

WOMEN AND ME CAPABLE OF THE GOSPEL



Dear catechists,
priests and deacons,
consecrated men and women to the Lord,
dear sisters and brothers in faith,

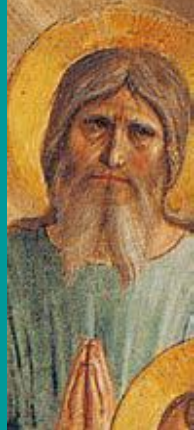
I would like to begin this letter with an image that I collected during my recent missionary trip to Malawi. I went to a village where a group of volunteers from Bergamo has built a church dedicated to Pope John XXIII.

At the end of the meeting with the community, I left a relic of the Holy Father as a gift. A man, on behalf of all, thanked me with deep emotion. Suddenly he turned to the Community with these words: *«Today we have received a great gift which we will place in the altar of our church. But this great gift will remain empty if we, who make up this community, do not become saints, as Pope John became»*.

I will not forget this teaching, I will not forget the clear and essential faith that this man conveyed to his community and to all of us; I will not forget his bare feet, his gnarled hands, his tattered clothes. At that moment the figure of an adult believer dazzled my eyes, a person who was thankful, happy, conscious, humble but not submissive, next to the bishop and in front of the community to bear witness to his faith. He was a farmer, a catechist of the Community. I bear in my heart a clear sense of the meaning of the dignity of a man who has made Faith not as a garment to show off, but as the living source of his existence.

PART ONE

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE CATHECHISTS



This image together with that of Jesus, Incomparable Master of a new humanity, on which we will dwell later, introduces in the most effective manner the considerations that I wish to share with you in the beginning of this pastoral year. They deal with reflections that arose from the beautiful experience of the encounter with the catechists of our Diocese, repeated in twenty-eight vicariates into which it was articulated. A challenging and well prepared meeting: a meeting in which I was able to recognize the history of the faith narrated by our communities, and particularly by those who are involved as catechists.

THE GRATITUDE

The first thought is therefore one of gratitude to all of you dear catechists, especially the female catechists. Pope Francis, in the recent trip to Brazil has re-proposed the need for a renewed consideration of women in the Church. The availability of many of you at the service of announcing and deepening the faith in Jesus, aimed primarily at children, cannot be underestimated: it is

certainly an act of love and inner awareness of the goodness of faith, that deserves recognition on the part of the whole community and the commitment to accept availability and to nurture it in an appropriate manner.

My thanks to you, to the numerous priests who accompanied you to the meeting and who are responsible for catechesis in the Parishes, thanks to every Community that expresses the awareness of the need of the transmission and nourishment of the faith through the organization of catechesis for every age and condition. Thanks to every family that participates in this movement of Faith. Thanks to the Lord, the living Master, Who communicates the vitality of His Gospel, through the work of the Holy Spirit who he continually gives to us. Allow me to add my special gratitude to the Director of the Diocesan Catechetical Office, who oversaw the vicariate meetings, contributing to their success.

THE MEMORY OF THE ENCOUNTER

The beginning of this letter is an opportunity to return briefly to the meaning and the content of those encounters. It was an accurate presentation of the situation of catechesis in our Parishes. The context was characterized by prayer, conviviality, and dialogue which were appreciated by all the participants. The attendance was remarkable and in some Vicariates it reached almost all of those who carry out this mission.

It should be emphasized that the majority of those present were catechists of children and adolescents following the itinerary of Christian initiation: namely, that journey of grace and faith which, from Baptism, received as infants, leads to the full introduction to Christian life, marked by the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation and by the full participation in the Eucharist, starting from the Mass of the First Communion.

The testimonies of the catechists, dedicated to adolescents, youth and adults; those engaged in the preparation of the parents for the Baptism of their children; those who accompany the fathers and the mothers of the children during the period of initiation; the married couples dedicated to the itineraries for engaged couples, were also very significant. Compared to the number of the catechists of the adolescents, the number involved with engaged couples though numerically reduced, is definitely a qualified minority.

THE GROUP PICTURE OF THE CATECHISTS

I wish to entrust this finding to you as an image that is an addition to those with which I have introduced myself: a kind of "*group picture*" that reveals a story through the people that appear to you. It is a vast and variously motivated story of the wide consensus regarding the so-called *catechism*, still perceived as a preparation for receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation, with greater involvement of families in respect to the past. The persons appearing in the group

picture are precisely the children, the catechists, priests and families. The Community remains in the background, yet reassured by the comforting numbers and the same Oratory seems simply the container necessary for carrying out *catechism*.

