

NATIONAL CATECHETICAL MONTH 2017

CATECHISTS: AGENTS OF RENEWAL IN THE PARISH

The National Catechetical Month 2017 celebrates the ministry and life of catechists in parishes and communities of faith.

The catechist participates actively in the life of the parish. He/she is a pastoral worker, an agent contributing to the renewal of the church. In various levels of church: from the diocesan level, to the vicariate, to the parish and the home, the catechist contributes his/her share in the life of catechesis.

It is important to note: every Christian is a catechist. The Christian encounters Jesus in the Eucharistic celebration, participates in the works of charity and justice, in the service of various groups from children to adults.

The encounter with Jesus becomes a challenge of conversion towards a greater sense of belonging to the church and participation in her evangelizing mission. Everything begins with Jesus and ends with Jesus.

The church is communion in mission. And the church is a strong contributor to the building of communion that calls people to a more intimate union with Jesus.

The great figures of Philippine catechesis are identified. From left to right, they are:

Cardinal Rufino J. Santos, DD

Bishop Alfredo Verzosa, DD

Archbishop Jose Ma. Cuenco, DD

Bishop Alfredo Obviar, DD

Mother Francisca Del Espiritu Santo de Fuentes
Brother Andelino Manuel, FSC
Cardinal Jaime L. Sin, DD
Ms. Mathilde Beckers
Fr. Lino Banayad, SJ
Sr. Angelina Lim, FMM
Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, OP, DD

Their pioneering work in the service of catechesis is a living monument to the evangelizing mission of the church in the Philippines. It is said that we are called to trace their “footsteps” (the building blocks of their achievements) and re – discover the “why” and the “how” of catechetical ministry. They continue to watch over us and to pray for us in helping build a “civilization of life and love”.

One needs to trace the ministry and life of these “giants” of Philippine catechesis and appreciate the work of catechesis as a never ending quest to make Jesus known and loved. Their programs and institutions continue to deliver excellence in catechetical work across generations, age groups, and pastoral contexts.

Philippine catechesis can be traced from the Beaterio movement of Mo. Francisca del Espiritu Santo in the 18th Century teaching people the faith, to the establishment of the Pius XII Catechetical center in Jaro by Archbishop Jose Ma. Cuenco, the CCD Program and method of Lino Banayad, SJ, the catechetical institutes of Mother of Life (Ms. Mathilde Beckers) and Lumen Christi Catechetical Center (Sr. Angelina Lim, FMM) – all established under the care of the first Filipino Cardinal, Rufino J. Santos. Cardinal Jaime L. Sin established the Catechetical Foundation of the Archdiocese of Manila, the first ever foundation to support full time catechists with remuneration through parish catechetical quota.

Bishop Alfredo Verzosa and Bishop Alfredo Ma. Obviar founded religious institutes: Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart and the Missionary Catechists of St. Therese whose charism is catechesis or education in the faith.

The De La Salle brothers through Br. Andelino Manuel Castillo, FSC assisted the church in the catechetical instruction in the public schools. The De La Salle Brothers have taken on the work of training catechetical supervisors in dioceses through the La Sallian Catechetical Center.

The figure of Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, OP stands out as the “architect” of contemporary Philippine catechesis through the publication of the National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines and the Catechism for Filipino Catholics.

The church in the Philippines is alive and well. Gratitude is given to the Lord who makes all things possible and to his instruments of grace: the pioneers who worked tirelessly in his vineyard and to the “nameless” catechists who move forth from church to the world and from world back to the church.

May the Triune God be praised and adored now and forever!