

Practical Approaches for Refining Your Catechesis

1. Introduction: [Learning Goals](#)

[Bernard Lonergan](#)

Knowledge Goal: To increase our repertoire of catechetical strategies.

Why? ([Brainstorming](#))

- Variety increases interest
- Meets more learning styles
- Take us out of the echo chamber of our familiar teaching methods
- Different topics lend themselves to different strategies. e.g. understanding the Mass
- Allows differentiation (more later)

What is a Learning Goal and why is it important?

Moral Goal: Help my fellow catechists grow in their faith

Spiritual Goal: Nurture a spirituality of catechesis

[Tea Party/Fold the Line](#)

1. What scripture passage speaks to your work as a catechist?
2. What makes you happy in your catechetical sessions?
3. When are learners most engaged?
4. What is your favorite teaching strategy?
5. How do you know that you have had a successful catechetical session?
6. What is the difference between Catechesis and Religious Education?

Teaching: Catechesis and Religious Education

What differentiates them? ([Visual paragraphing](#))

What unites them?

- [New Evangelization](#)
- [Divine Pedagogy](#)
 - God the Creator as teacher ([Discussion](#))
 - Jesus the teacher ([Scripture Search](#))
 - The Holy Spirit flowing through the Church ([Visual Storytelling](#), [Infographics](#))

[2. Five Core Methodologies](#)

- The person of the catechist ([GDC](#), [Parker Palmer](#))
- Art & Environment ([Visio Divina](#), [Learning Styles](#), [Gallery Walk](#), [Milling to Music](#))
- [Storytelling](#) ([Divine Pedagogy](#), [Components of a story](#), [Ways of telling a story](#))
- Critical Thinking ([Questions](#), Questioning techniques)
- Service Learning ([Reflection](#))

3 Some contemporary pedagogical areas of interest to catechists

Differentiation

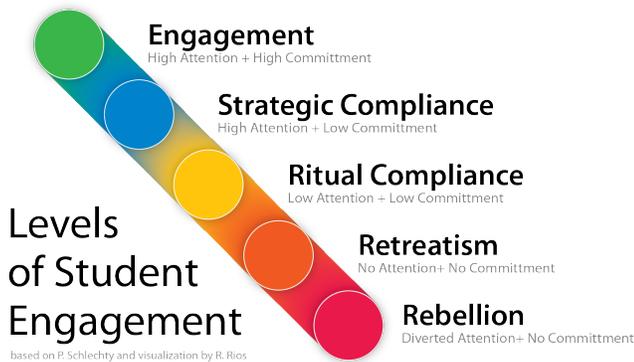
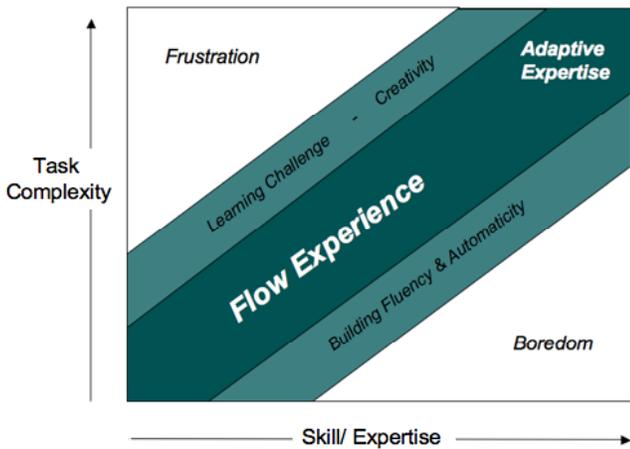
- We learn differently from each other. Therefore, it is important to discover the learning needs of individuals.
 - Learning Styles → Auditory (lectio divina), Visual (visio divina), Kinesthetic (service learning)
 - Psychological Needs ([Maslow's hierarchy](#)) → physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.
 - Prior knowledge
 - Affiliation with church ([Sherry Weddell](#) & [John Roberto](#) → Unaffiliated, Uninvolved, Occasionals, Active)
 - Educational maturity ([extrinsic](#) → [intrinsic motivation](#))
 - Cultural differences
 - Language

- Spirituality: [Benedictine, Carmelite, Franciscan, Dominican, Ignatian](#)

Accommodations:

