



MOTU PROPRIO: FIDES PER DOCTRINAM



BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

APOSTOLIC LETTER

ISSUED MOTU PROPRIO

FIDES PER DOCTRINAM

WHEREBY THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION PASTOR BONUS IS MODIFIED

AND COMPETENCE FOR CATECHESIS IS TRANSFERRED

FROM THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

TO THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Faith needs to be strengthened *through teaching*, so that it can enlighten the minds and hearts of believers. The particular moment of history in which we are living, marked as it is by a dramatic crisis of faith, calls for an ability to meet the great expectations present in the hearts of believers for a response to the new questions being directed both at the world

and at the Church. The understanding of the faith constantly demands that its contents be expressed in a new language capable of presenting, to all who ask, the reason for the hope present in those who believe (cf *1 Pet* 3:15).

It is a particular responsibility of the whole Church to keep the message of Christ ever fresh and effective, also through clear teaching which must nourish faith in the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God who for our sake became man, died and rose again for our salvation. She must do so tirelessly by appropriate ways and means, so that all those who accept the Gospel message and believe, may be born to new life through baptism.

In this year which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, as the Church meditates upon the rich teaching contained in those documents and finds new ways to implement it, we can acknowledge the great catechetical progress that has been made in these decades. The period after the Council, however, was not without errors, some quite grave, of method and content, which led in turn to deeper reflection and the preparation of a number of post-conciliar documents which have enriched the field of catechesis.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the Venerable Servant of God Paul VI stated that “a means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history” (No. 44: AAS 68 [1976], 34).

Blessed John Paul II, concluding the Synod of Bishops devoted to catechesis, also wrote that “within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavours to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself” (Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 20: AAS 71 [1979], 1294).

To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, my blessed Predecessor announced another Synod of Bishops, during which the Synod Fathers expressed their fervent desire that a Catechism be prepared in order to provide the universal Church with a synthetic summary of doctrine and morality in accordance with the Council's indications. With the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, issued on 11 October 1992, Blessed John Paul II promulgated the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and I myself, with a Motu Proprio dated 28 June 2005, approved and promulgated the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

We cannot forget other significant moments in defining the nature, method and ends of catechesis in the process of evangelization. In 1971 the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy issued the *General Catechetical Directory*, as a first synthesis of the progress made in the various local Churches in their own work of catechesis. In 1997, following the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Congregation for the Clergy issued the *General Directory for Catechesis*, confirming the Church's desire that the first step in catechesis should normally be aimed at conversion (cf. No. 62).

The teaching of the Council and the subsequent magisterium, reflecting the Church's great tradition in this regard, closely linked catechesis to the process of evangelization. Catechesis has a prominent place in the Church's daily life and her tireless efforts to proclaim the word of God to all and to teach believers in Christ to build up his body, the Church (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 4).

With the Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio *Ubicumque et Semper* of 21 September 2010, I established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, which pursues

its own ends “both by encouraging reflection on topics of the new evangelization, and by identifying and promoting suitable ways and means to accomplish it” (Art. 1 § 2: AAS 102 [2010], 791). In a particular way I wished to grant the new Dicastery the task of promoting “the use of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as an essential and complete formulation of the content of the faith for the people of our time” (Art. 3, 5°: AAS 102 [2010], 792).

Taking all these things into account, I consider it right that this same Dicastery should assume as one of its institutional duties the task of vigilance, to be exercised in the name of the Supreme Pontiff, over that instrument of evangelization which is the Church’s catechesis, as well as over the various aspects of catechetical instruction, for the sake of a more organic and effective pastoral activity. This new Pontifical Council can offer suitable help in this regard to the particular Churches and to diocesan bishops.

Therefore, accepting the joint proposal of the Heads of the Dicasteries involved, I have determined that the responsibilities for catechesis, which the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* of 28 June 1988 had entrusted to the Congregation for the Clergy, will be transferred to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, with the same jurisdiction which the former Congregation has hitherto exercised in this area and which is called for in canon law.

Consequently, in light of the above observations and after carefully pondering the matter and having sought the counsel of experts, I establish and decree the following:

Art. 1

Article 94 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* is abolished and the competence for catechesis hitherto enjoyed by the Congregation for Clergy is entirely transferred to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization.

Art. 2

The International Council for Catechesis established by the Venerable Servant of God Paul VI with a Letter dated 7 June 1973, is likewise transferred to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. The President of the Pontifical Council will become the president of this Council and the Secretary of the same Dicastery will be a member *ex officio*.

