



CENTRE FOR MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP

A work of the Missionaries of God's Love

Introduction to the Contemporary Theology of Mission

Theological Foundations of Mission 3

Introduction to Lecture 3

- Week 1 – the scriptural foundation of mission (scripture as salvation history, lens of mission). Trying to draw upon the authoritative witness of scripture for our practical theological approach to mission
- Last week – looked at the early Church's mission, beginning with Acts 2, then at the rapid expansion of Christianity in the second and third centuries, before examining the catechumenate in 4th century Jerusalem



Summary of Week 1

- The whole of salvation history (the Bible as a narrative) portrays God's mission in the world
- Israel's mission is to be faithful to the covenant(s) God establishes (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants), and through this fidelity to be a "light to the nations", a witness to the world
- Jesus' mission is to establish the new covenant in his person (by his death and resurrection)
- The Church's mission is to cooperate with God's mission in the world to see all things transformed and renewed in Christ.



Summary of Week 2

- **Acts 2** gives us a picture of the early Church's mission. Luke seems to be conveying that the early Church:
 - listened to the Apostles' teaching (*didache*),
 - engaged in true communion or fellowship (friendship in the Lord, or *koinonia*)
 - was faithful to the breaking of the bread (Eucharist) and the prayers
 - ensured that those who were in need were cared for
- The result of this was a distinctive community that non-believers were drawn to; & mission was a natural outcome of their way of life together
- **Between c AD 100 and 313 the Church grew rapidly in both the Roman Empire ('the West'), and the Persian Empire and Asia ('The East').**



Summary of Week 2 <continued>

- Missionary figures, including teachers, bishops, evangelisers, and apologists played an important, albeit secondary role in the spread of Christianity
- The monastic movement (monks) in both the West and especially the East also played a role in the spread of the Gospel
- The witness of the martyrs also played an important role in evangelising people
- But the primary mode of evangelization happened through existing networks, relationships, and especially households of faith.
- Various elements of Christianity were attractive to people living in a difficult world



Summary of Week 2 <continued>

- The witness of a community that bridged ethnic, religious, gender, and class boundaries was attractive to people, especially those who were disadvantaged by the dominant cultural system (women, slaves, non-Roman citizens).
- The snapshot of the catechumenate in 4th century Jerusalem:
 - Addresses the common issue of mixed or imperfect motives for presenting to baptism – Cyril sees these as opportunities
 - Gives us a picture of the preparation for baptism that the ‘competentes’ received during Lent.
 - Gives us a picture of the rich ritual action (baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist) that took place at the Easter vigil



Possible Implications for Mission Today

- Acts 2 and the Church's mission in the succeeding centuries point to the importance of the **witness** generated by the **distinctive community** that constituted by people wishing to follow Jesus and his teaching. That witness was produced by a combination of teaching, fellowship (or friendship in the Lord), liturgy, and practical care of the needy
- **The Gospel was presented in such a way that it spoke to the needs of the people** at that time (peace, patience in suffering, hope, eschatological fulfilment in the face of injustice).
- The catechumenal process and initiation created a dynamic which likely had a profound impact upon many of the recipients



Introduction to a Contemporary Theology of Mission

- Vatican II and a new paradigm for mission
- What was Vatican II: 21st ecumenical council of the Catholic Church (1962-1965)
- An ecumenical council: the college of bishops united with the Pope – highest level of the Church's teaching authority. E.g. Nicaea (AD 325), Trent (1545-63), Vatican I (1869-70)



A Brief Excursus on the Teaching Office of the Church (CCC 888ff)

- Christ shares his infallibility with the Church – the Church’s infallibility in relation to faith is granted to the Magisterium (lit. Teaching Office).
- The scriptural foundation for the magisterium is the power given to the 12 apostles to “bind and loose” (Matt 18:18). Peter is also given the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19).
- “to bind and loose” – in time of Jesus referred to teaching authority (what was lawful behaviour); juridic authority (membership within the community), spiritual authority to forgive or retain sins)
- Passed on to successors (cf Isaiah 22:22 – pass from Sheba, chief steward of Israel to Eliakim, his successor). Foundation of *apostolic succession*: passing on from apostles to bishops



A Brief Excursus on the Teaching Office of the Church (CCC 888ff)

- We associate “infallibility” with the pope, but the body of bishops, in union with the Pope exercise the “supreme magisterium” in an ecumenical council
- Conclusion – As an ecumenical council, a Catholic cannot dismiss the teaching of Vatican II. At the same time, not everything at Vatican II has the same doctrinal weight.