A JOYFUL STORY

WITH SOME ANXIETY

AND SOME QUESTIONS

It is a joyful story, with chapters of great intensity, capable of arousing emotion and hope, but also marked by anxieties and disappointments. When I browse through the parish Bulletins, I pause satisfied at the First Communion and Confirmation photos : I gather the diversity of poses and glances of the little children and the older ones; the smile of the catechists and the priests, and at times, I am there also.. I think of the Grace, the Spirit, the smile of God, the effort of those who announce the Gospel to them and of the hope of those who love them. It is a reassuring finding that renews and nourishes feelings of joy and gratitude, but at the same time it cannot erase the awareness of the decrease of the request of the sacraments for the children on the part of their parents, of the impressive diversification of the motivations of this request and of the family situations from which it stems: of the reduced and discontinuous participation in the Eucharist, of the drifting away of many after the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In the same group picture, I can see the faces of those who are engaged in catechesis with adolescents, young people, adults and the elderly. They are beautiful, but very few. Why? Perhaps they are few who avail of this service; they are few those available and prepared to carry it out; there are few proposals for teens, youth, adults; they are very few, because the priest is sufficient, in fact only he can and should carry out this service; they are few because the homily or sermon at Mass is sufficient for one who is no longer a child; they are few because the catechism of children is enough for a lifetime. Jesus also said of the rest: «*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few ...*» (Lk 10,2). There are few because the faith is something for a few, or is it because it is not an important thing?





PART TWO

FAITH IN GOD FOR THE LIFE OF MEN

Once I rebelled against the question: «*What do I gain from believing in God?*». Then I noticed that this question is also in the Gospel and that Jesus took it seriously. Why should men and women, young adults and the elderly of this time believe in God? And how is it possible that they believe? And believing in God, what does it change in life? Are the changes for the better? The answer to these questions cannot be offered only by the Pope, the bishops, the priests or the experts, but by a community of believers who day after day shape the lives of each and every one with the leaven of the Gospel, for a bread that gives proper life starting from those who are struggling to live.

WOMEN AND MEN, CAPABLE OF THE GOSPEL

The need emerges of a Gospel perceived as significant for the entire existence and not only as an ornament of some kind or as last resort of the limits of unavoidable experience. Faith in the Risen Lord, which transcends the boundaries of death, is proposed as decisive for life and forever. What emerges is the need for a faith that is

embodied in a humanity in its entirety: of men, of women believers and for this reason communicators of faith. It is an evangelical humanity, which does not qualify itself with an abstract moral perfection or with a religious formalism as an end in itself but with an embodied faith capable of transforming life and death, starting from the relationship with Jesus Christ, the Living. The group picture tells a beautiful story and reveals the need for youth and adults who provide the testimony of the decisive consistency of the Gospel: of credible Christians because they are believers, credible because they are humans.

ANOTHER WORLD

How do we respond to this need? How have we responded till yesterday? I do not intend to do an accurate analysis, but let us direct our gaze to another image: that of a Christian world or, if you wish, an apparently Christian one. A world where time and life were marked by the bell tower, where the village and the parish were identified, in which values and faith were transmitted by maternal milk, in which the consensus of what is essential for living worthily life was vast and almost inevitable. One became a Christian by living in a world like that. This was not right for everyone, but everyone lived in a world such as this. At times it seemed that such would change: revolutions or wars, discoveries and breakthroughs, men and new ideas, seemed to undermine this world, but in reality without succeeding. Today this world is no more. You still hear about the Catholic world, but in reality no one knows

what it is any longer. We live in another world, although some delude themselves that it is not so by attempting to reconstruct the world. What has happened, when did it happen, why did it happen? As I have just said, I do not intend to go in depth with these questions. although I consider relevant, instead I want to share a starting point, often taken for granted, but seemingly not taken seriously enough to determine choices and new ways of becoming and being a Christian, in a world that is no longer.

TO BECOME AN ADULT

Therefore, being men and being Christians seemed to coincide: today it no longer happens this way. We become adults abandoning the faith, we become adults without the need of faith, we become adults preserving the faith in its traditional and social aspects, one becomes an adult making the Faith a completely individual and private choice. On the stairs of what matters in life, Faith in God does not seem to occupy the first positions. Yet adult believers, Christian adults exist: why and how are they? How did they become so? What relationship exists between their faith and their adult life?

