

The Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers
Conference on Pastoral Care in Health 'Ephphatha! The Deaf Person, Herald and
Witness of the Gospel Message'
Vatican City, 4 - 6 June 2010

Practical Conclusions

At the end of this conference on pastoral care entitled 'Ephphatha! The Deaf Person, Herald and Witness of the Gospel Message', which was organised by the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, certain instruments have been defined for the implementation of certain priorities in the field of the integration of the non-hearing into ecclesial life and more in general into society. At this second stage of the initiatives of this Pontifical Council in favour of those affected by deafness, the recommendations which emerged at the end of the international conference 'Ephphatha! The Deaf Person in the Life of the Church' have been accepted and their implementation has begun. This result was achieved thanks to the active participation or adherence of members of this Pontifical Council and other Vatican offices, of the Italian Bishops' Conference, and of the dioceses of Rome, Bari, Brescia, Foggia, Chieti, Crotone, Padua, Patti, Vicenza, Bologna, Palermo, Sulmona, Aquila, Imperia, Agrigento, Teramo, Assisi, Florence, Foligno, Frosinone, Salerno, Milan, Trani, Modena, Tursi-Lagonegro, Venice, Messina, Terni, Rimini, Perugia and Pordenone. To these were added religious personnel, specialists and volunteers. A great contribution was in addition provided by representatives of the Church of the United States of America, of the Spanish Church, of the Irish Church and of the German Church who came to Rome specifically for this conference.

Here in summarising form are the instruments that have been outlined during these three days of work:

1. To offer local and particular Churches the instruments to begin to work 'for and with' deaf people, beginning with specific elements for pastoral planning and multi-media supports. Amongst these, special DVDs containing a translation into sign language to be used as a support in the pathway of formation and participation in the life of the ecclesial community.
2. To attend to and to disseminate with especial commitment the 'formation of those responsible for formation', first of all future presbyters, religious personnel and all agents of pastoral care.
3. As emerged during this conference, it is believed that it is of fundamental importance, for example in seminaries, for it to be possible to draw near to the reality of the non-hearing by learning the bases of sign language and their historical and personal experiences, that is to say the difficulties that they encounter in society and at school as well as in the Church. Such a schema of formation, with due adaptations, could be used at all latitudes.

4. To make permanent at the Pontifical Council for Health Care Works the Study Group announced during the international conference. This body will permit the necessary high quality and uniformity of the work carried out in this field.
5. To produce an Internet space of reference that is useful at the level of the dissemination of initiatives as well as communication and exchange between those who work in pastoral care for deaf people.
6. To promote the creation of *ad hoc* certification for those who translate into sign language in the Church world. Indeed, it is believed to be of fundamental importance that a distinction be made between a 'translator' and a 'facilitator'. This last should have sufficient religious skills and expertise to allow him to follow correctly, for example during the course of a Eucharistic liturgy, the unfolding of a religious service.

Lastly, all those taking part in the conference committed themselves, and will commit themselves, to ensuring that these above-mentioned conclusions will be quickly implemented as a response to what was called for in this field by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI and remembered during the opening of the deliberations of this conference by the President of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski.

Vatican City, 6 June 2010