- Blessed be the flexible ...
- Necessary for some, good for all (prayer styles)
- Pairing
- Technology (e.g. [virtual field trips](#))
- Use a variety of instruction and assessment strategies
- Use [cooperative group learning](#)- (Students depend on each other to solve problems)
- Provide a model or demonstrations of required/expected written or oral responses (do an example together)
- Learn by doing (kinesthetic learning) (e.g. [Catechesis of the Good Shepherd](#))
- Use visuals during instruction and accompany print material with visuals for clarification and explanation (use Church as a teaching tool)
- Follow predictable routines in order to create an environment of security and stability especially for students new to the language and culture
 - Involve students' culture and family in parish events and projects
 - Create a sense of belonging for EVERY student
 - Reduce length and allow more time for written tasks
 - Allow students to substitute drawings, pictures, or diagrams, graphs, charts for written tasks
 - Don't correct speaking errors in front of other students
 - Assign a personal buddy to help the student learn how the classes are conducted
 - Seat new ELL's toward the middle or front of the class.

Flow (Csikszentmihaly) & **Engagement** (Schlechy)



Feedback (Hattie)

- Give feedback
- Get feedback

- Key Questions:
 - Where am I going?
 - How am I doing?
 - Where am I going next?

The Three-part Lesson

- Activate (Mind's On)
 - Engagement through
 - Clarifying lesson goals
 - Interesting catechumens in the topic
 - Curiosity
 - Connect to real life (Life to Faith, Faith to Life)
 - Creativity
 - Purpose
 - Determine what they already know and activate prior knowledge
- Explore (Action)
 - Gradual Release of Responsibilities
 - Differentiating Instruction
 - The power of cooperative learning ([Think, Pair, Share; Jigsaw](#))
 - Strategies: <https://carfleo.com/art-of-teaching/teaching-strategies/>
- Consolidate
 - Three top takeaways
 - Relevance (Faith to Life)
 - Metacognition: What did I learn about myself as a disciple?
 - Strategies:
 - Revisit learning goal
 - Check-in
 - Exit cards: e.g. 3 new things, 2 questions, 1 favourite thing

4 Resources:

- Joe Paprocki, [Catechist's Tool Box](#)
- Jared Dees [31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator](#)
- [Visual paragraphing](#)
- [carfleo.com](#)
- [lesmiller.ca](#)
- Criteria for Catechesis: http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Criteria_for_Catechesis.pdf
- [Five Core Methodologies for Catechesis](#)

Storytelling

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables. He spoke to them only in parables, to fulfill what had been said through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the world." (Matt 13:34 NAB)

Jesus often told short stories in combination with other methodologies, such as critical thinking, environment, and his own personal actions, so that the story would lead the listener to a new insight about God, break open a truth, or spark a desire to change. The methodology of storytelling takes a great variety of forms, including direct narration, role playing, dramatic reading, comedy, creative writing, autobiography, biography, mime, faith sharing, musicals, original parables, and myths. Stories are told through many types of media, e.g., videography, television newscasts, film clips, email, YouTube, Podcasts, and Blogs, to name a few.

No matter where the story comes from or what shape it takes, a catechist will use it skillfully to move the listener to deeper faith. (Listening skills may also need to be taught.) Carla Rieger, motivational speaker and expert on creative people skills in the workplace, highlights five key elements of every good story. They are easy to remember as: *Platform* (What was life like every day?); *Tilt* (What happened to change the "status quo?" Rock the boat a little.); *Consequences* ("What happens as result of the tilt? How is life affected by this?); *Resolution* (How is this new situation dealt with? It can be good or bad.); *New Platform* (What is life like "from that day on?") (Rieger).

One way to enhance one's personal storytelling skills is to look for the "surprise" insights that come from personal experience and capture them in a notebook or computer file for use later on. Classic stories in books, plays, or film are other good sources of storytelling material.

Examples of the creative use of storytelling in catechesis include: (1) Role play: Turn favorite Bible stories (i.e., parables) into a play format for the listener to read and enact. This works with any age group, even adults. (2) Create a class news-paper or videotaped "newscast": Retell famous biblical stories as if they were happening today. (3) Tell modern parables: After reading some of Jesus' parables, ask the learners to create a "modern parable" using a familiar object, e.g., popcorn, cell phone, a new car, a football game. It helps to start with a common theme, e.g., "The kingdom of heaven is like a football game. . . ." (4) Faith sharing: One person at a time shares a personal story related to a theme, e.g., "calm coming after a storm." The others ("listeners") share their insights.

The effects of good stories are deep and lasting, especially when the catechist leads the learner to discover how the story illustrates God's relationship with us in some way. Sharing the stories of our lives can let the "pedagogy of God" work through these stories to transform the events of life into lessons of wisdom (GDC139).

