

Missionary activity is distinguished in AG 6 from pastoral care (and ecumenical ventures), though local churches require pastoral care even as missionary activity also takes place. As many council fathers had noted, however, the reality was each stage of planting, growing, and establishing a local church may occur more or less concurrently.<sup>309</sup>

AG 6 also envisages that “an entirely new set of circumstances” may arise, as a cultural group experiences radical changes that affect the peoples’ Christian faith. This is a reference to the phenomenon of “dechristianisation”, or contexts where the church has experienced a significant loss of adherents or been reduced to largely nominal allegiance. AG states that this context requires the resumption of missionary activity, which subtly broadens the concept of mission beyond traditional “mission territories” to include these dechristianised contexts.<sup>310</sup>

#### **4.2.6 The Process of Evangelisation in *Ad Gentes***

Suso Brechter found a sharp disjunction between the theological principles outlined in chapter one and the rest of the decree, whereas Peter Hunerman wrote that “it can justly be said that in this second chapter the theological vision presented in the first chapter is translated into practical steps.”<sup>311</sup> At times, AG reflects the compromise between territorial and anthropological concepts of mission necessary for its ultimate approval, but a fault-line does not exist between Chapter One and Chapter Two of the decree. As we have seen, Chapter Two reflects Congar’s proposal that missionary activity in the narrower sense be considered a dimension of the church’s broader mission (the focus of Chapter One). Chapter

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<sup>309</sup> Hunerman, "Final Weeks," 440.

<sup>310</sup> Ricardo Burigana and Giovanni Turbanti, "The Intersession: Preparing the Conclusion of the Council," in *History of Vatican II: The Church as Communion. Third Period and Intersession, September 1964 - September 1965*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 2003), 577.

<sup>311</sup> Hunerman, "Final Weeks," 449. Brechter had written that “Chapter 1 is typically self-contained; it resembles a theological treatise in character and does not fit harmoniously into the missionary decree as a whole.” Brechter, "Decree," 113.

Two therefore builds upon the definition of missions contained in paragraph 6. This means that although the new paradigm expands the concept of mission it does not nullify the need for missionary activity. Instead, the post-Christendom model of mission refuses to limit the church's mission to those activities alone, nor limit missionary activity to specific geographical locations.

Chapter Two of AG describes the nature of missionary work.<sup>312</sup> By specifying the recipients of such missionary activity as adherents to other world religions, those who live in complete religious ignorance, or atheists, the decree stipulates that missionary activity is for those people who have not yet heard the proclamation of the Gospel (AG 10).

Chapter Two is broken into three articles entitled "Christian witness", "Preaching the Gospel and Gathering together the People of God", and "Forming a Christian Community". The content of these articles synthesises the insights of the two most important schools of missiology in the years prior to the council, in which Joseph Schmidlin of Munster emphasised the role of conversion and sacramental initiation, while Pierre Charles of Louvain stressed the communal nature of salvation and the church's mediation.<sup>313</sup>

AG emphasises that the power of Christ's witnesses lies in identification with their broader community and culture, and with their presence in love, dialogue, and charity to all but especially to those who are suffering from poverty, violence and disease. Their witness is animated by the Spirit of Christ. Witness thus consists of a profound identification with others, born of a common cultural identity in some instances, but always by virtue of the incarnation in which the Spirit-anointed Son identified with our human nature, and which his members in turn emulate.

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<sup>312</sup> See Bevens and Gros, *Evangelization*, 39-43.

<sup>313</sup> Francis Anekwe Oborji, "Catholic Missiology 1920-2010: Origins and Perspectives," in *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology, 1910 to the Present* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 133-4.

The article on preaching the Gospel and gathering the people of God begins by stating that when God makes it possible, there is to be an initial proclamation of God, and of Jesus the Saviour (AG 13). The rest of the article focuses more upon the response to such preaching rather than its content. Those who respond to the Gospel come to faith in Christ, and are converted to him. This is only an initial conversion, which includes “being snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of God’s love, who called [the person] to enter into a personal relationship with [God] in Christ” (AG 13).

After such an initial conversion one enters into the catechumenate, which the Council fathers had decided to restore (in SC 64). In AG the catechumenate is situated within the broader process of evangelisation. It is described as a “training period in the whole Christian life” (AG 14). The catechumenate should include instruction in the “mystery of salvation”, moral formation, liturgical participation, and apostolic or missionary engagement. The catechumenate culminates in the reception of the sacraments of initiation (AG ).

