

Catholic Eparchial Secretariat Keren

Pastoral Department

Annual Report 2010

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Introduction

The Pastoral Department coordinates the Eparchy's Pastoral activities. Five years strategic plan was prepared & the operational plan for the year of 2010 has also sorted out. So, according to our operational plan of this year, the pastoral department accomplished the listed activities in the above contents and which its description will be following up. A few projects were written to raise funds and implemented the annual planned activities.

The department implemented the formative activities for the Catechists, and made important visits to parishes and chapels and came to know the situation and the pastoral care needed by the people in the Eparchy. The department also displays significant achievements and identifies constraints that limit the full operation of the pastoral activities.

Plan of action

The **main purposes** of the Pastoral Department are:

- To foster the development of mature and committed catechists
- To strengthen the Christian leadership capacity of Religious congregation sisters, Parish council, Youth leaders and CESK members.
- To strengthen family Catechism in parishes.
- To foster the development of mature youth and enhance their participation in Church's life (Eparchial Youth Association and its specific program)
- To improve communication among Pastoral office, Parish Priests, parish council and Catechists.
- To form and strengthen parish councils, Presbyterial council, Eparchial council and to clarify & improve their role in the whole Eparchy.

Pastoral statistics in the Catholic Eparchy of Keren

The Eparchy of Keren has 39 Parishes and 60 Chapels. The Parishes are guided by 38 Diocesan, Capuchin and Lazarist Parish Priests. And the actual number of working Catechists in the whole Diocese is 74 distributed as it follows:

Eparchial Presbyterate	Parishes	Chapels	No. of Catechists
Keren	17	23	37
Habinmentel	16	14	20
Hagaz	6	24	17
Total	39	60	74

We have sufficient number of Catechists in the Presbyterate of Keren; while in other two Presbyterates, there are substantial villages with Chapels but without catechists.

Evaluation on the Sacraments of Initiation

On the 23rd October 2009, one day workshop and evaluation on the Sacrament of Initiation was held in the Eparchial hall for the Parish Priests, Church leaders, parents and Catechists of the Eparchy of Keren. Around 30 people participated to the evaluation whose aim was to enable parents to have a good awareness and better knowledge about the Sacraments of Initiation: to discuss about their understanding of the Sacraments, to address the role of the faithful within the Church in its practicing, to install the knowledge & understanding of Eastern Rite ...

The workshop & evaluation was held in the morning at the Pastoral office, planned lectures, group work and discussions. The participants demonstrated interest in discussion and deepening the issue. The presence of Parish priests, Church leaders, parents and Catechists was optimal for the discussion and the exchange of their experiences and understandings regarding the Sacraments.

Experience sharing among various Religious Congregation Sisters

On the 12th December 2010, the so-called “**Sisters day**” for the Religious Congregation sisters working in our Eparchy had conducted their annual meeting in Hagaz Agro Technical Institute. It was one day program aiming; at staying together, praying, recreation and enriching each other in all aspects. Unity and sharing experiences was also part of this objective.

Catechetical Training Program

Introductory Trainings for 15 new Catechists

The pastoral office hired, trained and assigned 15 new catechists to their respective villages in the last two months of 2009. They have attended seven days introductory trainings (21-25/11/2009 and 15-16/01/2010) respectively on:-

- *Orientation and self-exploratory questions*
- *The way how to prepare lesson plan*
- *Introduction on how to utilize the booklets published by Sr. Sara Michael*
- *Methodology of Prayer and to Catechism*
- *The Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Communion & the way how to use & give adoration to it*
- *Liturgy and its practicing in general & the liturgy of the Holy Mass in Particular with introducing the parts and names of the vestments*

Objectives:

- Upgrading the knowledge of catechists and assign them as a replacement of the aged ones and those who left job,
- To install awareness and give them responsibility to be aware to their mission,
- To recruit competent Catechists as agents of evangelization.

The same introductory training is also given to another 20 newly hired Catechists on December 2010.

1st Part of 1st year Catechetical Training for the 3rd Group of Catechists

This training focused on 3rd group of Catechists on their 1st year program. 28 participants (9 males and 19 females) have attended the training in February 2010. The training was facilitated by Abba Kibreab Meskel, Abba Semharay Zeraslassie and Abba Dawit Tekle.



The Goals of the Training were:

The subjects (courses) covered:

- The Apostolic Creed
 - Social Teaching of the Church
 - Counseling
 - Human sexuality and moral ethics.
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- Enhancing Catechists' knowledge and understanding the Apostolic Creed, its importance, meaning and role in daily life, prayer and faith.
 - Increasing the knowledge of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church; the Church's stand with regard the human right issue
 - Envisage Church's commitment in social issues for the well being of all people
 - Enhancing their knowledge on the role of counseling.
 - Increasing the knowledge on moral ethics in general, maturity and human sexuality in particular...

2nd Part of 1st year Catechetical Training for the 3rd Group of Catechists

The 2nd Part of the formative catechetical Training for the 3rd group of catechists was also held at the Eparchial hall of Keren from 23-29th August 2010. The course was given by H.E. Abune Kidane Yebio, Abba Uqbagaber Woldeghiorgis, Abba Habteleul Ghebray, Abba Merhawi Habtai, and Abba Dawit Tekle.

