Pope Francis noted the singular importance of the catechumenate “whereby growing numbers of adults, even in societies with ancient Christian roots, now approach the sacrament of baptism—for the new evangelization. It is the road of preparation for baptism, for the transformation of our whole life in Christ” (Lumen Fidei, no. 42).

In 2000 Jerry Baumbach described the catechumenate as a navigational aide for catechesis. While the societal landscape has changed in the last fifteen years, the essential guideposts in accompanying seekers on their journey with Jesus Christ and the Church remain the same. Like a GPS—global positioning system—that so many now rely on for communication and travel, the catechumenate depends on sufficient connectivity and real-time feedback on local conditions to navigate the various opportunities and roadblocks in the journey of faith.

**Sufficient Connectivity = Multiple Relationships**

Regularly at local diocesan celebrations of the Rite of Election, the presiding bishop asked the newly elect what first brought them to consider becoming Catholic: a book, a course, a lecture, someone they knew. Almost all raised their hands to indicate that a relationship with someone who was already Catholic was the main reason they walked the path toward full initiation. Connections with God and others brought the elect this far and will sustain them in a life of discipleship.

The catechumenate describes the essential interactions involved in forming a living, explicit and fruitful relationship with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (105) points out that the Christian community is to receive, understand, celebrate, live, and communicate the Gospel. All of these activities involve encounters with God, self, and others. Weaving a strong web of relationships that are experientially and culturally diverse provides both the person being initiated and the members of the faith community connections capable of working with
the Holy Spirit and the universal Church to guide one another in following the Way, the Truth, and the Life which is Jesus Christ. As Baumbach said “We never stop sponsoring one another” as we build up the body of Christ.

Real-time Feedback = Encounter, Listen, Walk

One of the things I find most beautiful about the catechumenate is that it is most fruitful when responding to the particular lives of those involved as part of God's incarnational pedagogy (White, 2014). Much like the GPS, it relies on being aware of the real-time conditions of the person asking for directions as well as the community or communities in which the journey will occur in order to provide accurate directions. “It [the baptismal catechumenate] reminds the Church that her catechesis accompanies a continual conversion to Christ and an ongoing initiation into the celebration of the sacraments and the life of the Church” (NDC, no.35.D, p 116).

The catechumenate challenges parish leaders to be open to encountering people in the process of listening to God and finding a community with and through whom to walk the journey of faith; they are not enrolling for a course that graduates at Easter. For instance, the National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry found that the RCIA is the most common space for faith formation for Hispanic adults (as reported by parishes with Hispanic ministry). If we recognize the initiation sacraments as markers in a life long walk with Christ, not isolated destinations captured in pictures, how would we engage all adults in apprenticing each other in the Catholic way of life.

Navigating with Joy

Our catechetical GPS map is framed by the parameters of the catechumenate. Through sufficient connectivity and real-time feedback we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to guide one another toward the ultimate happiness: the fullness of life in Christ. Pope Francis, during the Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate that concluded the Year of Faith, expressed it well when he said, “Dear catechumens, today you begin the journey of the catechumenate. My wish for you is to follow it with joy, sure of the entire Church’s support, who is watching over you with great trust. . . . I invite you to guard the enthusiasm of that first moment in which he opened your eyes to the light of faith; to remember, like the beloved disciple, the day, the hour in which for the first time you stayed with Jesus, felt his gaze upon you.”

Further Reading
Pope Francis. “November 23, 2013 Address during Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate and Meeting with Catechumens at the Closing of the Year of Faith” (www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en/eventi/EventiPassati/23-11-2013.html)


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Catechumenal model, evangelization, catechism, inculturation, formation of catechists, address challenges and correct errors. Catechumenal model: call to return to Catechumenant (GDC 88); pedagogy (meet them where their at). GDC 88. Catechesis, which is at the service of this growth, is also a gradual activity. ‘Good catechesis is always done in steps’.

Evangelization. Evangelize for conversion (GDC 60 and on). GDC 61. “Primary proclamation is addressed to non-believers and those living in religious indifference. COINCATI: International Council for Catechesis, Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990. CSEL: Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Wn 1866 ff.) CT: John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae (16 October 1979): AAS 71 (1979), pp. 1277-1340. 'â€” the missionary character of contemporary catechesis and its ability to secure adherence to the faith on the part of catechumens and those to be catechized in a world in which religious sense is obscured must also be underlined: in this dynamic there is an acute awareness that catechesis must have a catechumenal style, as of integral formation rather than mere information; it must.