When sufficient new converts have been initiated and a local church has been born, congregations of the faithful are to be “built up” into Christian communities (AG 15). The chapter’s final article describes the principal characteristics of such local churches.

By including an article on the formation of a local church at this point AG is vulnerable to Bevans’ critique that the decree “has in its imagination the white “First World” missionary working in exotic lands and cultures.”<sup>314</sup> Thus the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of AG 2 appears to pertain only to locations in which a local church had not yet been established.

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<sup>314</sup> Bevans, "Revisiting Mission," 274.

### 4.3 Restoration of the Catechumenate

As we have just seen, the process outlined in chapter two of AG included the restored catechumenate. The paragraphs in SC and AG concerning the catechumenate's restoration were accepted on the floor of the council with little comment.<sup>315</sup> In one sense, this was unsurprising, as experiments with catechumenal processes and requests to Rome to reinstate the adult catechumenate had originated in various missionary contexts since the sixteenth century. As part of the reforms initiated by the Council of Trent, Cardinal Giulio Santori (1532-1602) was commissioned to revise the Roman Ritual. Inspired by his study of patristic liturgical texts, Santori intended the revised ritual to include rites for a catechumenate and adult initiation. Aspects of Santori's rites were disseminated in the "new world" through a treatise written by Thomas de Jesus SJ (1564-1627).<sup>316</sup>

In the nineteenth century two French 'missionary bishops' attempted to reinstate a catechumenate in China and Africa. Louis-Simon Faurie's efforts in China proved unsuccessful because the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith forbade his use of preparatory baptismal rites as a rite of entry into the catechumenate. In Africa, Charles Lavigerie's four-year two stage model met with Roman approval because he did not alter the baptismal ritual in the Roman missal.<sup>317</sup>

In 1959, Joseph Blomjous, the Dutch bishop of Mwanga (in modern Tanzania) successfully petitioned for the restoration of the rites of the catechumenate. Blomjous proposed a seven-step structure based upon the Roman ritual that was accepted, with

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<sup>315</sup> The paragraphs on the catechumenate were not raised in the first discussion of the schema on the liturgy. See Mathijs Lamberigts, "The Liturgy Debate," in *History of Vatican II: The Formation of the Council's Identity. First Period and Intersession, October 1962 - September 1963*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1997), 134.

<sup>316</sup> Paul Turner, *The Hallelujah Highway: A History of the Catechumenate* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications 2000), 130-4.

<sup>317</sup> Turner, *Hallelujah Highway*, 139-59.

minor modifications, as an “Order of Baptism of Adults Arranged as a Catechumenate in Steps”, in a revised Order of Baptism published in April 1962, only months before the council’s first session.<sup>318</sup>

Further calls for the catechumenate’s restoration emerged during the council’s preparatory phase. A number of missionary bishops from Africa wanted a true catechumenal process because they believed that powerful Christian initiation rites were necessary to ensure African men and women were genuinely converted to Christianity, and to counter potent indigenous initiation rites.<sup>319</sup>

The influence of these missionary bishops likely explains why the paragraphs in SC concerning the catechumenate’s restoration were passed on the council floor with little comment: adult catechesis and initiation in the mission territories of Africa and Asia sat quite comfortably within the Christendom model of mission.<sup>320</sup>

However, the missionary bishops’ call for the catechumenate’s restoration was echoed by French and Dutch bishops, who thought the catechumenate should form part of the response to the dechristianisation of Europe. Their support arose from their experience of experiments with the catechumenate in France.<sup>321</sup>

Thus, for much of the four hundred years between the Council of Trent and Vatican II the calls to restore the catechumenate arose because of the need for a catechetical process in the so-called mission fields of Africa and Asia. In so far as these missionary contexts were territories outside Europe, these calls to restore the catechumenate remained entirely

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<sup>318</sup> Turner, *Hallelujah Highway*, 130-4.

<sup>319</sup> Peter McGrail, *The Rite of Christian Initiation: Adult Rituals and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 73, 81.

<sup>320</sup> In his commentary on SC Joseph Jungmann wrote: The reference to adult baptism and the catechumenate in the preparatory document was “incorporated into the Constitution without material change.” Joseph Jungmann, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 49.

