

cl

CATECHETICAL
LEADER



Inspiring Mercy through Ministry

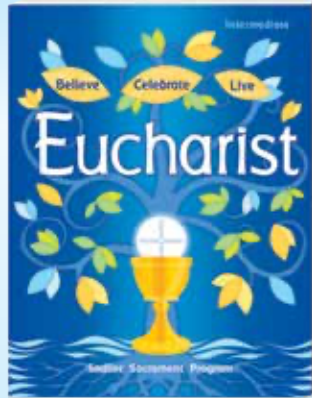
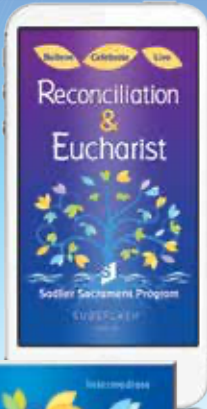
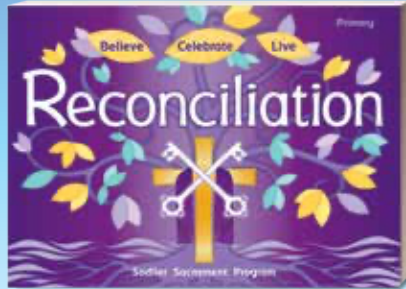
IN THIS ISSUE:

Face-to-Face with Jesus:
Helping Children Experience
the Year of Mercy

A Catholic Imagination —
Imagine That!

Merciful Ministry

NEW!



Believe • Celebrate • Live™ Creer • Celebrar • Vivir™

See sacrament preparation in a whole new light with this English and Bilingual/Spanish program that will:

- Fully engage children, parents, and catechists in active participation with vibrant print, video, music, and mobile applications
- Break open the Scriptures through a prayerful *Lectio* and *Visio Divina* approach, forming young people in the Word of God
- Model liturgical prayer experiences and “mystagogy” leading to a lifetime of celebrating the sacraments
- Incorporate strategies and tips for including children with disabilities in every chapter

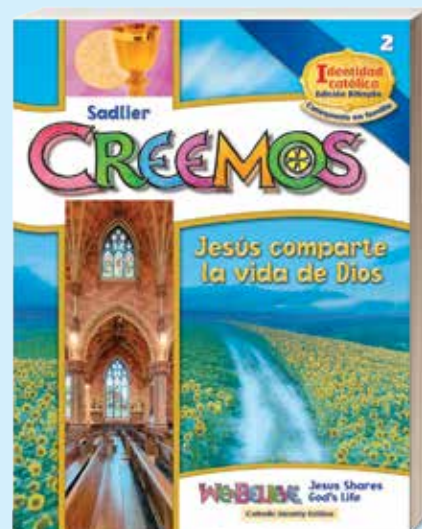
TO VIEW OR REQUEST A SAMPLE, VISIT
www.Sadlier.com/BCL

Creemos™ Identidad católica

In the new Catholic Identity Edition of Sadlier’s complete bilingual catechetical program for Grades K–6, you’ll find:

- Inspiring Catholic Identity Retreats that nurture spiritual growth and relationships with Jesus Christ
- Catholic Identity Q&A with grade-specific and age-appropriate responses
- Family Resources that increase families’ involvement with prayer and practices correlated to each retreat

TO VIEW OR REQUEST A SAMPLE, VISIT
www.Sadlier.com/Creemos



CATECHETICAL LEADER Table of Contents

July 2016

In Every Issue

- 4 **From the President** Ken Ogorek
“Get Off My Lawn!” and Other Words of Wisdom
- 5 **From the Executive Director** Margaret Matijasevic
What Difference Does the NCCL Make?
- 24 **Book Review** Reviewed by Dan Thomas
Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age
- 26 **PCL Perspectives: At Work in the Vineyard** Judith Brusseau
Responding to the Holy Father’s Call to “Care for Our Common Home”
- 27 **New Evangelization on a New Continent** Claire M. McManus
The Decline of Twitter
- 28 **Transforming, Evangelizing Catechesis** Terrie Baldwin
Inspiring Faith in Young Adults
- 29 **Diocesan Director’s Forum** Christopher J. Chapman
The Year of Mercy
- 30 **Adult Faith Formation** Leisa Anslinger
Do People Care?
- 31 **Notable Resources** Dan Pierson

Features

- 6 *Face-to-Face with Jesus: Helping Children Experience the Year of Mercy* Grace Urbanski
- 10 *A Catholic Imagination — Imagine That!* Anne Frawley-Mangan
- 14 *Merciful Ministry* Kathy Hendricks
- 17 *All Are Welcome: Catechesis and Special Needs* Ana M. Arista and Joseph D. White
- 19 *Meeting Them Where They Are: Catechizing Young People through Visual Language* Lir Mac Cárthaigh
- 22 *Igniting the Domestic Church* Claire M. McManus



Face-to-Face with Jesus: Helping Children Experience the Year of Mercy page 6



Merciful Ministry page 14



Meeting Them Where They Are: Catechizing Young People through Visual Language page 19

NCCL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Ken Ogorek
<i>President</i>
Archdiocese of Indianapolis | Jayne Mondoy
<i>Treasurer</i>
Diocese of Honolulu | Teresa Burns
<i>At-Large</i>
St. Robert of Newminster Church, Ada, Michigan |
| Libiá Paez Howard
<i>Vice President</i>
Archdiocese of Chicago | José Amaya
<i>At-Large</i>
Archdiocese for the Military Services | Richard Drabik
<i>At-Large</i>
University of Dayton |
| Ellie Nelson
<i>Secretary</i>
Diocese of Rockford | Most Rev. Christopher J. Coyne
<i>NCCL Episcopal Advisor</i>
Diocese of Burlington | Bryan Reising
<i>At-Large</i>
Diocese of New Ulm |

NCCL STAFF

- | | |
|---|--|
| Sally Russell, SSJ
<i>At-Large</i>
Archdiocese of Baltimore | Margaret Matijasevic
<i>Executive Director</i> |
| Michael Steier
<i>Ex-Officio</i>
USCCB, Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis | Gina Garroway
<i>Director of Operations and Membership</i> |

“GET OFF MY LAWN!” AND OTHER WORDS OF WISDOM

Ken Ogorek



National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



In my most recent column, I meant to say, “Any notorious public dissenter does not help the work that we do and also makes that work even more difficult.” My haste nearly led to waste and what I submitted was a bit different. So, for the record, although I love and respect people who dissent from church teaching (because God made them, God loves them, and God wants them to be happy with him forever in heaven), I don’t like it when folks contradict basic doctrinal or moral teachings of God’s holy, Catholic Church — mainly because it makes my job harder.

On that note, it dawned on me awhile back that — in addition to saying what I don’t like when it comes to catechesis — it might be helpful to articulate what constitutes good catechesis. What traits should a catechetical effort have in order to be considered authentic, excellent, and effective by God’s grace?

Many traits can be proposed that constitute good catechesis. For now, I suggest three: 1) Discipleship focus; 2) Connecting Scripture and tradition; and 3) Authentically inculturating.

DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

Unless we help folks understand that we study church teaching to hear the voice of Jesus, we risk simply sharing “interesting but odd facts about God” with no passion for relationship — a disciple’s relationship with Jesus. Good catechesis, then, not only shares information accurately and completely but also contextualizes church teaching as indicative of the love God has for us and facilitative of a genuine relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is profoundly important. We participate in catechesis because we are disciples of Jesus. Our discipleship relationship with Jesus is possible in part because his teaching is shared with us via catechetical ministry.

CONNECTING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

Jesus is the word of God. The living word of the Father. The divine Logos. As Catholics, we know that both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition — the Spirit-guided,

authoritative teaching of our church throughout history, including today — together comprise the one word of God. Our experience of Jesus is truncated when either the Bible or a good catechism are conspicuously absent from our regular diet of raw material for reflection and prayer. Good catechesis, then, helps us see the connections between Scripture and the Magisterium’s doctrinal guidance, always in the context of their role in a disciple-Master relationship between each human person and Jesus Christ.

AUTHENTIC INCULTURATION

Every human culture has elements of goodness, truth, and beauty. Each culture, though, contains aspects that are contrary to the gospel. All cultures are in need of purification, and good catechesis helps us confront sinful behavior honestly and charitably. So we celebrate the beauty in culture — making use of it to help share the faith. And we speak the truth in love about voices that would draw us away from God, away from true communion with our neighbor. Inculturation, then, isn’t about the faith morphing in ways that conform to one or more cultures at a cost of reversing one or more basic doctrinal or moral teachings; it’s about embracing culture with an inspired capacity to keep at arm’s length the one whom Jesus and St. Paul call the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning who disguises himself as an angel of light.

“HEY, YOU KIDS!”

The stereotypical grouchy old man shakes his fist and yells things like “Hey, you kids, get off my lawn!” I’m not young, but I’m relatively cheerful. As a leader I find that it’s helpful to explain what something is *not* in addition to what it is. My hope is that you’ll take the occasional statement about what’s not helpful catechetically in a spirit of holy clarity. And I encourage you to continue articulating — based on Scripture — what comprises authentic catechetical renewal in the Catholic Church.

May you continue furthering that renewal by God’s grace, and may NCCL with the special protection of the Immaculate Virgin Mary lead a charge of disciple-making while becoming more broadly known for evangelization and faith formation at their finest. ■

415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017
 (202) 756-5512 • FAX (202) 756-5519 • E-mail nccl@nccl.org
 Website www.nccl.org

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE NCCL MAKE?

Margaret Matijasevic



As I transitioned into the role of executive director for NCCL, an organization of more than 2,000 gifted, imaginative members, my prayer constantly turned to Jesus. Jesus is the ideal model for NCCL members. The effectiveness of Jesus's catechetical model depended upon the disciples he gathered around him.

He called them forth for a variety of reasons, but three are important for us to consider in regard to NCCL: 1. Jesus needed companionship with others to do ministry. 2. Jesus recognized that a variety of charisms and life experiences would impact the reach of the gospel message. 3. Jesus knew that together they would be able to be more influential to the priorities of the ministry.

It is easy to be consumed by the tasks of the ministry. The role of the catechetical team in the parish is highly important, so as to better reach all those whom we are called to serve. And then on the diocesan level, groups of talented people assist offices in catechist formation and insight into catechetical trends. But the larger picture lies within the national identity of professional catechetical leadership, while in collaboration and conversation with people from all over the nation. Not only does it become our call to this vocation to serve our local needs, but to impact the larger visioning of catechesis into the future through a professional network.

