

The inspiring criteria of the formation of catechists

237. An adequate conception of the formation of catechists must always take prior note of some of the criteria which inspire and configure with varying emphases relevant to the formation of catechists:

- Firstly, it is a question of forming catechists for the need to evangelize in the present historical context, with its values, challenges and disappointments. To accomplish this task, it is necessary for catechists to have a deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity; as well as a great social sensitivity. All formation programs must accommodate these points;
- In formation, account must also be taken of the *concept of catechesis*, proposed by the Church today. It is a question of forming catechists so as to be able to transmit not only a teaching but also an integral Christian formation, by developing “tasks of initiation, of education, and of teaching.” Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators and witnesses of the faith;
- The present *catechetical moment* being lived by the Church requires catechists who can “integrate,” who are capable of overcoming “unilateral divergent tendencies” and who are able to provide a full and complete catechesis. They must know how to link the dimension of truth and meaning of the faith, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, ecclesial and social meaning. Formation must contribute to the enrichment of these factors lest tensions arise between them;
- The formation of lay catechists cannot ignore the *specific character of the laity in the Church*, and cannot be regarded as merely a synthesis of the mission received by priests and religious. Rather, “their apostolic training acquires a special character precisely from the secular nature of the lay state and from its particular type of spirituality”;
- Finally, the *pedagogy* used in this formation is of fundamental importance. As a general criterion, it is necessary to underline the need for a coherence between the general pedagogy of formation of catechists and the pedagogy proper to the catechetical process. It would be very difficult for the catechists in his activity to improvise a style and a sensibility to which he had not been introduced during his own formation.

General Catechetical Directory, 1997

55. C. Need for Formation

Like all Christians, catechists are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation. The catechist should continue his or her own spiritual formation through frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, through spiritual direction, and through continued study of the faith. The catechists should also be provided with opportunities for spiritual growth such as retreats, conferences, etc. In addition to spiritual formation, the catechist is also in need of pedagogical formation, especially as society, teaching methods and culture change.

National Directory for Catechesis, 2005

Quote taken from 55. E. Ongoing Formation of Catechists

“Since effective catechesis depends on virtuous and skilled catechists, their ongoing formation should enhance the human, spiritual and apostolic qualities and catechetical skills they bring to their ministry. The pastoral care of catechists is an essential aspect of the diocese’s overall catechetical plan.”

National Directory for Catechesis, 2005