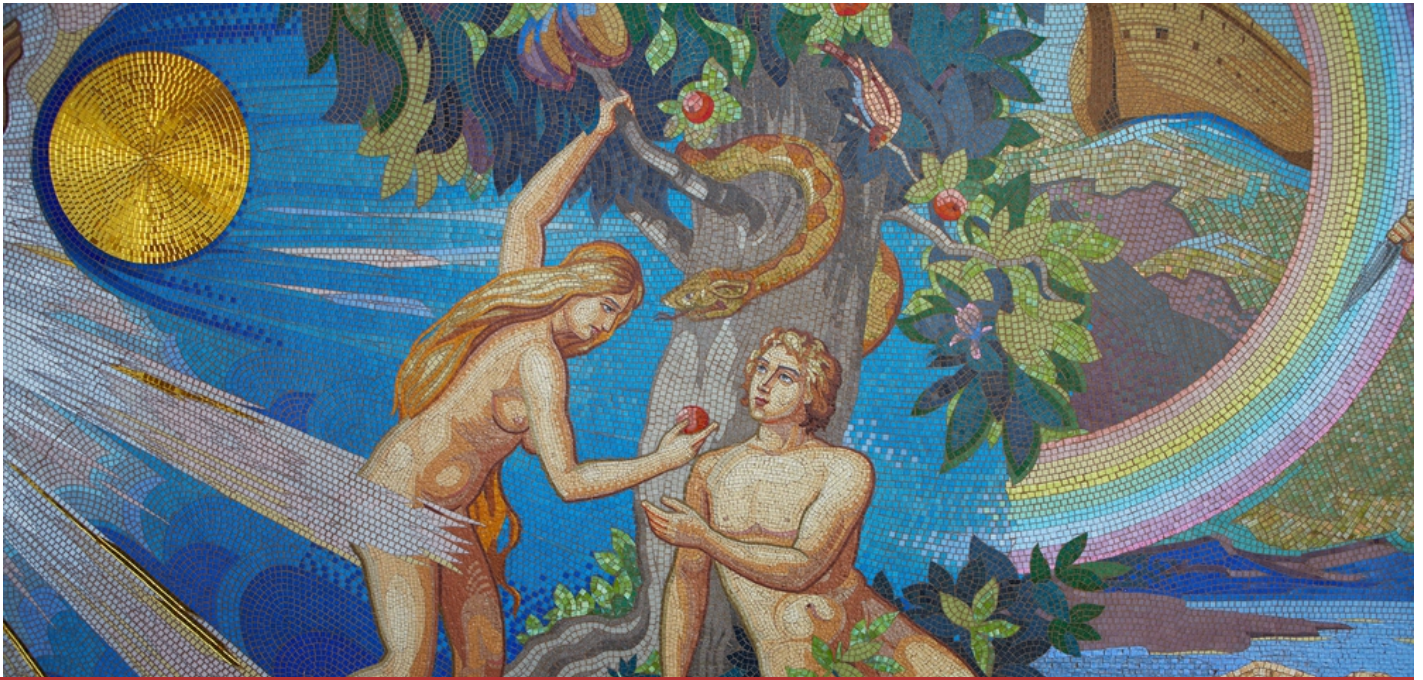




NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY GEORGIE NORMAND, M.A.

ADDRESSING THE TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS IN CATECHESIS:

Lack of Context for the Incarnation/Redemption

An Alarming Under-Catechesis

The catechesis of recent decades as well as that of the entire second half of the 20th century could be accurately described as anemic in clarity, scope, and depth and having been made available in such meager and shallow portions that a child, teen, or even adult then and now can hardly recognize when something contrary to the Faith is being propagated.

LACK OF CONTEXT

For decades, catechesis has been situated far outside of its proper context. Even the youngest children can and do understand the account of Adam and Eve. They can grasp the concept of the Big Problem (the Fall and its consequences) and God's Big Solution (the Incarnation).

However, the watershed moment of the Fall is only briefly introduced to children, and then rarely explicitly connected to everything else they will





learn, even in a spiral catechetical curriculum where important truths are supposed to be revisited each year in more depth. Yet it underpins everything – why Jesus came, why He died, why they need the Church, why they will always need the Church, and why they will always need the sacraments.

This is a moment in human history that must be revisited over and over again and connected over and over again in sacramental preparation and at all points along the years of catechesis. When this doesn't happen, it's rather easy for teens, college students, and adults to walk away from the Church with the impression that Christianity and particularly Catholic Christianity boils down to being a nice person. And, as we all know, this is exactly what *has* happened for decades.

The late Archbishop Daniel Buechlin sounded the alarm about the state of catechesis as early as 1997. In an oral report to the Assembly of Bishops, he cited 10 serious doctrinal deficiencies in catechetical texts that were ultimately responsible for the alarming lack of context related to the Fall - as though the Church has always existed in a vacuum.

Although many of these deficiencies have been addressed by catechetical publishers to some degree, the current Church consists of many poorly catechized adults who are often catechists themselves.

Like yeast, the consequences of years of under-catechesis have permeated the loaf and resulted in a dumbing-down of the last few generations.



UNDER-CATECHESIS

It is the Fall that provides the appropriate context for the Faith, establishing the rationale of why the Church even exists. At every opportunity, children should be asked, “Why do we *need* the Church?” They should understand at every moment that our need for the Church is directly connected to the fact of the Fall. We need to remind ourselves and them that we are called to be holy, but we cannot be holy by ourselves without the vessels of grace found only in the Church.

We desperately need all that the Kingdom of God on earth (the Church) offers us to prepare ourselves for the eternal Kingdom – cleansing, healing, nourishing, and purification of our sick souls. The graces that flow

from the Sacrifice of Christ must be connected to the consequences of the Fall in the mind of every child. They will never leave the Church if they understand how helpless they really are in acquiring holiness without the power of the sacraments to bestow the Life that only flows from Christ. And not only the sacraments, but every other blessing that comes from our life in the Church.

Again, it is the Fall that explains why the Church even exists and leads us to understand the urgency of attending to our own personal salvation. Going forward toward a more robust catechesis, the foundation must be the Fall and its consequences.



ABOUT GEORGIE NORMAND, M.A

GEORGIE NORMAND, M.A. is an educator, longtime catechist, founder of Red Sea Catechetics™, and author of the upcoming book *Every Child a Theologian* and the *It's a Journey™* Sacramental Preparation Program for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist. She spent more than a decade as a second-grade sacramental preparation catechist at St. Matthew's Catholic Church in Jacksonville, Florida (Diocese of St. Augustine). Georgie is an educator who believes that the study of theology is important for all ages and that it can and should be digested by the youngest children with the help of visual teaching aids – in other words by “teaching up.” Her goal is to deepen today's catechesis of the young to help them better understand the Faith and to preempt the false idea that the Church is man's idea.

HER WORK IN THE FIELD OF LITERACY

As an educator, Georgie is best known for her efforts in the field of literacy. She turned her concern about the low reading scores in the US into solutions for teachers and students. After earning a master's degree in Reading Education, she developed a literacy screener that accurately identifies students in PreK-2 who are at risk for reading failure. She created an early literacy curriculum and PreK-12 intervention designed to prevent and address fluency deficits and other problems common in struggling readers - including those with dyslexia. To support teachers and tutors who work with these students, she also developed a comprehensive professional development program. Her many articles on dyslexia have been featured in *Exceptional Parent Magazine*.