

## The Relevance of the Antiquum Ministerium To the Role of Catechists in Evangelization in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Tanah Mas Parish

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**Abstract.** Catechists play an important role in faith growth, especially in a world that is currently experiencing development. Catechists should have spirituality that animates their vocation especially in carrying out their duty to proclaim and serve. Catechist ministry needs to be effective so as to provide progress for the faith of the people in responding to their call. Recognizing the role of catechists, Pope Francis through the Antiquum Ministerium document emphasized the importance of establishing catechist ministries where catechists need to be given sufficient attention and guidance. However, catechists in Tanah Mas have not met these expectations, especially in their services due to the small number of catechists. To find out more, it will be examined how the catechist ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Tanah Mas Parish in carrying out the call to evangelization?; To what extent does the spirit of the Antiquum Ministerium document animate the catechist ministry in evangelization in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Tanah Mas Parish?; Has the Antiquum Ministerium document answered the needs of catechist ministry in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Tanah Mas Parish? To discuss these issues, researchers use qualitative research methods with in-depth interview techniques, observation and documentation. The results showed that although in a limited number of catechists, catechist services at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Tanah Mas Parish have been effective, the existence of this Antiquum Ministerium document is a form of support and appreciation for catechists to be involved in serving by having spirituality that is expected especially to answer the needs of catechists and formation for catechists today, especially in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Tanah Mas Parish.

**Keywords:** Antiquum Ministerium, Evangelization, Catechism

## BACKGROUND

The primary task of the Church is to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of all nations, as He commanded in Matthew 28:19-20. This is the desire of Jesus that the Church continues to embrace human life (Wuriningsih & Setiyaningtiyas, 2023). This commandment became the basis of the Church's mission in the work of catecheses. as Pope Paul VI affirmed in article 14 of the document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that proclaiming the Gospel is a distinctive grace and vocation of the Church, which must indeed be fulfilled properly. However, with the ongoing changes in the world, many devotees tend to focus on worldly life, causing a crisis of faith. When people are too dependent on the world, they can doubt God's role. This is a challenge for

the Church to safeguard and develop the faith of the people. Therefore, it is important for Christians in the Catholic Church to strengthen and take good responsibility for their faith.

The Catholic Church has long called on its people to care for the difficulties of others, but it has been less visible in the spiritual development of others. Catholics are expected to grow in faith, hope, and love. The growth of the Christian faith is increasingly taken seriously by the church throughout the world, because being a member of the church and being baptized is not enough. Catechesis becomes important to prepare people in the church community and to be actively involved in church life. Catechesis is considered the most important and special ministry in the Church, and must be done well and systematically so as not to cause problems in other church ministries. Therefore, attention to faith development and people's participation in church life is important to note. The formation of priests and catechists is important for the growth of the Christian faith. Catechists are ministers who cannot be separated from the Church, because this ministry comes from the teachings of Jesus himself. The role of catechists should not be underestimated, for they have a noble and holy calling as part of the lay apostolate in the Church and the world. That is why it is important for catechists to present Christ through participation in the lay apostolic ministry.

In reality, few clerics can evangelize so many people and carry out pastoral care. The Church, then, needs lay involvement in various areas of ministry. As happened in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Tanah Mas Parish through information obtained from the parish secretariat which has only one parish priest while the congregation served almost ±2,000 people. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church Tanah Mas Parish is a parish that has experienced rapid development. In pastoral care, this parish is in dire need of many pastoral personnel engaged in their fields, to help the formation and development of people who are still going on today, especially in the work of evangelization. The role of catechists is indispensable in the development of people's faith. The catechist ministry at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Tanah Mas Parish is running properly, but there is concern that there are fewer catechist ministers. This is due to several things, including many elderly catechists, only a few actively involved catechists and young people are less interested, and there are no graduates from catechist schools. In a life of faith, those who have received baptism are responsible for the development of their faith. Therefore, to find out more and answer these problems, a deepening was carried out to find out about the ministry of catechists in the parish in relation to the content of the Antiquum Ministerium document.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

### **Catechists**

Etymologically, catechist comes from the Greek “katechein” which means echoing church teachings, or communicating, sharing information, or teaching things related to faith (Yunarti, 2016). In his book, Kusumawanta gives an understanding that catechists are all Christian believers, both clergy and laity who are called and sent by God to be a herald of the Word of God (Indra, Adinuhgra, & Hamu, 2022). It is the catechist who introduces the word of God to everyone, in other words understood as the mouthpiece of God or understood as God's mouthpiece. Catechists speak in the name of God and are understood to be observers of the people and sent within a particular area of the Church. A catechist is a Christian believer (both clergy and laity), who has received baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist and belongs to a group of laity who specifically accept and respond to the call and mission from God to become a preacher; who has studied specifically about the Christian life and studied it throughout his life; and received official missions from the Church (*missio canonica*); imbued with a spirit of dedication to proclaiming the gospel and bearing witness to Christ for all men.