INSPIRING FUTURE CATECHESIS

It is our call to not only attend to the present needs but also brainstorm together about tomorrow. Just as Jesus served directly the local needs of the people, he also spent time talking to the disciples over meals, preparing them for tomorrow — a tomorrow that would not be like anything they could imagine. This is one difference NCCL makes in the nation. *NCCL inspires the future of catechesis.*

Jesus didn't gather disciples with the same experiences or charisms. He gathered a variety of folks, with differing opinions, who often argued, and who were often confused as to the heart of the gospel message. We are not unlike them today in our ministry. NCCL is inclusive of many different leaders, all with unique charisms and life experiences, both of which inform their distinctive catechetical imaginations. What a gift for us to consider at the national level!

SHAPING CATECHETICAL IMAGINATION

Through our local experiences, there is the gift of similar lived experiences that influences how catechetical praxis is applied, yet at the national level, there is a unique call to this vocation to think bigger. And it really is through the effectiveness of collaboration that our individual catechetical imaginations can grow. Collaborating with members of NCCL from across the nation can assist each of us in ministry to look at the unexpected. NCCL is not seeking uniformity in its visioning, but is nurturing collaboration of a yet unfolding vision of catechesis for tomorrow through the grace-filled living of our shared vocational experiences as catechetical leaders. What we cannot achieve locally, we are called to bring to the national table of collaboration. *NCCL is the diverse network of catechetical praxis and experience that shapes the national catechetical imagination.*

FINDING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Lastly, Jesus gathered everyone together to break bread and to share in the larger call of the gospel. Taking time to gather as a larger group blesses each of us with the reminder that we are part of a larger mission, one that is beyond the daily experience of our local efforts, and one that reaches out to every crevice of the world. Often, I am asked, "What are we doing about...?" or "How do we cope with...?" Fill in the blanks with any crisis in our ministry — perhaps including these phrases: "pastors hiring unexperienced people as DREs," "our salaries and benefits not meeting our needs to stay in the ministry," "catechists not finding time to be certified." These questions are national questions, to which we are each called to form effective future-focused answers. The more we share our hopes for tomorrow's catechetical leadership, the bigger the impact we can have. *NCCL is the network through which creative solutions to today's catechetical issues are created, nurtured, and applied.*

NCCL is the professional network of your fellow disciples, called to a particular mission in the church. Your particular charisms, experience, and life story is crucial to the national motivational force that is moving the catechetical story in today's world, and shaping tomorrow's praxis to ensure the gospel message is heard. Essentially, NCCL makes a difference for one reason — you. ■

Face-to-Face with Jesus: Helping Children Experience the Year of Mercy

Grace Urbanski



In his July 2015 interview with Pope Francis, Andrea Tornielli asked, “How can mercy be taught to children?” Tornielli included the Pope’s reply in his newly published book, *The Name of God Is Mercy*. The pope suggested three concrete ways adults can cultivate mercy in children’s hearts: “By getting them used to the stories of the gospel and to the parables. By talking with them, and above all by having them experience mercy” (87).

These three suggestions — stories, conversations, and practice — involve the whole human person in each thought, word, and deed of daily life. Children are particularly well suited to live out mercy in thought, word, and deed. This article explores why children are exemplary “mercifiers,” and how parents, teachers, and catechists can help cultivate mercy in children.

Jesus tells his apostles and every adult who cares for children, “unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3). What is it about children that makes them so fit for heaven? During this jubilee Year of Mercy, we reflect on two childlike attributes necessary for eternal happiness: awe and dependence.

CHILDREN OF AWE

Children are filled with wonder. Babies need to touch (and taste) everything around them. Preschoolers ask *why* nearly as often as they breathe. Children take things apart, wonder how the world works, and notice changes. In *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton describes the insatiable curiosity of children as “the eternal appetite of infancy.” In Chesterton’s imagination, this appetite keeps God young: “It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never gotten tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we” (60).

In “Misericordiae Vultus,” the April 2015 document announcing the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis returns often to the theme of wonder, encouraging us to “allow God to surprise us” in this Year of Mercy (16). Awe, surprise, wonder: these are essential qualities of the childlike. Pope Francis describes his own watershed prayer experience in terms of awe. In *The Name of God Is*

Mercy, the Holy Father describes the specific day he “felt welcomed by the mercy of God.” At the age of 17, on the feast of St. Matthew, he entered his parish church to go to confession. The sacramental experience flooded the heart of the future pope: “God came to me and filled me with wonder” (34).

Wonder and awe are so critical to Christian life that, in losing them, we detach ourselves from God. Pope Francis warns that “the degradation of awe” closes us off from God’s surprises. “When awe wears off,” Pope Francis says in Tornielli’s interview, “we think we can do everything alone” (69). This is a classic temptation, of course, as old as Adam and Eve.

CHILDREN OF DEPENDENCE

The antidote to self-reliant delusions is a healthy sense of our status as creatures. “We need to remember and remind ourselves where we come from, what we are, our nothingness. It is important that we not think of ourselves as self-sufficient” (58). In short, we need God.

Children outshine adults in this area because they are so accustomed to relying on others. Babies, for example, cry to alert their caretakers that they need something: attention, food, comfort, sleep, clean diapers. Under normal circumstances, babies have an expectation of a caring response. They cry out; a parent responds. Babies are never angry or resentful that they cannot provide everything for themselves. They are content to rely on the providence of their parents. The Lord tells us, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you” (Is 66:13). Scripture reminds us over and over we are the children of God, the God who will never forsake us (see Is 49:15, Ps 27, Lk 11:13).

In describing the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis offers imagery of both mothers and fathers. Again in *The Name of God Is Mercy* he says, the “Church is showing her maternal side, her motherly face, to a humanity that is wounded. She does not wait for the wounded to knock on her doors, she looks for them on the streets, she gathers them in, she embraces them, she makes them feel loved” (6). And later in the interview the





pope affirms that “God is a careful and attentive father, ready to welcome any person who takes a step or even expresses the desire to take a step that leads home. He is there, staring out at the horizon, expecting us, waiting for us” (51).

I remember the day I felt I had truly left childhood behind. It was Mother’s Day, and I was expecting my third baby. My husband asked how I wanted to celebrate, and for the first time ever, I immediately knew he meant me, not my mom. That felt strange, identifying more as a parent than a child; my transition into independent adulthood seemed complete. Becoming a responsible adult and starting a new family is a beautiful vocation necessary for the human race, of course. Nonetheless, God intends for us always to retain our status as children. Regardless of age or experience, we are daughters and sons of our heavenly Father, who loves us with a “visceral love” (92).

MERCIFUL THOUGHTS: STORIES

Taking our place as children of God, we enter into the Year of Mercy with open hearts. In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis emphasizes the significance of knowing ourselves as children, radically dependent on our Father: “Mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are.” Francis adds, “In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us” (9).

The pope’s words come from his reflection on a story, specifically, the parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21–35). Jesus tells the story to illustrate what forgiveness looks like. Pope Francis takes the time to paraphrase Jesus’s entire parable (9):

In reply to Peter’s question about how many times it is necessary to forgive, Jesus says: “I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven times” (Mt 18:22). He then goes on to tell the parable of the “ruthless servant,” who, called by his master to return a huge amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master cancels his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, “Should

not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” (Mt 18:33). Jesus concludes, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (Mt 18:35)

In his relatively brief document (only 25 sections), Pope Francis dedicates most of one whole section to retelling Jesus’s story, even though most of his readers know the parable by heart. Nevertheless, the pope tells the story. In this way, reading *Misericordiae Vultus* feels less like a scholarly endeavor and more like story time with a beloved parent.

Jesus told stories, and Pope Francis retells them, to help us *experience* virtue. Children are concrete thinkers. Stories help them imagine Jesus, hear his voice, gaze at his face. Lessons about the abstract concepts of mercy and forgiveness penetrate children’s minds and hearts more profoundly when they come to life in stories. In *Tending the Heart of Virtue: How Classic Stories Awaken a Child’s Moral Imagination*, Dr. Vigen Guroian, a veteran professor of religion and morality in children’s literature, states that stories have “the capacity to stimulate and instruct the moral imagination. [They] have the power to shape the character of children.”

In *The Name of God Is Mercy*, the pope explains that mercy is “God’s logic,” which differs fundamentally from the logic of scholars. While sophisticated scholars and policy makers may strategize to achieve justice in this world, God “goes beyond justice, he subsumes it and exceeds it in a higher event in which we experience love, which is at the root of true justice” (78).

Children, naturally, have a strong sense of justice. We see evidence of this every time a child screams, “That’s not fair!” And how often they are correct! Pope Francis reminds us that the older son in the Prodigal Son parable is onto something. He has been faithful to his father while his brother has not. “The reaction of the elder son is also human. It is the mercy of God that is divine” (49).

Much of life is “unfair,” and an appropriate human reaction is anger. Mercy, on the other hand, is not human. Mercy is divine. Being divine, mercy is a gift God gives. We must ask for it. Before we ask for it, though, we must know we want

it. Stories that help our children see the goodness of mercy can shape their thoughts and dispositions so they long to be merciful, like the Father.

In both *Misericordiae Vultus* and *The Name of God Is Mercy*, Pope Francis cites parables that can help us think more like our merciful Father. Here are some New Testament parables Pope Francis mentions:

- * The Call of Matthew (Mt 9:9-13)
- * The Lost Sheep (Mt 18:10-14)
- * The Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18:21-35)
- * The Cleansing of a Leper (Mk 1:40-45)
- * The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37)
- * The Lost Sheep (Lk 15:1-7)
- * The Lost Coin (Lk 15:8-10)
- * The Lost Son (Lk 15:11-32)
- * Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Lk 19:1-10)
- * The Good Thief (Lk 23:39-43)
- * The Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:4-42)
- * The Woman Caught in Adultery (Jn 8:3-11)
- * The Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-21)
- * Jesus and Peter (Jn 21:15-19)

Parents, teachers, or catechists who want to sprinkle some secular fairy tales into lessons on mercy might include “Cinderella,” Oscar Wilde’s “The Selfish Giant,” or other classics about forgiveness. Stories help shape our thoughts and characters. They help us desire good things. And they inspire us — and our children — to ask God to give us merciful hearts.

