Comprehensive Exam
Ph.D. in Catechetics

Day 1: Catechetics

1. Define the terms “religious education” and “catechesis” and discuss the distinctive characteristics of each. Which term (religious education, catechesis, or another term) best describes most parish programs for children attending the public school and which term best describes an ideal parish program? Explain.

2. Discuss the relationship between evangelization and catechesis as it is understood in catechetical documents and from the perspective of three scholars. Why, in your opinion/judgment, has the ministry of “evangelization” become so important today and has its relationship to catechesis changed (evolved or devolved) in its pastoral understanding and application since Vatican II?

3. Define mystagogy and how it is related to liturgical catechesis. Discuss three authors’ understanding and method of mystagogy. What can you add to the discussion from your own reflection, experience, and/or study?

4. Discuss the importance of “justice and peace” as part of a catechetical program, particularly as articulated in catechetical documents. Identify and explain the elements of an ideal catechetical program of “justice and peace.”

5. Discuss the pros and cons of mandatory service projects or programs in schools and parishes? What can be gleaned from the catechetical documents on the importance of service in the life of a Christian? What do you judge to be the best way to teach or catechize the baptized to a life-long commitment of service and why?

6. Describe and evaluate the essential elements of a Catholic youth ministry program as promoted by contemporary writers. Discuss and prioritize the goal(s) of youth ministry in the Catholic Church?

7. Synthesizing the content of the material under Education Models for Adult Faith Formation, identify essential elements that must be considered in developing a good model of Adult Faith Formation. Offer a critique of the authors’ works.
8. Describe the methodological approaches of Religious Education and Catechetics used in the United States from the perspective of history (include contemporary methodologies). In light of this history, evaluate and critique the methodologies used today.

9. Describe Augustine’s contributions to catechesis. What would you (and the authors studied) highlight as his greatest contribution and why?

10. Reflecting on the contemporary issue of immigration, what impact (or potential impact) does it have on catechesis? As an issue that can be very divisive in both the civic and Christian communities, describe the catechesis that is/will be needed.

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Day 2: Catholic Theology

1. Present two New Testament meanings for baptism that became central in the theology of baptism in the Christian tradition. Give examples of how they appeared in the patristic literature and show how they are present in the contemporary liturgy of Christian initiation.

2. Discuss the theology of Christian initiation that is present in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and identify some questions that this theology has raised in relation to the current practices regarding infant baptism and confirmation in the Roman Catholic Church.

3. Use the work of two or more theologians to discuss the significance of the notion of memorial for a Eucharistic theology.

4. Discuss two of the models of the eucharist presented by Kevin Irwin in his book Models of the Eucharist and reflect on the contribution each model makes to a liturgical theology of the eucharist.
1. The prominent patristics scholar Peter Brown has written that “an ambitious program of new learning is latent in a work which Augustine began to write in middle age, the *De Doctrina Christiana*,” which Brown goes on to call “one of the most original that Augustine ever wrote, for it dealt, explicitly, with the ties that bound educated Christians to the culture of their age.” In light of Brown’s remarks, discuss the main lines of the “ambitious program of new learning” that is to be found in this treatise.

2. A number of authors, such as Matthew Fox, Colleen Griffith, Thomas Groome, and Michael Warren, have written about the relationship between spirituality on the one hand and catechesis/religious education on the other. Drawing on what you consider most important in any or all of their articles, present your own understanding of what this relationship, at its best, should be.

3. One of the most influential writers on issues in education in recent decades has been Parker Palmer, author of *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education*. In a two-part answer, first discuss major points made by Palmer in this book and then give your own evaluation of the work, noting both its strong and weak points.

4. Eight authors on your reading list deal, in one way or another, with the “uncoupling” of spirituality from religion, i.e., the phenomenon that leads some people to say, “I am spiritual but not religious.” First discuss major reasons why “religion” seems to be giving way to “spirituality” and then reflect on whether you think this trend could (or should) be reversed.

5. Discuss the most important aspects of the teaching about discernment found in the sayings and anecdotes of the desert fathers and then, in a concluding section of your answer, reflect on what parts of their teaching remain most helpful for people today.

6. Discuss some of the models of spiritual direction that have come down to us from the early Church and then reflect on which model(s) seem most pertinent for giving spiritual direction in our own time.