

Catechesis and Catechist for the New Evangelization
Meeting for the Presidents and Officials
of the Episcopal Commissions for Catechesis of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe

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CONCLUSIONS

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What have we been learning from these days of our conference? We have been realizing how the new *Directory for Catechesis* and the Motu proprio *Antiquum ministerium* of Pope Francis have become milestones in the recent catechetical movement of the Church. Both documents mirror the intended transition in understanding and practicing of catechesis nowadays. It is the change in perspective from a more self-referential concept to a perspective of outgoing and therefore more missionary based and shaped. This requests a spirit of creativity how the kerygma can be addressed to people of our times according to the teaching of the Church and their special life-conditions at the same time,

What this could mean I'll try to summarize in five fields – according to the presentation and discussions of our conference during the last few days:

1 Field: A sense of orientation

Cardinal Bagnasco has stressed out in his presentation that there seems to be a certain temptation of nihilism in our times. This leads us christians to a more focused spirituality that we may become more salt and light to the world. By this the meaning of "*kerygma*" (so often mentioned and underlined by Pope Francis) has to become more a kind of an elementary catechesis. Orientation needs process and is by itself always development. Therefore we also can realize a new desire for the "sacred" and we are challenged to rediscover what is sacred.

In this very context the meaning of the "*via pulchritudinis*" is becoming more and more important. Our attention for shaping environments, our engagement in pilgrimages, our focus on liturgy has to be called to mind. Although we have to realize, what some comments mentioned, that catholics often are blocked by language in transmitting their faith.

In terms of this the importance of knowledge in faith (Cardinal Bagnasco), education and teaching has to be called to mind much more in an appropriate way.

2 Field: **A sense of belonging**

It is characteristic for our times that lots of people feel lost and have the deep desire no longer being on their own. Because it seems to be impossible to oversee the variety of possibilities in our times, also an agony of choice has to be recognized. Cardinal Bagnasco reminded us to watch at the Church as an underground river that flows and that carries me what will give me the feeling of belonging to a greater tradition than my personal life seems to be about. The polish philosopher Jaroslaw Pelikan has been referring to it as *"Tradition isn't the dead faith of people who are alive but the vital faith of those who have already died and the vital faith for them."* Professor Fossion has been referring to this by underlining the meaning of a catechist as a mediator and the necessity of a so called "milieu" where this conviction is lived and transferred.

3 Field: **A sense of compassion**

A recent advertising struck me most. There it said: "If you feel what you see, you will give what you have". The whole topic of "mercy" is about this and the way Pope Francis is expressing this spirituality to the whole Church calls us more and more in to an attitude of listening. In his address to us the day before he said: *the inculturation of faith "requires knowing how to listen to people, to the peoples to whom one is proclaiming: listening to their culture, their history; listening not superficially, already thinking of the pre-packed answers we have in our pockets, no ! To really listen, and to contrast those cultures, those languages, even and above all the unspoken, the unexpressed, with the Word of God, with Jesus Christ, the living Gospel. And I repeat the question: Is this not the most urgent task of the Church among the peoples of Europe?"*

In so far a sense of compassion in catechesis requires the attitude of *"knowing how to be with"* and to install a mentality of dialogue in all contexts of transmitting the faith.

4 Field: **A sense of communion**

A new need for communion includes both: to have part in the community of the Trinitarian God and to give part to this received communion. This spirituality and mentality is based on what Holy Pope John Paul II has expressed so deeply in his Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (43). To be grateful for the charisms of others - just not only in view on them - but as an enriching of our own lives by this is part of a divine spirituality of communion. Pope Benedict XVI has underlined this necessity by referring to the old roman ideal of

friendship "*idem velle - idem nolle*" what means togetherness in what we want and what we avoid and leave"

In addition and contrast to some very enthusiastic presentations of community-experience also in a digital world I want to admit some real advantages (cf. DC 365-372). But at the same time we may not lose the awareness of its boundaries and limitations. Digital life is very often the expression of being networked but not deeply committed. But the gospel is about a deeper sense of spiritual and physical presence and commitment.

5 Field: **A sense of coming home**

One of the deepest desires of people in our times is that of "coming home". And even more that we would presume or admit – it is related and referred to the idea of conversion and reconciliation. In the catechumenal development of the US the special catholic understanding of "conversion" is addressed as "being born again and again and again". Not just a single moment in life but a continuous invitation of turning back to our roots and of beginning once again. Actually what is expressed in a famous short story of Franz Kafka who is returning home after years of separation from his family. Approaching his home he is realizing what had had in mind and finally hoping and sighing: "If only someone would come and open the door for me!" That is the destination and meaning of catechesis: to open the door and to keep the door open!