MERCIFUL WORDS: CONVERSATIONS

While immersing our children in stories is essential to character development in the Year of Mercy, we also need to talk with our children about how the stories make them think and feel. Our conversations will cultivate the seeds planted by Jesus’s parables.

Mercy is real. Pope Francis stresses this emphatically in his interview with Tornielli: “I will say this: mercy is real; it is the first attribute of God. Theological reflections on doctrine or mercy may then follow, but let us not forget that mercy is doctrine. Even so, I love saying: mercy is true” (62). Our conversations with children help take stories about mercy out of the realm of thoughts and apply the divine gift of mercy to real life. Stories provide children with an experience of mercy; our subsequent conversations with them give them a lexicon of mercy.

Adults who care for children regularly provide vocabulary for children of all ages, prompting them to adopt the speech of polite and educated people. With toddlers, caregivers say, “Use your words!” Older children often need help putting into words or describing what they observe and experience. Even my college-aged daughter asks me to help her practice how to say things before she makes an important phone call.

Pope Francis goes so far as to make up a new word for us to use in the Year of Mercy: *mercifying*. The pope’s episcopal motto is *miserando atque eligendo*, which comes from the writings of

the Venerable Bede. He explains the origin of the motto and his fondness for it in his interview with Tornielli:

When describing the calling of Matthew, [Bede] writes: “Jesus saw the tax collector, and by having mercy chose him as an Apostle, saying to him, ‘Follow me.’” This is the translation commonly given for the words of St. Bede. I like to translate *miserando* with a gerund that doesn’t exist: *mercifying*. So, “mercifying and choosing” describes the vision of Jesus, who gives the gift of mercy and chooses, and takes unto himself. (11-2)

In choosing us, despite our weakness, God confirms that we are his beloved sons and daughters. We rely on God to give us the words we need to “mercify,” to go beyond our human nature. Being in regular conversation with God helps. That’s called prayer.

The Year of Mercy encourages us to nurture our children’s conversations with the Lord. That may mean learning more prayers (like the Chaplet of Divine Mercy), adding new prayer times to the school day or family life, or reinvigorating our celebration of Sunday Mass. The Mass is the very best prayer we have. While many families feel overwhelmed at the idea of committing to Mass *every* weekend, it may feel less intimidating to make a special effort to celebrate Mass, fully participating in the prayers and songs, during the limited weeks in the Year of Mercy. God willing, the strength of the Eucharist will inspire a lifelong commitment after our jubilee year closes.

We can improve our conversations within our own families and classrooms too. Parents, teachers, and catechists might consider writing a personal note to a child in their care every Sunday. Even a brief message renews the joy of children. Children who know the deep confidence of being loved unconditionally are quite likely to “mercify” the world around them.

MERCIFUL DEEDS: PRACTICE

An excellent book about children and parenting I have read in the past few years is *The Self-Esteem Trap: Raising Confident And Compassionate Kids In An Age Of Self-Importance*, by Polly Young-Eisendrath, PhD. Writing from a secular psychotherapy point of view, Young-Eisendrath emphasizes how to help our children ground themselves, even when life is difficult:

In the 1970s and 1980s, teachers and parents began a campaign to cure low self-esteem in our young. Hoping to increase children’s creativity and self-expression, this educational and parenting movement unwittingly promoted a self-esteem trap: unrealistic fantasies of achievement, wealth, power, and celebrity. When these expectations are not met in adult life — as inevitably they are not — the result is a negative evaluation of the self. And the trap of negative self-absorption cannot be eased or helped by more focus on the self.

To be sure, a “focus on the self” leads away from happiness. The Year of Mercy invites us to focus instead on the way, the

truth, and the life: God incarnate in Jesus. Paradoxically, the more we help our children focus on Jesus, the more they will grow to love themselves. They will rejoice in their irrevocable dignity, because God became one of us and redeemed us when we were sinners.

Engaging wholeheartedly in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy is essential to our jubilee year journey. Additionally, practicing mercy in real life means experiencing the cycle of failure and forgiveness. Pope Francis is emphatic on this point. Again, in *The Name of God is Mercy* he states, “The most important thing in the life of every man and every woman is not that they should never fall along the way. The important thing is always to get back up. ... The Lord of mercy always forgives me; he always offers me the possibility of starting over. He loves me for what I am” (60).

Children must have the freedom to fail in a supportive, loving environment. They need to know that we, the adults who care for them, love them always, and do not expect perfection. Pope Francis quotes St. Ambrose: “God preferred that there should be more men to save and whose sense he could forgive, rather than have only one Adam remaining free from fault” (87). The Year of Mercy challenges us to consider that *more* is better — more children, more family time, more works of mercy, more prayers, more mistakes.

Yes, more mistakes. “Our humanity is wounded,” Pope Francis reflects. “We know how to distinguish between good and evil,

we know what is evil, we try to follow the path of goodness, but we often fail because of our weakness and choose evil” (42). Thanks be to God, we have the sacrament of reconciliation. Every adult who cares for children should take advantage of God’s healing mercy in the sacrament this year. And our children, learning to practice mercy, must go too. Celebrating this sacrament brings us back to the wonder and awe children model for us. Pope Francis asks us to examine our consciences well, reflecting on the truth of our life — that we are created, redeemed, mercified, and chosen. We “ought to feel like a sinner,” he says, “so that [we] can be amazed by God” (43).

Even small children can practice an examination of conscience. The Apostleship of Prayer website has a video on the children’s page called *A Trip to the Movies with God: A Nightly Examen for Children*. The regular family practice of an Examen, as St. Ignatius of Loyola calls the daily review, can help us respond to Pope Francis’s vision for the Year of Mercy. “Above all,” he reminds us, children must “experience mercy” (87).

Praise the God of heaven,
for his mercy endures forever. (Ps 136:26) |

Grace Urbanski is national director of children’s ministry for the Apostleship of Prayer in the United States. She is the author of Pray with Me: Seven Simple Ways to Pray with Your Children (Ave Maria Press, 2015). She and her husband, David, live in Milwaukee with their five children.

NEW THIS FALL

Our Catholic Life

A READING AND STUDY GUIDE FOR ADULT FAITH FORMATION

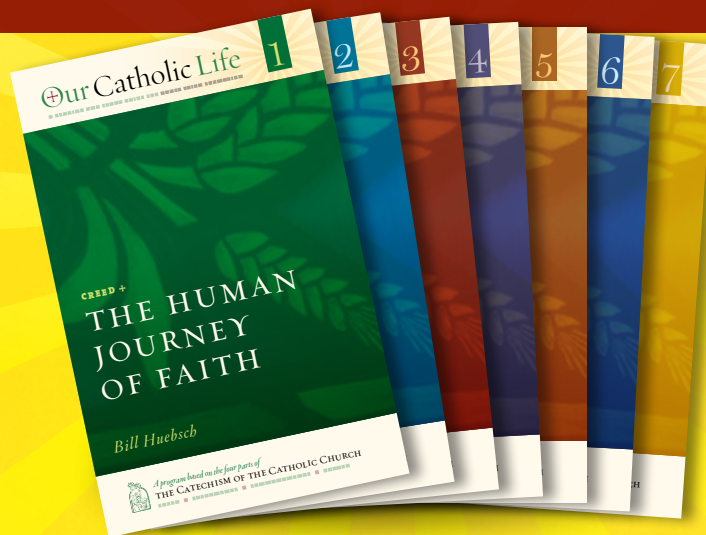
A program based on the four parts of
THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CREED + SACRAMENTS + COMMANDMENTS + PRAYER

INTRODUCING an engaging summary of the entire *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that brings together faith and daily life. Seven easy-to-read 64-page booklets break open the Catechism’s main themes—The Mystery of God, Christology, Anthropology, Ecclesiology, Sacraments & Liturgy, Morality and Prayer—and include a self-contained leader’s guide for each session.

FEATURES INCLUDE

- » Imprimatur
- » A dynamic method for use in small groups including catechists, teachers and adult faith study groups
- » Questions leading to critical conversations about faith
- » Affordably priced for your budget



ALSO AVAILABLE IN SPANISH!

To Order

CALL 1-800-321-0411

OR VISIT WWW.23RDPUBLICATIONS.COM

 **TWENTY-THIRD
PUBLICATIONS**

TCLOCL16

A Catholic Imagination — Imagine That!

Anne Frawley-Mangan



What makes me Catholic? What keeps me Catholic? My mum was a Baptist and worshipped at a very vibrant church with great songs, great smiles, and great sermons. My dad was (a pre-Vatican II) Catholic. Growing up, we went to Mass and spoke to no one unless we knew them (and there weren't many — we didn't stay long enough to meet anyone). Dad didn't like singing so we tried to go to Masses without music and the sermons were always way over my head. Like most others my age, I thought Mass was boring and there seemed to be so many rules in the church. So when I was old enough to choose, why did I stay with the Catholic Church and not join mum and the Baptists? The answer for me is both complex and simple. I believe in, revel in, delight in, am immersed in the Catholic imagination. What is a Catholic imagination? It's very simple. It's about being able to see God everywhere, in all things, in all situations. It's not an "either/or" way of living; it's a "both/and" way of seeing the world. It's about the presence of God in the environment, the Eucharist, the poor, the different, and the homeless. It's about experiencing God in you and me, and in the person beside you, and across the table from you at breakfast. It's the Catholic imagination that lets you see and be in the mystery of God.

Albert Einstein once made the outrageous claim that imagination is more important than knowledge. I'm going to take that one step further and say that a religious imagination is more important than religious knowledge. If our roles as educators, evangelists, social justice advocates, pray-ers, and Christian enculturators are to be fully realized, then firing up our own religious imaginations and that of those in our care is imperative. We can know all about God in our heads, but if we can't imagine God, what are we going to do with what we know? We need to know God through our senses; we need to feel God, see God, taste and hear God, and our imagination is the place where that can happen.

SHARING FAITH THROUGH ART

The arts are a perfect vehicle to both develop the imagination and allow the imagination to be a source of knowledge. Indeed we've been doing this since the very beginning. The Hebrew bible is full of singing and dancing, of using art to praise and worship God, and of drama and storytelling as ways of sharing God's message. So too in the early Christian churches, worship spaces were adorned with the beginnings of Christian art, and many of these images were symbolic because of the persecution suffered by those who followed the teachings of Jesus.

