



New Directory for Catechesis released



The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization releases a new Directory for Catechesis, providing guidelines for the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel through catechesis and evangelization.

By Vatican News

The long-awaited updated Directory for Catechesis was released in the Vatican on Thursday. It was drafted under the direction of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. It was approved by Pope Francis on 23 March - the liturgical memorial of Saint Turibius of Mongrovejo, a 16th century saint who gave a strong impetus to evangelization and catechesis. This latest edition comes as a follow-up to the "General Catechetical Directory" of 1971, and the "General Directory for Catechesis" of 1997 both of which were issued by the Congregation for Clergy.

The new Directory seeks to highlight the close link between evangelization and catechesis. It underlines that every baptized person is a missionary called to find new ways of communicating the faith with commitment and responsibility. In this regard, the new Directory proposes three major principles of action: Witnessing, Mercy and Dialogue. The new Directory containing over 300 pages, and is made up of 3 parts divided into 12 chapters.

Formation of Catechists

The first part, entitled "Catechesis in the evangelizing mission of the Church", treats the formation of catechists.

The Directory points out that in order to be credible witnesses of the faith, catechists have to be "catechized before being catechists." This involves working with gratuitousness, dedication and integrity, according to a missionary spirituality that is an antidote from "sterile pastoral fatigue".

Catechists are also called to be vigilant in performing their specific task “so that absolute protection is guaranteed to every person, particularly to minors and vulnerable person.”

Catechetical process

The second part - “The process of catechesis” - underscores the importance of a “profound and effective communicative model”. It proposes the use of art through the contemplation of beauty as a means of connecting with God, and sacred music as a way of instilling the desire for God in the heart of people.

The role of the family also comes to the fore. There those being evangelized can live the faith in a simple and spontaneous way. It is also where people can receive Christian education in a humble and compassionate manner.

In the face of new family scenarios in contemporary society, Christians are called to accompany others with closeness, listening and understanding in order to restore hope and trust to all.

A culture of inclusion

The Directory also highlights the importance of “welcoming and recognizing” the differently-abled. It stresses that they are witnesses to the essential truths of human life and are to be welcomed as a great gift. Their families also are deserving of “respect and admiration”.

In the same way, catechesis should focus on acceptance, trust and solidarity for migrants, who, far from their homeland, may experience a crisis of faith. Migrants are to be supported in the fight against prejudices and the serious dangers they may face, such as human trafficking.

Preferential option for the poor, catechesis for prisoners

The Directory calls for attention to be given to prisons describing them as an “authentic mission land”. It proposes that for prisoners, catechesis should be the proclamation of salvation in Christ, as well as caring listening which shows the maternal face of the Church.

As regards the poor, catechesis should educate people about evangelical poverty. It should also promote a culture of fraternity and foster indignation among the faithful against situations of misery and injustice suffered by the poor.

Parishes, schools and Church associations

The third part, entitled “Catechesis in Particular Churches”, is dedicated to catechesis in parishes, ecclesiastical movements and other Church associations.

Parishes are highlighted as “examples of community apostolate” which should provide creative catechesis adapted to people’s lived experience. Other Church associations are also recognized as having “a great evangelizing capacity” that adds to the “Church’s richness”.

Regarding Catholic schools, the Directory proposes a movement from being “scholastic-institutions” to becoming “scholastic-communities” of faith with an educational project based on Gospel values. It also notes that teaching religion is distinct from, but complementary to, catechism.

Stressing that “the religious factor is an existential dimension that should not be overlooked,” the Directory affirms that “it is the right of parents and students” to receive an integral formation that takes the teaching of religion into account.

Cultural and religious pluralism

The Directory points out that ecumenism and interreligious dialogue with Judaism and Islam is a special area for catechesis. Catechesis must “encourage the desire for unity” in order for it to be a true instrument of evangelization.

It calls for a dialogue that combats anti-Semitism, and promotes peace and justice with Judaism. At the same time, it urges the faithful to avoid superficial generalizations in order to foster dialogue with Islam.

In our contemporary context of religious pluralism, the Directory calls for catechesis that can “deepen and strengthen the identity of believers”, promoting their missionary impetus through witnessing as well as “friendly and cordial” dialogue.

Technology and the digital world

The Directory reaffirms that science and technology are at the service of the person and should be directed towards improving the living conditions of humanity.

It proposes that catechesis should be directed towards educating people in the proper use of the digital culture, which has both good and bad elements. Catechesis should also focus on helping young people distinguish truth and quality amid the “culture of the instantaneous.”

Other themes highlighted by the Directory include the call to a “profound ecological conversion”. Catechesis promotes this conversion through attention to the safeguarding of creation and the avoidance of consumerism.

It also highlights that catechesis is to inspire labour according to the Social Doctrine of the Church with special attention to the defense of the rights of the weakest. In addition, it encourages the development of catechetical material produced on the local level and organization at the service of catechesis including the Synod of Bishops and Episcopal Conferences.