In fact, the need for stories is so great that they seem to create themselves. Storyteller Ursula LeGuin is quoted as saying, "There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories." Perhaps the most important storytelling skill of all is the catechist's ability to sense the listener's need for a particular story at a particular time.

Critical Thinking

Jesus asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Messiah of God." (Luke 9:20)

Variations on the theme of critical thinking include questioning, debates, agree-disagree discussions, interviews, group problem solving, theological reflection, Bible study, pretests and post tests, case studies, and more. Here are some specific applications of critical thinking as a catechetical methodology using dialogue, debate, and questioning.

Dialogue

Dialogue is a particular style of "discussion." Used in catechesis, it stimulates participation and opens people to the "dialogue of salvation" that God continues to have with people (Paul VI, 72; Pontifical Council 9, 10). During formal catechesis, dialogue can take many forms and can be used with a large group, small groups, or one-on-one. It can be woven into panel discussions, agree-disagree discussions (physically move to position on a continuum line), brainstorming, and case studies or current events articles followed by discussion. A skillful catechist can incorporate inductive and deductive reasoning, proclamation of the catechetical message, and the personal experience of the learners (GDC 150, 151).

Debate

Debate can be used to raise awareness of controversial contemporary topics in the light of Christ's teaching. Two or three debaters form a team to represent each side of the question. After each person has used the set time to present the topic, they then use a set time to "rebut" points stated by the other team. Next, the discussion is opened to the whole group. Catechists need to construct debate statements carefully, avoiding statements that are against church teaching. For example, rather than say: "For or against: The death penalty is a moral good," instead make a statement that could be true or false, depending on the evidence gathered and presented, e.g. "For or against: The death penalty has protected innocent citizens."

Questioning

Many types of questioning, including factual, convergent, divergent, and evaluative questions, as well as combinations of them, can be used to stimulate critical thinking. Questions should be stated clearly, not ambiguously, and directed to the entire group. An example of “convergent” questioning is the Socratic method that is used to develop a fuller understanding of a problem or issue. It is a “convergent” type of questioning because it generally leads to a single solution or resolution. It is usually directed by the catechist.

Since those who are being questioned need time to think, the person who asks the questions should pause for 2–3 seconds before asking someone to give an answer. This “wait-time” of 2–3 seconds can seem like a very long time to the leader of the discussion. Further, questions that foster critical thinking do not have to put a person on the spot. Avoiding “conscience questions” is important, especially in discussions about moral issues. For example, it is better to ask, “What would a person of integrity do in this case?” rather than, “What would you do in this case?”

As a catechetical methodology, critical thinking helps learners to explore and articulate the ways in which faith and reason are intertwined. “Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 159).

Art and Environment

On another occasion Jesus began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. And he taught them at length. . . . (Mark 4:1-2)

Environment and art can be powerful portals to the transmitting of faith if catechists are attentive to the space the sights and the sounds that surround the learners. Catechists should not overlook any visual, aural, or tactile media, but rather use them as methods to enliven and enrich faith.

The church has long understood the power of art in transmitting faith. Consider the great cathedrals, music, and visual art that have inspired Christians for many centuries. The recent emphasis on multiple intelligences and learning styles has made us more aware of the fact that humans learn in many different and wonderful ways, including through music, dance, and art. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy makes clear the central place of the arts in our faith. “The fine arts are rightly classed among the noblest activities of human genius; this is especially true of religious art and of its highest achievement, sacred art. Of their nature the arts are directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands” (CSL 122).

In theological perspective, we believe that God uses the arts to communicate with us. In turn, we use the arts to express our love for God. This “common living space” and exchange of “gifts” is the root of liturgical experience. Catechists can take cues from liturgy and its teaching styles.

The catechetical environment and all of the arts can be entry points for engaging the various types of intelligence and interests. Here are a few ways to tap into the power of the arts in religious formation: display pictures (as good artistic quality as you can find); play background music for reflection times; sing songs; play instruments; dance or respond to rhythm in other ways; read a poem; draw, paint, sculpt; tour your own church, or go on a field trip to visit other places of worship, share a meal; set up a “Gallery Walk” of art prints to appreciate and discuss; use symbols and sacramentals, flowers, fabrics, candles.