Most people in the Middle Ages were unable to read, so religious education took place primarily through the stories told in stained glass windows, drama, poetry, icons, sermons, and music. Great abbeys and cathedrals were built, which were works of art in themselves and provided a space for worship. The Mystery and Miracle plays of this era were a significant source of religious education and entertainment,

especially at Christmas and Easter. These ordinary people did not attend schools, but the impact of this aesthetic form of education was reflected in the deep religiousness of the people. During the Middle Ages, religion was deeply entrenched in everyday life.

During the Renaissance, the genius of Michelangelo, Raphael, and Palestrina enhanced celebrations and worship spaces through their

aesthetic qualities. Great art was closely associated with and sponsored by the church. The power of this art has been immense right through to the present day and is a great source of intuitive understanding.

However, the role of the imagination through religious history has been a bit of a roller coaster ride with many ups and downs. The Reformation brought with it a dip in the use of the imagination in religious knowing and celebration. At the decree of the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church set up its own education system and produced a Catholic catechism. The development of the printing press allowed these books to be more widely available. And so learning in religion came to

*The arts are a perfect
vehicle to both develop
the imagination and allow
the imagination
to be a source
of knowledge.*

be dependant upon the written word rather than interaction with the arts and imagination. Memorization became the primary source of acquiring knowledge. It was thought that the learning of facts would lead to the desired aim of this catechetical style of religious education: growth in faith.

As educators, we know that sort of teaching is not going to work with today's young people. Theories of knowing and learning have changed dramatically, especially in the last 100 years or so. Even as far back as the mid-1900s, RE was more likely to include more imaginative and active methods, including Bible stories, music, movement, and prayer. I clearly remember wandering around my year-two classroom as Eve, accompanied by Adam, naming all the animals in the Garden of Eden. Of course we were taught a very literal understanding of the story. However, the Scriptures are full of metaphor and symbol and rhetoric (which are also the language of the arts), and many parts are not meant to be taken literally.

SYMBOLIC FAITH

Liturgy, which is based in Scripture, also relies on symbol and symbolic language. You can't do Catholic if you don't do symbol. How are we preparing our children to interact with symbols? That's when the imagination comes in! Symbols are not black and white, nor are our experiences of the sacraments. Augustine of Hippo said, "These things are called sacraments because in them one thing is seen, while another is grasped." This is very non-dualistic thinking; there's nothing black and white about this. It's the imagination that can help us make sense of this mystery by living in the land of "both/and." Living in this mysterious place requires us to fire up our imaginations and pay attention to what is around and in us.

By involving the imagination, the arts offer a different way of knowing as they provide opportunities for both cognitive and affective learning. Throughout history, many of the great educators have separated reason from emotion and believed that reason and logic provided the only true knowledge. Emotions were unreliable and not to be depended on. There was an understanding that the student was like an empty vessel, which a teacher could fill with knowledge. These were the days when we *knew* that the world was flat, that the earth was the center of the universe, and that we'd go to hell if we ate meat on Friday.

However, we know that not everything can be explained through reason and logic — take love, for example. Anyone who knows love will know what I mean. I know my husband loves me. I can't explain it in a logical, rational way, but I *know* it. That's what we call aesthetic knowing. It's just as real and true as reason. These are different, complementary ways of knowing. We don't rely solely on one or the other.

Peter Abbs describes aesthetic knowing as a sort of sensual understanding, and that is my favorite description! It is in the sensing — touching, tasting, feeling, hearing, and seeing — that we arrive at knowing. This is how we learned about

the world as babies, but somewhere along the line we stopped trusting this way of knowing. Aesthetic knowing is another form of intelligence and benefits us just as surely as other forms do.

In the realm of the aesthetic, we never tell people what to think, or do, or imagine. What we want to do is let each person get in touch with their own Catholic or sacramental imagination because, when viewed through the lens of sacramental imagination, all things are capable of being sacrament. That is, they reveal the presence of God. Catholic Christian cosmology sees God as creator of all things. All of creation is good and is gifted to us through God's grace. The material world can be a door to the sacred because God is both in the world and beyond it. This worldview embraces a belief that life is meaningful and worthwhile.

For many of our students, the spirit needs to be discovered and nurtured before this sort of religious knowing is possible. We are warned against beginning spiritual education with Scripture, traditions, or even liturgy but rather with experiences of life in the arts, creation, and feelings because "spirituality is an art of the imagination and ... to see spirit correctly involves an education or development of the imaginative faculty" (Tacey 2003, 211). It is not uncommon for people to suggest that they experience God in the natural world, in sunsets and mountains, in the people they love, or in times of joy and sadness. These are sacramental moments, perceived and experienced through a sacramental or Catholic imagination.

Andrew Greeley believed that the development of a religious imagination is a vital step in being socialized into the church. Let's be clear: this is not all about touchy, feely, emotional mumbo jumbo. We are using both our affective and cognitive senses. The imagination processes new information with experience and then sends it to the intellect. Greeley emphatically called for a return to the teaching methods of the early church, which relied on imagination. He believed that because of the historical use of symbols such as candles, medals, stained glass, and holy water in the rituals and education of Catholics, those from this faith tradition make particular use of the religious imagination and have many opportunities to call on it. "The Catholic imagination is, namely, one that views the world and all that is in it as enchanted, haunted by the Holy Spirit and the presence of grace" (Greeley 2000, 184).

The arts are so valuable for developing the imagination because they rely on symbols for the communication of meaning. Furthermore, the arts are motivating and engaging to children and allow them to develop their own understandings as their faith develops (Frawley-Mangan 2006). Constructing meaning from symbols is also central to Catholic Christianity. Participating fully in liturgy is impossible if you don't "get" symbols. And the place in which you process them is the imagination. We need to be developing the sacramental or Catholic imagination of our students so they "get" liturgy.

The texts and rites of the liturgy are both symbolic in themselves and reliant on symbols as their building blocks. The symbols must be sacramentally adequate (Groome 1991) to lead people to that internal and external full, conscious, active participation demanded by the liturgy. Groome warns that “even for people socialized to appreciate them, the ‘core’ symbols cannot be presumed existentially adequate because of a theological principle that announces they are ‘effective’” (Groome 1991, 345). He contests that by making the assumption that symbols such as bread, wine, light, sacrifice, water, altar, and people have the intended effect in all contexts and for all the assembly, liturgy is reduced to magic. On the other hand, if these sacred symbols can be encountered, they have the potential to be formative and transformative. The arts can help prepare for and experience that encounter.

FINDING GOD IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

I am not suggesting we ignore our intellect. We need both our head and heart to make sense of this world and all it offers. And our imagination enables us to do just that because it bridges the dichotomy between rational and affective thinking. The experience of God’s presence is at the heart of liturgy and the imagination enables this encounter to take place. Aesthetic knowing takes place via the imagination as it interprets image, symbol, story, myth, parable, and ritual. These offer a way of knowing that is not part of the rational paradigm. They belong in the realm of aesthetic knowing.

Albert Einstein said that there are two ways to live: one way is to live as if nothing is a miracle; the other is to live as if everything is a miracle. The Catholic imagination insists that everything is a miracle, because religious knowing is about seeking and finding God in our everyday lives. Andrew Greeley believes (as I do) that “God lurks everywhere [and the] key component of Catholic imagination [is] sacramentality, the presence of God in all creation” (Greeley 2000, 24).

The search for God’s presence involves the whole person: head, heart, and hands. It requires engagement in lived experiences. As religious educators, we are called to provide our students with these opportunities for encounter. Artistic methods that open up spaces for aesthetic knowing are so very valuable here. Jesus used this model of teaching. Washing his disciples’ feet at the Last Supper was a creative, imaginative, sense-filled, and

engaging way to teach about service. He knew that sometimes words are not enough. Would Peter have been able to “get it” any other way? Pope Francis is a master at it! By washing the feet of prisoners (some of them female), refusing to judge, asking for prayers, carrying his own briefcase, eating with workers, and living simply, he excites our imaginations as we are exposed to his way of living the gospel call. His Catholic imagination is well and truly in focus as he lives heaven on earth.

So with apologies to John Lennon, I prefer to...

Imagine that everything is heaven.
It’s easy if you try.
You may say I’m a dreamer
But I’m not the only one.
I hope today you’ll join us
And the world becomes a God-filled one.

And it all starts with a Catholic Imagination — Imagine that!

REFERENCES

Augustine. (d. 430). Tractate 27. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701027.htm>

Frawley-Mangan, A. 2006. *Drama and Religious Education: A Match Made in Heaven*. Master of Education (Research), Australian Catholic University, Brisbane.

Greeley

Groome, T. 1991. “Liturgy and Preaching.” In *Sharing Faith: a Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*, 337–378. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.

Tacey, D. 2003. *The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence Of Contemporary Spirituality*. Sydney: HarperCollins Publishers. ■

Anne Frawley-Mangan is the co-owner of Litmus Productions, an Australia-based publisher of creative resources for liturgy and religious education. She is an experienced educator, presenter, and writer with a long and loving association with drama, learning, and liturgy.

CATECHETICAL LEADER

PUBLISHER: National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

Catechetical Leader (ISSN 1547-7908) is published four times a year by the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Authors’ views do not necessarily reflect those of NCCL. Letters to the editor and submissions of news items are encouraged. Send to *Catechetical Leader* at the address above or e-mail nccl@nccl.org.
Phone: (202) 756-5512
Fax: (202) 756-5519 Contact NCCL for reprints.
Copyright © 2016 by NCCL.

NCCL members receive *Catechetical Leader* as a part of membership. To join, go to <http://nccl.org/membership>

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NCCL, 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Please recycle CL.



RCIA That's Easier to Teach...

Because It Speaks to Them



New Look, New Name

The ever-popular and long-running RCIA program *Journey of Faith* has a fresh, new look and expanded leader materials. Written in the engaging, pastoral style of the Redemptorists, *Journey of Faith* and *Jornada de Fe* (previously *Camino de Fe*) speak more clearly to people where they are in their faith journey and address relevant life issues and faith topics in a catechetical approach to the RCIA.



More of What You Need to Teach With Confidence

The comprehensive *Leader Guides* give you everything you need, whether you're a veteran RCIA instructor or a first-time volunteer. New features include

- **Wraparound design** lets the leader follow along with participants throughout the lesson.
- **Additional discussion points** prepare the leader for participant responses and help them keep the conversation going.
- **Supplemental materials** are offered for *The Word Into Life* scriptural study for RCIA groups and the popular *Catholic Update* newsletters on core RCIA topics.

