



Why do we celebrate Catechetical Sunday?

In 1935, the Vatican published *On the Better Care and Promotion of Catechetical Education*, a document that asks every country to acknowledge the importance of the Church's teaching ministry and to honor those who serve the Christian community as catechists. For the first few years after Catechetical Sunday was established, national catechetical congresses were held in conjunction with the celebration. Since 1971 the USCCB's Department of Education has produced materials to help parishes celebrate the event at the local level. The word "catechetical" is unfamiliar to most people.

This year, the Church will celebrate Catechetical Sunday on September 18, 2011, and will focus on the theme "Do This in Memory of Me." Those whom the community has designated to serve as catechists will be called forth to be commissioned for their ministry. Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Catechetical Sunday is an opportunity for all to rededicate themselves to this mission as a community of faith.

What does it mean?

The word might be more familiar than you think. Many Catholics have used the word "catechism" for years, and they know it has something to do with the compendium of the Church's teachings. The root word, "catechesis," is from a Greek word meaning "to echo, or resound." Catechesis is the act of resounding or bringing the Church's teachings to the world. A catechist is one who teaches in the name of the Church.

Why do we have a special day set aside to commission catechists?

Catechesis is a distinct and special ministry in the Church. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes clear, "Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life . . . her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis" (no. 7). This ministry of teaching in the name of the Church has a profound dignity, which is why catechists are formally commissioned by the Church. It is only fitting that we set aside a day to highlight this ministry and invite the entire church community to think about our responsibility to share our faith with others.

How are parents, the primary catechists of their children, recognized on Catechetical Sunday?

Parents are truly the primary catechists of their children. They prepare the soil and plant the first seeds of faith. On Catechetical Sunday, we not only highlight the work of catechists in parishes and schools, but we also commend parents and guardians and encourage them to take seriously their role of making their Catholic households a place where faith is passed on to the next generation. This is why the rite of blessing of catechists used on Catechetical Sunday includes an optional blessing of parents and guardians.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has designated the third Sunday in September as Catechetical Sunday.