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## IN YOUR LIGHT WE SEE OUR LIGHT

*“Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church’s life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase, but even more, her inner growth and correspondence with God’s plan depend essentially on catechesis”.*

*Catechesi Tradentae 13*

Ever since the formation of the Commission for Catechesis in November 2016, our Eparchy has attempted to systematise the Catechetical formation of our children and young persons. The faith formation of our younger generation has been one of my greatest pastoral interests in my ministry as a teacher of the Catholic faith. In this process, Holy Mother Church has always given us directions and orientations through her teaching, especially in the General Catechetical Directories, Encyclicals and other documents. Further, the Catechesis of the Eparchy draws inspiration from the Catechetical tradition and vision of Syro-Malabar Church expressed in **Call and Response**, our Catechetical Directory. On 25th June 2020, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of New Evangelization promulgated the 'New Directory for Catechesis', the Church’s official guide to teaching the faith. As the first Catechetical directory of this Millennium, this directory offers fundamental principles and orientations that are relevant to our times.

### **Our Catechetical Ministry**

I am happy to bring to your attention that our Catechetical ministry involving more than 8000 students and 1400 teachers and supporting staff is perhaps one of the biggest faith formation programmes for young people in Catholic Europe. The formation that we give to our children and young persons, is therefore connected with the very foundation and mission of our Eparchy. The presence and active participation of our Catechesis students make our communities younger and more vibrant. Pastoral initiatives at the Eparchial and Regional levels, set out in our Pastoral Plan ‘Living Stones’ gives utmost importance to the ministry of Catechesis. All our teachers are volunteers who have shown great dedication and spirit of sacrifice for the efficient functioning of our Catechesis programme.

The Catechetical Commission receives constant support from the priests, religious and lay teachers. The regional Co-ordinators, Catechetical Directors and Regional secretaries work hard to facilitate the Catechetical ministry in the region.

### **Ongoing formation of Teachers**

The ‘formation of the formators’ is important as they need to update their knowledge as well as revitalising their spiritual resources. We have had training programmes for all teachers of the Eparchy in 2018 by Rev. Dr. Jimmy Poochakkatt, the then secretary of the Syro-Malabar

Synodal Commission for Catechesis and by Rev. Dr. Thomas Melvettath, the present Secretary in August this year for the teachers of Glasgow region. More training sessions are planned for the other regions after the inauguration of the Academic year 2020-2021. The first gathering of the Head teachers was conducted on 21st September 2019 in Stoke-on -Trent. It was a fruitful meeting that made valuable recommendations to the way we communicate our faith. For the past two years, our headteachers were blessed to have participated in the retreat preached by Rev.Fr. Binoy Karimaruthumkal and Rev.Fr. Daniel Poovannathil.

### **Safeguarding and Data Protection Commissions**

As the Commission for Catechesis is a ministry that involves and focuses Children, the Commission works closely with the Eparchial Safeguarding and Data Protection Commissions. Rev. Fr. Joy Vayalil CST, the Chairperson and Mrs Ancy Johnson, the Secretary of the Commission for Catechesis, are members of the Safeguarding Commission. Every Catechetical centre has safeguarding representatives and they make sure that faith formation is done in an environment that ensures the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

### **Faith-formation During Lockdown and Google Classroom**

According to the new General Directory, the very ‘evangelisation of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media.’ (GDC 209). As the Global Pandemic Covid-19 posed a great challenge to our liturgical and catechetical services, we could make use of the blessings of the digital media to a great extent. Regular meetings of the Commission, regional Secretaries, meeting with the presbyterium was effectively conducted and suggestions were received.

We were looking forward to a reliable and safe alternative platform to conduct our Catechesis lessons. This led to the introduction of Google Classroom. Google Classroom is a communication and document sharing platform to facilitate paperless communication between catechesis teachers and students and streamline educational workflow. Classroom allows teachers to create classes, post assignments, and view work in real-time. By implementing google classroom we are able to communicate with the teachers and the children effectively. I appreciate the commitment, talent and hard work of Mr. Jimmy Mathew in helping the commission to set up the Google Classroom. Teachers from different parts of our Eparchy collaborated to prepare workbooks and study materials to be distributed when the Google classroom is launched.

### **Combined Mission**

Catechetical ministry in Syro-Malabar communities outside India faces similar cultural, and linguistic challenges. In order to address these, the Catechesis commissions in the Eparchies of Great Britain, Chicago, Melbourne, Mississauga and the Apostolic Visitations in Europe and in New Zealand came together to form a combined Catechetical mission. The Combined mission aims to discuss the common issues that we face, to share the pedagogical resources. Our initiative of Google Classroom was much appreciated by the Combined mission.

## **New Orientation in Catechesis**

There are a number of insights in the New Catechetical Directory that are especially appealing to the Oriental theological sensitivities. Catechesis is essentially defined as Kerygmatic and Mystagogical -proclaiming and celebrating the Word of God and the Bread of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ. This propels our whole attention to the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Eucharist. As our families and worshipping communities are centred on these divine realities, we become a community that effectively live, celebrate and transmit our faith. As we inaugurate our Catechetical Academic year, on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020, with the theme '**in your light we see our light**' (Ps.36.9), I invoke God's blessing upon all, especially on the Children and the Teachers.

With the assurance of my prayers and good wishes,

Yours in Lord and our God,

+ *Joseph Srampickal*

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NB: This circular must be read in all Parishes/Missions/Proposed Missions of our Eparchy during the Celebration of the Holy Qurbana before 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