Visit us at Liguori.org/rcia-journey to learn more about the *Journey of Faith* / *Jornada de Fe* program and to see sample lessons and *Leader Guide* lesson plans. Call us at **800-325-9521** and mention code **16338** when you order to receive a free trial subscription to *Catholic Update*, the popular monthly newsletter that explores Catholic teaching and tradition on contemporary topics in easy-to-understand language.

Merciful Ministry

Kathy Hendricks



Bill is a strange character whom Becky encounters now and then as she carries out her role as campus minister. She greets him cordially each time and offers an invitation to attend a Sunday service at her Presbyterian church. One day he shows up and surprises everyone with his unwashed clothes, blue

hair, and T-shirt emblazoned with a politically charged message. His late arrival coincides with the start of the pastor's sermon. Strolling down the middle aisle, Bill peers into each pew in search of an empty seat. Finding no one who will make room for him, he makes his way to the front of the church where he further shocks the staid assemblage by seating himself on the floor just in front of the pulpit. The congregation holds its breath as one of the ushers, a widely respected deacon, makes his own way down the aisle. The two are a study in contrasts: Bill with his wildly eccentric and youthful appearance and the elderly deacon in his three-piece suit walking with great difficulty because of debilitating arthritis. Becky assumes he will escort Bill out of the building or at least to a side pew where he will be less of a spectacle. Instead, the deacon painfully lowers himself to the floor and takes a seat behind the strange young man. It's a striking example of mercy.

When announcing plans for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis quoted Luke 6:36: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." It is a clear reminder to make mercy the centerpiece of all we say and do. Such a call has a particular resonance for parish and diocesan ministers.

It goes without saying that ministry should be merciful. When caught up in budget battles, personality conflicts, and overwrought schedules, however, mercy toward others and ourselves can be in short supply. How, then, do we increase our efforts to be merciful ministers? The threefold vision of the prophet Micah is a starting point. "You have been told what is good and what the Lord requires of you. Only to do what is right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). This beautiful passage has much to reveal about keeping mercy at the forefront of our ministerial efforts. The deacon's story, in turn, offers some concrete examples of how this works.

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT

Some translations of the Micah passage use the term "do justice," an essential theme throughout Scripture. The delivery of justice was particularly applicable to people on the outer edges of society as a commitment to honoring their inherent humanity. What does it mean to do what is right and seek justice for those living on the margins today? In his book, *Tattoos*

on the Heart, Father Gregory Boyle describes the struggles of those trying to extricate themselves from gangs in Los Angeles and the efforts of his organization, Homeboy Industries, to support their efforts. Boyle writes that Jesus was less about "being *right* than being *in the right place*." Thus we often see him within range of those who were blind, sick, disabled, and cast off from their families, their religion, and society at large. In like manner, Homeboy Industries operates in the midst of neighborhoods where gangs are rife, taking ministry to the streets through day-to-day encounters.

The deacon in the story certainly chose the right position as well — on the floor next to Bill. He and Boyle are "Micah models" for ministry that places us where we need to be. It might be with a grieving family, an insecure catechist, or a group of restless second-graders. "Doing right" is taking a merciful stance wherever we are and with each person we encounter.

Parish and diocesan ministry offer multiple opportunities for "doing right" by the people to whom we minister. This facet of merciful ministry also calls on us to be truly *righteous*, that is, to conform ourselves to Christ in order to be merciful in the way of the Father. The late Henri Nouwen described the contemplative vision that mercy entails. "To contemplate is to see and to minister is to make visible. The contemplative life is a life with a vision and the life of ministry is the life in which this vision is revealed to others" (*Simpler Living, Compassionate Life*). Ministry is sensitive work because it touches people at the most vulnerable points in their lives. Routines, responsibilities, unrealistic expectations, and exhaustion can generate a myopia that recognizes only the worst in others and ourselves. As Nouwen noted, the challenge of the contemplative life is viewing the world as transparent. Such vision recognizes that which lies below and beyond an opaque perspective. The deacon, in sitting down with Bill, exemplifies transparent vision. While others in that oh-so-proper church saw a strange, dirty, and even repulsive character, the deacon saw Bill with the transparent eyes of Christ — someone of inestimable worth in God's great and expansive heart. He then performed a simple act of contemplative ministry, modeled on Jesus's healing encounters. He acknowledged Bill's humanity. He felt compassion for him. He chose a merciful response. In doing each of these things, he opened a door of mercy for Bill — not only into the congregation but also into his own heart.

LOVING GOODNESS

If you are a news junkie, you may find it extremely difficult to pinpoint anything good in the world around us. Mass shootings, terrorist attacks, political chasms, and economic doom are just a few of the attention-grabbing headlines scroll-

ing across our screens and popping up in tweets, posts, and minute-by-minute Internet updates. I unwittingly subscribed to the latter when I uploaded a traffic alert app from a local television station. Now I get news on my phone of the latest crisis as it is unfolding. Unplugging is an option, to be sure, but that in itself won't draw me toward the good.

Once again, a shift in wording opens the Micah passage a bit further. Substitute "kindness" for goodness and a new dimension emerges. To love kindness is to adopt the transparent vision essential to contemplative ministry. It also requires a willingness to pay the price of an open heart. The poet Naomi Shihab Nye puts it this way:

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things...
Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows.

The deacon's painful gait as he makes his way down the aisle offers another explanation for his compassionate response to Bill. It's probable that his extension of mercy arose from the fragility of his own health, thus enabling him to show great hospitality to another. He lost something precious — his

mobility — but, in the process, came to understand that "it is only kindness that makes sense anymore" (Nye).

Mother Teresa of Calcutta once summed up the nature of the world's woes. "We have forgotten that we belong to each other." A recognition of kinship is the basis for compassion and empathy. It requires a softening of the heart envisioned by another great prophet: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek 11:19). Hearts united in kinship are "fleshy" in their capacity to connect with others. They do so in the following ways:

- ★ Fleshy hearts *feel*. They empathize with others and don't deny, ignore, stifle, or suppress their own pain.
- ★ Fleshy hearts *expand*. They grow more compassionate through experiences of grief, loss, disappointment, and hurt.
- ★ Fleshy hearts *pulse*. They reverberate with kindness, gratitude, and a heightened sense of kinship with all of God's creation.

How does this translate into merciful ministry? One way is through increased attentiveness to the pain of others. We often encounter such awareness in unexpected ways. I recall an experience while serving as a parish life coordinator in a large and mostly affluent community. Each weekend I made a point to



The Catechetical Review!

is for **YOU!**

DREs, RCIA Coordinators, Youth Ministers

- *Reproducible articles*
- *Projectable works of art*
- *Spanish translations online*
- *Multiple users for just one subscription*

Request a **FREE** review copy at

Catechetics.com

Or call **866-538-7426** today!

celebrate all the Masses in order to be present to the community. By the end of the last one I was drained and ready to go home. Even so, I pushed myself a bit further by going to coffee and doughnuts. This is where I often saw an elderly woman I'll call Dolores standing alone and outside of the conversational circles. Each time I greeted her she had a story to tell about a cruise she had taken or her involvement with an ecumenical group. At the end of our conversation, she thanked me for listening to her. I felt abashed by such gratitude and hoped I didn't come across as being burdened by these visits. One Sunday, she unexpectedly shared an account of sexual assault and how she dealt with the horror of the experience and its aftermath. She said her faith in Jesus had sustained her and brought her through the resultant trauma. As she ended her story, she once again thanked me for listening to her. It shook me to the core. I felt humbled and honored by her trust and grateful for the times I had talked to her despite my weariness. Attentiveness, I discovered, was a great antidote to the compassion fatigue that can derail merciful ministry.

Another form of expansion is recognizing our own heartbreak and seeking ways to open ourselves to it. A striking aspect of my experience with Dolores was the way she allowed a horrific experience to transform something in her. She spoke without bitterness or anger but also didn't downplay the tremendous pain it entailed. The most authentic ministers are those who don't self-edit their lives. As Richard Rohr notes, "Pain that isn't transformed is transmitted." When we truly understand this, even the most horrific, shameful, or mournful experiences in our lives can deepen our capacity for compassion and understanding. This isn't done overnight but with a significant amount of inner work and the help, guidance, and support of a spiritual director or other trusted companion.

A third way to embrace goodness and expand the heart is by cultivating a climate where kindness can flourish. I have visited many parishes and dioceses over the course of my work as a catechetical consultant and speaker. Even in brief encounters, it is not hard to spot kind environments. Hospitality, levity, and laughter serve as hallmarks. Gratitude is abundant. A willingness to serve and to be served with graciousness is evident. One always feels blessed and awash in mercy in such places.

WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD

The word "humble" is derived from "humus," meaning "of the earth." To be humble is to recognize our own humanity. This is a far cry from the message I received as a child, namely that humility was a form of self-abasement. To walk humbly with God is to know God's love, affection, and companionship. It is to tread the way of a saint.

There is a lovely Sufi story about a man so generous, kind, and holy that the angels ask God to reward him with a special gift. God asks what the angels would recommend. When they can't agree on an appropriate blessing, God suggests they ask the man himself. The man's response stuns them. His only request is that he not know the good he is doing for others. The angels return

to God and relay the request. In response, the man carries out his work. Wherever his shadow falls, people are comforted, restored to health, and filled with joy. In time, they forget the saint's name. They take to calling him "the Holy Shadow."

The image of a shadow falling upon someone is generally viewed as a dark and menacing experience. The Sufi story turns the meaning around. Most of us can call to mind a "holy shadow" in our lives — someone who provided a word of consolation or extended comfort and compassion without really realizing it. How many of us, in turn, consider the ways our holy shadows fall upon others, particularly as we carry out our various ministries? This, too, is what it means to walk humbly with our God.

In the story of Bill and the deacon, each takes a walk down the aisle — Bill's is a rather clueless yet endearing one and the deacon's is a slow and painful one. Both walk humbly. I read this endearing story in the newspaper, *The Colorado Episcopalian*. It formed part of a sermon given by the Rev. Dayle Casey upon the ordination of a group of deacons. Casey noted how their call to ministry was one of sharing what they first received from Christ as one "who walks beside us in times of trouble so that we might walk beside others in their troubles." The deacon's walk down the aisle imaged the same "walking-besideness which we ourselves have received from God ... Just so [we] bear one another's burdens."