The task of a catechist is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and help the faithful know, love, and believe in Him. They must also bear personal witness through daily life that reflects the teachings of Jesus. As heralds and witnesses of the word of God, catechists are responsible for continuing to develop the catholic faith of the faithful. They teach religion, share life experiences, and practice faith in daily life so that people can more easily understand and accept religious teachings. Catechists should also set an example of life and testimony as a form of proclaiming the Word of God. They have an important role in the continuous formation of faith from children to adults in the Catholic faith. If a priest cannot provide enough formation, it is the catechist who is responsible for teaching the faithful.

A catechist must have a spirituality based on their vocation and duty as bearers of the Good News. They must spread the teachings of Jesus so that they are known, loved, and believed by many, by following the example of Jesus' attitudes and actions in daily life. Catechists must also have the spirituality that comes from Jesus Christ as a true teacher, and play a role in Christ's prophetic, priesthood, and royal work in keeping with their status as lay Christians. There are four aspects of spirituality that a catechist should possess. A catechist must have a spirituality based on their vocation and duty as bearers of the Good News. They must spread the teachings of Jesus so that they are known, loved, and believed by many, by following the example of Jesus' attitudes and actions in daily life. Catechists must also have the spirituality that comes from Jesus Christ as a true teacher, and play a role in Christ's

prophetic, priesthood, and royal work in keeping with their status as lay Christians. There are four aspects of spirituality that a catechist should possess. First, they must be open to the word of God and the teachings of the church, living in unity with the triune God. Second, the wholeness of life and the witness of faith through concrete actions and prayer. Third, a strong missionary spirit to preach the gospel without hesitation. Fourth, devotion to Our Lady as a simple catechist example. They must also make the Holy Spirit their soul, understand and live out the teachings of Jesus, and feel His presence through Scripture, prayer, and joy in carrying out the task of proclaiming the Gospel.

### **Evangelization**

Evangelization is the mission of the universal Church passed on from the teachings of Christ to the apostles. Evangelization comes from the Greek word "euangelion" and Latin "evangelium", meaning the good news brought by the messenger. The word evangelization itself comes from ancient history, namely a slave who was chosen to bring glad tidings to the king of victory in war and in return he was given the freedom to be a free man. Similarly, we, as bearers of the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ the Son of God, give glad tidings to mankind. In this respect, evangelization is a task that brings freedom and God's grace to all people. This task must be performed with joy and zeal that brings blessings to all who hear it (KAJ, 2019).

In Lumen Gentium article 35, the proclamation of Christ is regarded as evangelization carried out through actions and words, namely living witness. Through this evangelization the laity fulfilled their prophetic duty. The main goal of evangelization is repentance, which means bringing the individual to reconciliation with God (Ekaprabhana, Sitindjak, & Frans, 2019). The Holy Father Paul VI in the document *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in the second chapter explains the meaning and intent of "evangelization" as a task of mission as a whole, in various ways of formulating it. Evangelization is defined as bringing the Good News to all mankind with the intention of transforming them through the influence of the Gospel and making them live anew in Christ (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* article 18). In addition, evangelization can also be interpreted as the clear and overt proclamation of the Lord Jesus (Tedy, Firmanto, & Aluwsia, 2022). Now, the meaning of evangelization has expanded to a wider extent, not only by preaching the good news to those who do not know Christ, but also renewing people's lives to the core of their lives. Thus, evangelization is relevant to all levels of the church, regardless of whether they already know the good news or are still living in old habits.

All the faithful have a responsibility to spread the gospel through evangelization, which includes teaching, celebrating faith, bearing witness, loving, working, serving, and more. It is

an essential part of the identity of a disciple of Christ and a fundamental commitment of the Church. Evangelization aims to strengthen faith in Christ and is a gift of the Church's special vocation. Evangelization is the primary task to be carried out by all members of the Church, both hierarchical and laity, because the Church is intrinsically missionary. In modern times, evangelization is an urgent necessity by which the Church is sent to bring the Good News to all people through the Gospel.

Today's method of proclaiming the Gospel must be adapted to the situation in order to reach modern man. Some effective methods include living witness, liturgy of the word, catechesis through mass media, personal contact, sacraments, and popular piety. The Church seeks to lead people to repentance through evangelization, which means that preaching only succeeds if it is listened to, accepted, and digested properly. The new evangelization is the Church's response to an age that has distanced people from their identity and weakened the role of faith in their lives. Central to the new evangelization is the creative effort of the Church as heir to tradition to respond to the rejection of God. The Church is committed to giving direction to individuals and groups in seeking a better future. The challenge is to find new and credible ways to convey the gospel with fresh appeal and greater influence.

### **Antiquum Ministerium**

Antiquum Ministerium, is a document published in the form of motu proprio by Pope Francis on May 10, 2021. The Antiquum Ministerium is an effort to evaluate and re-institutionalize ministers who had existed in the early Church. In the context of the directive of 1 Peter 3:15, the Antiquum Ministerium is the Pope's proactive and innovative response to reform according to the mandate of the Second Vatican Council. It embodies the spirit of the Antiquum Ministerium by recognizing the importance of catechesis in the life of the Church while adapting its methods and approaches to meet the demands of today's rapidly changing society. This document is titled motu proprio, meaning that it is not the result of the office of the Pontifical Department, the synod of bishops or the results of the council but of the Pope's own intentions. The motu proprio implies a recognition that there has been marginalization and reductionist attitudes towards catechesis and catechists in the Church (Firmanto, 2023).