The answers are varied and many, but rarely nothing has anything to do in a decisive manner, with a proposal for a permanent formation, catechesis, of an in-depth study of the Scriptures, of reflections on faith.

TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Each year, I meet young people and adults seeking to become Christians, to receive Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. They are following a preparatory itinerary, called Catechumenate. During our meeting, I ask them why they have chosen to become Christians, and the most frequent response indicates as the main reason, the encounter with one or more Christians. The knowledge and understanding of the faith comes later. The possibility that this passage does not remain isolated is greater when the *New Christian* can live as a member of a parish community.

Every Sunday in our churches, people of different ages, socio-cultural preparation gather together: these include young people and adults (and probably many of those who are reading this letter). It appears to be decisive that they are not forced by the social context nor by the religious precept. Why are they there? What are the consequences for their lives? In spite of different characteristics, the constant participation in this meeting does not only nourish an understandable meaning of belonging, but also the need for an existential consistency with the words heard and gestures carried out.

Every day, women and men, open their eyes, get out of bed and begin to work. Some believe in God, others do not, others are completely indifferent: what changes in their day and in their work? What difference does faith make? The contribution of the Christian faith to a more

human life is a decisive criterion for judgment in the sensitivity and even the consciousness of a man and a woman of our time. The question remains open whether this contribution is essential, decisive or simply appreciated and desired. In light of these simple considerations, it seems clear to me that the relationship between faith in God and the life of today's man, the meaning and value of this relationship, are the *new world* in which one becomes and grows as Christian.



PART THREE

THE BREAD FOR LIFE AND FAITH



My Parrish priest used to say that for a *normal* Christian two things are necessary: the Sunday Eucharist and weekly catechesis. Everything else is extra. The risk we encounter in our communities is to live the extra as more than necessary.

THE RAISON FOR THIS LETTER

The purpose of this letter is not to increase the number of Christian adults who attend catechesis, but that of awakening and renewing the awareness that faith in Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen, challenges, enlightens and transforms the life of man, of every man, of all mankind to a definitely better life. This knowledge is transmitted in a particularly *organized* way to infants and children, but with difficulties in finding meaningful and effective ways to reach the youth and adults. The initiatives in this direction are many and varied, but the results seem not very representative. It is not a matter of quantity, but of distance: the distance between the faith in Jesus Christ and daily life in its many aspects: the perception of self,

the relationships, the human activity, the knowledge, the limit, the good and the evil...

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

The *Christian doctrine* of the past, normally held on a Sunday afternoon by the parish priest, did not reach all Christians from the quantitative point of view, perhaps it reached less than those who today are involved with the proposals of a parish. Its effectiveness was not determined by the number of people involved or by the skill of the parish priest (although that made a difference), but by the context in which it was proposed: a context in which all spoke to everyone of that faith that only some delving into the *doctrine* taught by their parish priest. Today the *doctrine* has not disappeared nor has the parish priest: we were saying that the proposals have even multiplied. There are many catechisms and a wide range of means and methods for adults too. What has changed dramatically, with relevant consequences is the context, as we mentioned earlier. The context does not speak of the faith in Jesus Christ any longer, nor does it talk about it in a profoundly different way as in the past so that one goes away quickly.

The elderly persons are significant witnesses of this: on one hand, they reminisce and try to maintain the forms of the faith of their youth and maturity, on the other they have quickly assimilated a culture that no longer makes faith as its inspiring source.

In this respect, the re-proposition of traditional forms, which maintains the ability of conserving and transmitting the faith, is not sufficient to meet the need for a significant relationship between faith and life, and at times is exposed to the risk of emphasizing greatly the distance or of nurturing a distorted faith as regards the Gospel.

TAKING LIFE SERIOUSLY

An observation to be taken very serious is this: just because life seems to be the crucial place of the proposal of the faith, we must not imagine that an adult may grow in faith simply through a proposal that is a well-organized transmission of contents, of knowledge, of ideas: a well-structured reorganization of catechesis of adults certainly has its value, but it requires a consideration of life in its significance, uniqueness and value, beauty and drama, possibilities and limits, which is expressed by a very concrete and perceptible manner by those who say they are Christians and by the Christian community as a whole. The life of the people, of every single person, is a serious place for a non-doctrinal (although necessary) but existential catechesis. The life told, but above all lived is this place.

