

50th International Eucharistic Congress



Pastoral Preparation and Overview

Theme of the Eucharistic Congress:

The theme of the Congress is: *Communion with Christ and with one another*. Over the course of the next two years (2010-2012) this theme will be explored in four distinct “Stages” of preparation. These “Stages” will occur seasonally.

The Four Stages of Preparation:

1. Stage One – Autumn/Winter 2010: Christ gathers us as a Eucharistic Community.
2. Stage Two – Spring/Summer 2011: Christ gathers us to listen, to hear, to be nourished and to be formed into community by God’s Word.
3. Stage Three – Autumn/Winter 2011: Christ gathers us to be nourished by the Bread of Life.
4. Stage Four – Spring 2012: Christ gathers and strengthens us for Mission by the Word and the Bread of Life.

As the Feast of Corpus Christi (2010) will be the first event on the horizon in preparation for the Congress it is hoped that the resources provided will help parishes engage with the theme of the Stage One.

After Corpus Christi 2010, and in advance of Stage One, pastoral resources and a catechetical programme will be published in our next e-zine in time for people to prepare and plan for pastoral preparation at parish and local level.

The Catechetical Approach:

The *General Directory for Catechesis* clearly favours an approach that connects the “human experiences” of people with the great truths of Christian faith. The dynamic can be described as enabling individuals and groups to bring their *lives* to *Christian faith* and to bring *Christian faith* to their lives with the intended outcome of *lived Christian faith*. The approach known as *Shared Christian Praxis Approach* is being recommended.¹ It has five distinct movements:

1. Movement One – *Attend and Reflect*. Individuals are invited to pay attention to their own life experience and practice regarding particular issues or themes. An interesting generative theme can be offered for reflection and discussion. Here, creativity is needed in focusing the theme— it can be a story, an example, song, symbol, puzzle, parable, or just posing a good question.
2. Movement Two – *Hear the Story*. In this movement a deeper level of reflection on the chosen theme is invited through the use of reason, discussion, memory and imagination. Here people are invited to reflect critically on, to share about and to learn from their present practices and life experiences.
3. Movement Three – *Embrace the Vision*. Here access is given to the group regarding Christian Story and Vision through informed input using scripture and church teaching related to the chosen theme.
4. Movement Four – *Think it Through*. Here one is invited to a personal appropriation of faith, making it one’s own. Participants are invited to integrate their personal stories with the Christian Story and Vision and to experience a deeper understanding and critique of their own story in the light of the Christian Story.
5. Movement Five – *Judge and Act*. In this fifth movement the individual or group is invited to decision – cognitive, affective or behavioural. There is an

¹ This type of *Shared Christian Praxis Approach*, developed by Thomas H. Groome, has been used successfully for decades in religious education and faith development programmes worldwide. It reflects the “dynamics of knowing” outlined by the theologian Bernard Lonergan. The *Shared Christian Praxis Approach* has five distinct movements or steps (Groome 1980, 1991).

opportunity for participants to choose a personal or group faith response to the theme which has been the focus of the particular *shared Christian praxis* event. This may include a decision to take some definite overt activity or it could be a decision to take time for further reflection or clarification.

Outlining the next two years:

The task in hand is to take the Four Stages of Pastoral Preparation for the Eucharistic Congress and to bring the approach of *Shared Christian Praxis* to bear on each Stage. The following is a brief indication of how this might be achieved during each of the Four Stages or periods of Pastoral Preparation.²

² **Content and Methodology:** Paragraph 149 of the *General Directory for Catechesis* states that there is no 'opposition or artificial separation or presumed neutrality between method and content'. This should be kept in mind when the detailed content and proposed methodologies are being suggested in order to facilitate the above overview.

Stage One: *Christ gathers us as a Eucharistic Community.*

The First Stage is entitled *Christ gathers us as a Eucharistic Community*. Let us see how the shared Christian Praxis Approach might help in bringing *life* to *Faith* and then *Faith* to *life*.

1. Movement One – *Attend and Reflect. Attend and Reflect.* Consider examining ‘Gathering’ as a generative theme. Focus the theme of “gathering” around a “secular” life experience of gathering. Ask: Who? What? Where? When? Why? What if?
2. Movement Two – *Hear the Story.* Invite individual expressions and opinions about “gathering” how they experience it, live it, think or feel about it and so forth.
3. Movement Three – *Embrace the Vision.* Here the rich theme of “gathering” in Scripture, Tradition and Theology can be dealt with. Scripturally, the ‘Emmaus event’ (Luke 24:13-35) should be key here.
4. Movement Four – *Think it Through.* Now the praxis moves back to life and invites people to make this Faith content and its spiritual wisdom on “gathering” their own, to take it to heart in their own lives. This might be a good time for prayer, contemplation, reflection, journaling etc.
5. Movement Five – *Judge and Act.* The primary intent is that participants not simply learn about “gathering” (though this is important) but that they learn from it for their Christian lives. Outcomes might be proposed as activities, debates, panels, round-robins, role-plays, etc. Practical actions and outcomes are invited and chosen at this stage.