The subjects (courses) covered:

1. Old Testament;
 - a. General introduction to the OT
 - b. The main message of Pentateuch books with special reference to Exodus & its relevance for us today
2. The Sacraments of Baptism & Confirmation
3. Liturgy according to the Ge'ez Rite;
 - a. the Term & definition of the word Liturgy
 - b. The scope of Liturgy
 - c. Brief history of Liturgy
 - d. Various seasons in the liturgical year of the church according to Ge'ez rite
 - e. The practical ceremony of the Holy Mass
4. Church History;
 - a. Church Apostolic community in Jerusalem
 - b. The Church's expansion, confrontation with Judaism & Hellenism
 - c. The Roman persecution & Constantine turning point (1st – 3rd century)
5. Identity & Spirituality of Catechists



2nd group graduated Catechists





10 years Catechetical evaluation in the Eparchy of Keren

An evaluation of catechetical service was carried out by an external expert and the objective of the evaluation was:

- To assess the collaboration between Parish Priests, Parish Councils and Catechists
- To Evaluate the remarkable and effective pastoral service which was carried out by the local sisters (Enatietat)
- To Evaluate the accomplished activities and their efficacy
- To Identify the challenges and weak points of the Catechetical section and propose solutions for its betterment



- The current economical crisis of the country aggravates the financial status of the catechists and it also affects the performance and qualification.
- Assessing the collaboration among Parish Priests, Parish council (Shmagele) and Catechists and recalls each ones responsibilities.
- Strengthening the reciprocal communication between the Parish Priests and Shmagele and securing the availability of the teaching facilities etc.

Retreats

Christmas Retreat for all Catechists

The Pastoral Dept. coordinates various retreats for the whole day during Christmas, Easter seasons. The retreat is given both for catechists and CESK staff respectively.



Christmas and Easter Retreat for catechists & CESK members

Workshops

Workshop & Meeting with all the Catechists in their respective Presbyterate

On 08/12/2009, 22/12/2009 and 23/01/2010, workshops and meetings was conducted in the Presbyterate of Habinmentel, Keren and Hagaz. The objective was:

- To familiarize with catechetical booklets prepared by Sr. Sara Michael
- Clarification on the vocation and mission of a Catechist,
- Sharing experiences, communal prayers, meditations and recreation.

Workshops for all the Inter-Religious Sisters in the Eparchy



On 8th March 2010 the Religious Sisters working in our Eparchy conducted different spiritual courses, like

1. **“Lectio Divina” “how to pray the Bible”** by Sr. Lettemihret Tesfay
2. **“Interpersonal communication”** by Br. Ghebreyesus Habte



Workshops for all Catechists 23/3/2010 and 22/5/2010

Last year, the Catholic Church in Eritrea had celebrated the 150 Jubilee for the death of St. Justin De Jacobis. In our Eparchy the Lazarist fathers had organized a workshop with Eparchial catechists. On the 23rd March 2010 a workshop was given in depth on **“History, Life, and Mission of St. Justin De’Jacobis”**.



A booklet entitled “**The Guide for Catechists**” was published at a National level and a workshop was conducted so that catechists may utilize the booklet during their mission. The content of the course was: *Spirituality of the Catechists, Requirements/Criteria for recruiting new candidates, ongoing formation for the Catechists, and the Monthly Bonus of the Catechists.*



The four groups discussing on the group work questions

Formation of Catechist’s Association

All catechists agreed to form a kind of association and after serious discussions had chosen “the Servant of God” Fr. Angelico da None to be their patron. Father Angelico, during his earthly life in Keren, had more emphasis on the formation of catechists as pioneers of biblical testimony. Thus, in order to follow-up his exemplary life, had decided to dedicate “Day of Catechists” on 1st June which recalls the date of his death.

Youth activities

The pastoral Department Youth animation & formation is part of our programs.

The pastoral department has arranged sport competition among four parish youths in Keren. The competition included foot ball, basket ball and volley ball. Moreover, both sexes have participated in the competition. The winners of the competition have received their awards contributed by the pastoral department. The main aim of the competition was to strengthen the youth's unity, develop sense of working together and cohesion with church.



Monitoring

The pastoral department coordinator had visited ten villages. During the visit a trilateral meeting was held, i.e., the Parish priest, the Parish council and the assigned Catechist.



Figure 1 St. Joseph Bogu



Figure 1 St. Michael Zen

The discussion has raised the following issues;

1. The Catechists and their administration

2. How the Pastoral activities in general & the Catechism in particular is going on
3. The monthly Bonus for the Catechists
4. Villages' Contribution to Catechism



Figure 2 Holy Saviour Ghergher



Figure 4 Gheleb

Major Achievements

- Up grading the capacity of the catechesis
- Graduating second round of catechists
- Supportive supervision to the parishes and chapels
- Strengthening partnership with religious congregations
- Organizing and Empowering youths
- Initiation of self sufficiency measures by some parishes

Challenges

- High turnover of catechists
- Low bonuses
- Limited budget
- Transportation problems
- Sense of dependency from parishes side
- Limited youth organization and empowerment.