"BE MERCIFUL, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL"

This is how we mirror the mercy of God. Our model is Jesus who walked into the right places with kindness and humility as he reached out to heal, to teach, to bring comfort, and to challenge people to lives of holiness, justice, and love.

Jesus also walked in solitude. He knew how the inner spirit needs the wellspring of prayer and silence to keep from drying up and growing brittle with fatigue, resentment, cynicism, or despair. Ministry in a parish or diocese is often busy and sometimes frenetic. Merciful ministry entails taking care of our own hearts, especially in prayer. Establishing and maintaining solid spiritual practices keeps us in touch with our true needs and authentic in our call to ministry. Praying for those in our care, particularly those who try our patience, gentles the heart. Seeking and extending forgiveness provides relief from pent-up resentments. Managing the time and energy given to negative people and situations allows for redirecting both toward those who bring out the best in us. And cultivating gratitude softens the heart and enlarges a vision of the world toward all that is good, beautiful, and holy in God's sight. |

Kathy Hendricks is National Religion Consultant for William H. Sadlier and author of the blog We Believe and Share. She has written several books and numerous articles on spirituality, family, and parish leadership. Her latest book is The Spirituality of Parenting (Twenty-Third Publications). A long-time member of NCCL, Kathy has experience as a parish and diocesan catechetical leader, teacher, and pastoral minister. She and her husband, Ron, live in Castle Rock, Colorado.

All Are Welcome: Catechesis and Special Needs

Ana M. Arista and Joseph D. White



In recent years, there has been increased discussion regarding the catechesis of individuals with special needs, including learning disabilities, cognitive or emotional issues, or physical

limitations that could potentially be obstacles to full participation in a learning or formation setting. Examples might be a child with ADHD in a parish religion program or a teen with autism preparing for confirmation.

In the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the bishops of the United States address the importance of catechesis for persons with special needs, stating, “Catechesis for persons with disabilities is most effective when it is carried out within the general pastoral care of the community... The whole community of faith needs to be aware of the presence of persons with special needs within it and be involved in their catechesis” (49).

In most cases, persons with special needs can and should be catechized with the community of typically developing peers. There are a few important reasons for this:

- ✱ Smaller parishes may only have a few individuals who would fit into a special program or class. Segregating those individuals might deprive them of the experience of community that is such an important part of our Catholic faith.
- ✱ The whole community benefits from the presence of persons with special needs and from inclusive practices. Every person brings both gifts and areas of need. We miss the gifts of persons with special needs when we fail to include them in our groups.
- ✱ Unless an individual poses a safety risk to self or others, he or she can usually be included in the group activities in some way with some adaptations.

The U.S. bishops state, “Persons with disabilities should be integrated into ordinary catechetical programs as much as possible... They should not be segregated for specialized catechesis unless their disability makes it impossible for them to participate in the basic catechetical program” (49).

Catechists and catechetical leaders might agree in principle with this philosophy of inclusion but feel at a loss regard-

ing how to carry it out. They might seek a one-size-fits-all approach to special needs — a resource or program that will meet all the special needs of individuals in a parish. In reality, this is not feasible, because every individual is unique and comes with a different combination of gifts and strengths. This includes persons with special needs. There is no approach that works with *all* children with autism, *all* individuals with ADHD, or *everyone* with a reading disability.

However, there are skills that can be learned and applied by catechists and catechetical leaders that will assist them in adapting material and methods to the needs of individuals they serve. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states, “No methodology, no matter how well-tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process” (156). This is especially true when it comes to meeting special learning needs.

A PROCESS FOR MEETING SPECIAL NEEDS

The following is a framework for working with individuals with special needs and their families — a six-step process we can apply as we discern what approach would be most helpful with each learner.

Step One: Reflect on the pedagogy of God

The GDC tells us that it is the mission of the church to be a “visible and actual continuation of the pedagogy of the Father and of the Son” (141). By reflecting on the way God has formed his people, we can gain valuable insights into many different aspects of catechesis. In the pages of sacred Scripture, we learn valuable lessons about how to meet special needs.

Take, for example, the patience Jesus shows with Peter (who today almost certainly would be diagnosed with ADHD). Jesus sees the best in him, even when Peter cannot see it within himself. He forgives Peter’s impulsive actions, but holds him accountable for growth. Consider the Scripture story of the man who cannot walk and is carried by his friends to the house where Jesus is teaching, only to find that it is impossible to get close to the master because of the large crowds. Their radical solution — cutting a hole in the roof so they may lower their friend through — inspires us to be bold as we work to overcome obstacles that would keep others from meeting Jesus. Or the apostle Philip, as he follows God’s call and finds the Ethiopian on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. As the Ethiopian reads

from Scripture, he struggles to understand. Philip makes himself available to help, but respectfully waits for an invitation. When it comes, he sits beside the Ethiopian, reading and reflecting with him. When we meditate on the ways God has met various types of special needs throughout salvation history, we are inspired to teach others in the way that God teaches us.

Step Two: Invite and welcome individuals with special needs and their families

We sometimes encounter catechetical leaders who say they do not need to make adaptations in their programs because there are no individuals with special needs in their communities. This concerns us for a couple of reasons. First, there are needs present in any group of people. Some needs are more visible and obvious than others, but everyone has strengths, and everyone has areas of need. Second, if there are truly low numbers of persons with disabilities in parish programs, it might be because they haven't been invited!

Welcome individuals with special needs before you even encounter them. Make it clear on registration forms and introductory letters and e-mails that the parish catechetical program is committed to making reasonable accommodations for learners with special needs. Ask parents to let you know if there are needs you should be aware of. When families present themselves with questions or concerns, first give them a warm welcome, and let them know you are glad they have come.

Step Three: Personalize your approach

In programs for children and teens, get to know the individual child with special needs and his or her family. As previously mentioned, no one approach is helpful for all individuals with particular needs, because each person is different. Find out this child's interests and strengths as well as his or her needs. Ask the parent what is helpful in other settings, such as home or school. Does the child have an individualized education plan at school? If so, are there any strategies from that plan that might also be used in the catechetical setting?

Step Four: Enter into empathy

Make an effort to consider how it feels to be the person with special needs. For example, if you are working with an individual with intellectual or developmental delays, reflect on times when you had difficulty understanding something when it seemed like others could. How did you feel? Who helped you understand better? How did they do it? If you are making accommodations for an individual with physical limitations, walk through the space, considering what mobility issues you might encounter if you were the person with a physical disability. We might never fully understand the other person's experience, but making an effort to do so helps equip us to be both more compassionate and more effective.

Step Five: Seek out guidelines and best practices

Experienced professionals in the areas of education, psychology, and pastoral practice can provide a wealth of resources in

the form of general guidelines and best practices. Books and websites on adaptations for various types of learning needs might prove to be valuable tools. These resources often provide specific adaptations for various types of learning needs, including both accommodations and modifications. *Accommodations* result in a change to the way in which a child learns the material. They focus on the "how" of learning. An example of an accommodation would be allowing a child with dysgraphia (a writing disability) to respond to questions verbally, instead of in written form. *Modifications* are changes in *what* a learner is taught or expected to learn. An example would be not requiring a child with a disability to recite certain prayers from memory before celebrating the sacraments, even if this is an expectation for neuro-typical children in the group. In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has published *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*. These guidelines help to answer many of the questions and concerns encountered by catechetical leaders and clergy regarding adequate preparation and celebration of sacramental rites with persons with special needs.

Step Six: Foster a positive, responsive climate

A positive, responsive climate is one in which everyone's gifts and talents are recognized and appreciated. We must always remember that individuals with disabilities are persons with gifts as well as needs. Their identity extends beyond their disability. This is one reason why we are conscious about using *person-first language*. For example, we would say "a child with autism," rather than "an autistic child." In a positive, responsive climate, we look for opportunities to give feedback about the good things we see. We expect and encourage the best. A positive, responsive climate is also one in which the catechist or leader facilitates cooperation and collaboration. In a children's catechetical setting, this might involve inviting children of diverse abilities to work together. Educational research tells us that this approach raises the level of learning for everyone in the group.

OPENING THE DOORS WIDE

The gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone, and our church is open to all. Let us renew our efforts to make this a reality in practice by opening the doors wide to everyone in our community, including persons with disabilities. As the GDC reminds us, "A growth in social and ecclesial consciousness, together with undeniable progress in specialized pedagogy, makes it possible...to provide adequate catechesis for [persons with disabilities], who as baptized have this right and if non-baptized, because they are called to salvation" (189). ■

Ana M. Arista is director of faith formation at St. William Parish in Round Rock, Texas. She is coauthor of the Allelu early childhood religion program.

Dr. Joseph D. White is a clinical child psychologist and national catechetical consultant for Our Sunday Visitor publishing. He is the author of The Way God Teaches: Meeting Special Needs.

Meeting Them Where They Are: Catechizing Young People through Visual Language

Lir Mac Cárthaigh



Earlier this year I saw a photograph that shocked me. It showed a group of ten teenagers, both boys and girls, sitting around looking intently at their cellphones. I know what you're thinking: there's nothing new in that. Everywhere we go these days, we see similar scenes of adolescents immersed in small, shiny devices. What was so disturbing about this picture is where the teenagers were: not on a boring subway journey or killing time between classes, but in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, immediately in front of the Rembrandt painting known as *The Night Watch*. For 300 years *The Night Watch* was considered one of the greatest paintings in the world, a visual equivalent of the novels of Dickens or the symphonies of Beethoven, and yet here was a representative group of today's youth treating it with the utmost disregard. My horror was shared by a whole host of Twitter commentators decrying the short attention span and blinkered obsession with technology shown by "generation selfie."

But appearances can be deceptive; a little research into the background of the photograph showed it in a completely different light. It seems that the Rijksmuseum has developed a particularly good app for exploring their collections, and the students shown in the photo had been asked by their teacher to use this app to research Rembrandt's life and work. Now, rather than showing some teenage philistines slacking off, the photo reveals a group of students studying hard.

The reaction I had — shared with those who had commented on Twitter — revealed two things very clearly: First, the power of an image. This photograph had stirred up a frenzy among art-lovers and educators without having to use a single word. Second, the tendency of a non-digital native like myself to have a knee-jerk reaction where engagement with new media is concerned.

