Lisa Mladinich

Be an Amazing Catechist

Inspire the Faith of Children

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Introduction: A Quiet Revolution

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

What you hold in your hand is a highly effective training program for the Catholic catechist. It is simple, engaging, and useful to catechists at every level of experience using any curriculum. You may not need every idea in this book, but I guarantee that you will find within it valuable tools for making your catechetical ministry more vibrant, more exciting, and more effective.

What this book is *not*, is the esoteric product of a highly educated, highly trained expert. Based on several years of my own classroom experience and my own and others' research, it is more like a field guide — written by one of your own in language you can relate to. I'm a catechist and a parent, like many of you. I prepare and pray and do what I can and *trust God* to do the rest.

"I can do all things in him who strengthens me." *(Philippians 4:13)*

So what can you expect from the pages that follow? I'll begin by asking you to prayerfully study your faith, a little at a time. I'll get specific and practical with my suggestions. Remember, we can't share what we don't have. As the *National Directory for Catechesis* declares, "Like all Christians, catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation" (p. 730). Don't fear this process. God rewards our every effort, and our joy increases along with our knowledge. Not because we're worthy, but because we trust, humbly, like little children, in the power of God.

The rest of this book will take you through specific teaching techniques and ideas that have been highly successful in my classrooms. I'll share insights from sources I have benefited from in my own research and give you guidelines and suggestions for making *your* lessons exciting and unforgettable. I'll make recommendations for further inquiry where applicable.

I'll wrap up with the most important element of this program, asking you to deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ in His Church. Through prayer and sacramental life, you will find strength and encouragement — you will receive the graces needed to be an *amazing* catechist.

Ultimately, you will enter a classroom filled with children, or welcome a group of children into your home, and begin to teach the Faith from your own heart and mind. In that moment, it will seem that you are alone and that what you are doing cannot possibly make a serious difference in the lives of those entrusted to you. But nothing could be further from the truth.

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Sharpen Your Knowledge

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man and he will increase in learning."

(Proverbs 9:9)

Teaching is a great way to learn.

You may feel ill-equipped to teach the Faith to children. But you don't need a degree in theology to teach the Faith *accurately and powerfully*. Look at each lesson, one at a time, week by week, and make sure you understand the concepts. If don't have a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it's available in paperback for about ten dollars (or free online — see resource list on page 3), and it is a treasure. It has a very good, detailed index to make things easy for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten and inspire you as you use it. And again, use it a little at a time. Don't get overwhelmed. If a child asks you a question you don't have the answer to, make a note and say, "Great question! I'll look that up in the *Catechism* for you and give you the answer next week." You'll be modeling the virtue of humility while teaching students that our Church can be trusted to provide answers.

What you teach matters, even if you can't see the results. You are planting seeds, and God will do the rest. So pray and study. As you open yourself to learning, you open yourself to an outpouring of grace in your life and in your ministry.

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Here are just a few of the online resources I use:

- **The Vatican** — for access to Vatican documents in ten languages: www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm.

- **The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' official website** — for a free online version of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, a free online Bible, daily Mass readings, and much more: www.usccb.org.

- **Teaching Catholic Kids** — informative articles and other resources for teaching children the Faith. Includes activities for different age groups, ideas for adapting to different seasons, recommended books and other products from Our Sunday Visitor, and much more: www.teachingcatholickids.com.

- **CatholicMom.com** — a website dedicated to celebrating all things Faith, family, and fun from a Catholic perspective. Includes weekly podcasts: www.new.catholicmom.com.

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