

CATECHISTS' JUBILEE

I'm delighted this Diocesan Jubilee for Catechists occurs today, the Memorial of St. Teresa of Avila, the first female Doctor of the Church, an outstanding teacher of the Catholic faith. St. Teresa, born in 1515, as a child wanted to become a nun and, aged 20, she joined Carmel in Avila. Utterly committed to prayer and the spiritual life, she began to find the atmosphere in Carmel too easy-going, with much chit-chat and visitors constantly being entertained. She started working for reform and, in her early 40s, helped by St. John of the Cross, founded the first of several new convents of stricter observance, based on silence and contemplation. These Discalced Carmelites were in time formally recognised by Rome as an alternative branch of the Order. In her life, St. Teresa wrote three books on prayer, which are spiritual classics today: *The Life* (her autobiography), *The Way of Perfection* and her famous *Interior Castle*. A valiant woman who suffered constant ill-health, one with deep insight into the soul, a truly holy woman who achieved the heights of mystical contemplation, Teresa died in 1582 and was canonised soon after. As she received the Last Sacraments, she exclaimed: *O my Lord, it's now time for us to see each other.*

Make your home in me as I make mine in you said Jesus in the Gospel. Catechists today need to be holy, people of prayer and contemplation, able to help and teach others how to pray. We spoke earlier about the need to offer not any catechesis but an *evangelising* catechesis. In this all of us could do no better than study the example and the teaching of St. Teresa of Avila. Her emphasis on union with God, and how to cultivate prayer, is critical for every disciple of Christ. Indeed the *Catechism* quotes her beautiful definition of what prayer is: *In my opinion, she says, contemplative prayer is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him Who loves us.* This is the message of Jesus in today's Gospel: *Make your home in me as I make mine in you.* Each one of us is called to a personal-passionate friendship with Him. Indeed, it's only when someone has encountered Christ and been touched by Him, that the specifically catechetical moment can occur, be received and take root.

Make your home in me as I make mine in you. That is the message we should take away from this day. In this Mass, in which we venerate St. Teresa of Avila, let's ask her intercession. May the Holy Spirit help us grow in the spiritual life. May the Holy Spirit enrich us with many gifts of contemplative prayer. May the Holy Spirit help us assist others to find in the Heart of Christ that TGLHH&F for which they long.