Vatican II

- Vatican II was called by Pope John XXIII – to respond to a crisis (like all ecumenical councils).
- The crisis was the phenomenon of modern unbelief or atheism
- The end of Christendom – dechristianization
- *France, pays de mission? – France, a Mission Country (1943)* by Daniel and Godin



Vatican II

- *Aggiornamento* – “Updating” – fresh language required to speak to modern people
- Some bishops and *periti* (experts) or theological advisors suggested that the way forward was to “return to the sources” (“*ressourcement*”) – Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church
- *Ressourcement* for the sake of *aggiornamento*



Key Documents of Vatican II

- 4 major constitutions of Vatican II
 - *Sacrosanctum Concilium* - On the Liturgy
 - *Dei Verbum* – on Divine Revelation
 - *Lumen Gentium* – on the Church (ad intra)
 - *Gaudium et Spes* – on the Church in the modern world
- Many other documents (e.g. relationship to the Jewish people, Catholic education, Eastern rite Catholic Churches, *Ecumensim*, + more)
- *Ad Gentes* – On Missionary Activity



What was Vatican II really about?

- Lots of confusion about this in the aftermath of the Council
- John XXIII puts it like this – how can we position the Church to respond to the needs of our fellow human beings
- Paul VI in 1975 (10 years after the Council): “The objectives of [Vatican II] are definitively summed up in this single one: to make the Church of the twentieth century ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the twentieth century” (EN 2)
- So “hermeneutical” or interpretive key of the council: evangelisation



Vatican II and a Post-Christendom Church: A New Paradigm for Mission

- What is conceived at Vatican II is a post-Christendom Church - a Church that needs to be in the world but also in mission to and for the world, when Christendom is over.
- Could be argued that Francis' papacy marks the true birth of post-Christendom Church – first non-European pope since the 8th century
- Shift in the demographic center of Christian faith to the majority world (Africa, Latin America, Asia)
- A post-Christendom Church requires a new model for mission
- Conceptualised in *Ad Gentes* – Vatican II's Decree on Missionary Activity



Ad Gentes (AG)

- Last document of Vatican II to be approved
- The actual process by which the document was created reflects the transition from a Christendom model of mission to a post-Christendom model of mission
- Early drafts of AG still assumed Christendom – Christian countries (comprised of Europe, colonies and former colonies) and “mission territories (everywhere else)
- So the early drafts of AG – addressed legal questions about the mission territories



Ad Gentes

- So-called “Missionary Bishops” (bishops from mission territories) reacted to this – said their dioceses were local churches (not inferior in status to European dioceses).
- For Yves Congar OP, one of the *periti* (expert theologians) who worked on *Ad Gentes* – even bigger problem: the conversation about mission territories was problematic – France requires missionary activity, and some of the most vibrant locations for faith in “mission fields” – terminology didn’t work
- Congar: we need a better theology – from missions to mission



Ad Gentes

- Congar uses the principle of *ressourcement* to solve this problem: goes back to Augustine, Alexander of Hales, Thomas Aquinas
- Not to their theology of *mission*, but their theology of *God*
- The term *missio* refers, not the Church, but to God
- *Missio* describes the relationship, the dynamic between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as it takes place in the world.
- The Trinity ad intra – the Son and the Spirit *process* from the Father
- When this dynamic plays out in the world – the Son's procession from the Father is Jesus' *missio*; the Spirit's procession from the Father is his *missio* in the world



Missio Dei: The Mission of God

- So mission refers to *God's action* in the world
- *Ad Gentes* frames mission accordingly:
“The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father” (AG 2).
- Not so much that the Church has a mission, but rather the mission (of God) has a Church
- The Church does not have a mission of her own, but shares in the mission of God.



