

**LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

**PHD DISSERTATION THESIS PAPER  
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**TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ADULTHOOD:  
PERSPECTIVE CHANGE ON ADULT CATECHESIS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the ongoing challenges for the church to pursue new ways of service, a purposefully outlined implementation of adult catechesis offers the possibility to stimulate mission-oriented and strategic renewal. In my dissertation I aim to study with an interdisciplinary approach those fields of practical theology which can serve as a theoretical basis for implementing adult faith formation. With this 'journey' I would like to prove that adult catechesis is indispensable for the holistic interpretation of Christian teaching and learning. My basic assumption is the following:

Based on the Great Commission of Jesus to teach all generations it has become a priority for the churches to develop a new catechetical approach to adults in order to offer accompaniment in the human processes of meaning making and spiritual search.

**APPLIED METHODS**

The dissertation is based on theoretical research into fields of practical theology that offer a wide perspective on the challenges of current Adult Faith Formation issues. For practical theology to be contextual, it is necessary to be part of an interdisciplinary spectrum of research, namely the findings of sociology and psychology in relation to questions concerning

societal changes, religiosity, spiritual and faith developmental issues. From the perspective of practical theology, the lessons derived from the history of catechetics, homiletics, pastoral counselling, liturgy and the challenges of confirmation are all contributive factors to establishing a new approach to religious education.

## **THESES**

The lessons derived from the history of catechesis, the changes in our societies and the challenges of the postmodern world offer guidelines for understanding the current state of the adults' world. For a healthy adult life, for a responsible society, for a church striving for running Christian education and for a dedicated discipleship it is necessary to follow up faith formation processes. To make it happen, it is indispensable to provide possibilities for education and for the church to be present with a catechetical approach. Raising awareness about the need for adult catechesis and for its implementation is not an option, rather the re-discovery and application of the Great Commandment's holistic catechetical spectrum. Based on these approaches the theses of my dissertation are the following.

- a. During those periods of church history when the church had to struggle for life, the prioritization of teaching resulted in recruitment and in spiritual growth. The pursuit for new ways in present-day church life is also a period when the church needs to reconsider the actualization of her vocation. The postmodern world around us is not built on the hegemony of rationality any more and offers a possibility for any religious or philosophical meaning-making effort. The Christian church can respond to this with the potential of adult catechesis. In our postmodern environment teaching and accompaniment means both calling and challenge for the church.
- b. Adult catechesis is characterized by interdisciplinarity. Implementing catechism involves close relations to the sciences of psychology, pedagogy, sociology and to practical theological disciplines, such as homiletics, pastoral counselling and liturgics. For sacred communication to happen, people must experience entry points into the life of the church that foster the development of faith formation.
- c. The Bible, the catechumenate of the ancient church, the findings of the reformation and even the development of Religious Education after the

changes in Hungary point to the fact that religious practice entails a continuous educational task. The presence of learning communities in the church is the sign of life, of renewal, engrossment and revitalization. This is how a biblical, Christian anthropology-based and empathy-filled faith development and formation focused adult catechesis can come about.

- d. Societal changes had a deep impact on meaning-making and on relating to religious and spiritual questions. In the meaning-making process the church can offer a new vision of man and the future and can point to the common reality of faith and life. Adult catechesis should be characterized by strong connection to contextual questions and it should become a companion to adults in asking questions generated by those changes.
- e. Adult catechesis and faith development are in close connections. Research into mature faith and sociological findings support the fact that adult church members are not reaching more mature faith stages. The possibility and the task of the church is to foster by building upon the theories of faith development the competencies necessary to recognize transcendence reality and learn about it.
- f. Adult catechesis can also build upon the research findings of religion pedagogy and andragogy and work for a development of religion andragogy. Transformative learning should be the learning theory behind adult catechesis, and its methodology should be based on hospitality and pastoral attention.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Lutheran Church in Hungary in the past decades witnessed many new endeavours to realize this catechetical renewal. The annual programs prepared by church districts always contained curriculum for adults that was exciting and attracted attention. The new challenges of adult education have already made their impact on several church ministries (courses for presbiters, postgraduate courses for teachers and diaconial workers), but these programs are still one of a kind and it is necessary for renewal to carry out adult catecheses with a concerted effort accompanied by methodological and mission-oriented renewal.