News
Vatican



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Vatican City — May 5, 2021
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Pope Francis will be creating a new official ministry in the Catholic Church for those who teach children and others the fundamentals of the faith, the Vatican announced May 5.

In a brief note to journalists, the city-state advised that it would be hosting a press conference May 11 to present a new papal *motu proprio* ("on his own initiative") making the change. The document will be titled *Antiquum ministerium* and will "institute the ministry of catechist," the note said.

The Vatican did not immediately provide further details.

In the Catholic Church, a catechist is someone who teaches the core principles of the faith. In earlier centuries, catechists were often priests or members of religious orders but they are now frequently lay persons who volunteer or are sometimes employed at Catholic schools or parishes.

Francis' decision to recognize catechists more formally as having a ministry in the church could be a response to the 2019 Synod of Bishops from the wider Amazon region, which called for better recognition for the various roles played by laypeople in church structures.

The Vatican's May 11 press conference will be led by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

A few hours after the initial announcement of the new *motu proprio*, official outlet Vatican News explained that Francis had first expressed a desire to formally create a ministry of catechist in a 2018 video message to the Second International Congress of Catechists. "Being a catechist is a vocation … and is a true and genuine ministry in the church," the pontiff said at the time.

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