



To all Priests, Deacons, Religious and Lay Faithful of the:
Archdiocese of Kingston, Diocese of Montego Bay, and Diocese of Mandeville.

PASTORAL EXHORTATION

May 21, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Happy Easter to you all!

In his recent Apostolic Letter “*Antiquum Ministerium*”, Pope Francis draws attention to “the centrality of a catechesis that gives priority to the education and on-going formation of believers. (AM # 4) ...so that the faith might be an effective support for the life of every human being” .(AM # 3)

Implicit in our Holy Father’s words is a call to renew and revitalize Catechesis that members of the Church Community will be formed and equipped to make the Synodal journey into the future. In response to this call, we, the Bishops of the three Dioceses in Jamaica, have deemed it necessary to write this Exhortation to all the clergy and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in Jamaica.

First, we want to thank you, our priests, deacons, catechists, and other generous collaborators for the effort you have been making to keep alive the Catechetical programmes in your deaneries and Church Communities. Despite the challenges of the last few years, you have managed to maintain varying levels of animation in the ministry of Catechetics. May God, who began this good work in you, bring it to fruition even amid the difficulties you face.

While we acknowledge the positive signs of life, we must also acknowledge a lethargy pervading this important ministry. This inevitably is reflected in the quality of life experienced in our Church Communities, and our Church’s mission of proclaiming the Good News of salvation to the world. We, your Bishops, as the Shepherds and Chief

Catechists in our respective Dioceses, see this as a matter of concern and it leads us to evaluate the mandate given to us by Jesus Christ Himself: “ Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (Matt 28:19-20)

In keeping with the model of Church, which the Holy Spirit is forming under the leadership of Pope Francis, two aspects give the desired meaning and focus of Catechesis in moving forward: **SYNODALITY** and **LIFE-LONG FORMATION & EDUCATION**.

Synodality is a way of being Church where everyone, without exception, “feels at home” and participates in the life and mission of the Church by listening to each other with respect, that allows each member to share in the life and mission of the Community according to each one’s gifts and talents. Being Church in this way will give witness to the unity for which Jesus prayed - “That all may be One” - and for which society yearns.

Life-Long Education and Formation finds its meaning in the words of Pope Francis (Joy of the Gospel, EG # 166), “... a progressive experience of formation involving the entire Community and a renewed appreciation of the liturgical signs of Christian Initiation... (it is an) insertion into a broader growth process and the integration of every dimension of the person within a communal journey of hearing and response”. This way of understanding Catechetical Formation calls for a paradigm shift: to grow into our identity as a Synodal Church, all of us must adopt the approach to Catechetical Formation as one which begins at infancy and continues throughout life to the moment of death, and this applies to every member regardless of age or position in the Church. Catechesis is not only about understanding the doctrines of the Church... it is also about a developing relationship with Jesus Christ, which is of its nature on-going, and therefore must be given the appropriate structure and programme implementation in each Church Community. The way forward in a Synodal Church is guided by a Catechesis which has these two pillars as its foundational strength. Working together with the Holy Spirit and each other to build this strong foundation, we can have renewed hope that the Church in Jamaica will continue to build the Kingdom of God according to the mind of Christ.

As your Bishops, who have the responsibility for ensuring the vitality of Catechesis, we renew the charge given to you, priests of our Dioceses, as the “immediate assistants of your Bishop.... to neglect nothing with a view to a well-organized and well oriented catechetical effort” (CT # 64) because together, Bishops and priests, we “have the chief responsibility for fostering, guiding and coordinating catechesis” (CT # 16).

And you, Catechists, fulfill a role “of the highest importance” (*Ad Gentes* # 17), because your service has the objective of laying the foundation on which the Christian’s life of Faith is built. We urge you to re-commit yourself to this ministry as you collaborate with your priests, deacons, and other members of the Church in the renewal of catechesis in your Diocese.

To the entire Church Community, the Church has this to say: “Catechesis always has been and always will be a work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must be responsible. But the Church’s members have different responsibilities, derived from each one’s mission..... all have in various degrees very precise responsibilities in this education of the believing conscience, an education that is important for the life of the Church and affects the life of society as such” (CT # 16)

Finally, this task of Catechetical renewal will benefit greatly from a more intentional cooperation between our three Dioceses. There is a strongly felt need for more structured regular synodal meetings among the clergy and among the laity, at the Parish, Diocesan and National levels. This would provide the support and encouragement needed to be more effective in carrying out the mission of the Church in Jamaica today. We, your Bishops, support this idea of inter-Diocesan cooperation and encourage creative initiatives that could bring about energy for the Synodal journey we are making together.

With every good wish and prayers,

Yours in the Risen Lord,



Most Rev. Kenneth Richards
Archbishop of Kingston



Most Rev. Burchell McPherson
Bishop of Montego Bay



Most Rev. John D. Persaud
Bishop of Mandeville