Proposing places where telling and sharing everyday life and its more significant moments is possible, is the perspective that seems to me to correspond to the needs that we have identified. It is in this perspective that we

can re-read and renew, if necessary, our proposals of the catechesis of the adults.

It is also in this perspective that we should imagine the figure of the catechist of adults: not only but above all an expert, and not only a witness, but an adult believer who shares with others the love for life inflaming it with the message and grace of the Gospel.

THE WONDERFUL FRESCO

I would like, at this point, to focus on the image that accompanies the letter. It is the representation of the Sermon on the Mount, painted by Blessed Angelico in the Convent of St. Mark in Florence. The scene represents with immediate effect the figure of Master Jesus, sitting higher up, he draws on to himself His disciples, listening to him, arranged in a circle in front of him. The eyes, the hands and the position of their bodies communicate the total concentration on the teaching and the person of the Master. Without being disrespectful, this image represents the desire of every catechist or preacher of the Word of God and if we wish, of every teacher, educator or parent.

But there is one detail that transforms this representation and makes it unique: they are the golden halos that surround the head of eleven of the listeners, while it remains in the shadow that of one who is listening as well, though painted almost entirely hidden. The halo represents holiness that is nourished by listening to Christ the Teacher: this is the new life that Jesus inaugurates

and teaches starting from the large fresco of the Beatitudes and then for all the chapters of the Sermon on the Mount, the importance of which goes beyond the limits of faith itself. But the same halo also represents and even more so, the relationship which has already been established between Jesus and his apostles and between them and Jesus, a relationship that precedes the teaching itself; a relationship that is the fruit of a decisive encounter not simply with a Master, but more greatly with a man acknowledged as God, the Son of God. The darkness of the halo of Judas, does not anticipate his betrayal, it does not say of an unavailability to listening, but reveals the absence of this decisive and existential relationship with the Master, who is also the Lord.

THE FAITH AND THE ENCOUNTER

It is true that faith is a journey, always a journey; faith is something alive, never definitively accomplished or possessed; faith is a story of purification through the crucible of life, of darkness, of evil and of pain, of merciful Grace, but firstly, it is a cultivated intuition, unavoidable anxiety, passionate pursuit and finally discovery, wonder, awe, gift and encounter. Faith is a relationship with Him.

We could simply say that the existence of the Christian community that comes forth from the encounter with Him, through the work of the Spirit, and with a wealth of experience, words, signs, introduces, promotes, and makes the encounter with Him recognizable and possible

to others, believed as the Master, the Expected One, the Son of God.

Catechesis is an expression of this conviction and condition to nourish it: it is certainly knowledge, but the knowledge that is born out of love for Him and that nurtures this love. It is a progressive awareness of the existential wealth, of the transformation of life and of history, of the liberation and hope that flows from Him.

A Christian Community cannot do without the catechesis directed to the adults who compose it: without this its existence as a Christian community is not possible. But we must recognize that many people who participate in the life of the community, many who are on the threshold of the Community itself, many who were baptized as babies, should be placed in a position of being able to experiment, to be able to renew this decisive encounter with Jesus, the Living.

Cardinal Martini wrote in 1984: «This is the fundamental condition of talking about catechesis of the adults: catechesis supposes that there has been an encounter between Jesus and freedom of man. If the initial event of proclaiming the Gospel, the provocation and assent of freedom is missing, then catechesis remains without any linking point of attachment. It becomes reflection and transmission of an organic matter of which the original change has not been received. It transforms itself therefore into mastering, indoctrination, transmission of habits and behaviors of Christian life without any vital reference to the fact that they are founded and justified as Christian behavior».

PART FOUR SOME PERSPECTIVES



The Year of Faith, which is ending, has been and still is a suitable opportunity for a consideration of this kind. In these months, in different ways, every Christian community and every Christian were invited to a reconsideration of the Church's faith and of one's own faith. In particular, we were invited to consider the central point of our faith represented by Jesus, Crucified and Risen, by the revelation of the countenance of God his Father and ours, by the communication of the new life in the Holy Spirit. «*This is our faith, this is the faith of the Church ...*». An adult Christian should be able to closely agree with this and with what is involved in existential terms, so as to be able to say: «*... and we are proud to profess it ...*».