<sup>321</sup> McGrail, *Christian Initiation*, 80-1.

within the paradigm of Christendom. The Christendom model of mission only needed an adult catechumenate in so-called non-Christian countries, as the Church in Christendom countries baptized all of their inhabitants in infancy, thereby eliminating the need for an adult process of coming to faith in Christ. The call to restore the catechumenate from the Dutch and French bishops was a recognition that the transmission of faith from one generation to the next was breaking down in these European countries.

While infant baptism might have predominated in countries that were formerly and formally part of Christendom, the restoration of adult catechesis and initiation indicated that baptism could not be reduced to a cultural rite of passage, as the practice of marking the birth of a child through a religious ceremony. Rather, the restoration of the catechumenate heralded the rediscovery of baptism as the outcome of a process of conversion, facilitated by a period of instruction and ritual, and as the result of a freely chosen response of faith. In a Christendom model of mission, it was believed that only mission territories need such a process, but in a post-Christendom world where everyone needs to be evangelised then initiation, and its re-appropriation by those baptized as infants, becomes crucially important.

#### **4.4 The RCIA and the Process of Evangelisation**

The process of evangelisation outlined in Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes* (AG 10-18) is intrinsic to the structure of the RCIA. As we have already seen, the catechumenate itself is for those who have been attracted by Christians' witness, listened to the initial proclamation of the Gospel and responded with initial faith and conversion (AG 13). This means that witness and initial proclamation belong to the RCIA's first period, the pre-catechumenate. The second period of the RCIA is the catechumenate proper, as referred to

in AG 14. The third period of purification and enlightenment that normally coincides with Lent is for those catechumens who wish to enter into the stage of final preparation for baptism. The final period of the RCIA, or mystagogy, occurs after sacramental initiation and is intended to consolidate the catechumens' sense of belonging to the Christian community and living of the Christian life.

The unity between the structure of the RCIA and the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes* is due to their concurrent development. Their coordination was assured by Xavier Seumois, the missiologist primarily responsible for the final draft of what would become Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes*, and who was also a member of Coetus XXII, the study group responsible for the preparation of the RCIA.<sup>322</sup>

Since the RCIA and AG describe the same process, the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes* and the RCIA complement and mutually interpret each other. As a liturgical text, the RCIA highlights that evangelisation is essentially liturgical in nature. It contains, however, only brief (but illuminating) notes about the non-liturgical aspects of the process of evangelisation and catechesis leading to initiation. AG provides crucial insights into the nature of witness, the initial proclamation of the Gospel and the response of faith and conversion, which inform the sparse directives concerning the pre-catechumenate's content in the RCIA.

## **4.5 The Process in Subsequent Magisterial Statements**

### **4.5.1 *Evangelii Nuntiandi***

The process of evangelisation has been presumed, taken up and expanded in each of the papal documents on mission since the council. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) Paul VI provided

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<sup>322</sup> McGrail, *Christian Initiation*, 121.

an expansive vision of evangelisation that did not exclusively focus upon preaching, catechesis, and baptism, but also called for the evangelisation of institutions and cultures, including the promotion of liberation, justice and peace (see EN 17, 18-20, 24). Like Chapter One of AG Paul VI defined evangelisation broadly, as “bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new” (EN 18). He went on to state, however, that humanity’s transformation still requires the proclamation of the Gospel, its acceptance through faith and baptism and lives of discipleship:

there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelisation is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelises when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs (EN 18).

While the ultimate goal of the Church’s mission is thus a transformed humanity (all human beings living under the reign of God), the principal path to this goal is people’s integral conversion to Christ, who then become agents of the world’s transformation. EN therefore affirms the post-Christendom model of mission and locates the narrower understanding of missionary activity within that larger definition of mission. EN lacks a certain clarity, however, because the term evangelisation refers to both mission and to missionary activity in the exhortation, which has sometimes contributed to the reduction of the entirety of the church’s mission to witness, proclamation and catechesis culminating in sacramental initiation. This is the very truncation of the concept of evangelisation that Paul VI himself warned against in EN 17. We saw an example of this in the Antioch manual, which equated the pope’s statement that the Church exists to evangelise (a statement about the entirety of the Church’s mission), with the process of evangelisation (missionary activity or

the narrow definition of mission). When this happens, other dimensions of the Church's mission are rendered subsidiary to the process of evangelization, or excluded altogether.

