

The Hierarchy of Truths: The Golden Threads of Catechesis

The hierarchy of truths, also commonly referred to as the golden threads of catechesis, is a helpful way to see how we can come to understand our faith. These truths are the very basic tenets of our faith. Every teaching of our faith in some way comes down to one of the five topics listed below. It is important to understand that this list is not meant to say that some teachings are less real or less true than others. It simply means that these truths are foundational to the understanding of our faith. They illuminate other truths of our faith. These truths connect doctrines to each other which helps us to see their unity.

The Hierarchy of Truths

1. **The Trinity:** This is the most essential truth of our faith. Without it, no other truths make sense. The Trinity **MUST** be taught in every doctrine.
2. **The Incarnation:** Christ is the center of the world. All catechesis should be Christocentric (*Catechesi Tradendae* 5). Everything we teach is connected to who Christ is and what Christ continues to do.
3. **The Paschal Mystery:** All that Christ is, culminates in the Paschal Mystery. The Paschal Mystery is the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It is the saving act of Jesus for which He came into the world.
4. **The Church as the dispenser of mysteries (sacraments):** This teaches of the importance of the Church, most especially in light of the sacraments.
5. **The Church as the mystical body of Christ/Human Dignity:** Because God is a communion of persons, we too participate in the body of Christ. Human Dignity plays a role here in the fact that we image God and the Trinity is a communion of persons, so we as the Body of Christ image this community of persons.

When we catechize, we are teaching these basic truths of our faith, while at the same time, going deeper. Each of these truths is the basic building block to the doctrines we teach. They have to be taught in a progressive order and in a systematic way that connects a doctrine to this basic truth. For example, teens cannot understand why abortion is wrong if they first are not taught about human dignity. However, they cannot learn about human dignity until they understand the Trinity, etc.

Think of catechesis as a spiral. The very root of that spiral is these truths, but each year with our young people, we delve deeper into one of these truths. This is not to say that we simply teach these five things over and over again, but that everything that a Coordinator of Youth Ministry teaches is based on these concepts. For instance, if you were teaching young people and you wanted to explain the dangers of relativism, it should be rooted in the Trinity, although it might not be obviously directed to the Trinity. Everything that we believe in some way relates back to this hierarchy. We need to be making these connections for the teens that we work with.

Source: Abridged version taken from the *Youth Ministry Resource Manual of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington*, Chapter 3: Catechesis, pages 7-8, by Emily Anderson