

The Catechist as a Mediator in Building the Spiritual Awareness of Young People

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to elaborate on the crucial role of the catechist as a mediator in fostering the spiritual awareness of young people in this modern era. Employing a descriptive literature review methodology, the study analyzes various theological and pastoral sources concerning catechesis, spiritual formation, and digital challenges. The findings revealed a critical gap in traditional catechetical methods, which often fail to build a bridge between Church teachings and the youths' personal experiences. The research concludes that the catechist must transition from being merely an instructor to becoming a spiritual mediator. This mediating role is key to building authentic personal relationships, providing consistent spiritual guidance, and modeling genuine faith. The mediator successfully bridges the doctrinal world with the youths' complex reality, helping them to internalize Christian values and cultivate a firm spiritual identity. This strategy ensures that faith is lived out dynamically and prepares young people to face contemporary challenges with spiritual resilience.

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Introduction

The rapid advance of digital technology has profoundly reshaped the lives of young Catholics, whose daily experience is now inseparable from fast-paced digital culture. Pope Francis, in *Christus Vivit* (art. 87), cautions that while the digital world exposes young people to risks of isolation and instant gratification, it simultaneously offers remarkable opportunities for communication and meaningful encounter, calling the Church to develop contextual accompaniment and evangelization models suited to the digital reality young people inhabit (Fransiskus, 2019). This digital lifestyle has also contributed to a decline in religious devotion and a heightened vulnerability to secular influence, often triggering a moral crisis in which young people lose sight of their identity as believers, underscoring an urgent need to strengthen their faith and spiritual awareness (Eliasaputra et al., 2020; Febrianto et al., 2025).

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Amid this critical situation, the presence of catechists has become increasingly vital to the Church's mission. As spiritual companions, catechists help young people grow in faith, deepen their relationship with Christ, and remain faithful and active within the ecclesial community—roles carried out through faith formation, personal example, motivation, and sustained accompaniment that enable young people to face contemporary challenges without losing their identity as disciples of Christ (Wardana et al., 2024). Positioned at the front line of parish, school, and community life, catechists bring hope and love that help young people remain grounded amid secularism and individualism, making them strategically essential to sustaining youth spirituality in the modern era (Pebriani, 2024; Anggal, 2024).

Despite this crucial role, catechesis that remains confined to one-directional doctrinal instruction often fails to address the spiritual crisis young people face, as such traditional methods rarely engage their personal experience or everyday reality. What young people need instead is a dialogical approach relevant to the world they navigate daily. However, an approach centered solely on doctrinal transmission tends to fail in cultivating depth of faith, pointing to the need for a paradigm shift in how the catechist's mission is understood and carried out (Tinenti, 2023).

The catechist's identity has traditionally been understood through several overlapping roles. Catechists are lay members of the faithful engaged in the Church's pastoral ministry, particularly in accompanying young people and proclaiming God's word, and are recognized as those formally trained for this task (Klau, 2024). The *Redemptoris Missio* further describes catechists as witnesses and evangelizers who form the backbone of the community and its missionaries—an irreplaceable presence whose teaching, witness, and example bridge the Church's faith with the everyday life of young people (Paulus II, 1990). Catechists are likewise understood as educators of faith, teachers who impart systematic religious instruction while embodying Christian values in daily life, positioned as professionals expected to demonstrate competence, responsibility, and fidelity to Church teaching (Meran, 2017; Yunarti, 2016). Within the Church, catechists serve as co-workers of priests and Church leaders in proclaiming, teaching, and faith accompanying; within education, they function as instructors who convey the faith systematically and contextually while shaping character and Christian values among learners (Bhoki, 2017).

Beyond these established roles, however, catechists hold a broader function as mediators—bridges connecting young people to a lived experience of God. This mediating role enables young people to experience, understand, and internalize God's presence in their lives, extending the catechist's task beyond doctrinal instruction toward connecting Church teaching with the concrete realities of youth living in the modern world, thereby rendering Catholic teaching genuinely relevant and making the Church's presence tangible among the young (F.Jenny & X, 2024). As mediators, catechists communicate Church teaching while also listening to young people's needs and aspirations, functioning as a communicative bridge that supports their spiritual growth and helps them integrate Christian values into daily life, while also serving as spiritual companions who guide them through challenges of faith and morality (Saputra, 2025). This mediating presence

humanizes the Church's image—rendering it approachable, close, and responsive to youth needs—through caring engagement, active involvement, and simple, contextual language, so that the Church is experienced not as a distant institution but as a warm, accompanying faith community (Kebingin, 2020). In this capacity, catechists help young people translate Gospel values into daily life, ensuring that faith becomes not merely received doctrine but a living guide for navigating everyday struggles, revealing the spiritual meaning embedded in their lived experience (Pebriani, 2024). This mediation is realized through personal, dialogical accompaniment that deepens young people's knowledge, love, and following of Christ, strengthens their relationship with God, and supports the formation of personal identity and life meaning in light of faith (Mukin, 2025). Ultimately, catechists function simultaneously as proclaimers, educators, role models, and facilitators who contribute to both the Church's mission and the formation of young people (Ley & Derung, 2024).