THE SECOND PROCLAMATION

This fundamental requirement introduces the reflection on the so-called “*second proclamation*”: it is a matter of a renewed, concise and decisive proposal for who has already received the “*first proclamation*” of the Gospel

and of the faith, has already become a Christian, already knows and practices concrete aspects of Christian life: I am thinking, for example, of those who have celebrated and are celebrating the sacraments such as Matrimony, Baptism of children, occasional Sunday Eucharist, of those who attend the funerals of relatives and acquaintances, of those who frequent parochial environments such as the oratory, of those who participate in initiatives of the parish, of the people involved in forms of volunteering, of those who inspire their behavior and the education of their children and grandchildren with values that are drawn from the Gospel...

These precise experiences can become the *places* and the opportunities of the *second proclamation*: a re-proposition of the heart of the Christian faith in relation to aspects and moments of life considered particularly significant. It is obvious that if on one part these occasions are not *exploited*, using the experiences of life in an *instrumental* manner, on the other hand it is unthinkable to whip up a proposal, that requires a passionate and careful preparation both for what regards the contents, as well as what regards the ways and persons who propose them.

LAY BELIEVERS FOR ADULT BELIEVERS

Once again it represents the need for adults who converse with adults on the level of faith. This is not a matter of replacing the figure of the priest, but of promoting amongst the laity the ability to render the reason for their

faith and hope to other lay people. The richness of figures of adult believers, representing different living conditions, just as the priest, the nun, the lay man or woman, engaged couples or married couples, the witnesses of different embodiments of the faith, is a possibility offered in significant manner, especially when people perceive not only the diversity of the figures, but also the intimate unity that binds one with the others.

This intimate unity requires a shared vision of faith, the way of being a Christian community, how to embody the faith and to offer it to others. In this perspective, the role of the priest is decisive: it means a responsibility that does not coincide with the power to form the community in his own image and likeness, but to be in the service of communion with the Church as a whole and with all those who make up the Community to which one was sent.

THE CATECHUMENAL DIMENSION

The idea that these processes occur simply through a better organization of the transmission and communication of the faith would be distorting, as one could once again risk transforming Faith itself into knowledge, an idea, into a way of seeing life, even into a kind of pre-established pattern, an ideology. A perspective of this kind tends to focus on the organization, programs and tools. In the perspective we have evoked which do not exclude these dimensions, on the contrary other elements emerge as decisive: testimonies, experience, relationships. The encounter

with the person of Jesus, the Living comes from listening to His Word, and it is nourished by the thorough examination of its implications, but together it is configured in a complete manner, within a context in which the Sacred Signs that the Church carries out and Charity that it exercises are equally necessary and decisive.

In this sense we can and must speak of the Catechumenal dimension of Christian formation, that is to say, an integrated proposal in which not only knowledge but also experience becomes constitutive. Not only catechesis, but also a renewed proclamation of the Gospel would remain sterile, if not intertwined with the ability to grasp and live the scope of the Sacred Signs and of the new Commandment of Charity.

THE CATHOLIC ACTION

THE HISTORY

In this context, I do not feel as an imposition, to propose a reflection on the role of Catholic Action in our diocese. If the observations we are making on the adult believer have their plausibility, then a thoughtful consideration of Catholic Action is not useless. We must recognize that the Council which constituted a decisive step regarding the role of the laity in the Church, by extending to all lay Christians those prerogatives which were previously attributed to those who belonged to Catholic Action. If it

is true that precisely after the Council new lay movements were born, it is equally true that these new realities are characterized by and express their vitality around charismatic figures and particular charismas. The Catholic Action, which for its laws and aims embraces the entire mission of the Church, suffers in some way by the spread of the same task and, therefore, the same mission to the entire community. In addition, the emergence of the subjectivity of the local Church and the articulation of its pastoral organization (I am thinking of the formation of most of the pastoral offices of the curia, of the different pastoral councils, diocesan commissions, of the organization of the training of catechists, liturgical animators, workers of charity ...) actually replaces many of the initiatives which until then Catholic Action was seen as the protagonist. Even in parishes, thus reorganized, Catholic Action was considered as an alternative to the parish proposals, an addition which threatens to impoverish the energies of the parish or to shatter it unnecessarily. If we are to add to this the goal of the so-called Catholic world, the relationship with a party of reference, the articulated relationship with the professional world, associative modalities, the unity between faith and prevailing social behavior, we will understand that the role of Catholic Action, in strongly organized Dioceses like ours, has been re-dimensioned. Many priests have consolidated this step and many people, who have not known the Association, are not interested in knowing and proposing it.