Use the learning space itself as a tool. Begin by arranging the space to facilitate sharing, eye contact, aural communication, ease of movement, comfort, and beauty. Create a welcoming space by asking yourself how the space makes you feel when you enter it. How will the learners feel? Be aware of air quality, lighting, ambiance, and everything that surrounds the learner. Add color and life to the space, e.g., a plant, a swatch of cloth, a painting, a sculpture, etc. Take the learners into a different area, e.g., outdoors, to the church, on a field trip. Display related art prints or art created by the learners. Set up a prayer space/corner. Have a special place to gather in front of or around as you pray together. Keep a copy of the Bible visible all the time. Direct the learners to change the items in the prayer space to reflect the liturgical year. Play reflective music. Form a musical “group.” Invite learners who can play an instrument to do so. Encourage musical composition—e.g., a great amen, a responsorial psalm. Create lyrics, spoken texts, poetry, and word chants. Invite learners to pray using dance, rhythm, voice.

These are but a few ideas to “prime the pump” of creative catechetical methodology and make the most of art and environment.

Service

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?

(James 2:14)

Many would agree that service learning has become an integral and effective component in most schools: public, private, and Catholic, as well as in parish social justice ministries. We know that people need to integrate what they learn in the classroom or in parish programs in order for it to be effective. The ministry of catechesis demands this integration in a deeper sense.

The gospels contain countless examples of this integration in the life of Jesus who, with a caring attitude, immersed himself in the community and led its focus back to God. He related to all types of people: the poor, the brokenhearted, the sick, the women at the well, and even the money changers.

The GDC is clear that people of faith cannot be passive learners. Baptism evokes a profound awareness of our call to holiness and a “livelier sense of mutual service in charity” (27). Consequently, in order for the transmission of the faith to take root and truly be effective, it must be expressed in acts of service and charity.

Today, most parishes boast a strong service component in their confirmation preparation and the RCIA process. Catholic social teaching provides a wonderful framework for creating service learning projects, designing retreats, or having thoughtful discussions in order to link gospel teaching to current life issues and discuss appropriate involvements. Some examples, based on the seven themes of Catholic social teaching (USCCB Department of Justice), are listed here:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person. Participate in the annual Right to Life Mass and March for Life. Write letters to local government representatives asking them to promote the dignity of the human person and oppose anti-life legislation.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation. Collect items for the poor and needy; “adopt” a homeless family and send them meals.

Rights and Responsibilities. Become aware of the church’s impact on the local neighbourhood or city by mapping the area, then researching and labeling the church’s influence there. Discuss: What has been done, by whom? What still needs to be done

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. “Hunger Banquets” are an effective way to teach students about world poverty and how they can make a difference. Teach the concept of stewardship by creating a budget and include giving a portion to the poor.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers. Teach the meaning of work and discuss the connection between faith and a meaningful day’s work. Call attention to the personal gifts and talents of the learners and discuss their responsibility for using them in meaningful ways.

Solidarity. Various parish groups can make and send care packages to soldiers, the ill, seminarians, or those away at college.

Care for God’s Creation. Catechists can motivate students to recycle paper and plastic, participate in a neighbourhood cleanup, use energy efficient lighting, and carpool by linking these things to the concept of God’s creation.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* reminds us that catechetical pedagogy is only effective “to the extent that the Christian community becomes a point of concrete reference for the faith journey of individuals” (GDC 158). With this in mind, we view the community as a place of unique faith formation as it provides a faith-witness beyond the confines of the classroom. As members of a pluralistic culture, there is a need to find common ground. The Golden Rule is one moral norm found in all major religions (see McKenna). Jesus expressed it as, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Catholic social teaching implies that we can find common ground and exchange gifts in the Golden Rule.

Finally, an effective catechist will invite learners to reflect on their service and involvement in the community and encourage them to express their reflection in creative ways. Younger children, for example, might verbally share their experience and follow that by drawing a picture or writing a poem. Older children and adults can reflect in a journal about their experiences, concerns, hopes, and insights. They can express those insights by composing a prayer, singing a song, creating a sculpture, or even writing a book.

The Person of the Catechist

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses. . . . (Acts 1:8)

A catechist can be called by many names: mentor, confidant, teacher, listener, prophet, mother/father, facilitator, challenger; but essentially a catechist is a “mediator who facilitates communication between people and the mystery of God” (GDC 156).

