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Pope Francis listens to Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the F

Pope Francis listens to Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and president of the International Theological Commission, during a meeting with commission members Nov. 24, 2022, in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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Theologians must explore and "venture" out further to help enrich doctrine while catechists must stick to established, "solid" doctrine, never anything new, Pope Francis told theologians.

"The theologian dares to go further, and it will be the magisterium that will stop him," the pope said in an audience Nov. 24 with members of the International Theological Commission.

"The vocation of the theologian is always to risk going further because he is seeking, and he is trying to make theology clearer," the pope said.

Catechists, on the other hand, must only present doctrine that is precise, correct and "solid," he said, "not the possible novelties, some of which are good."

Never give children and adults any catechesis "with new doctrines that are not sure," he added.

The International Theological Commission is a papally appointed board of religious and lay theologians from different parts of the world who examine "doctrinal issues of great importance and relevance," according to the Vatican, and advise the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

When Francis concluded his address by thanking members for their valuable service, he added: "Perhaps it would be important to increase the number of women." Of the 28 members on the current commission, five are women.

He said the reason is "not because they are the trend, but because they think differently from men and make theology something more profound and even more 'flavorful.'"

The commission members are working on three themes: emerging anthropological issues "of crucial significance for the journey of the human family in the light of the divine plan of salvation"; the theology of creation from a Trinitarian perspective; and the relevance of the Christological faith professed by the Council of Nicaea, according to the pope.

The commission is led by Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the doctrinal office, and its secretary general is Msgr. Piero Coda. Members serve a five-year term.

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