But as we know things change: it is not a matter of proposing forms related to past seasons, but one of meeting the needs that our time imposes on a Christian community that does not cultivate ambitions for power, but does not give up the task of growing in faith, faith which becomes a principle of the transformation of man and of history. In the context of the reflections we are making on the adult believer some needs that seem inescapable are revealed: the need to overcome the resignation to the fragmentation of the proposal for Christian formation; the need to overcome the risk of a Christian community that is essentially worried about itself and of self-preservation; the need to definitely overcome a form of neo-clericalism that sees priests at the centre of everything and lay persons as aspiring to appropriate some power. To these are added other needs of no less importance: the need to foster a stronger lay conscience, the possibility to adopt in the community forms of real responsibility like those power of an association; the need for a renewed understanding of faith capable of dialogue and not only of imposing oneself as an alternative to the contemporary world.

These are the reasons that today push me to propose the presence of Catholic Action into our diocesan reality, starting from the parish communities and from the new forms of pastoral units. Catholic Action, which in these times cannot avail of a lot of energy, is called firstly to reflect on these considerations and to elaborate them into a convincing proposal for our parish communities; the latter, starting from the priests together with the organisms of communion and trainers will assess with renewed discernment the considerations, the needs and the reasons I have outlined.



PART FIVE

GUIDELINES FOR THE JOURNEY

I hope that through the passages in this letter, catechists, priests, families and communities, we have perceived that the communication of faith to the younger generation and to the men and women of our time will take place starting from the conviction lived by a community of credible adult believers. In this sense, I wished to indicate the ideal and practical priority of catechesis of the adults.

In the light of this priority, I am proposing some indications for the journey in our Diocese, Vicariates, Parishes and pastoral units in the coming years.

PASTORAL YEAR 2013-2014

WORKING ON WHAT IS EXISTING

- Awareness on the part of the whole community, beginning with the pastoral councils, the catechists, all the pastoral workers and all leaders of parish activities, voluntary groups, of the reasons that support the proposed proclamation of the faith and of Christian formation for the adults.

- Knowledge on the part of all the above persons of the parish, diocesan and vicariate initiatives existing in this area.
- Identification of the existing forms of a *second proclamation* and their recipients, and more specifically of catechesis of adults, in the possible limit.
- Evaluation, with the help of diocesan subsidies, of the existing initiatives and identification of the most important needs to indicate to the Diocesan Catechetical Office.
- Renewed and shared attention in the preparation, proposal and implementation of the initiatives of proclamation, catechesis and formation of adults.
- Identification, shared with the Parish Council, of persons to whom to propose the service of catechesis of adults and the necessary preparation.
- Consideration of the diocesan proposal of the Biblical-Catechetical aid «*Prisoners of Hope*» on the figure of the adult believer.
- Evaluation of the formative proposal of Catholic Action and of the reasons that support it, shared with the Pastoral Council and accompanied by the diocesan authorities.
- Respectful and convinced proposal of the Christian faith to those who are not baptized: foreigners and Italians. Cordial and responsible reception of the request of foreign and Italian adults to become Christians.

Introduction of adults to the catechumenate according to the diocesan guidelines.

- Recognition of the adult believer in the different areas, initiatives, celebrations, encounters, with particular attention to family life, illness, old age, invisible suffering, the world of work, culture, communication, school, education, social life and politics.
- Participation at the diocesan meeting of catechists, where to share, deepen and celebrate with the Bishop the reasons for the choice of catechesis of adults.

PASTORAL YEAR 2014 -2015

REVIVING THE COMMITMENT

- Diocesan proposals of models for the proclamation and catechesis of the adults.
- Evaluation and selection of the Diocesan proposal, shared with the Pastoral Council.
- Preparation of catechists for adults for the proposed models, taken care and decentralized in the territory by the Office.

PASTORAL YEAR 2015 -2016

RESTARTING IN THE COMMUNITY

- Organic definition of the Parish formative proposal for adults, shared with the Pastoral Council, starting from the new proposals and starting again from what is existing.

CONCLUSION



Dear brothers and sisters,

last year I shared some thoughts on Christian brotherhood with you: I believe that the commitment of our community to live and bear witness to this fundamental condition of our faith should not dwindle. We are walking in the direction of an ever more necessary and widespread collaboration between our Parishes, which without the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of brotherhood, we will not only never reach, but will also betray the characteristic and decisive way of being the Church, starting precisely from our Parishes.