Catechists, whose very presence is a kind of “methodology,” are in many ways similar to good teachers. The classic “onion model” is used to describe various dimensions of a teacher. Beginning in the center, the “layers” are mission, identity, beliefs, competencies and behavior. Each layer affects the others and all of them interact with—and can be influenced by—the environment (see Korthagen). The outer two layers are the most easily observed and evaluated by others, and they do influence the inner three. The inner three “core qualities,” however, greatly influence the outer two (Korthagen; Ofman).

In the 1800s, Saint Julie Billiart, patron saint of catechists, named behaviors that should be visible in a catechist. They are: prayerfulness, generosity, sacrifice, a sense of responsibility, knowledge, prudence, respect for the dignity of the individual, a sense of authority and cheerfulness (in St. John). This list is remarkably similar to current listings of “essential qualities” of teachers, e.g., empathy, compassion, understanding, tolerance, and flexibility (Tickle); a strong sense of self-worth, deep feelings of love and respect for all people, and a hunger for truth and knowledge (Stoddard).

Other behaviors and qualities of an effective catechist that might spring from these essentials are: willingness to learn and grow (humility); self-confidence in the role of catechist; accurate articulation of the content of the faith; building relationships where catechesis can happen, e.g., smiling at people, speaking to them, calling them by name, showing interest in their lives; being generous with praise and cautious with criticism.

The charism given to the catechist by the Holy Spirit, along with a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only the catechist’s human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of catechetical methodologies (GDC 156). The catechist is the medium in and through which other methodologies become valuable in the ministry of the Word called catechesis.

QUICK SUMMARIES OF MAJOR PRAYER TRADITIONS

1. Benedictine Prayer & Spirituality

Benedictines are best known for communal living according to the Rule of St. Benedict, its founder, in which the two main principles are manual labor and communal prayer. Recently, there has been a movement for lay people to live elements of the Rule as well. The Rule can be simplified as: Commitment, Balance and Relationship. Lay Oblates live the Rule and receive ongoing spiritual guidance.

The communal prayer of the Benedictines is the **Liturgy of the Hours**, a structured liturgical prayer consisting of psalms, prayers, songs and readings, following the rhythm of the times of day and of the Church Year. Lay people are encouraged to use the simplified version found in *Christian Prayer* and includes Morning and Evening Prayer.

Benedictine tradition includes a simple form of prayer using scripture – **Lectio Divina** (holy reading) – that facilitates understanding what God may be saying to a person through a reading. The four steps are:

- 1.) *Lectio*: read or listen to the text, paying attention to any words or phrases that stand out.
- 2.) *Meditatio*: meditate on what speaks to you, repeating it to yourself and allowing it to interact with your thoughts, hopes, memories and desires.
- 3.) *Oratio*: pray, entering into loving conversation with God, allowing the word you have heard and meditated on to touch and change you.
- 4.) *Contemplatio*: simply rest in the presence of God and accept His loving embrace. In silence, let go of your own words and simply enjoy being in the presence of God.

The contemplative tradition of the Benedictines is best known from the Trappist monks, who observe a strict rule of silence. Their form of contemplation was recovered from the ancient tradition of meditation based on the desert Fathers and Mothers, the fourth movement of *Lectio Divina*, and the mystical tradition of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. This prayer form is called **Centering Prayer**, or **The Prayer of the Heart**. Famous 20th Century American Trappists include Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington, William Meninger, and even Henri Nouwen, who spent a year as a “part-time” Trappist.

2. Carmelite Prayer & Spirituality

The earliest Carmelites were hermits who stayed on the slopes of Mount Carmel near the end of the twelfth century. They lived in poverty and sought solitude on the mountain where Elijah the prophet had made his home, while meditating on God. Today, they look to the mountain, to Elijah, to Mary, and that tradition of solitude as their spiritual wellspring. The symbol of Carmel stands for the intimate encounter that God brings about between the person and God in the midst of all that is most ordinary in life. The expression and source of this encounter, contemplation and prayer, are the very heartbeat of the interior journey of transformation of the Carmelite today, whether vowed religious or layperson.

The symbol of Elijah is central to Carmelite spirituality. He is seen as a man on a journey who hid in the desert in a time of dryness and journeyed back to meet God in new and unexpected ways. This symbol is operative in a key concept of Carmelite spirituality from St. John of the Cross: the “dark night of the soul” -- a period of spiritual dryness where God seems not to be present to the seeker. Mary is associated with the rain of God’s Grace that ends the dryness, like the little cloud Elijah sees in 1 Kings 18:44.