Paul VI went on to expand the process of evangelisation in Chapter Two of AG by including other dimensions of mission. The pope initially comments upon witness, proclamation and faith, conversion, the adoption of a way of life and entry into the church through participation in the sacraments (EN 21-23), and then defines evangelisation as a "complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative" (EN 24). The "acceptance of signs" is Paul's designation for sacramental initiation and ongoing participation in the sacraments. EN thus contains the core elements from Chapter Two of AG, but adds the "renewal of humanity" (which refers to the evangelisation of culture, liberation and human development) and "apostolic initiative", which is Paul's shorthand expression for his litmus test of evangelisation, that someone who has been evangelised will in turn evangelise others (EN 24).

EN 24 omits any reference to the formation of a local church. In so doing, the process of evangelisation is removed from its original mission field. With this step, the process of evangelisation is removed from the older "mission field" context, and is now applicable to every local church, whatever its stage of development.

#### **4.5.2 *Catechesi Tradendae* and *Redemptoris Missio***

One of John Paul II's aims in *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) was to ensure that catechesis was recognised as a discrete "stage" in the same process of evangelisation (CT 18). Catechesis is defined in CT as "an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, 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” (CT 18). CT cites EN 17-24 to locate that catechesis as one of the elements within the “whole process of evangelisation” (CT 18).

In *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) John Paul II reiterated the process of evangelisation first outlined in Chapter Two of AG, discussing witness, the initial proclamation of Christ the Saviour, conversion and baptism, and the formation of local churches (RM 42-49).<sup>323</sup> The reference to the formation of local churches rather than entry into the church (as in EN) reflects John Paul II’s focus in RM upon the permanent validity of the mission *ad gentes*, or to those peoples who have never heard the Gospel. In those contexts, the local church needs to be established for the first time.

Like Paul VI in EN, who had added the “renewal of humanity” to encompass other dimensions of the Church’s evangelising activity, John Paul II discussed the process first enunciated in Chapter Two of AG in conjunction with other aspects of mission. These included paragraphs devoted to “base communities”, inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, the promotion of human development and the criterion of charity for all forms of mission (RM 50-60). In both EN and RM, these additions were intended to ensure that the Church’s evangelising activity was not confined to witness, proclamation and the establishment of the Church alone. By referring to the elements of mission such as inter-religious dialogue and human development as “paths” within the “single but complex” reality of mission, RM affirmed that these expressions of mission possessed intrinsic value and significance (RM 41).

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<sup>323</sup> For an evaluation of John Paul II’s overall theology of mission see William R. Burrows, “Mission and Missiology in the Pontificate of John Paul II,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 1 (2006): 3-8.

Missiologist Marcello Zago argued that by including these new forms of mission RM does not follow the “path from missionary presence to young church”.<sup>324</sup> The expansion in the Church’s understanding of mission signified by these additions does not constitute a negation of the process described in Chapter Two of AG either. It should be noted, however, that Chapter Five of RM possesses the same essential structure as Chapter Two of AG, examining witness, initial proclamation of Christ the Saviour, and then conversion, baptism and the formation of local churches, before adding additional paragraphs on the other forms of mission mentioned above (RM 42-49). Furthermore, John Paul II’s discussion of the paths of mission in RM begins with a reference to Chapter Two of AG, and then cites paragraphs 11-15 of AG a further five times in the chapter.<sup>325</sup> The intention of both EN and RM is not that the process outlined in Chapter Two of AG be rejected or neglected, but that it be embedded within the more expansive understanding of mission first articulated in Chapter One of AG, and further developed through both EN and RM themselves.

#### **4.5.3 The General Directory for Catechesis**

The 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) was released under the auspices of the Holy See’s Congregation for the Clergy. Although not part of the papal magisterium, the GDC grounded the church’s catechetical activity within the theology of evangelisation that had developed through the papal teaching on mission since the council. As part of this, the GDC called the content of Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes* “the process of evangelisation”, and expressed the ongoing significance of this process when it stated that:

The conciliar decree *Ad Gentes* clarifies well the dynamic of the process of evangelisation: Christian witness, dialogue and presence in charity (11–12), the proclamation of the Gospel and the call to conversion (13), the catechumenate and

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<sup>324</sup> Zago, "Commentary on RM," 74.

<sup>325</sup> See RM footnote no. 68: AG II, 10-18; footnote no. 70: AG 11-12; footnote, no. 73: AG 13, 74. AG 13-14; and footnote no. 80: AG 15.