Missio Dei

- The Church's mission is to cooperate with what the Holy Spirit is doing
- Repenting of our ecclesial Pelagianism (Pope Francis)



What constitutes the Church's Mission then?

“[The Church's mission to express] the divine love of the Trinitarian communion embraces every imaginable good,

from works of mercy, social justice, and efforts at reconciliation to the promotion of religious liberty, environmental conservation, and common understanding among religious traditions.

Wherever the dignity of human life and the sacredness of human existence require promotion or defence; wherever human relationships require nurturing or healing; wherever evil and sin tear at the fabric of life, there the mission of the church lies.

Similarly, mission involves every celebration and sign of the Trinitarian life in the lives of the faithful and every attempt to make its meaning and truth known to others, thus embracing the whole contemplative and liturgical life of the Christian community

as well as every form of witness, proclamation, catechesis, and inculturation of the gospel among peoples”.

William Gregory



Back to *Ad Gentes*

- AG 1 – Intro

Chapter I – Principles of Doctrine

- AG 2 – the passage we saw above – *Missio Dei*
- AG 3-5 – salvation history through the lens of mission
- AG 6-9 – missionary activity (flows out of mission)

Chapter II – Mission Work Itself

Chapter III Particular Churches

Chapter IV – Missionaries

Chapter V – Missionary Activity

Chapter VI - Cooperation



AG Chapter II – Mission Work Itself

- Article 1: Christian Witness
 - Witness
 - Dialogue
 - Presence in charity
- Article 2: Preaching the Gospel and Gathering together the People of God
 - Proclamation of the Gospel – kerygma
 - Call to faith and conversion
 - Catechumenate
 - Initiation
- Article 3: Forming a Christian Community

