



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.

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