Christian Initiation (14), the formation of the Christian communities through and by means of the sacraments and their ministers (15-18). This is the dynamic for establishing and building up the church” (GDC 47).

The GDC relied upon John Paul II’s threefold division between the mission *ad gentes*, pastoral activity and the new evangelisation in RM (GDC 58). John Paul II had stated at the outset of RM that he was concerned about the decline in missionary activity that had taken place in countries in which little to no evangelisation had previously taken place, especially in Asia, Africa, and Oceania. The desire to foster the “mission *ad gentes*” in these locations led John Paul II to reassert the distinction between geographical territories where the church had not yet been established and other countries where the church was well established and flourishing. John Paul also adverted to dechristianisation, speaking of “countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger churches as well” in which significant numbers or groups of the baptised had “lost a living sense of the faith” or who had stopped identifying with the Church. John Paul II said that this “intermediate” situation between the mission *ad gentes* and pastoral care in an established church called for a “new evangelisation” or re-evangelisation (RM 33). While RM speaks of mission being directed towards people and groups, the encyclical does define these different settings geographically, or in territorial terms.

This step in the papal magisterium thus represented a re-invocation of a Christendom model of mission to some extent, as mission territories were once again distinguished from Christian countries. This likely reflected John Paul II’s own experience of deeply Catholic Poland and his visits to Asian and African nations which had received little to no missionary activity. As his own analysis in RM makes clear though, even by 1990 the world could no longer be neatly divided into Christian and non-Christian countries (RM 37).

Notwithstanding the difficulties of maintaining these geographical distinctions, John Paul II nonetheless insisted that,

it does not seem justified to regard as identical the situation of a people which has never known Jesus Christ and that of a people which has known him, accepted him and then rejected him, while continuing to live in a culture which in large part has absorbed Gospel principles and values. These are two basically different situations with regard to the faith” (RM 37).

The GDC affirmed John Paul II’s analysis while recognising that all three situations could co-exist in the same location, especially in the “great cities of the world” (GDC 59). However, and again relying upon John Paul II’s threefold division, the GDC contended that because the mission *ad gentes* is the “missionary responsibility most specifically entrusted to the church by Jesus” it is “thus the exemplary model for all her missionary activity” (GDC 59). This means that although the process of evangelisation is proper to the mission *ad gentes*, it is paradigmatic for the pastoral care of the faithful and for the new evangelisation. Therefore, both post-baptismal catechesis and the efforts to evangelise the nominally baptised ought to be animated by the process of evangelisation too.

The GDC goes on to state that if the process of evangelisation is paradigmatic for all missionary activity, then the “model for all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate” (GDC 59). This principle is reiterated twice in the GDC, underscoring its importance.<sup>326</sup> This principle had originally been articulated in the message of the Synod fathers from the 1977 general synod on catechesis: “The model for all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate when, by specific formation, an adult converted to belief is brought to explicit profession of

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<sup>326</sup> See GDC 68: “This inherent richness in the Catechumenate of non-baptised adults should serve to inspire other forms of catechesis,” and GDC 90: “Given that the *missio ad gentes* is the paradigm of all the Church’s missionary activity, the baptismal catechumenate, which is joined to it, is the model of its catechizing activity.”

baptismal faith during the Paschal Vigil."<sup>327</sup> However, *Catechesi Tradendae*, John Paul II's post-synodal exhortation arising from that synod did not repeat this principle.

In *Christifideles Laici* (ChrL), however, John Paul II referred to a post-baptismal *catechumenate*, stating that "The Synod Fathers have said that a post-baptismal catechesis in the form of a catechumenate can also be helpful by presenting again some elements from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults with the purpose of allowing a person to grasp and live the immense, extraordinary richness and responsibility received at Baptism" (ChrL 61). The same idea was included in a footnote in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1990). The reference in the catechism provides an interesting rationale for a post-baptismal catechumenate: pre-baptismal catechesis prior to infant baptism is of course attenuated, and this needs to be addressed:

Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. *By its very nature* infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The catechism has its proper place here (CCC 1231).<sup>328</sup>

So, rather than positioning the adult catechumenate as merely a model for other forms of catechesis (as the GDC had done), *Christifideles Laici* and the Catechism hold that an actual post-baptismal catechumenate is required. This rationale parallels Joseph Ratzinger's argument that the catechumenate is not merely a preparatory course of instruction prior to baptism, but is actually intrinsic to the sacraments of initiation. Ratzinger makes this case on the basis of the profession of faith that an adult makes immediately prior to baptism. To be able to make this profession of faith, the person needs to know what it means to believe and live out the content of the faith contained in the credal formula that is used, which in

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<sup>327</sup> "Catechesis in Our Time: The Official Message of the Fifth Synod of Bishops Rome, 30 September - 29 October 1977," *The Furrow* 29, no. 1 (1978): 59. Paragraph 59 of the GDC quotes this sentence.

