



CHRISTIAN LIFE EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

PASTORAL ORIENTATIONS

"Jesus drew himself near and walked along with them" (Lk 24:15)

The history of the Church is a long history of believers, who "have based the transformation of their lives on their encounter with the living Christ" (Jesus Christ, the way to humanization, p 14), such as the very first witnesses, the apostles, the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Emmaus.

As we are reminded by the General Directory for Catechesis (1997), "The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ making, of oneself, a disciple of him. This demands a permanent commitment to think like him, to judge like him and to live as he lived. In this way, the believer unites himself to the community of disciples and appropriates the faith of the Church" (n.53).

This experience of conversion and of encounter is at the heart of the catechetical plan. Our journey of reflection in this *Year of Faith* is another reason for us to look, again, at how we form our members in Christian living. There have been many instances of reflection concerning this reality, one being at the Council of Priests.

On November 7th, 2012, a meeting was held, which brought together a large number of pastoral agents, priests, deacons, and those laypeople who do pastoral work, but are not mandated, to discuss the sessions for children aged 8 to 11 years.

We tackled the following subjects, among others: 1) the number of years of instruction; 2) the number of hours of catechesis and related activities; 3) the percentage of related activities versus the hours of catechesis; and 4) the diocesan tariff.

In light of recent official catechetical documents, the Pastoral Guide for Christian Life Education and Instruction will present in detail the many diocesan aspects

discussed. The goal of this document is to offer, not just the norms of our diocese, but a vision of the future, which will allow us to adapt our practices to our missionary context.

However, in order that parishes can get ready for the next pastoral year and, as a result of the consensus reached at the meeting of November 7th, 2012, it is appropriate within the diocese that 1) the instruction of children ages 8 to 11 be spread out over four years; 2) there be 60 hours of catechesis and 30 hours of related activities over the four year period; 3) the diocesan tariff be established at \$100 per year to cover registration, manuals and the material necessary for catechesis.

Please note, however, that no child is to be refused due to lack of money and those in charge must show great flexibility when taking registrations. We also insist on the practice, already established by the provincial plan, that there is only one sacrament per year.

We have adopted these provisions in order to promote unity and cohesion within the diocesan plan, in regards to Christian education and instruction. Together and united, we will more than ever, radiate the love of Christ and favour the transmission of the faith for the growth of the Church and the building of the Kingdom of God, here and now. We will be better able to help our youth discover that Jesus wants to journey with them and calls them to journey with Him, which is the challenge of our new evangelization.

I count on your collaboration and your ecclesial sense to embrace the implementation of these recommendations, which are firstly and above all, a source of cohesion and unity. However, we must not lose sight of the essential qualities of our programs of Christian education, that is, our welcome, our tender and loving accompaniment, as well as, our understanding of the lives of these children.

Thanking you for your support and your cooperation, I offer you again, the assurance of my prayers in Jesus, our way, our truth and our life (Jn 14:6).

This 21st of November, 2012 on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady,



† Noël Simard
Bishop of Valleyfield