



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

25 years at the service of Catechesis

The Catechetical Office of the Latin Patriarchate celebrates its 25th anniversary and welcomes its new director.



Training sessions are regularly organised in the Diocese of Jerusalem for Christian education teachers.

“The last commandment of Jesus before ascending into heaven referred directly to preaching the Gospel to all nations. [...] Throughout history, the Church has developed many forms in the service of proclaiming the Word of God; one of these is Catechesis,” writes Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa in the foreword of the booklet prepared to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Catechetical Office of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Back in 1994, the office was founded to provide educational, pedagogical, doctrinal and spiritual help in the area of catechesis for the Christian Education teachers not only working in the institutes run by the Latin Patriarchate but in all Christian schools in the region.

Sister Virginie Habib has run this office for the past 15 years until July 2020 and she says: “The programs and activities of the Catechetical Office contribute to the ongoing formation of the Christian Education teachers in an integrated and comprehensive manner, encompassing all aspects required to fulfill their mission in the best possible way.” “The final goal is to educate a new generation fully aware of their Christian faith, able to live what they believe within their church and society,” she adds.

Throughout these years, many activities have been run by the office, starting with the visits to schools. Without doubt spending time to become better acquainted and more familiar with each situation is a priority. Workshops and training courses for teachers have been regularly offered for different topics as well as spiritual retreats and visits to the Holy Sites.

Interreligious dialogue is “an inseparable dimension of our daily life in the Middle East and the practice in this field comes before the theory,” explains sister Virginie.

The topic of dialogue with other faith communities is therefore present in an indirect way while the office has engaged more explicitly in ecumenical issues. "Our catechism books have this approach and we try to deepen it through our discussions on certain topics, like sacraments, saints and the Virgin Mary," affirms Sister Virginie who shares that the office decided to open its doors to all Christian schools to ensure that everybody, not only Catholic teachers, is being offered the possibility of training and formation. "The advantage of this approach is that through these meetings and interactions over these years, the Christian Education teachers became one team: they share the same vision and goals although they are teaching in different schools. Furthermore, the experience of a larger group from different backgrounds is more enriching than a small group from the same context," concludes the former director of the Catechetical Office.

On August 5, 2020, Father Remon Haddad was asked to take over the responsibility of director of the Catechetical Office from "the respected Sister Virginie Habib who has worked with love and devotion in this office for many years," he says. Father Remon is 31 years old, a priest since 2016 and now serving also as an assistant priest in the parish church of Ramallah and assistant to the spiritual leader of the Youth of Jesus' Homeland Palestine. Looking ahead to his new charge in the Catechetical Office, Father Remon intends to continuing to "support teachers with courses and activities and also provide all the modern and electronic educational tools they need." A teacher himself, he comments: "I love teaching Catechism in schools, I have been teaching for six years and I will continue to teach at the Latin Patriarchate school "National College" in Ramallah." He is planning to conduct religious activities for students, such as Bible competitions, and help the students know better their Holy Land through visits to the holy places.

Reflecting about parish life, Father Remon adds: "A book especially written for our diocese Sunday Schools will soon be published, containing biblical texts and attractive lessons in new and fun ways. This book will help the parish leaders to deliver the Word of God to the children."

Father Remon concludes by thanking the Order of the Holy Sepulchre for its constant support and with a request: "I ask you to pray for me so that the Lord would grant me and those who work with me in this ministry success."

(October 2020)