

# Presidential Address

## Worship and Mission/Evangelism: Panel Discussion

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In January's Presidential Address, I was thrilled to host a panel discussion based on one of Robert E. Webber's books, [\*Ancient Future Evangelism\*](#), one of two books that Bob wrote on the topic of catechesis or, as he referred to it, Christian formation. First, some background on the topic.

### Worship and Mission/Evangelism: Background

Worship exists for the Church, and the Church exists for the world. So, is worship therefore evangelistic? Is it *for* the unbeliever? Several years ago, I was invited to do a lecture series at a Baptist seminary. On the first day of my lectures, I stated, "Worship is not for the unbeliever, but for the believer." In the next morning's Q&A, one of the senior professors mentioned that in his



Baptist tradition, that perspective goes against one of their primary sensibilities, the importance of the altar call for conversion after the sermon. He said, "The high point of our services is to see people come forward to receive Jesus. You can't do that if unbelievers aren't present." Here is part of my response. "I stand by my statement that worship is primarily for the believer. However, the Apostle Paul made it clear in his letters that there would be unbelievers present. So, given that the early church celebrated the Eucharist weekly, and that Eucharist is only for believers, what did they do?"

From the second century the Church established an evangelistic instructional and formational process called catechesis. Catechesis literally means oral instruction (or "echoed" learning) on every aspect of the Christian faith leading followers of Jesus to learn how to belong, behave and believe. The IWS community understands catechesis to be a process that takes place within accountable relationships over a period of time for the purpose of bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ. In the patristic period, seekers who wanted to know about the faith were invited to stay in worship for the service of the Word but were dismissed

with a kiss of peace and sent to be instructed on the faith while the baptized stayed for the Eucharist. The instruction of seekers was focused primarily on three topics: moral and ethical behavior, beliefs, and prayer. Christian moral and ethical behavior was taught using the Ten Commandments, Christian beliefs were taught using the Apostles Creed, and Christian prayer was taught using the Lord's Prayer. The candidates for baptism, called the elect, were baptized at the Great Paschal Vigil, which started after sundown on Holy Saturday. Before being baptized the elect had to recite from memory the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. After baptism and chrismation, the newly baptized received their first Eucharist. Following the Paschal Vigil, the newly baptized neophytes entered into a time of mystagogy, or instruction in the mysteries of the faith, beginning with a full explanation of the Eucharist.

So, the Church dealt with unbelievers in worship by developing initiatory, baptismal catechesis that was a relational, embodied, and comprehensive process of evangelism through immersion in the basics of forming Christian faith and character.

Bob Webber gave three presidential addresses on the importance of catechesis! In his third ("[Catechumenate across the Curriculum](#)," June 2006, [handout](#)), he advocated for a recovery of the catechetical process as a primary key to worship renewal. That was his final talk at IWS. These talks are all archived on the website ([audio archive](#) / [video archive](#)).

### **Worship and Mission/Evangelism: Panel Discussion**

Our panel of experts included the following scholars:

- Dr. Ximena DeBroeck, Director of Pastoral Formation at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, PA, and Director of Catechetical and Pastoral Formation for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.
- Dr. Jim Dodge, DWS alumnus, retired Provost and Professor at Canby Bible College, catechist. His work on catechesis was upheld by Bob Webber as a primary example of excellent theological and historical support for catechesis. It is [archived on the IWS website](#).
- Dr. Dinelle Frankland, DWS alumna and Academic Dean and Professor at IWS, and Minister of Worship and Choirs at First Christian Church in Clinton, Illinois.
- Dr. Reggie Kidd, Professor at IWS, Dean of the Cathedral Church of St. Luke, Orlando, FL, Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

- Dr. Greg Wilde, DWS alumnus and Professor at IWS. He is an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church/Anglican Communion.

All of these panelists are experts in catechesis, or Christian formation, and all have served on the IWS Catechesis Task Force. The video of the panel discussion can be found here: <https://iws.edu/2022/01/22jan-presidential-address/>

**Introduction to the Panel Discussion:** Although the word “catechesis” may not be widely used among all of our IWS family, the historically rooted concept is nevertheless at the heart of who we desire to be as the called-out people of God. In his book *Ancient Future Evangelism*, Bob Webber referred to catechesis as “Christian formation.” This process educates maturing Christians in:

- the Story of God
- the Christian life as participation in the life of the Trinity
- the theological and scriptural background of our faith
- the moral and behavioral expectations they should consider to be normative
- the style and meaning of liturgical rites (shared elements) engaged communally for worship and formation, especially baptism and Eucharist

The process of catechesis begins prior to baptism and works hand in hand with mystagogy (teachings on the mysteries of the faith). Mystagogical catechesis focuses on the deeper revelations of sacred/sacramental life, increased conscious participation in that sacred/sacramental life, communal praxis and theology, and cultural/missional reflection. These types of learnings are considered basic, lifelong, and ever-changing processes for believers seeking ongoing spiritual growth to Christlikeness and unity of faith and practice.

**Implications:** IWS supports and embraces this process of initiatory and ongoing catechesis as the Church’s timeless model for Christian formation. We seek to guide the IWS community in this process of becoming Christlike. We are also committed to be formators ourselves, and likewise to train others in our community to be formators.

**Questions to the Panel:** Please respond to these questions in light of the perspectives on Christian formation found in Bob Webber’s book, *Ancient Future Evangelism*.

Question 1: What are the biblical and historical bases for the ancient Christian formational process of both initiatory and ongoing catechesis and mystagogy? (Ximena, Reggie)

Question 2: Was Bob Webber correct that this moral/ethical, spiritual and theological formational process matters today? If so, why? (Jim, Dinelle, Greg)

Question 3: What are the implications of this moral/ethical, spiritual and theological formational process for worship renewal and the renewal of the Church in our time? (Ximena, Reggie)

Question 4: What are the implications of this moral/ethical, spiritual and theological formational process for theological higher education? (Dinelle, Ximena)

Question 5: What are the implications of this moral/ethical, spiritual and theological formational process for evangelization of the contemporary global communities? (Jim, Greg)

*And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

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