
Pope Francis: “Catechists needed in our globalized culture”

The ministry of Catechist in the Church is an ancient one and is urgently needed today given the rise of a “globalized culture” that requires lay ministries who feel called to cooperate in the work of evangelization in order to contribute “to the transformation of society through the penetration of Christian values into the social, political and economic sectors”, the Pope writes in the Apostolic Letter *Antiquum ministerium* issued “*Motu Proprio*”, instituting the ministry of catechist, that is rooted in the Gospels, as attested by the letters of St Paul and the opening paragraphs of the Gospel of Luke. No to all forms of “clericalization”, while embracing “the missionary commitment”, Francis remarked, announcing that the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments will soon publish the Rite of Institution of the lay ministry of Catechist. *“From the beginning, the Christian community was characterized by many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the building up of the Church”*, the Pope writes with regard to what he defines “an indispensable diakonia for the community”, proclaimed and recognized beginning with the Second Vatican Council, whereby the Church “has come to a renewed appreciation of the importance of lay involvement in the work of evangelization.” “The history of evangelization over the past two millennia clearly shows the effectiveness of the mission of catechists”, writes Francis, highlighting **“the countless lay men and women who directly took part in the spread of the Gospel through catechetical instruction”**: “Men and women of deep faith, authentic witnesses of holiness, who in some cases were also founders of Churches and eventually died as martyrs.”

“In our own day too, many competent and dedicated catechists are community leaders in various parts of the world and carry out a mission invaluable for the transmission and growth of the faith”,

is Francis’ analysis. In fact “the long line of blessed, saints and martyrs who were catechists has significantly advanced the Church’s mission and deserves to be recognized, for it represents a rich resource not only for catechesis but also for the entire history of Christian spirituality.” *“Without prejudice to the Bishop’s mission as the primary catechist in his Diocese, one which he shares with his presbyterate, or to the particular responsibility of parents for the Christian formation of their children, recognition should be given to those lay men and women who feel called by virtue of their baptism to cooperate in the work of catechesis.”* This is the central part of the *Motu Proprio*, wherein Francis states that the presence of the catechist “is all the more urgently needed today as a result of our increasing awareness of the need for evangelization in the contemporary world, and **the rise of a globalized culture**. This requires genuine interaction with young people, to say nothing of the need for creative methodologies and resources capable of adapting the proclamation of the Gospel to the missionary transformation that the Church has undertaken.” **“Fidelity to the past and responsibility for the present** are necessary conditions for the Church to carry out her mission in the world”, the Pope writes, citing the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* to highlight “the specific form of service” of catechists, called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith as it develops through its different stages: “from the initial proclamation of the kerygma to the instruction that presents our new life in Christ and prepares for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and then to the ongoing formation that can allow each person to give an accounting of the hope within them.” *“At the same time, every catechist must be a witness to the faith, a teacher and mystagogue, a companion and pedagogue, who teaches for the Church”*, is the profile illustrated in the *Motu Proprio*. “Only through prayer, study, and direct participation in the life of the community can they grow in this identity and the integrity and responsibility that it entails”, the Pope writes. “It is fitting that those called to the instituted ministry of Catechist be **men and women of deep faith and human maturity**, active participants in the life of the Christian community, capable of welcoming

others, being generous and living a life of fraternal communion. They should also receive suitable biblical, theological, pastoral and pedagogical formation to be competent communicators of the truth of the faith and they should have some prior experience of catechesis”, is Francis’ recommendation. Furthermore, it is essential that those called to this ministry “be faithful co-workers with priests and deacons, prepared to exercise their ministry wherever it may prove necessary, and motivated by true apostolic enthusiasm.” On their part, Episcopal Conferences are invited “to render effective the ministry of Catechist, determining the necessary process of formation and the normative criteria for admission to this ministry and devising the most appropriate forms for the service which these men and women will be called to exercise.”

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