

Directory for Catechesis

Chapter IV: THE FORMATION OF CATECHISTS

3. CRITERIA FOR FORMATION

135. In the formation of catechists several criteria must be kept in mind that serve as inspiration for programmes of formation. Since catechists must be formed for evangelisation in the present world, it will be necessary to use wisdom in harmonising the attention due to persons and to the truths of faith, personal growth and the community dimension, care for spiritual dynamics and dedication to the effort for the common good. A few criteria should be considered in a more specific way...

c. Style of accompaniment: the Church feels the duty of forming its catechists in the art of personal accompaniment, both by proposing to them the experience of being accompanied in order to grow in discipleship, and by enabling them and sending them to accompany their brothers. This style calls for a humble willingness to allow oneself to be touched by the questions and confronted by the situations of life, with a gaze full of compassion but also respectful of the other's freedom. The new development to which the catechist is called resides in the proximity, in the unconditional acceptance and in the gratuitousness with which he makes himself available to walk beside others in order to listen to them and explain the Scriptures (cf Luke 24:13-35; Acts 8:26-39), without establishing the route in advance, without demanding to see the fruits, and without holding anything back for himself.

4. THE DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION

142. The catechist, on account of his service, holds a position relative to the people he accompanies in the faith and is perceived by them as a point of reference, who exercises a certain form of authority. It therefore becomes necessary that this role be lived out with the most absolute respect for the conscience and person of the other, avoiding every kind of abuse, whether of power, of conscience, financial, or sexual. Catechists, in their programmes of formation and through an honest dialogue with their spiritual guides, should be helped to identify the correct ways of living out their authority solely as service of their brothers. Moreover, in order not to betray the trust of the persons assigned to them, they should be able to distinguish between the external forum and the internal forum and should learn to have great respect for the sacred freedom of the other, without violating or manipulating this in any way.