

Pastoral Department

Report compiled by Abba Dawit Tecle, Dept. Head

1. Introduction

The Pastoral Department coordinates the Eparchy's Pastoral activities. Five years strategic plan was prepared & the operational plan for 2012-2013 has been accomplished. 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.

The department has also implemented the formative activities for the Catechists with all its scarcities. And as a result of this, it displays significant achievements and identifies constraints that limit the full operation of the pastoral activities.

2. Plan of action

The **primary purposes** of the Pastoral Department are always:

- To foster 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 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.

3. Pastoral statistics in the Catholic Eparchy of Keren

The Eparchy of Keren has **41 Parishes** and **52 Chapels**. The Parishes are guided by 39 Diocesan, Capuchin and Lazarist Parish Priests. The number of active Catechists in the Diocese of Keren is 57 distributed as it follows:

Eparchial Presbyterate	Parishes	Chapels	No. of Catechists
Keren	18	19	26
Habinmentel	17	14	21
Hagaz	6	19	10
Total	41	52	57

We have enough Catechists in the Protopresbyterate of Keren. However, the Protopresbyterates of Habinmental and Hagaz have villages and Chapels without catechists.

4. Experience sharing among various religious congregation sisters

On the 17th of December 2012, the members of different Religious congregation sisters have visited Filfil. It was a one day program aiming at; staying together, praying, making recreation and enriching each other in all aspects. It was interesting for them in all dimensions of their Socio-pastoral services. Unity and sharing experiences was also part of this objective. Based on the “Year of Faith”, they planned the other two workshops which they should follow within the year of 2013. According to the plan, the first workshop was organized on 05 January 2013 and the second was on 09 March 2013. According to their feedback and evaluations conducted at the end of the day; the program was very good, constructive and fruitful.

5. Catechetical Training Program

Introductory Trainings for 7 new Catechists

The pastoral office hired, trained and assigned 7 new catechists to their respective villages from October-November of 2012. They have attended their introductory training on the 19th of November 2012.

The training was on:-

- Orientation and self-exploratory questions
- The way how to prepare lesson plan
- Methodology of Prayer.
- Methodology to Catechism

The objectives were; to upgrade their knowledge and assign them as Catechists in replacement of the aged ones and those who left job, to foster in them awareness and give them the responsibility of Catechism, to make them familiar to their mission, to produce competent Catechists at all levels of the society, and to form them as the agents of evangelization. As a feedback they expressed their gratitude of what they have received.

1st year’s Catechetical Training for the 4th Group of Catechists

This training focused on 4th group of Catechists on their 1st year program. 16 participants have attended their first term annual training from 26-28 of February 20113. The training was facilitated by Abba Tesfaselassie (Abadu), Abba Merhawi Habtay and Abba Dawit Tecele.

The Training covered:

- The Apostolic Creed
- Social Teaching of the Church
- Counseling
- Human sexuality and moral ethics.



The second session was from 27-29 August 2013, facilitated by; Abba Habteul Ghebray, Abba Merhawi Habtay, Abba Quazien Hamde, and Abba Dawit Tecle in the Eparchial hall consecutively. The subjects covered were;

1. Church History

- a. Church Apostolic community in Jerusalem
- b. The church's expansion, confrontation with Judaism and Hellenism
- c. The Roman persecution and Constantine turning point (1st-3rd century).

2. Sacraments

- a. Introduction to the Sacraments
- b. The meaning of the word Sacrament
- c. Christ as the Sacrament of the Father
- d. The church as the sacrament of the Risen Lord
- e. Baptism and Confirmation

3. Sacred Liturgy

- a. The term and definition of Liturgy
- b. The scope of liturgy
- c. Brief history of liturgy
- d. Various seasons in the liturgical year of the church according to the Geez rite
- e. The practical ceremony of the Holy Mass

4. Old Testament

- a. General introduction to the Old Testament
- b. The main message of Pentateuch books with special reference to Exodus and its relevance to us today

6. Retreats



Christmas Retreat for all Catechists

On 29th of December 2012, at Mariam Dearit Shrine, 87 Catechists responded to the invitation to take some time to reflect on personal life and their ministry within the Church.

The retreat which run for half a day, began with the Holy Mass in the Shrine by Abba Yonas Ghebremariam. After the Mass, there

was a short break for breakfast. Then, they have done some spiritual songs and readings. After a short reflection, Abba Yonas gave a speech on the meaning of retreat and about the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a time also for the rosary and adoration to the Blessed Sacrament.

Christmas Retreat for CEK & CESK members

On 3 January 2013, at Mariam Deari Shrine, 16 CEK & CESK staff members participated to the retreat in preparation for Christmas. The Retreat began with the Holy Mass in the Shrine



by Abba Dawit Tecele coordinator of the Pastoral office. After the Mass, there was a short break for breakfast. The retreat, that lasted for half a day (i.e. from 6:00



am-1:00 pm) was also guided by Abba Yonas G/Mariam parish priest of St. Michael Zen. In his first reflection, he insistently communicated about the meaning of Retreat, spirituality and prayer in our personal life as well as about its effectiveness in our

daily life and activities. And his second reflection was focused on the forgiveness of God and the waiting of human beings.