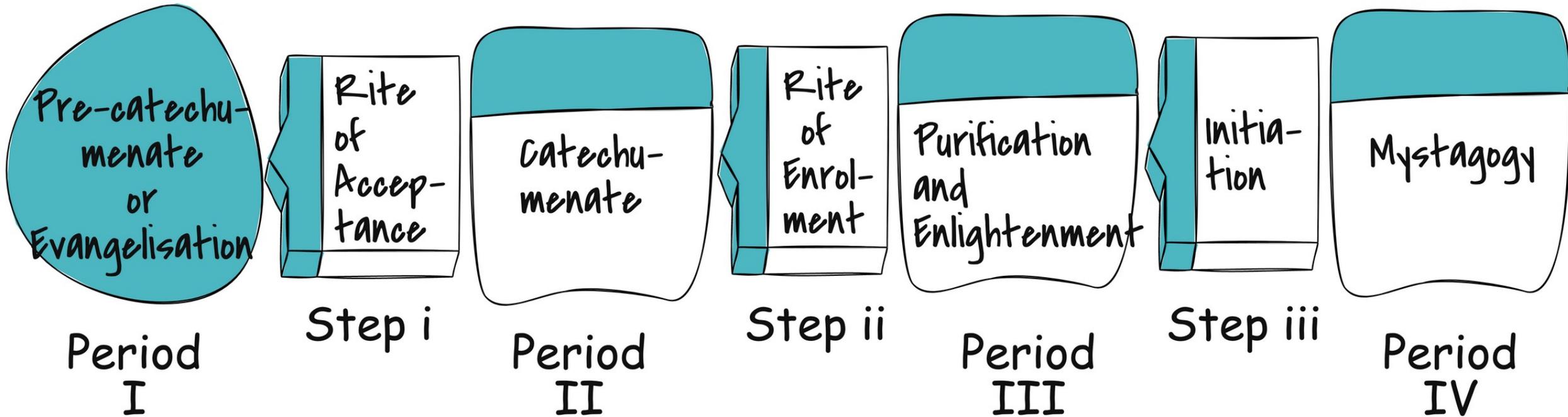


Rite of Christian of Initiation of Adults

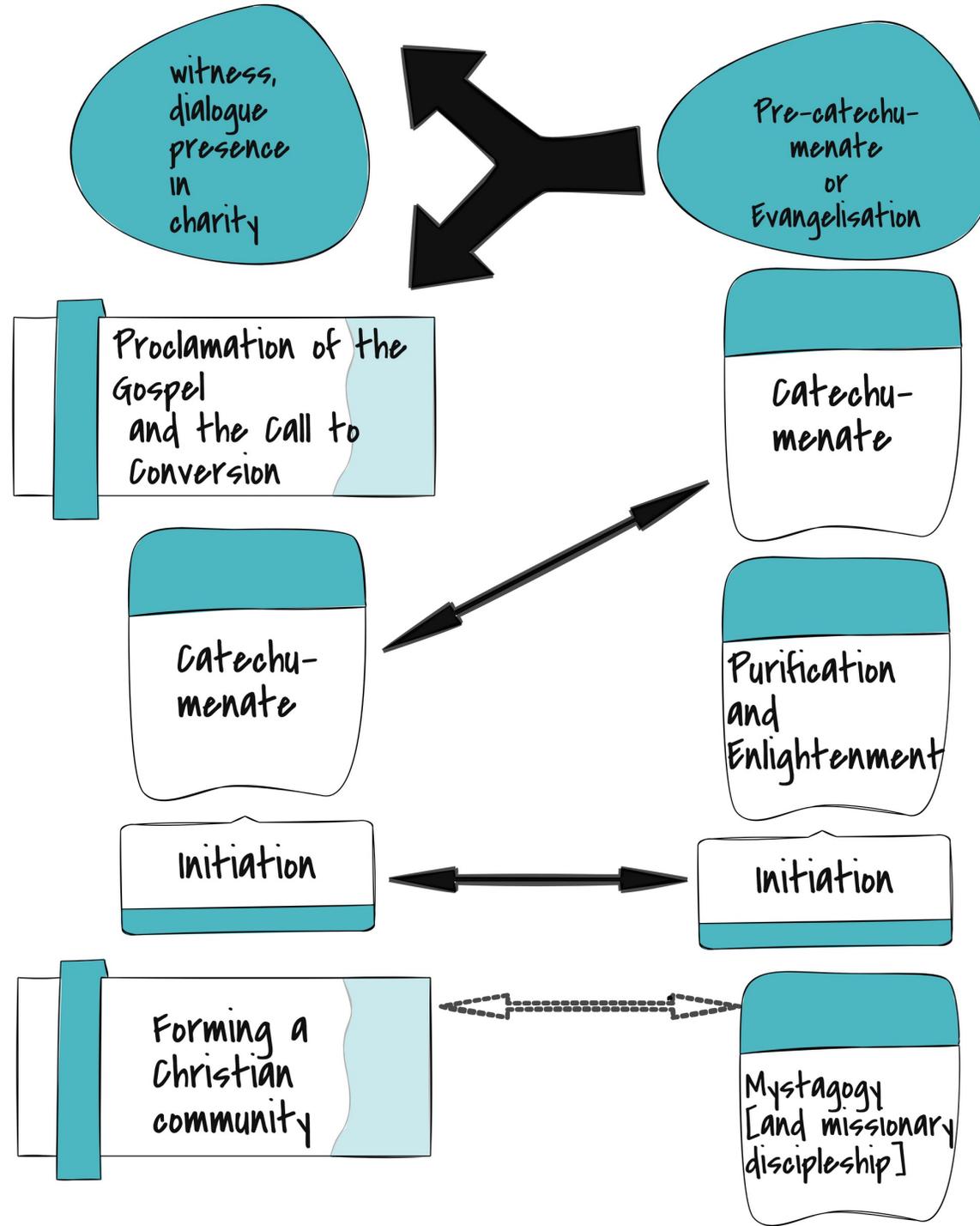
- Catechumenate flourishes in 4th and 5th centuries.
- As infant baptism becomes the dominant form of initiation, the catechumenate more or less falls into disuse.
- Calls for its restoration and experiments occur at various 'missionary moments', e.g. the 'discovery' of the 'New World'
- 1962 - *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Vatican II) restoration of the catechumenate
- Work starts on what will become the RCIA as part of Vatican II
- An exercise in *ressourcement* too – go back to sources like Cyril (also *Apostolic Tradition*, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ambrose, Augustine, for inspiration
- RCIA published in 1972 – liturgical and missionary document



