

CATECHISM TO THE YOUTH

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Introduction:

I will start my presentation with a brief description of the social, economical and political situation in Indonesia. This is by way of background to our Popular Mission topic: Catechism to the Young. In the following parts, I will share some information about the catechism we use to catechize the young and its contents. At the end, I will give some reflections and some difficulties we face in our Popular Mission.

Part I: Social and ecclesial situation

1. Social, economic, political situation

Our country is a developing country. There is development in almost every aspect of our lives: social, economic, cultural and religious, especially for our brothers and sisters who are Moslems. We are in the stage of transition, going from an agricultural way of life to an industrial way of life. Besides this internal change, we also welcome foreign investors and tourists. So there are many facilities fostering an easy-life style.

There are five formal religions in Indonesia: Islam, the majority, Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, Hinduism and Buddhism. We have a good relationship among the different sects. Nowadays, this peaceful life and valuable relationship is colored by some politically motivated incidents that gave the impression that this relationship is not as good as it really is. The Christian Churches always seem to be the victims. To outward appearances, it seems that the Moslems are dominating our country in all aspects of life: cultural, economic, political and social.

In such a situation, we are facing several problems:

1. A secularization of life: a compartmentalization of mundane life and religious life;
2. Moral principles are neglected, such as the rights of poor people, human rights, etc.
3. A kind of fear among Christians to confess their faith and Christian identity.

2. Ecclesial Phenomenon

The Indonesian Church is growing. Every year we baptized many infants and adults. Since the end of 60s, we have promoted an attitude that describes us as “fully Christian and fully Indonesian.” As an implementation of the spirit of Vatican Council II, our church is trying to involve the lay people to take an active part in all aspects of the church, including catechesis. There has been Christian Leadership training for both political leaders in decision-making-positions, and for lay persons involved in maintaining pastoral works.

Nowadays, there are many social action movements done by the Catholic Church and by individual Christians. Our concern is that the latter merely use social analysis as the basis for their action and not solid theological or scriptural principles.

Part II. Catechism to the youth in our popular mission

The actual giving of the Popular Missions lasts 7 - 10 days. In the mission itself we divide the people into three categories: (1) adults, (2) youths and (3) children. I would like to talk only about the youth.

1. Specific Objectives of the Catechesis to the Youths

Our specific objectives are:

- (1) To motivate and animate our youth to live out their Christianity in every aspect of their lives;
- (2) To give a spiritual and psychological background to help them become mature;
- (3) To give some skills which are important for their growth in psychological and spiritual maturity.

2. Kind and Process of the Catechesis: "Catechesis of the Peoples" (Indonesian: "Katekese Umat.")

We use a catechism called "Catechesis of the Peoples" (*Katekese Umat*). This kind of catechism tries to integrate a theological approach and an anthropological approach. The history of salvation is realized in the concrete lives of people. So human history is understood to be a manifestation of salvation history. This understanding urges all Christians to realize that as human beings we should live lives based on the history of salvation, that is, Revelation, Scriptures. On the other hand, we believe that the Revelation of God really touches the lives of people today.

In this catechesis, themes are taken from the concrete life of the people (anthropologically) and also from the Scriptures (theologically or scripturally). Real life consists of personal experiences, natural events, communal experiences as well as historical experiences. In the Scriptures, we can find many of these themes -- creation, sin, grace, vocation, conversion, etc. (in the Old Testament); charity, mercy, a Loving Father, the Early Community, etc. (in the New Testament).

This catechesis is called "catechesis **of the peoples**" because its source is the people: it is for their sake, for the actualization of their faith, and it is implemented by the people themselves. By using the words "its source is the people," I refer to the actual situation of the people; the phrase "for their sake" refers to the idea that faith goes together with life. It is hoped that by this catechesis the people will actualize their faith in their lives.

This catechesis goes through three steps. First, we start by pointing to an actual life situation (social, political, Ecclesial, cultural, religious, etc.) or a scriptural story as a problem to be discussed by the people. We ask their commentary about this matter. In the second step, we come to the theological approach. Here we can use either one method, by itself, or integrate the two methods together. We may use a scriptural approach to address the problem

or an approach that emphasizes the teaching of the Church. Or, we may use a method that uses both scriptural and Church teaching. We ask them to reflect on what Christ would say if He were alive in our time; we also ask people how they would answer the challenge in the light of what the church teaches. In the third step, we lead them in a reflection/discernment process regarding God's will in this specific situation. It is then recommended that the people make an action plan: "Faith without works is dead!" [James 4]

To say something about "strengthening youth skills:" it is our desire to increase "practical" skills in our youth. In this training we use specific activities for learning critical skills. Sometimes we integrate the teaching of skills with the teaching of values in the variety of activities. For example: we ask a group of six people to conduct a drama about anything taken from their actual experience. By this drama, they practice expressing themselves (*performance*), their way of speaking (*public speaking*), imagining the characteristics of another person. Drama teaches self-confidence, etc.

3. The Content of the Catechesis

We classify the content of our catechesis to the young in three categories:

- (1) Category of knowledge: Vatican Council II about the Vision and Mission of the Church; roles of the laity; Evangelization; Social Teaching of the Church; Local and National Political Situations, etc.
- (2) Category of Spirituality and Personality of a Christian: Spirituality of the laity; The Church in the World; To be Light and Salt of the Word; Who am I?; Building a Healthy Personality ("Seven Habits"), etc.
- (3) Category of Skills: Managerial Principles, Organization, Leadership, Conducting Meetings, Facilitating, Public Speaking, etc.

4. Notes:

The Process of our Popular Mission uses this structure:

1. Pre-Mission: inventory of the situation, preparation
2. Proper Mission : 7 -- 10 days
3. Post-Mission: follow-up:
 - a. giving materials for regular meetings of the people;
 - b. evaluation and workshop/training: once in three months;
 - c. 7 - 10 day missions once a year, for three years.

Part III: reflection

1. The Results I Obtained

As far as we know from our follow-up, we find that some youths have already taken part in the catechesis of the children, involved in the activities of the young. Some of them proposed themselves to be coordinators, with some plans to improve their groups. Some have participated in social organizations.

2. The Problems/Difficulties

Beside those results, we had some difficulties. I would classify the difficulties in three categories, i.e.:

1. Regarding the Team

- we don't have the same vision about the catechesis to the young;
- we need a practical psychological approach and knowledge of group dynamics;
- our numbers are not enough compared to the number of youths, especially if we orient our catechesis to human development;

2. Regarding the Youth

- The interests of youth are really very different from ours; they tend to enjoy life and the things of the world. We find it very hard to motivate them to join in the mission;
- most of the youth go to the city for education or work; we can't get them to stay involved in parish activities.

3. Regarding Resources:

- we have limited resources; but we are trying to work with what we have, and to be creative.

3. The Teaching I draw from the Vincentian Mission:

1. I am convinced that St. Vincent did what the Church called him to do. He wanted to revitalize the Church with the participation of all the members of the Church: priests, sisters, lay people. This is what the Popular Mission is doing.

It is time to awaken the Church by motivating all the members to live Christian lives in their actual situations. I think this is what Our Lord really wants: Everyone who has heard the Good News should spread that joy to the world. This is our Vincentian duty.

2. Economic growth and modern life are affecting our way of life. It seems to me that people are becoming individualistic. At the same time, we realize that nobody can live alone. I see that everyone needs personal contact, personal relationships. Personal and full-hearted dialog and human contact will bring back those away from our Church. Our Popular Mission should actualize personal and full-hearted dialog and human contact as a kind of New Evangelization.