To fulfill this mediating role effectively, catechists rely on several complementary strategies. A contextual approach allows catechists to connect faith with young people's lived situations. This helps them discover meaning in faith through relevant, personal engagement—including openness, dialogue, and the use of digital media familiar to youth—rather than through rote doctrinal memorization (Chiaralazzo & Krismiyanto, 2025). Personal witness serves as an equally central strategy, since young people are more persuaded by authentic example than by theoretical instruction. Thus, a catechist's consistent, faithful, and Christ-reflecting way of life thus becomes the true measure of effective proclamation (Klau, 2024). Direct experiential engagement further reinforces this formation, as young people are invited into direct encounters with God through prayer, reflection, communal activity, leading prayer, participating in the Eucharist, engaging in devotions, and undertaking simple service—experiences that build relationship with God, others, and self, shape character, and prepare young people to become authentic witnesses of faith in their own right (Tinenti, 2023).

These roles and strategies collectively produce meaningful outcomes: young people come to recognize themselves as God's creation whose life flows from Him, while remaining rooted in Christ's love, and continuing to live out their spirituality daily, while growing more responsible for their own lives and spiritual development amid an ever-changing world (Mbeo et al., 2020; Saputra, 2024). Ultimately, the catechist's influence enables young people not merely to know the teachings of faith intellectually, but to internalize and practice these values authentically as an ongoing expression of their spiritual growth (Sarang & Kipman, 2021).

While the catechist's role as faith educator and companion has been well documented, existing literature tends to treat catechesis primarily as one-directional doctrinal transmission, with comparatively limited attention paid to the catechist's function as an active mediator bridging Church teaching and the lived digital realities of contemporary youth. This gap is significant given that traditional catechetical methods, as noted above, often fail to resonate with young people navigating a fast-changing digital culture. The present study addresses this gap by foregrounding the novel conceptualization of the catechist as an active faith

mediator—one who builds warm, personal relationships as a foundation for accompaniment, embodies consistency between word and action as a credible witness, and guides young people to integrate faith teaching into concrete daily life, thereby sustaining living faith amid the currents of modernity (Mukin, 2025).

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the role of the catechist as mediator in building the spiritual awareness of young people in the modern era, and to explain how this mediating role helps them live out their faith and integrate Christian values into everyday life (Chiaralazzo & Krismiyanto, 2025).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using the library research method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study sought to understand and describe in depth a phenomenon based on data in the form of words, concepts, and information drawn from various relevant sources (Siyoto, 2015). Library research was employed because the study's data were obtained through the tracing and examination of various written sources related to the research focus. Through library research, the researcher was able to identify, compare, and synthesize various ideas and prior research findings related to the role of the catechist as a mediator in building the spiritual awareness of young people.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources comprise official Church documents pertaining to catechesis, the duties and role of the catechist, evangelization, and the faith formation of the faithful. Secondary sources, meanwhile, comprise theological and pastoral books, scholarly journal articles, and prior research findings addressing catechists, catechesis, spirituality, pastoral accompaniment, and the faith life of young people. Sources were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research theme, their credibility, and their bearing on the research objective.

Data collection was carried out through documentary study and literature review. The researcher systematically examined the relevant sources (Siyoto, 2015), recording, selecting, and grouping information corresponding to the research focus according to principal themes: (1) the meaning and role of the catechist; (2) the catechist as mediator of faith; (3) the spiritual challenges facing young people in the modern era; (4) the catechist's strategies for building the spiritual awareness of young people; and (5) the impact of catechetical accompaniment on the growth of young people's faith.

Through this method, the study not only sets forth existing theories but also seeks to relate them to the concrete situation currently confronting the Church and young people. This literature review approach provides a comprehensive and contextual understanding of how catechists can play an active role in fostering the spiritual awareness of the younger generation amid the currents of secularism and modern technological advances.

Results

Based on a synthesis of the entire body of literature, this study demonstrates that the role of the catechist as mediator constitutes a pastoral necessity that is increasingly relevant in addressing the dynamics of young people's lives in the

modern era. The various studies analyzed share a common thread, namely that faith formation can no longer be adequately carried out through an approach oriented solely toward the transmission of doctrinal material. Rather, the formation process must be directed toward accompaniment that enables young people to experience, reflect upon, and live out their faith in daily life. Thus, the results of this study not only demonstrate the existence of an important role for the catechist as mediator, but also explain why this role has become so urgently needed within the contemporary context of the Church.

The results of the literature review indicate that young people in the modern era face increasingly complex challenges in building their spiritual lives. Various studies reveal that the development of digital technology, instant-gratification culture, secularism, and moral relativism exert a substantial influence on the way young people perceive faith and religious life (Febrianto et al., 2025). This situation causes many young people to struggle to integrate the teachings of faith with the realities of daily life. As a result, faith is more often understood as theoretical knowledge rather than as a lived experience that shapes the way one thinks, behaves, and acts (Eliasaputra et al., 2020).