The RCIA



*Ad
Gentes*



RCIA



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

- Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975)
 - Paul VI presumes the process
 - Uses 'evangelization' in two ways:
 - as synonymous with the entirety of the Church's mission
 - As referring to missionary activity or the process by which an unbaptised person is converted, is baptised, and becomes a disciple
 - Has been an issue as EN gets used by people: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (EN 14).



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

EN continued: “For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: "Now I am making the whole of creation new."

But 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 evangelization 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 evangelizes 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”.



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

- John Paul II distinguishes between the mission ad gentes, pastoral care of the faithful, and the new evangelisation (*Redemptoris Missio*, 1990)
 - Mission ad gentes: the first evangelisation of those locations where the Gospel has never been proclaimed
 - Pastoral care of the faithful: takes place in those locations where a mature local church exists
 - The new evangelisation: re-evangelisation of those places where large numbers of the baptised do not practice their faith
- For John Paul II – The process of evangelisation refers to the “mission *ad gentes*”



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

- The issue with this is that these three contexts can no longer be delineated *geographically*
- Globalisation and migration have resulted in a religious pluralism where all of these contexts now co-exist



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

- The General Directory for Catechesis (1997) – compendium of Catholic teaching on evangelisation and catechesis
- First document to speak of the “process of evangelisation”
- “The model for all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate” (GDC 59)
- Means that catechesis of the baptised should be inspired by the RCIA process



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

- Pope Francis – *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)
- The documents preparing for the Synod on the New Evangelization recognized that the context had changed
- Now “new evangelisation” is to take place in 3 principal “settings”:
 - “Ordinary pastoral ministry”
 - “The baptised whose lives do not reflect the demands of baptism”
 - “To those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him” (EG 14-15)
- Notice “New Evangelisation” refers to all three in EG, and not just the second group



The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

“John Paul II asked us to recognize that ‘there must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel’ to those who are far from Christ, ‘because this is the first task of the Church’.

Indeed, ‘today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church’ and “the missionary task must remain foremost’.

What would happen if we were to take these words seriously?

We would realize that missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity*”. (EG 15)



Process of Evangelisation in the *Directory for Catechesis*

2020 Revision of the 1997 GDC

- Charity – “permeating the whole temporal order”
- Witness – thru solidarity, fellowship, and dialogue
- First proclamation and call to conversion
- Catechumenal process
- Maturing in communion and mission through formation, sacraments, and charity

Catechumenate as a Source of Inspiration for Catechesis

“Precisely because of its missionary character, the catechumenate can also inspire the catechesis directed towards those who, although they have already received the baptismal grace, do not actually taste its richness: in this sense one speaks of catechesis inspired by the catechumenal model or a post-baptismal catechumenate or a catechesis of initiation into Christian life”

Catechumenate as a source of inspiration for all Catechesis

So we are speaking of 3 “catechumenal initiatives”:

- 1) a catechumenate in the strict sense for the unbaptized (RCIA)
- 2) A catechumenate in an analogous sense for those baptized who have not completed their initiation
- 3) A catechesis of “catechumenal inspiration” for those who have been initiated but not sufficiently evangelised and catechized

The Process of Evangelisation in Papal Teaching Since the Council

If missionary outreach is paradigmatic for all of the Church's activity, then (as we saw in the GDC) the baptismal catechumenate (or RCIA) is the model for ordinary pastoral ministry and for reaching those baptised people who are not fully living out their faith

