

Message for Catechetical Month 2024

My dear Catechists, on behalf of my brother Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (A.E.C.), I greet you with a grateful heart as we celebrate Catechetical month 2024. The Antillean Church is grateful to you for your consistency, commitment, and willingness to share your gifts and talents to form the People of God in the Antilles. We give thanks to God for your selfless work and dedication to this Ministry.

Our theme for 2024 - **Catechists: Missionaries of Healing and Service**, came out of the Synodal listening sessions. People expressed much hurt in all kinds of ways, spiritually, psychologically, mentally, physically and even socially. These hurts may have had their genesis in the relationships in the family, school, work, neighbourhood communities or traumatic events that occurred, even in the Church community. It is difficult for hurting people to grow if they do not encounter the healing touch of Jesus in their lives. Catechists are called to become agents of healing and to facilitate healing for those you catechize. A hurting Church can only become an effective sign of God's loving and saving presence, if it is open to acknowledge its wounds and seek healing to become the wounded healer.

**Catechists:
Missionaries
of Healing
and Service**

It is important for us to understand the four dimensions of the person: intellectual/mental, emotional/psychological, physical and spiritual. It is in our understanding of the whole person that we can plan the healing sessions appropriately and with the appropriate personnel for such sessions. This aspect of our ministry will invite us to work with psychologists, emotional intelligence personnel, spiritual directors, mental health personnel, physical health professionals and other holistic healers. The choices we make here must be done with careful consideration and contemplation on the Church's teachings. It is also important for us to examine our own selves and what is crying out for healing within us. Remember, you cannot give what you do not have.

We catechists have been entrusted with a serious mission to administer and make available healing opportunities for our people (children and adults). This should engage all our senses and form the first part of our sessions. Healing was a significant and very important part of Jesus' ministry. Members of the body of Christ are calling out for healing just as they did when Jesus walked on this earth. Let us hear their cry! Let us help them identify their pain and avail themselves of God's healing power in Jesus the Christ.



God's healing power in Jesus the Christ. This is where our ministry of evangelization begins – when people encounter the God who heals. As we know, it is hard for people who have experienced brokenness to believe in themselves and to work with others in celebrating of life. We are called to be a Eucharist People, a people who work with others to find healing and transformation, so that a synergy of gifts and talents are experienced. We need people who can admit to their brokenness, and be open to healing, so that they can join with others on the road to holiness.



As people who are responsible for formation, it is important for us to note our goal in this context. We want a healthy Church that can be an effective Body of Christ. We may be wounded but we must claim redemption and be a visible sign of God's presence in this world. This is our call to serve. We must form people to see and hear through the eyes and ears of Jesus so that we can recognize the needs in our midst. Recognition of needs is not enough; we must engage people in the actual action to address these needs. From our experience of teaching, we know that people learn best when they act. Our catechetical sessions must engage those being catechized in some kind of relevant service.

Service is about encountering Christ in the most vulnerable. Remember the Scripture, "And the King will answer,

"In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers (or sisters) of mine, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40).

God created us in the image and likeness of Himself, a triune God who is love itself. St. Augustine says that our hearts are restless until they rest in God because we have so much love inside of us that it wants to overflow to others. Hence the reason loving and being loved, make us feel so good and empowers us to be more. Let us help our people to be a people of service, ministering and seeking the face of Christ in the least, the little and the lost. Sometimes it may be a simple act of love and accompaniment. Whatever the needs we see around us let us try to respond. Responding as a team is always better, and more productive than as a single person. Let us encourage those we catechize to join with others to bring hope and love to others.

If our Church in this region is to be a visible sign of God's presence, and promote the reign of God, then it is incumbent on us to act as Jesus would. He is here through each of us, and catechists must help people realize how they make Jesus present to the space and people they find themselves in and with. Let us help people to live consciously as the 'people of God', the people God that He has made a covenant with, the people God called by His name.



Catechists, I invite all of us to become God's presence throughout this region: develop a fervent life of prayer, stay close to Sacred Scripture, allow the Liturgy to form you, enrich your community with your gifts and talents, value and love people and celebrate Eucharist in all of creation.

Today, I celebrate you and your ministry, and pray God's richest blessings upon you and your family. Go forth, catechists, catechizing by your lives and make healthy disciples who would make this world a better place and promote God's reign on earth.

+ John D. Persaud
Bishop of Mandeville
Chair of the AEC Commission on Doctrine & Faith Formation