(A Fuller Pastoral Preparation Programme will appear after the celebration of Corpus Christi 2010 – in time for Autumn 2010)

Stage Two: *Christ gathers us to hear, to be nourished and to be formed into community by God's Word.*

The following illustrates how the shared Christian Praxis Approach might help in bringing *life* to *Faith* and then *Faith* to *life* in this Second Stage.

1. Movement One – *Attend and Reflect*. Focus the theme of “hearing/listening” around a life “secular” experience. An interesting generative theme can be creatively offered. Consider the aural media, counselling, bereavement, quality listening etc.
2. Movement Two – *Hear the Story*. Invite individual expressions and opinions about “hearing/listening” as they experience it, live it, think or feel about it.
3. Movement Three – *Embrace the Vision*. Here the rich theme of “hearing/listening” in Scripture, Tradition and Theology can be dealt with. Scripturally, the ‘Emmaus event’ (Luke 24:13-35) should be key here. “When the scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and it is Christ, present in his word, who proclaims the Gospel” (General Instruction, *The Roman Missal*, p. xxi).
4. Movement Four – *Think it Through*. Now the praxis moves back to life and invites people to make this Faith content and its spiritual wisdom on “hearing/listening” their own, to take it to heart in their own lives. This might be a good time for prayer, contemplation, reflection, journaling etc.
5. Movement Five – *Judge and Act*. The primary intent is that participants not simply learn about “hearing/listening” (though this is important) but that they learn from it for their lives. Outcomes might be proposed as activities, debates, panels, round-robins, role-plays, etc. Practical actions and outcomes are required at this stage. These should come from the participants.

(A Fuller Pastoral Preparation Programme will be published here in advance of Spring/Summer 2011)

Stage Three: *Christ gathers us to be nourished by the Bread of Life.*

The following illustrates how the shared Christian Praxis Approach might help in bringing *life* to *Faith* and then *Faith* to *life* in this Third Stage.

1. Movement One – *Attend and Reflect*. Here individuals are invited to pay attention to “nourishment” in their own lives. An interesting generative theme can be offered. Here, creativity is much needed – can be story, example, song, symbol, puzzle, parable, etc. or just posing a great question; however!
2. Movement Two – *Hear the Story*. Reflect deeply on “nourishment” (personal, communal, global) through reason, discussion, memory and imagination.
3. Movement Three – *Embrace the Vision*. Give access here to the Christian story and vision regarding “nourishment” through a thorough instruction in scripture and theology around the theme. Scripturally, the ‘Emmaus event’ (Luke 24:13-35) should be key here.
4. Movement Four – *Think it Through*. Now the praxis moves back to life and invites people to make this Faith content and its spiritual wisdom on “nourishment” their own, to take it to heart in their own lives. This might be a good time for prayer, contemplation, reflection, journaling etc.
5. Movement Five – *Judge and Act*. Here the individual is invited to decision – cognitive, affective or behavioural around the theme of “nourishment”.

(A Fuller Pastoral Preparation Programme will be published here in advance of Autumn/Winter 2011)

Stage Four: *Christ gathers and strengthens us for Mission by the Word and the Bread of Life.*

1. Movement One – *Attend and Reflect*. Focus the theme of “mission” around a life “secular” experience of mission. Ask: Who? What? Where? When? Why? What if? Mission and ‘the missions’.
2. Movement Two – *Hear the Story*. Invite individual expressions and opinions about “mission” as they experience it, live it, think or feel about it, etc.
3. Movement Three – *Embrace the Vision*. Here the rich theme of “mission” in Scripture, Tradition and Theology can be dealt with. Scripturally, the ‘Emmaus event’ (Luke 24:13-35) should be key here.
4. Movement Four – *Think it Through*. Now the praxis moves back to life and invites people to make this Faith content and its spiritual wisdom on “mission” their own, to take it to heart in their own lives. This might be a good time for prayer, contemplation, reflection, journaling etc.
5. Movement Five – *Judge and Act*. The primary intent is that participants not simply learn about “mission” (though this is important) but that they learn from it for their lives. Outcomes might be proposed as activities, debates, panels, round-robins, role-plays, etc. Practical actions and outcomes are required at this stage. These should come from the participants.

(A Fuller Pastoral Preparation Programme will be published here in advance of Spring/Summer 2012)

Conclusion

The Eucharistic Congress 2012 will provide an opportunity for every member of the Church to reflect and renew our commitment to faith in light of the theme, Communion with Christ and with one another. There is an invitation to parishes, groups, movements, ecclesial groups and individuals to renew our understanding of Eucharist. Those engaged with pastoral planning can use the resources provided to establish a path of preparation towards the Eucharistic Congress. The Stages of Preparation outlined in this document can provide a common approach to pastoral preparation. All resources will be made available through the Eucharistic Congress e-zine and www.iec2012.ie