Art. 3

In virtue of the competences granted it by this Apostolic Letter issued *Motu Proprio*, the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization:

§ 1. Is concerned with promoting the religious formation of the faithful of every age and condition;

§ 2. Has the faculty to issue norms meant to ensure that catechetical instruction is suitably imparted in accordance with the Church’s constant tradition;

§ 3. Has the task of ensuring that catechetical formation is properly carried out with regard to its methods and aims, in accordance with the directives of the Church's magisterium;

§ 4. Grants the necessary approval of the Apostolic See for catechisms and other writings pertaining to catechetical instruction, with the consent of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith;

§ 5. Assists the Offices for catechetics within Episcopal Conferences, follows their initiatives pertaining to religious formation which are of an international nature; coordinates their activities and, in certain cases, provides necessary assistance.

What I have established with this Apostolic Letter issued *Motu Proprio*, I wish to be observed fully, now and in the future, anything to the contrary notwithstanding, even if worthy of special mention, and I order it to be promulgated by publication in the daily newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, taking effect fifteen days after promulgation.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 16 January in the year of our Lord 2013, the eighth of my Pontificate.

Benedictus PP. XVI

ARTICLE FOR THE PROMULGATION OF THE MOTU PROPRIO "FIDES PER DOCTRINAM"

by H.E. Msgr. Rino Fisichella

Pope Benedict XVI, in his homily at the inaugural Mass of the recent Synod of Bishops, affirmed that the New Evangelization become part of the ordinary pastoral activity of the Church with the aim of awakening in every baptized person the awareness of being a bearer of the Gospel. For this to occur, there needs to be a serious and systematic Christian formation which unifies faith and everyday life. It is only in this unity that it is possible to state the reasons for faith and its contents. At the conclusion of the Synod, with characteristic foresight, Benedict XVI announced the transfer of competency over Catechesis from the Congregation for Clergy to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. The *Motu Proprio* "Fides per doctrinam", published today, clarifies the thinking behind this move. What is clear is that this transfer is no mere formality, but must be understood in the context of the concrete pastoral action which Pope Benedict is setting out for the Church in the years and decades to come. Creating a more organic relationship between Catechesis and the New Evangelization serves above all to consolidate the innovative path of the different stages of the evangelizing mission of the Church set out by the Second Vatican Council. At the same time, it offers the project of the New Evangelization a highly qualified instrument with which to pursue its direction.

Along with the profession of faith, the liturgy, and personal witness to Christ, Catechesis emerges as a necessary factor in sustaining faith and ensuring it has sufficient cultural depth. Believing is not the same as adhering to fables or to the myths of the past. It means giving personal assent to the truth of revelation which is actuated and brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For this reason, knowledge of the content of faith is fundamental and necessary, and its rediscovery urgent for the process of the New Evangelization.

Over the years, the teaching of Vatican II has given a truly innovative impetus to Catechesis. The work undertaken to renew catechetical texts is an objective fact and the need to elaborate pastoral programs for the formation of catechists remains a priority, notwithstanding its many difficulties. The responsibility of the transmission the faith obliges us to ensure that Catechesis is a privileged dimension of Christian formation, if we

are to avoid forms of discontinuity which would lead to a crisis of faith. The publication of *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, whose twentieth anniversary we now celebrate, is the clearest sign of this awareness which emerges increasingly in the life of the Christian community. Catechesis is not extraneous to pastoral activity or a marginal aspect of it.

On the contrary, the need for the ongoing formation of believers requires that we progress beyond a Catechesis which is limited to the reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation. Being educated in the faith, in fact, is a right which all believers must rediscover in order to construct their own identity and come to an increasingly deeper knowledge of the mystery in which they believe. The New Evangelization faces many scenarios hitherto unknown. It must speak to a listener who is increasingly immersed in a scientific and technological culture. Given this fact, the formation of Christians must be adequate. One of the avenues which the New Evangelization must pursue relentlessly is therefore the need to help the faithful understand that Catechesis is necessary for a coherent life of faith. The religious illiteracy which is among the causes of the crisis of faith affecting many Christians can easily be overcome. For this to happen, however, it is necessary that the pastoral action of the Church invests in Catechesis and Christian education.

“The illumination of the minds and hearts of believers,” as *Fides per doctrinam* states, is essential for rendering Christians faithful and courageous witnesses to the Risen Lord.

H.E. Msgr. Rino Fisichella

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for Promoting the New Evangelization)