A SCREEN-BASED CULTURE

Whether we like it or not, or whether we think it's of benefit or not, new media is where young people now spend much of their time. Today's average American teenager spends seven and one-half hours per day directly engaged with screen-based media. That's the equivalent of watching 17 episodes of *I Love Lucy*. Statistics released by the Pew Research Institute in April 2015 show that 92 percent of American teenagers go online

daily, while 24 percent report that they are online "almost constantly." This figure is bolstered by the fact that three out of four American teens now own a smartphone.

Younger children have grown up in an environment where mobile technology such as smartphones and tablets are the norm rather than the exception — the presence of these devices is as unquestioned as the ubiquitous television set was for earlier generations. The most recent statistics available (from 2013 and therefore woefully out of date in the fast-moving world of technology) show that three out of four American children aged 0–8 have regular access to a smartphone or tablet.



So how does this technological engagement affect the catechist? What does the screen-based nature of new media tell us about the educational needs of young people? This seemingly new question can be answered with reference to a timeless authority: the life of Jesus.

TEACHING LIKE JESUS

As art director for Veritas, the publishing arm of the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference, I'm responsible for overseeing the illustrations for the new religious education program for Irish elementary schools, *Grow in Love*. One of my tasks is briefing our illustrator, ensuring that she has the information she needs to make the scenes from the gospels as accurate and illuminating as possible. When illustrating Jesus's mission, I asked her to show him in the marketplace, surrounded by people of all kinds. After all, Jesus wasn't a politician or a lawyer

who sat in an office all day, waiting for people to make appointments with him. He went out into the world, actively seeking out those who needed him; Jesus meets people where they are. When Jesus speaks to people he doesn't employ difficult theological terminology; he uses language that they understand and employs parables that express his meaning through imagery and examples drawn from their own world. Jesus's teaching method provides a valuable paradigm for today's educator.



Heart is probably not the best way to present Jesus. The design of our Jesus for *Grow in Love* is friendly; he has rounded features and — more often than not — a big smile. He can be serious, prayerful, or authoritative, but our illustrations never lose sight of his fundamental love for humankind.

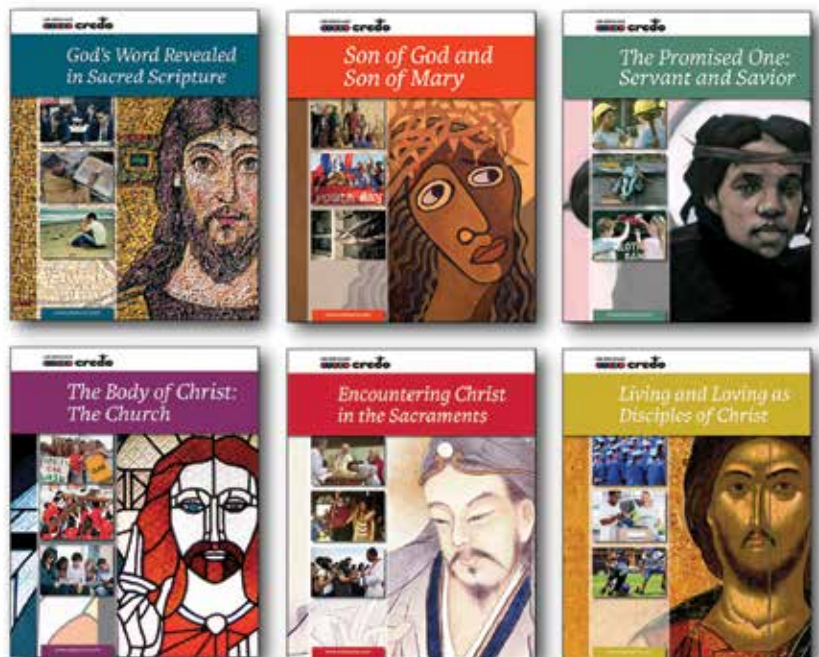
For an older audience we also strive to get the most from visual language. One of my most important projects over the past few years has been the *Credo* series for U.S. high schools. The pedagogy of the series is expressed as “life

to faith to life,” meaning that lessons start with the everyday experience known to the student, then relate that to an aspect of the world of faith, and conclude by bringing that faith lesson into play in the student's everyday world.

The design of the books follows the same principal: the world of everyday life is represented by photographs — usually of teenagers engaging in normal activities — while the world of faith is represented by fine art. The Catholic Church is almost certainly the greatest single patron in the history of Western art. Without church patronage there would be no Ghent altarpiece, no Sistine ceiling, no Last Supper, no Ecstasy of

When I was of elementary school age, the best show on television was *Sesame Street*. It was bright, friendly, and entertaining — and if I learned a few things from it along the way, what was the harm? Educators, TV programmers, and app developers have learned from that lesson. In the past two decades, children's entertainment has become a lot more sophisticated and a lot more focused on learning. If you've been around children anytime since the 1990s, you're bound to have been exposed to Barney, Dora the Explorer, or Doc McStuffins. These are the protagonists of programs that try to educate as well as entertain; they do it a lot more subtly than *Sesame Street* did, but I know from watching my own kids how successful it is. The colors, shapes, and loveable characters that appear in these shows are carefully calculated to appeal to their target age-group. Kids love the characters, they love the stories, and that puts them in a place where they're open to the message that lies beneath the surface.

The insight that I take from this into my own work is so ancient that it has its own Latin tag: *Ubi mel ibi apes* — you will find the bees where there is honey. Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating giving our young learners candy instead of vegetables, just recognizing that we should offer them a visual framework that is sufficiently comfortable, familiar, and suited to their needs. So when we're designing textbooks for younger pupils we have to be careful that the imagery we use is suited to them. For elementary school kids, a very traditional image like the Sacred





St. Teresa. In fact, the history of the church and the history of art are so intertwined that art historian Albert Edward Bailey asked, “If we remove all the religious art from the galleries of Europe — what are we left with?”

SHARING FAITH THROUGH ART

The use of striking visuals (whether photographs or artwork) is not simply a way to make the textbook prettier; it is a proven way to gain the student’s attention and to improve their retention of the information presented. The human brain processes visual information 60,000 times faster than text — which might help explain why a Facebook post containing a picture has a 150 percent greater chance of receiving a “like” than a text-only post. Images are also a proven learning tool: research into the ‘picture superiority effect’ demonstrates that a group who were given a piece of information using words alone could recall 10 percent of it 72 hours later, whereas a similar group given the same information using words and pictures recalled 65 percent of it.

It is hugely rewarding for me to receive feedback from teachers using the *Credo* series who say that students who were not initially engaged by the text became drawn into the books through the artwork. As a visual learner, I appreciate the chal-

lenge faced by students who are similarly inclined, and I try to cater to their needs whenever possible. For example, each chapter of the *Credo* books begins with an opening spread — a block diagram with pictures — that offers a visual expression of its key themes and acts as a revision tool for visually oriented students and teachers.

Some people say that if the Incarnation happened in the 20th century, Jesus would have appeared on radio and TV talk shows, and that if it happened today he would use social media — with all of its associated catchy visuals — to further his mission. Would he, like Pope Francis, be an expert at creating memorable images? I don’t know. But I’m convinced that he would continue to meet people where they are, to walk alongside them as he always has done, and to choose his words and his imagery based on their understanding and their world experience. We would be doing the right thing if we followed his example. |

Lir Mac Cárthaigh is a graphic designer specializing in publications. He was editor of Film Ireland magazine from 2004 to 2007 and is currently art director of Veritas Publications in Ireland.

Three out of four American children aged 0–8 have regular access to a smartphone or tablet.

Igniting the Domestic Church

Claire M. McManus



"All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God and if we knew how to touch them, give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him."

— Gerard Manley Hopkins

These beautiful words speak to the challenge set before us in Pope Francis's exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Three white papers submitted to the 2015 NCCL Conference were given the task of breaking open *EG*, allowing its wisdom to pour out onto the domestic church. Each author found a way to name the spark that lies within the family and offered ways to touch it and let it ignite the flame.

THE PASTORAL CONCERN FOR THE FAMILY

David Thomas, PhD, professor and *peritus* for the U.S. bishops at the 1980 Synod on the Family, highlighted the pastoral concern for the family in his paper "The New Evangelization: Involving Families, the Domestic Church." Thomas points out, "The family now sits right in the middle of all the cultural

turmoil of the postmodern world." The church must act on a practical level to help families "survive as they face the horrific challenges of life today."

Parish life is the nexus where "family and Church most often connect," writes Thomas. Pope Francis wants all members of the church to think of themselves as missionaries. Pope Francis implores us to "Go out to 'find God in every human being' (92). Thomas explains how this is the task set before us as we interact with families. "[Pope Francis] was not so much bringing God to them; rather he was connecting God who is already there!" Thomas reminds us that "part of the work of evangelization [is] to bring to the surface, to make known the sacredness of this world and with a family perspective, apply this same vision to family life."

THE CRADLE OF EVANGELIZATION

Lauri Przybysz, DMin, coordinator for marriage and family life for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, identified the family as the cradle of evangelization. Families, therefore, must embrace the kerygma, "since their daily lives are 'a true expression'

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Annual National Conference
- Discounts on Annual Conference fees and member created products
- Promoting advocacy for Professional Catechetical Ministry
- Website with current information, resources, and job postings
- Opportunity to gather regionally and nationally with others in ministry
- Nurturing Catechetical Leaders with various levels of experience through resources
- Weekly Online Newsletter
- Up-to-date information on Catechetical trends
 - Various levels of leadership for service
 - Subscription to *Catechetical Leader* magazine

WHO BELONGS?

MEMBERS

- Bishops
- Pastors
- Publishers
- Academics
- Directors of Religious Education, Faith Formation & Evangelization
- Diocesan Staff Members



NCCL Global Ends Policy

"Members of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership will achieve competence as leaders in ministries of Evangelization and Catechesis within the teaching mission of the multi-cultural Catholic Church in the United States."



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT www.nccl.org



connect with us!



of the Church.” Her “Ministerial Applications of *Evangelii Gaudium*” focus on the family, whose mission is “to be a force in society to cultivate the Kingdom of God.” Quoting St. John Chrysostom, Przybysz frames the responsibility of each family to prepare their children to be harbingers of God’s love and mercy. “When we teach our children to be gentle, to be forgiving, to be generous, and to love their fellow men...we instill virtue in their souls and reveal the image of God within them.”