<sup>328</sup> n73, emphasis mine.

turn presupposes a period of instruction and formation in faith. Ratzinger argues that because the profession of faith is necessary for baptism the catechumenate is actually part of the sacrament. The omission of the catechumenate therefore renders the sacrament incomplete.<sup>329</sup> For those baptised in infancy then, the sacrament needs to be completed by a post-baptismal catechumenate that enables them to make their own profession of faith, which ratifies the decision made by their parents and godparents on their behalf.

When it comes to considering the significance of the catechumenate for youth ministry, it is not simply that a catechumenate is necessary for unbaptised youth, those who have received only some of the sacraments of initiation, or even for those baptised young Catholics who, by their non-participation in the life of the Church, do not live out the full significance of their baptism. The Catechism's rationale and Ratzinger's argument would suggest that the children of practising parents need to undergo a process akin to the catechumenate in order to fully realize the sacrament of baptism in their lives.

The references to a post-baptismal *catechumenate* in the Synod statement, *Christifideles Laici* and the Catechism were very brief. With the publication of the GDC, however, the *principle* that the baptismal catechumenate ought to serve as *the model* for all catechesis was stated more clearly, and then discussed at some length (GDC 90-91).<sup>330</sup> Importantly, the GDC stated that there was a "fundamental difference" between catechumens and those being catechised after their baptism, and thus made an important distinction between pre- and post-baptismal catechesis. It went on to examine the various elements of the catechumenate that could nevertheless serve to inspire post-baptismal catechesis. By stressing this distinction the GDC protected the unique significance (and

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<sup>329</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1987), 35-6.

<sup>330</sup> These two paragraphs possess the heading: "The Baptismal Catechumenate: Inspiration for Catechesis in the Church".

unrepeatability) of baptism and its effects in people's lives, while maintaining that catechesis was required for those effects to take root.

The GDC specifically stated that the baptismal catechumenate ought to inform ministry with young people. The directory suggested that the "formative resources of the journey of initiation" needed to be marshalled to address the phenomenon of pre-adolescents who received the sacrament of confirmation and then abandoned the practice of the faith (GDC 181). Then, after suggesting that distinctions between adolescence and young adulthood were not easy to make, the GDC stated that catechesis to these groups needed to be "*profoundly revised and revitalised*" (GDC 181).<sup>331</sup> Given the paradigmatic role the GDC ascribes to the baptismal catechumenate, it is logical to conclude that the GDC intended the baptismal catechumenate to be the basis of this revision.

#### **4.6 *Evangelii Gaudium* and the End of the Christendom Model of Mission**

As we have seen, the GDC relied upon John Paul II's geographical demarcation between the mission *ad gentes*, the new evangelisation and pastoral activity. While this is partly dependent upon increasingly outdated designations between mission territories and Christian countries, it does not mean that the paradigmatic nature of the process of evangelisation is invalidated. Pope Francis addressed this in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG). Given that EG was intended to draw together the fruits of the 2012 general synod on the new evangelisation, it is noteworthy that Francis rarely uses the term "new evangelisation", and when he does so it is to subtly re-define its meaning. As was the case in both AG and EN, Francis speaks of evangelisation in relation to people rather than in relation to territorial or

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<sup>331</sup> Emphasis in original.

geographic designations.<sup>332</sup> Rather than repeat John Paul II's three-fold division between Christian, non-Christian and post-Christian regions, Francis re-frames these three categories as relating to persons: they are now defined as 1) "preaching the Gospel *to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him*", 2) "*ordinary pastoral ministry*", and 3) ministry to "*the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of Baptism*" (EG 15).<sup>333</sup> Rather than designating the third of these categories as the new evangelisation as John Paul II had done, Francis redefined the new evangelisation as referring to all three settings (EG 14). His redefinition sits better with AG's description of the Church as missionary by its very nature, as it means that the pastoral care of the faithful is considered to be an intrinsic dimension of the church's mission and not a subsequent activity that follows on from 'real' or 'true' missionary activity.