Easter Retreat for all the Catechists

On 17 April 2013, at Mariam Dearit Shrine, 60 catechists participated to the retreat in preparation to Easter. The Retreat began with the Holy Mass. It was for half a day (i.e. from 6:00 am-2:00 pm) and was guided by Abune Kidane, Bishop of the Eparchy of Keren, who gave a good reflection on the great feast of Easter and the “Year of Faith”. Participants were happy for the opportunity given to them to stop from daily activities and reflect together on relationships with God and personal life. The retreat concluded by sharing lunch.

Easter Retreat for CEK & CESK members

On 25 April 2013, at the chapel of St. Paul, in the of village Fafida; CEK & CESK staff participated in a half day retreat, run by Bishop Kidane Yebio, in preparation for Easter and the “Year of Faith”. Participants were glad for the opportunity given to them to stop from daily activities and reflect together on relationships with God and personal life especially on their faith. It was ended by communal lunch.

7. Workshops Catechists

In 2013, Catechists attended more workshops than the past few years. The workshops, listed below, were given on the occasion of the “Year of Faith”.

#	Title	Date	Teacher
1.	Lumen Gensium	15 Dec. 2012	Abba Frezghi Bekit
2.	2 nd	13 Feb. 2013	Abba Tewelde Mebrahtu
3.	Faith and Unbelief	16 April 2013	Abba Fesseha Tekie
4.	Faith and Eternal Life	18 June 2013	
6.	Regular Catechism in Pastoral service	16 Sep. 2013	Sr. Kibra Fesseha

Workshops for all Religious Sisters in the Eparchy

Two workshops were given to various religious sisters who are working in the Eparchy. As it was in the “Year of Faith”, both workshops were about faith. The first was 2nd Part of CCC (about Liturgy) and was on 5 January 2013. It was facilitated by Abba Yonas Yohannes. The second was given on 9 February 2013 by Abba Zerahaymanot Sium. It was about “Faith and Eternal Life”. Both workshops were held at the Eparchial hall. Each workshop was held for one day. The Sisters attended the lectures with interest and participated actively by asking questions. Subjects covered, were helpful for the ministry within which they give service and to their personal spirituality & faith.



8. Graduation of 3rd group of Catechists 08/12/2012

The 3rd group of Catechists who have been following their Regular Catechetical formation from 2010-2013 have graduated on the 8th of December 2012. The occasion began with the celebration of the Mass which led by most reverend Abune Kidane Yebio at the Eparchial chapel. After the reading of the Gospel, the Bishop gave a beautiful homily and at the end of the mass he awarded/certified the catechists with certificates and the Holy Bible which is the spiritual weapon as a sign of apostolate. After the Mass communal breakfast was taken place. Then, some of the catechists have said some words of thanks and expressed their happiness and expressed their good will to give service to brothers, the Church and God. The bishop concluded the program with thanksgiving, reminding of their responsibility, prayers and gave them the final pastoral blessings.

These catechists are those who attended the three regular years of catechetical formation. Even though they started in a good number, only 14 catechists are completed their formation (courses). This certifying is held for the third time. And now the 4th group is taking their courses to be certified after 3 years.

9. Annual Feast of the Catechists

This year also the Catechists celebrated their third year annual feast on 8 June 2013 in a very attractive manner and well organized program. They celebrated it under the umbrella of **Abba Fesseha Gebreamlak “The servant of God”** who they have chosen as their patron. The feast began by Holy Mass, celebrated by Reverend Bishop Kidane Yebio and Abba Hailemariam Ghebre at the Eparchial chapel. And it continued with a very short and attractive program till 12:00 pm one of which was a lecture emphasized on the life history of Abba Fesseha Gebreamlak, the spirituality, devotion and prayers which should be done in his name particularly and in the name of all the saints in general. The lecture was given by the Cistercian monk Abba Hailemariam Ghebre. Most Reverend Bishop Kidane, Eparch of the Eparchy of Keren, opened the program with a prayer and a short speech. Then Abba Uqbagaber W/ghiorgis, the secretary general, welcomed the guests and participants and briefly explained the goal and objectives of the feast. Finally, Most Reverend Bishop Kidane Yebio advised the Catechists, and participants and gave his blessings. The program concluded with a shared lunch.



10. Major Achievements

- Up grading the capacity of the catechesis
- Strengthening partnership with religious congregations
- Initiation of self sufficiency measures by some parishes

11. Challenges

- High turnover of catechists
- Low bonuses
- Limited budget
- Lack of dedication on the side of Catechists
- Sense of dependency from parishes side
- Delay to withdraw the monthly bonus of the Catechists
- Limited youth organization and empowerment.