *A beautiful challenge*

To know and to love Christ in his Church; to be articulate, joyful and credible witnesses of the Gospel: these were the challenges emerging from these two memorable days.

As Bishop Denis Nulty said in his homily at Evening Prayer at the conclusion of Day 2, we are now blessed with invaluable resources for the New Evangelisation, especially the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Pope Francis is urging us all on: ‘Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelisation ... So what are we waiting for?’<sup>7</sup>

*Adult Studies of the Catechism* is a wonderful way to respond to the Holy Father’s challenge.

For information on the study-group nearest you, or to get help in starting one, contact: Máirín at 087-795 0325, or, [catechism@corkandross.org](mailto:catechism@corkandross.org).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> ‘*Trí fillte in éadach ‘s gan ann ach aon éadach ambáin, trí ailt i méar ‘s gan ann ach aon mhéar ambáin, trí dhuilliúir I seamróg ‘s gan ann ach aon tseamróg ambáin. Sioc, sneachta, leac oighre, níl insna trí ní sin ach uisce, Mar sin tá trí Phearsa i nDia ‘s gan ann ach aon Dia ambáin’* (Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, ed., ‘*Lón Anama*’: *Poems for Prayer from the Irish Tradition*, Cois Life, Dublin 2005, Poem n. 67, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> See Irish Episcopal Conference, National Directory for Catechesis *Share the Good News*, Veritas, Dublin 2010, especially Chapter 4: ‘Adult Faith Development’.

<sup>3</sup> *Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Veritas, Dublin 2014, 704 pp.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), 2013, 23.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Router, ‘Adult Studies in the Catechism’, *Intercom*, February 2014, pp. 28-29.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, Homily to Catechists, 29 September 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, 120.