Even as he redefined the new evangelisation in this way, Francis quickly went on to repeat John Paul II's declaration in *Redemptoris Missio* that traditional missionary activity (or the process of evangelisation as I, following the GDC, have been calling it) is paradigmatic for the other two settings (EG 15). Francis thus reaffirms the paradigmatic nature of the process of evangelisation (and within that process, the baptismal catechumenate as the model for catechesis), but without retaining the limitations of the territorial definition of mission.

Unlike his predecessors, Francis does not directly engage with the process of evangelisation in EG. Nevertheless, he presumes it, especially in his discussion of the

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<sup>332</sup> Francis' decision here reflects the Synod's *Instrumentum Laboris*, which states, "Traditional, established concepts – formally denoted by the terms 'countries of ancient Christianity' and 'mission lands' – are no longer suitable. At present, these terms seem overly simplified and referring to outdated situations; they fail to provide useful models for Christian communities today". General Secretariat of Synod of Bishops, "*Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith", Vatican, accessed December 4 2017, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20120619\\_instrumentum-xiii\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html).

<sup>333</sup> Emphasis in original.

kerygma (initial proclamation), and by referring to kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis. To appreciate Francis' approach, it is important to realise that the *Aparecida* document of the combined Latin American and Caribbean bishops conferences (CELAM) underpins many aspects of EG.<sup>334</sup> Francis was one of the principal drafters of the *Aparecida* document while he was still archbishop of Buenos Aires. Composed for the Church in Latin America, *Aparecida* does not refer directly to the process of evangelisation, because the vast majority of Latin Americans are baptised. Instead, *Aparecida* outlines a "process of formation of missionary disciples" (Ap 276), which is described as a "formative itinerary" for all of the baptised, "regardless of the role they play in the Church" (Ap 276). The statement identifies five aspects of this process: 1) The encounter with Jesus Christ; 2) Conversion; 3) Discipleship; 4) Communion, and 5) Mission (Ap 278).

After outlining this "formative itinerary" *Aparecida* sets out several proposals concerning Christian initiation (Ap 290). The first proposal states that:

We feel the urgency of developing in our communities a process of initiation into Christian life starting with the kerygma, guided by the Word of God, leading to an ever greater personal encounter with Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect man, experienced as fullness of humanity, which leads to conversion, to following in an ecclesial community, and to a maturing of faith in the practice of the sacraments, service, and mission" (Ap 289).

Note that this proposal mirrors the process of evangelisation, but omits initiation because it is presumed that Latin Americans have been baptised in infancy.

*Aparecida's* second proposal refers to the catechumenate in the early church as a "formative itinerary" too, and then quotes from Benedict VI's post-synodal exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (SCa), which states that the ancient catechumenate "always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of

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<sup>334</sup> "Aparecida Document", CELAM, accessed June 17 2018, <http://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf>. Francis refers to *Aparecida* 10 times in EG.

the faith, it centered on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, proclaimed by authentic witnesses” (Ap 290).<sup>335</sup> In SCa, Benedict XVI had continued: “It is first and foremost the witness who introduces others to the mysteries. Naturally, this initial encounter gains depth through catechesis and finds its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist. This basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a process of mystagogy...” (SCa 64). Following Benedict XVI, *Aparecida* calls this latter activity “mystagogical catechesis” (Ap 290). While Benedict bases his reflections upon the ancient catechumenate, he is referring to the same basic process as it is enunciated in Chapter Two of *Ad Gentes*. *Aparecida*’s formative itinerary, therefore, is clearly based upon the process of evangelisation first enunciated in AG (which as we shall see is rooted in the ancient catechumenate). *Aparecida* transposes the process from its original “*ad gentes*” context (in AG 10-18) to the contemporary Latin American situation and thus to a largely baptised population. As a consequence, the itinerary extends beyond initiation and into the life of ongoing discipleship, which is to be lived in communion and expressed in mission. Francis’ reflections upon kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis in EG are grounded in *Aparecida*’s formative itinerary which was in turn modelled upon the process of evangelisation initially articulated in Chapter Two of AG.

