

Dimensions of Faith

The catechist who hopes to understand the possible faith responses being sought in his or her participants must both understand how faith is defined and identify the various developmental milestones of faith.

Faith development and growth in faith contribute to a variety of unique responses.

1. Faith is distinct from religion and belief, though all three are related.
 - Religion is the cultural expression of faith as belief and practice.
 - Belief is the holding of certain ideas. Belief is formed out of faith.
 - Faith is more personal than either religion or belief. Faith is an orientation of the personality and response to self, others, the universe, and God. Faith is also a relationship of trust and loyalty. Faith addresses such questions as “On whom do you set your heart?” and “What gives shape and meaning to your life?”
2. Faith is a way of seeing that governs how a person understands reality.
3. Christian faith is a free gift. It is expressed as a living response to Jesus and the kingdom of God. Faith has three aspects.
 - Cognitive—faith is believing and conviction.
 - Affective—faith is a relationship of trust.
 - Behavioral—faith is doing (ritual and morality).
4. Christian faith incorporates three realities.
 - The first reality is a firm conviction about the truths, which are proposed as essential.
 - The second reality is a relationship of confidence in, and loyalty to, a personal God who saves people in and through Jesus Christ.
 - The third reality is doing God’s will—working to build up the kingdom of God.

Experience

1. Have the catechists list three personal beliefs which they feel are basic to their faith. Have them explain why they chose what they did.
2. Invite the catechists to use some nonverbal techniques (art, pantomime, symbol, song, etc.) to portray for the group what gives shape, meaning, and motivation to their lives today.
3. In small groups, have the catechists discuss some specific ways they can improve their teaching by being more aware of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of faith. How can they witness to their own relationship of trust and loyalty with God?

Pause and Reflect

- 1. In what ways can you make the various dimensions of faith you have discussed a part of your life?**
- 2. How can this information help you be more conscious of what is happening to your students as they grow in faith?**