Key concepts in Carmelite spirituality are 1) allegiance to Christ, 2) openness to Scriptures, 3) a sense of silence and solitude, and 4) the undivided heart. The primary Carmelite prayer forms are **solitude and meditation**. The Carmelite mystics, Teresa, John of the Cross, and Therese of Lisieux expanded the original vision, writing about new ways to understand the soul’s continuous longing for union with God and the daily struggles of the journey to reach it. Their writings and poems help lead us into visionary prayer.

3. Dominican Prayer & Spirituality

St. Dominic was a spirit-filled man raised up by God to answer the pressing need of the Church for a continuous body of trained preachers. (Father William A. Hinnebusch, O.P.) He founded the first apostolic Order (Order of Preachers) in 1216.

Nearly eight hundred years after the foundation of the Order, the Dominican way of life still offers the individual, and the world, a unique path to holiness. The Order can be characterized as *contemplative*, rooted in a strong prayer life; *apostolic*, determined in its work for the salvation of souls; *liturgical* in its life centered in the celebration of the Eucharist and choral recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours; *sacrificial*, consecrated to God through the vows and always mindful of the life of penance; *doctrinal*, dedicated to study, teaching, and the defense the Faith; and *fraternal*, lived in community and bound together with one heart and one soul in God. St. Dominic’s genius was a way of life that blended the contemplative and active, a life that remained faithful to the monastic practices of contemplative orders, but not limited by them.

4. Franciscan Prayer & Spirituality

Franciscan prayer is definitely in and of the world, at the same time it is an experience of God. Francis did not speak about spirituality so much as he lived his prayer - as Celano (an early biographer of Francis) said "He became prayer" and in the intimacy of his relationship with God he would have his followers join him. "Hold back nothing of yourself for yourself, so that he who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally," Francis said. Franciscans seek God through an incarnational approach – God is our loving Father and all we have is gift; Christ is our Brother and the Spirit of that love lives in us. The Franciscan approach is Trinitarian, not static. Again Francis was practical - the Crib, the Cross, the Eucharist were his way to God, and finally his relationship to the Triune God led to an intimacy and familiarity with all wonders of creation so that he could address them as Brother/Sister - all are members of the one family.

Features of Franciscan spirituality are community and solitude, prayer and penance, humility and poverty. Prayer can be **vocal prayer, prayer using nature as its source and inspiration** (see Francis’ Canticle as an example – text is in popular hymn “Canticle of the Sun”), **contemplation**, or **Lectio Divina**. The contemplative dimension often focuses on union with God, and experiences of divine love. Yet, Franciscans are active contemplatives who find their mission in social justice ministry, and they are often found helping the poor, the elderly and the sick in homeless shelters, nursing homes and hospitals.

5. Ignatian Prayer and Spirituality

Ignatian spirituality is intellectual, visual and eminently practical. It aims to assist people to know God, understand their interior struggles, and discern what God is asking. St. Ignatius Loyola developed the *Spiritual Exercises* and founded the Jesuit Order as a way to teach others to do all of this. The role of a spiritual director as a compassionate listener/advisor is key to Ignatian spirituality. Ignatian prayer forms include **visual meditation, examination of conscience, prayer of discernment, journaling** and more.

The **steps of Ignatian prayer** in the *Spiritual Exercises* are

- 1.) Quieting oneself
- 2.) Naming a desire one has – the reason for the prayer
- 3.) Exercising the imagination through a visual meditation on a Scripture story
- 4.) Applying the senses – savoring the parts of the experience that provoked the strongest reactions.

Afterwards, there should be a *colloquy* – a prayer conversation with a member of the Trinity or with Mary, relating the experience back to the desire. This step may continue later with a spiritual director. Ignatian visual meditation begins with Composition of Place – placing oneself in the scripture story, by imagining how it looks, feels, smells and sounds. This can be done by oneself after reading a Scripture, by viewing a painting of a Scripture story subject, or can be guided by a leader and conducted in groups.

The Ignatian **Examen, or examination of conscience**, has five steps:

1. Quiet oneself.
2. Pray for the grace to see clearly, understand accurately and respond generously.
3. Review in memory the history of the day (week, month) looking for concrete instances of the presence and guidance of God, and the activity and influence of evil. (Pay attention to strong feelings associated with experiences and encounters).
4. Evaluate those instances in which we have either cooperated with God or yielded to the influence of evil. Express gratitude and regret.
5. Plan and decide how to collaborate more effectively with God, and how, with God's help, to avoid or overcome the influence of evil in the future.

Source: <http://www.cincinnati vocations.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Catholic-Prayer-Traditions.pdf>