

To All Priests and Pastoral Ministers of the Diocese of Kyoto

Pastoral Policy for the Formation of Lay Catechists in the Diocese of Kyoto (Part II)

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1. Background and Previous Developments

At the Priests and Pastoral Ministers' Gathering in November 2025, I shared the following points regarding the future policy for the formation of "Lay Catechists" in the Diocese of Kyoto (Part I):

- 1) Since 2024, a three-year term system has been introduced for "Lay Catechists," with renewal of ministry every three years.
- 2) From April 2025, the same system has also been applied to "Lay Faithful Accompanying Catechumens."
- 3) In the future, the Diocese intends to unify these two ministries under the single designation of "Lay Catechists" and continue formation accordingly.
- 4) By March 2028, when the current term of "Lay Faithful Accompanying Catechumens" concludes, the Diocese will promote formation opportunities so that those who wish may transition into the ministry of "Lay Catechist."

2. Challenges Identified Through the Questionnaire

- * The Evangelization Planning Office conducted a questionnaire survey among 17 participants during the follow-up meeting for "Lay Catechists" and "Lay Faithful Accompanying Catechumens" held on April 25, 2026.
- * The purpose of this survey was to understand the present situation, challenges, and support needed in parish communities regarding accompaniment of catechumens, baptismal preparation, and the sharing of faith.
- * The survey confirmed that, in many parishes of the Diocese of Kyoto, lay faithful are already actively involved in accompanying catechumens and baptismal candidates, and thus a foundation for the formation of lay catechists already exists.
- * At the same time, it became clear that parish communities as a whole still face challenges in welcoming and supporting catechumens.
- * Therefore, what is needed is not simply the formation of people who "teach doctrine." Rather, there is a need to build structures that can welcome catechumens, listen to them, share faith with them, support their baptismal preparation, and accompany them into the parish community after baptism.
- * In particular, the following four points emerged as important priorities:
 - 1) Clarifying the role of lay catechists throughout the Diocese and fostering a common understanding in each parish.
 - 2) Building teams in which priests and lay faithful can work together in accompaniment ministry.
 - 3) Strengthening the ability of parish communities as a whole to welcome catechumens.
 - 4) Emphasizing follow-up and accompaniment after baptism.

3. Future Directions

- * The Diocese will not immediately begin a large-scale formal training program. Rather, we will first present the Diocese's basic policy, promote opportunities for dialogue and exchange among priests, current ministers, and parish representatives, and then begin with small-scale pilot formation sessions.
- * The formation of lay catechists should not be understood merely as a system of "individual qualification." It should instead be promoted gradually as a diocesan initiative that supports accompaniment of catechumens and the faith formation of the entire parish community.
- * As an initial step, approximately six formation sessions for lay catechists will be offered by March 2028 for those currently serving as "Lay Faithful Accompanying Catechumens" who wish to participate. Further details regarding the content, schedule, and format of these sessions will be announced during June. I sincerely ask for your understanding and cooperation.