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research method used in this writing is a qualitative approach method, which involves the analysis and interpretation of texts and interview results to find the meaning of the observed phenomena (Sugiyono, 2017). In this study, the instruments used include observation, interview guidelines, and documentation to collect data. To complement the

instruments, field notes are also created to record what was heard, seen, experienced, and thought during data collection.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on data from interviews with 10 informants, it was stated that the catechist ministry at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Tanah Mas Parish, had run well and was quite effective. This has been started since 2018 when there was a teaching and inauguration of catechists by Father Prasetyo while still serving as Head Pastor at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Tanah Mas Parish. With a positive response, it was said that catechists in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus already have sufficient knowledge, understand some of the points of faith of the Catholic Church and are responsible in carrying out their services such as punctual, disciplined, committed, highly dedicated, willing to give time and help each other. Based on observations made, researchers found the same result, namely the catechist ministry at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Tanah Mas Parish was quite effective. This is evidenced by the existence of catechesis activities in various fields of activity every week. Services for catechumens are divided into sections, such as lessons for adult baptism are held every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, then for first communion and confirmation or confirmation sacraments are held on Sunday mornings. So far, the service has been running smoothly. In the activities held, catechists are quite actively involved and willing wholeheartedly to take the time to teach and commit to their ministry duties.

Furthermore, awareness of lay involvement is very important and indispensable in ministry and it is reaffirmed that when baptized the Catholic believer has received the mission duty. Because of this awareness of involvement, catechists actively give themselves fully in service. Catechists in Tanah Mas Parish have been actively involved, willing to serve with sincerity because of the spirit of carrying out their missionary duties. It is said that catechists actually need to play an active role, not only in teaching but also in service in the environment. Catechists are required to always be ready, brave and able to spend time willingly.

Based on the data from interviews and observations that have been conducted, the Antiquum Ministerium document has answered the needs of catechist services in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church Tanah Mas Parish that it is a serious concern in forming lay catechists to be involved. Special formation for catechists is very necessary and important, as self-provision and refreshment of the knowledge of faith that must be possessed before teaching catechumens.

So far, catechists have participated in faith formations held especially following courses, faith deepening such as catholicity activities, KEP or the like. Catholicity activities are carried out every month on the second Monday of the week, then KEP activities are carried out in June-September. There is also Angkrimo: Angkringan with Romo, which is a casual question and answer activity with the priest that makes the closeness between the people and the priest, this activity is held every month. This is a good start in realizing the mission of the church. Furthermore, regarding the institutionalization of catechists, this catechist service does not need to be and does not have to be institutionalized, it just needs to be addressed so that it can run well and there are those who coordinate because the catechist service has been included in the composition of the parish pastoral council, but there is nothing wrong because it can provide motivation for catechists in carrying out their ministry.

In ministry, every challenge is there. The challenges faced come from the catechists and catechumens themselves. From the catechist person is the schedule of catechization carried out and mastery of the material that must be continuously developed and the commitment to always faithfully serve. From catechumens to lack of commitment awareness in making time to follow learning. The hope is that catechists can be open to be able to provide space, especially for young people to be involved, and can become shepherds and role models who can have a positive impact, especially for the growth of people's faith.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of research, the ministry of catechists in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is very good, especially in teaching catechumens. They have sufficient knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic faith and carry out their ministry with full responsibility and commitment. They also help each other and make time for service. Catechists perform their duties with a spirit of service and recognize God's call to participate in the work of salvation. This document of the Antiquum Ministerium became a source of encouragement and support for catechists. Based on the results of research, the ministry of catechists in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is very good, especially in teaching catechumens. They have sufficient knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic faith and carry out their ministry with full responsibility and commitment. They also help each other and make time for service. Catechists perform their duties with a spirit of service and recognize God's call to participate in the work of salvation. This document of the Antiquum Ministerium became a source of encouragement and support for catechists. Although there is no catechist ministry in the parish yet, formation for catechists remains a top priority. This document is

important as a form of appreciation and support in answering the needs of catechists today, because it supports lay involvement in catechist services as a basis for the formation of effective services. Therefore, it is important for parishes to pay attention to building catechist services, continue to reform, and provide full support to the laity. Parishes need to be open to the times and make room for youth involvement in ministry. The hope is that parishes can prepare professional catechists and form institutions to nurture them. Then for catechists, it is advisable not only to provide teaching but also to continue learning, increase the knowledge of faith, set an example in spirituality, and keep up with the times in catechist service. And last but not least, it is for the laity because it is important to be aware of the preaching duty received from baptism, because it is necessary to be actively involved in the ministry for the growth and development of the church's faith.

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