This argument is supported by Mukin (2025), who affirms that the formation of young people's faith identity occurs through a process of accompaniment that helps them discover the meaning of life in the light of the Gospel. This view aligns with Saputra (2025), who emphasizes that dialogical pastoral accompaniment is able to bridge the teaching of the Church with the concrete realities faced by young people. These two studies mutually reinforce the conclusion that the success of faith formation depends not only on the content of catechesis but also on the quality of the relationship built between catechists and young people. The catechist's role as a mediator therefore carries strategic value, as it is able to connect doctrinal aspects with lived experience, allowing faith to develop into a personal and meaningful experience.

The findings also reveal a convergence of views among various researchers regarding the importance of personal and dialogical faith accompaniment. Saputra (2025) affirms that the catechist functions as a companion who helps young people understand the teaching of the Church through a close and sustained relationship. This view is reinforced by F. Jenny (2024), who state that a contextual approach enables young people to connect their lived experience with the values of the Gospel, thereby making proclamation more relevant. These two positions mutually support the conclusion that the success of catechesis is determined not only by the content delivered, but also by the quality of the relationship built between catechists and young people.

Analysis of the various sources further shows that the mediating role cannot be separated from the exemplary life of the catechist. Klau (2024) explains that the spirituality of the catechist constitutes the primary foundation of proclamation since young people tend to receive the witness of a lived life more readily than teaching that remains merely theoretical. This position is reinforced by Bhoki (2017), who affirms that a catechist is called not only to be a teacher of the faith but also an exemplar who embodies Christian values in daily life. This convergence of views demonstrates that a catechist's credibility is built through the unity of word and deed. In other words, the effectiveness of catechetical ministry is

measured not only by the ability to explain the Church's teaching, but also by the ability to make the face of Christ present through an authentic life.

Furthermore, the synthesis of the literature shows that the spiritual awareness of young people is not formed instantaneously, but through a sustained process of accompaniment. Spiritual awareness is the result of the interaction between lived experience, faith reflection, formation by the Church, and a personal relationship with God. Within this context, the catechist functions as a mediator who helps young people connect each lived experience with the light of the Gospel. This role is essential, since many young people face various difficulties, such as the search for identity, social pressure, digital culture, and declining involvement in the life of the Church. Through dialogical accompaniment, young people are helped to see that every lived experience carries formative value for faith when it is interpreted in light of the teaching of Christ.

Thus, the results of this study not only confirm the findings of previous research but also affirm that the concept of "the catechist as mediator" represents a development of the catechist's traditional role as a teacher of the faith. A catechist continues to bear responsibility for proclaiming the Church's teaching accurately; at the same time, however, he or she is required to build dialogical communication, cultivate personal relationships, live an exemplary life, and accompany young people through the process of their spiritual growth. This synthesis shows that the mediating role does not replace the teaching function but rather perfects the catechist's task, so that catechetical ministry becomes more contextual, participatory, and responsive to the needs of young people in the modern era.

Therefore, the central insight to be drawn from the results of this study is that the success of catechesis is measured not merely by the extent to which young people understand the Church's teaching, but above all by their capacity to live out, internalize, and embody the values of the Gospel in daily life. These findings show that the mediating approach makes a tangible contribution to building a deeper spiritual awareness, as it positions young people as active subjects in the process of their faith's growth, rather than as mere recipients of catechetical material.

Conclusion

This study concludes that young people in the modern era face a significant spiritual crisis rooted in the dominance of technology, secularism, and relativism. This situation calls for a paradigm shift in catechesis, as traditional methods focused on the mere transmission of doctrine have proven to create pastoral gaps and have failed to cultivate depth of faith. The role of the Catechist as Mediator of Faith therefore emerges as the most relevant and effective solution. A mediator is not merely an instructor but a person who fulfills key functions by serving as a bridge between the Church's enduring teaching and the dynamic lived reality of young people, and by standing as an authentic living example. This role requires catechists to give priority to personal relationship and contextual dialogue as the foundation of accompaniment.

Through this mediating role, catechists are able to help young people attain spiritual awareness—that is, a faith fully integrated into every dimension of their lives. In this way, the mediator's role ensures that young people possess a firm

spiritual identity, equipped to face the challenges of the modern age by genuinely living out Gospel values, so that the apostolate of catechesis may continue to flourish.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Church hierarchy, particularly dioceses and catechetical commissions, enrich their catechetical guidelines by integrating the model of the "catechist as mediator," with an emphasis on character formation and personal dialogue. In addition, catechists need to continually strengthen their competence in digital literacy and interpersonal communication in order to bridge faith with the world of young people. In this way, the catechist's role does not end with instruction but extends into that of a spiritual companion relevant to the digital age. Further empirical research is also needed to assess the effectiveness of this mediating role in enhancing the spiritual awareness of young people across various parishes, so that its findings may further enrich the Church's pastoral strategy on a broader scale.

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