

Final Statement

28th Indian Catechetical Association 2025

Catechesis in and towards Prayer

We, the 43 participants, comprising priests, religious, and lay faithful, gathered for the 28th General Assembly of the Indian Catechetical Association at the Siloam Renewal Centre in Shillong from 12 to 14 February 2025. Throughout this enriching gathering, we delved deeply into the theme *Catechesis in and towards Prayer*, engaging in seven thought-provoking paper presentations and four practical sessions designed to illuminate this central theme.

Our Reflections:

1. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines prayer as an act of raising one's heart and mind to God (CCC 2559). Our aim is to advocate for a holistic understanding and practice of prayer – one that nurtures communal bonds, fosters personal transformation, and encourages active participation within both the Church and society. At its core, prayer seeks to deepen our relationship with God, transforming believers to be *Alter Christus* in the world. We recognize the four key moments in catechesis: instruction, training, Accompaniment, and Evaluation.
2. “The Mass is prayer (Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, 15 November 2017).” We believe that catechesis towards a prayerful Eucharist offers a transformative encounter with Christ. Our catechesis should include fostering scripture study, promoting Eucharistic devotions, sharing testimonies of Eucharistic miracles, imitating the example of Mary and the saints in love and service, hosting contextual Eucharistic celebrations, and conducting liturgical workshops. Besides Eucharistic Catechesis, we believe in a Catechetical Eucharist. Pope Benedict XVI affirms this in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*: “The best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well (SC 64).”
3. In our deeper reflection on our relationship between prayer and catechesis we affirm prayer as one of the tasks of the catechist. We believe, celebrate, live and pray (CCC13). Prayer is one of the pillars of faith. Catechesis breathes life into faith, and faith, in turn, gives life to catechesis. “Catechesis has the task of educating the believer for prayer and in prayer (*Directory for Catechesis*, 86).” We call for a shift from merely teaching prayers to truly teaching how to pray. Here, the catechist's role extends beyond vocal prayers to include mental and contemplative prayer, such as *Lectio Divina* and the Jesus Prayer (*Directory for Catechesis*, 87).

4. Jesus prayed, he taught people to pray through his words and deeds. His whole life was in union with his Father. Jesus also emphasized key virtues necessary for prayer: faith, hope, love, humility, patience, gratitude, and perseverance. Jesus is both a model of prayer and a catechist of prayer. Jesus prayed at every moment of his life, making his entire existence a profound school of prayer. His example of forty days of prayer and fasting in the desert (cf. Matthew 4:1-2), as well as his contemplative moments in solitude on the mountain (cf. Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12), inspire us to integrate prayer into our daily lives.
5. A Church that supports prayerful families ensures its vitality and mission in an increasingly secular world. By strengthening families as domestic churches, it fosters a culture of love and faith, essential for sustaining its continuity and its call to be witnessing community. Despite modern challenges, the Church must implement a proper catechesis to empower and support families in their faith formation. To foster a prayerful family, parents and catechists should encourage daily family prayer, which is fundamentally a form of family catechesis. “Moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon (*Amoris Laetitia*, 288).”
6. The Church is urging its members to deepen their prayer life and understanding through catechesis, fostering a deeper conversion and intimacy with the Lord. Effective catechesis on contemplative prayer can transform one’s faith and promote an intimate relationship with God. It is a prayer of internal silence that leads to stillness. As the Cure of Ars, St. John Vianney, said, “I look at Him, and He looks at me (CCC 2715).” This presents a challenge for every catechist: to catechize on stillness and help others relish the presence of God. As Scripture reminds us, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps 46:1).
7. Prayer is a rich and vital aspect of Catholic spirituality, fostering a deeper relationship with God through various forms. “The task of catechesis implies the teaching of both personal prayer and liturgical and community prayer, initiating the believer into the permanent forms of prayer: blessing and adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise (*Directory for Catechesis*, 87).”

A Decalogue for Catechesis in and towards Prayer

In light of our reflections, we propose the following ten principles to enhance prayer in catechesis:

1. **Train Catechists in and towards Prayer** – Equip catechists in all forms of prayer, with a special focus on mental and contemplative prayer practices.
2. **Promote Local Prayer Traditions** – Identify, refine, and encourage contextualized expressions of prayer within the community.

3. **Promote Liturgy of the Hours in Parish** – Encourage the laity to actively participate in the Liturgy of the Hours (Lauds and Vespers) in parishes. Proper catechesis is essential to promote this liturgical prayer among the faithful.
4. **Make the Eucharist a Prayer** – Catechize the faithful on the significance of silence, hymns, prayers and the structure of the Mass. Avoid unnecessary additions that may distract from a prayerful experience.
5. **Promote Daily Family Prayer** – Where family members cannot physically gather due to time or distance constraints, utilize digital platforms to foster family prayer and spiritual bonding.
6. **Develop a Prayer Manual for Catechists** – Provide a comprehensive guide covering the origins, meanings, and various forms of prayer, as well as steps for practicing mental and contemplative prayer.
7. **Create a Family Prayer Manual** – Develop resources to guide families in prayer, including traditions for various occasions in the family, thereby fostering faith formation within the domestic church.
8. **Promote Sacred Space and Time for Prayer** – While prayer can take place anywhere and at any time, catechists should encourage the catechised to cultivate personal moments and dedicated spaces for prayer.
9. **Teach People to Pray with the Word** – The Bible is not merely a book to be read but one to be prayed with. Catechist should guide the faithful in praying with Scripture, especially through the Psalms and *Lectio Divina*.
10. **Form Praying Catechists** – A catechist who prays inspires others to pray. Provide training in prayer as part of catechist formation, ensuring that they themselves are rooted in a life of prayer.

Conclusion

As we, the participants of the 28th General Assembly of the Indian Catechetical Association, conclude our gathering, we are filled with a renewed sense of purpose and conviction. Our reflections on Catechesis in and towards Prayer have deepened our understanding of the integral role prayer plays in our faith journey. We recognize that authentic catechesis must lead to a transformative encounter with Christ, fostering a life of prayer, communion, and active witness.

Prayer is a relationship deeply cherished and continually nurtured. It is both personal and communitarian. The logo of the Jubilee Year 2025 beautifully reflects this idea of relationship from multiple perspectives. It depicts four individuals from the four corners of the world, symbolizing all of humanity, connected to one another. The bent cross leaning towards the people signifies God's closeness to humanity amidst the troubled waters of the world.

May our gathering bear fruit in our lives as catechists and catechumens, and may we continue to support one another in our shared mission of connecting with God through ourselves, others and the world in our catechetical endeavours.

Acknowledgement: “Catechesis in and Towards Prayer”, *Final Statement: 28th Indian Catechetical Association 2025*, Siloam, Shillong – February 12-14, in *Catechetics India*, April-June 2025, 36(2025)2, Pp. 31-33.

Remark: Every *Anbium Coordinator* can be imparted with Catechetical formation as determined by the Parish Priest.