#### **4.7 Conclusion: The Initiatory Dynamic**

At the Second Vatican Council the Church abandoned its commitment to creating Christian societies by intertwining political governance with the Church. The council also rejected the adversarial stance the Church subsequently adopted as a reaction to the fragmentation of Christendom by successive western nations. In so doing, the church

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<sup>335</sup> SCa 64.

entered into a post-Christendom context. This required an understanding of mission that was directed towards persons, rather than the maintenance of an older, territorial understanding of mission proper to Christendom. This new paradigm for mission was inaugurated through the drafting of AG.

Chapter Two of AG provided a description of missionary activity that the GDC would come to call “the process of evangelisation”. This process was both presumed in and expanded upon in both EN and RM, and came to include new dimensions of mission such as the promotion of liberation and inter-religious dialogue that developed in the new post-Christendom context. AG’s process of evangelisation is mirrored in and illuminated by the content of the RCIA. In keeping with its original formulation in *Ad Gentes* as pertaining to a context where the Gospel had not yet been proclaimed, the GDC held that the process of evangelisation should serve as the model for missionary activity in both “new evangelisation” contexts and in locations where “mature” churches were established. The GDC also asserted that the baptismal catechumenate is to be considered the model for all catechesis.

EG may be construed as the final step in the break with the Christendom model of mission begun at Vatican II, as EG does not conceive of mission in relation to geographical location. In so doing Francis re-positions the new evangelisation as incorporating the proclamation of the Gospel to those who do not know Christ, ordinary pastoral ministry, and the evangelisation of the nominally baptised. Finally, we saw that the *Aparecida* document sets out a formative itinerary for the catechesis of the baptised that is kerygmatic, catechetical and mystagogical, as it is predicated upon the same process of evangelisation articulated in AG, EN, and RM.

I want to call this process the “initiator dynamic”: “initiator” because the entire process is ordered towards full sacramental initiation into Christ and the Church, and a “dynamic” because it not only refers to a singular and unrepeatable process of adult evangelisation, catechesis and initiation into the Church, but because it is actually constitutive of the Christian life, of the Church’s very identity and is thus a principal source for the Church’s renewal. A Christian becomes more deeply a Christian and the Church becomes more fully the Church through more deeply appropriating the reality of sacramental initiation and its preceding evangelical and catechetical processes.<sup>336</sup>

The initiator dynamic incorporates each aspect of the process of evangelisation. A faith community that is seeking to live out the initiator dynamic will be conscious of the communal witness and the witness its members are called to give to Christ, and it will provide opportunities for those attracted by that witness to hear the initial proclamation of the Gospel. The community will also provide a process of catechumenal formation that seeks to deepen people’s initial faith and conversion, leading to their reception of the sacraments of initiation. This will be deepened by a period of post-baptismal reflection upon the experience of the sacraments. In short, the RCIA will be central to a faith community that embraces the initiator dynamic.

A truly initiating community will also recognise that *adult* initiation is not their only responsibility in this regard. The faith community will implement processes analogous to the RCIA for those adults yet to complete their sacramental initiation, whether this is because they have not received the sacraments of Confirmation or Eucharist, or because they have not been fully evangelised and catechised. It will also be attentive to the initiator dynamic

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<sup>336</sup> Bruce T. Morrill, “The Paschal Mystery Personified: A Commentary on the Rites of the RCIA,” *Liturgical Ministry* 15 no. (Spring 2006): 77.

in the course of its pastoral ministry, as it recognises its importance for people's renewal in faith. In particular, as the season for the renewal of one's conversion through repentance and prayer, Lent is especially important for the deeper inculcation of the initiatory dynamic among the faithful.

The initiatory dynamic also possesses implications for a faith community's youth ministry. First, there is no reason why the initiatory dynamics ought not pertain to adolescents. Second, it means that although Australian youth ministry has typically focused upon the children of practising parents and sought to engage nominally baptised youth, it has largely neglected the evangelisation of non-baptised youth. The recognition of our post-Christendom context means that ministry to youth needs to include all three groups of young people. To employ the language of the magisterial statements surveyed in this chapter, this requires the deployment of the process of evangelisation for the third group of young people, and the implementation of a formative itinerary for the first two groups. Or, as I have chosen to articulate it: youth ministry ought to embrace the initiatory dynamic as the foundational process for its ministry with young people.

Having established the rationale for re-configuring youth ministry in the light of the baptismal catechumenate, the next chapter examines the initiatory dynamic in greater depth through a close analysis of the RCIA.