These are the last months of the Year of Faith, which we will conclude with the feast of Christ the King: I was able to appreciate many initiatives to correspond with the intentions that our dear and unforgettable Pope Benedict has attributed to this Year. Also in this case, the concern for our faith and our desire that others rediscover, know

or choose it does not end. The orientation to consider the importance of the figure of the adult believer, seems to confirm this commitment.

Among the gifts of the past pastoral year, I am thinking in particular of the three Beatifications: Fra Bartolomeo Dalmasone from Ponte San Pietro, Don Luca Passi, a diocesan priest of the Apostolic College particularly associated with Calcinate, and Fra Tommaso of Olera, which we will have the joy of celebrating at the Cathedral, for the first time in the history of our Diocese.

It is not only the outward celebrations, not only recognition of the sanctity of men linked with our history, with our land, with our spirituality, but above all a grace and an appeal to live daily the call to holiness made to each of us and to our communities as we were reminded by the rural catechist of African land.

It is precisely on this road that we encounter the extraordinary gift of the announced intention of Pope Francis to proclaim Pope John a Saint with an exceptional procedure. We have lived the fiftieth year of his death with intensity, we have celebrated the fiftieth year of the opening of the Council wanted by him with particular attention, yearning to renew our adherence to the teachings and perspectives introduced by the Council itself.

During this year we were surprised by the humble and courageous decision of Pope Benedict who gave up the

service as the Successor of Peter and the unexpected election, by the consequences full of hope, of Pope Francis; we experienced immense joy in meeting him in a particular way during the diocesan pilgrimage to the tomb of Peter and Pope John. Now let us set ourselves to live the grace of his canonization, with deep gratitude, with a deep spiritual preparation, with personal and community participation in the diocesan proposals.

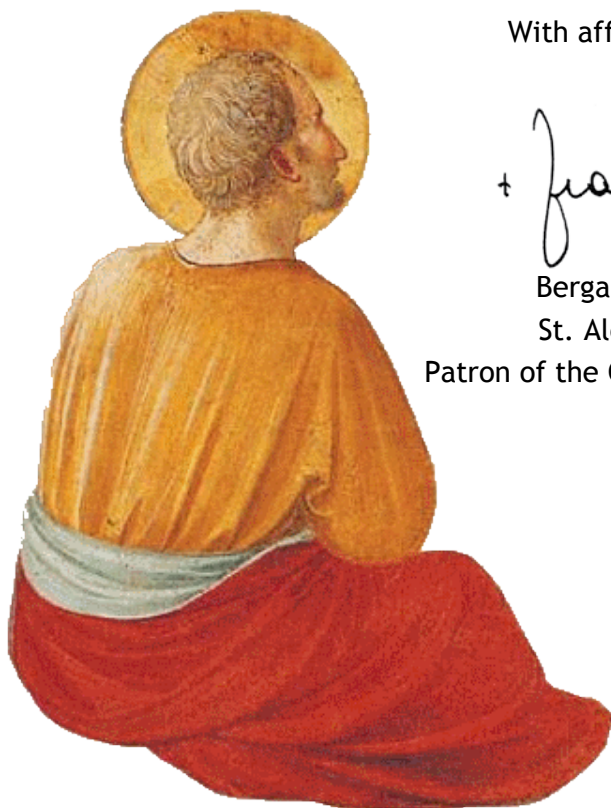
I am precisely to Pope John that I ask to conclude this letter with the words that he himself gives us, encouraging us on the road of faith, lived by women and men who have met Jesus, the Lord, who nourish the relationship with Him by the listening and the deepening of his teaching, which, as adults, testify the beauty of Christian life to the younger ones and to the entire world.

«It is necessary that the effort of each one of you tends to increasingly strengthen one's own faith, for a staunch possession of Catholic doctrine; making one's commitment concrete and professional, in possession of a strong Christian personality always being an example conscientious fulfillment of duty, and generous in the social apostolate and in civic presence» (POPE JOHN XXIII AT THE CATHOLIC TEACHERS, 5 September 1959).

To Mary, Mother of the Church and mother of our faith,
we turn in prayer.

Mother, help our faith!

Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he
may be light for our path. And may this light of faith
always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day
which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord! (LUMEN FIDEI,
60)



With affection and blessings

+ Francesco, vescovo

Bergamo, August 26, 2013

St. Alexander, The Martyr

Patron of the City and the Diocese