Evangelization takes place in three settings, and Przybysz locates the family within each. The first setting finds families that are “active and ardent members of our parish communities, and even those whom we see only occasionally in the pews.” The second setting is the baptized that have drifted away from the church. The third setting is made up of those who have never known Christ. Przybysz reminds us that “all deserve to hear the joyful message of God’s love.” Because of the many problems facing families today, the church must welcome them with open arms. As Pope Francis reminds us, “we can still proclaim the truth of Catholic teaching without excluding those who are not fulfilling it.”

PARENTS AS PREACHERS


Mary E. Pedersen, DMin, is Director of Adult Faith Formation for the Archdiocese of Dubuque. It is her role as “preacher to six

and grand-preacher to six” that brings the wisdom of the prophet to bear on the domestic church. In her paper, “Parents as First Preachers: Naming Grace in the Domestic Church,” Pedersen writes, “While responsibility for preaching lies within the entire community, parents perhaps have the greatest at stake for proclaiming the word of God — the salvation of their children, the happiness of their home, the growth of the Church,” and as Pope Francis states in *EG*, “the creation of a better world.”

Pedersen calls on catechetical leaders to “awaken and inspire parents to assume their role as first preachers to their children and to adequately equip parents to carry out this vital ministry.” Believing firmly in the presence of God’s word in the events of life, Pedersen believes that parents need only learn how to “joyfully name grace,” finding God’s presence in moments of peace, love, forgiveness, healing, joy — in the human experience.”


Each writer provides us with the means to be the torch that ignites the spark of God found within the families we encounter. **I**

Claire M. McManus, STL, is the director of faith formation for the Diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts.



Echoes of Faith®

3.0



A Project of the
National Conference for
Catechetical Leadership

CATECHIST FORMATION FOR THE DIGITAL AGE



The most comprehensive digital learning platform for catechist formation available today

- Newly revised and interactive online design widely used in parishes, schools, and dioceses throughout the United States
- Formation and skills training on **your** schedule—at your own pace
- Complete access to the entire site for one year with each paid subscription
- Available in both English and Spanish
- Accessible on desktops, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices

AVAILABLE NOW:

- New theology module: **The Church**

COMING FALL 2016:


- Newly revised English module: **I Believe, We Believe**

COMING SPRING 2017:

- Revised English module: **Prayer and Spirituality**



Sign up for a **FREE** 30 day trial at Demo.Echoes3.com!

[Echoes of Faith.com](http://EchoesofFaith.com)



Your Partner on the Formative Journey

8805 Governor's Hill Drive, Suite 400
Cincinnati, OH 45249
1-877-275-4725 | RCLBenziger.com†

 /RCLBenziger
  @RCLBenziger

T6170

Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age

by Sherry Turkle

Reviewed by Dan Thomas



What is more Catholic than conversation? We as a church are about conversations with God, one another, the community, and ourselves. Sherry Turkle, the Abby Rockefeller Mauze professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT, has spent three decades studying the impact of technology on the world in which we live. She has come up with several significant insights into the impact of the social media on young people and our society.

Reclaiming Conversation begins with this quote from Henry Thoreau: “I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society.” She divides the book into these three sections and adds an intriguing fourth chair: our dialogue with our machines.

Interviews with college and high school students, young adults, and those in the business community are the “data” Turkle uses to describe our media-saturated life. In them, she discovers the all-encompassing nature of media and what they are doing to our ability to talk to one another in meaningful conversations, which she describes as “open-ended and spontaneous, conversation in which we play with ideas, in which we allow ourselves to be fully present and vulnerable...[T]hese are the conversations where empathy and intimacy flourish and social action gains strength. These are the conversations in which the creative collaborations of education and business [and theology and spirituality] thrive” (4).

Conversations, in the sense described here, are and have always been difficult. It has never been easy to open oneself to another or others in ways that make us vulnerable. We have always found ways to avoid them. Reading books, hiding in our rooms, keeping interactions superficial, and so forth. But the mountain of social media that we are surrounded by today makes it so much easier to do this. As one young person says, “I’d rather text than talk.” Empathy and self-reflection suffer as a result.

*We as a church
are about conversations
with God, one another,
the community,
and ourselves.*

THE FIRST CHAIR

The first chair (and first section of the book) is solitude and the lack thereof among today’s media users. These two section titles capture what is happening:

- ★ I Share, Therefore I Am
- ★ I Tweet, Therefore I Am

What’s missing is solitude and self-reflection.

THE SECOND CHAIR

The second chair has to do with the relationships in family, friendship, and romance. Here, the difficulty with social sharing media like Facebook is that the user becomes a performer. One is always conscious that there is an onlooker who observes what is being presented, thus losing touch with one’s authentic self.

In talking with high school students, Turkle and her staff discovered a lessening of empathy: “Empathy is not merely about giving someone information or helping them find a support group. It’s about convincing another person that you are there for the duration. Empathy means staying long enough for someone to believe that you want to know how they feel” (173).

Empathy means staying long enough for someone to believe that you want to know how they feel” (173).

THE THIRD CHAIR

Chair three is about education and work. Turkle shows how texting in class distracts from attention to the others there. Even taking notes on a laptop leads to the students, focusing on recording every word that is spoken rather than choosing what are the key ideas presented. Projects given for the purpose of encouraging collaboration are done through e-mail, Gchat, and Google Docs, as opposed to face-to-face interaction. Students want to contact teachers by e-mail rather than during office hours.

At work, meetings become places where participants multi-task; direct conversations are avoided; people work at home. Conversations where trust is established, ideas and proposals are done, deals are closed, and relationships happen are harder to make happen.

What are some solutions she suggests? Put away your phone; slow down; take quiet time, find your own agenda, and keep your own pace; talk to people with whom you don't agree; take seven minutes to see how the conversation is going to unfold; challenge a view of the world as apps; don't avoid difficult conversations (319-30).

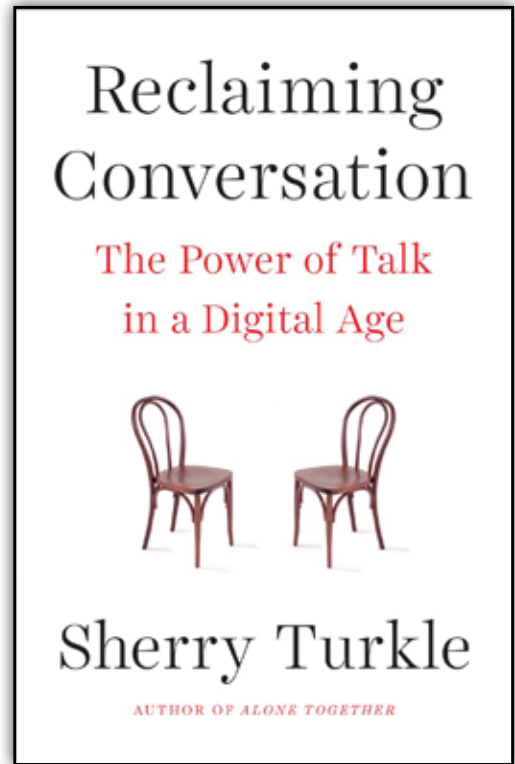
THE FOURTH CHAIR

The fourth conversation: the movie *Her* tells the story of a lonely young man who falls in love with his computer "Siri."

Turkle asks: "Who do we become when we talk to machines?" These are "caring robots" that will tend to our children and elders if we ourselves don't have the time, patience, or resources; automated psychotherapy programs that will substitute for humans in conversation" (337). Some fascinating questions are raised here.

This book brings to the fore some essential values that we as persons and as Christians need to converse about. It is a book to reflect upon, talk about in conversions with others, and even pray about. |

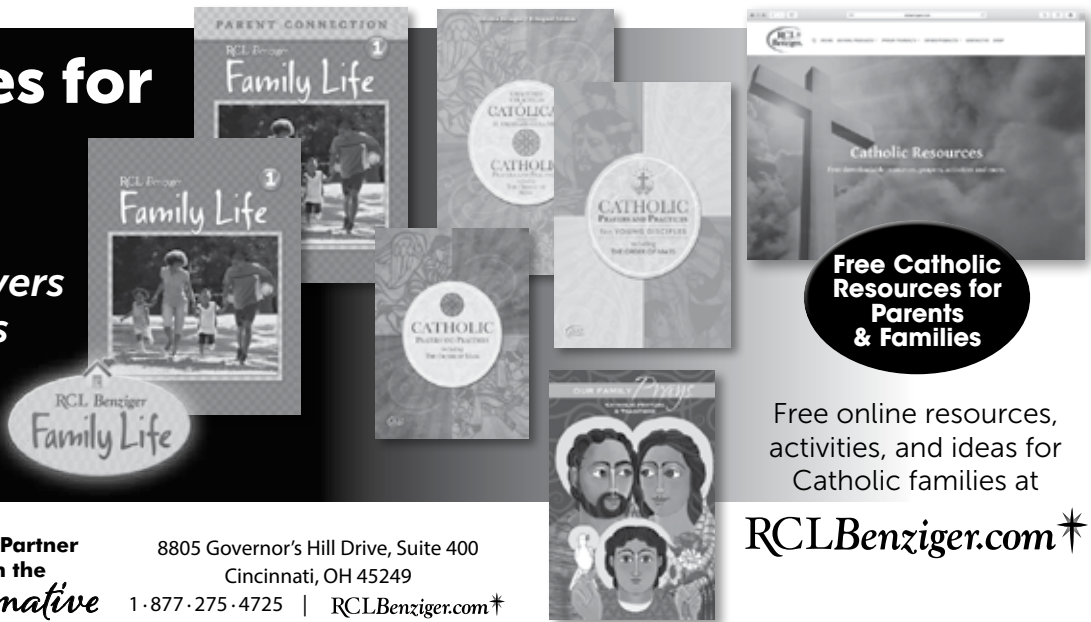
Dan Thomas was a director of religious education for 30 years in four different parishes in the Dayton area of the Cincinnati archdiocese. He retired in 2010. He has been married to Eileen for 35 years, and they have two adult sons. Contact him at danlthomas@sbcglobal.net.



RCL Benziger is proud to support parents and families in the faith formation of their children by providing resources to extend learning beyond the classroom into the home.

Resources for Families

- Family Life
- Catholic Prayers and Practices
- Our Family Prays



Free online resources, activities, and ideas for Catholic families at

RCLBenziger.com*



Your Partner on the *Formative Journey*

8805 Governor's Hill Drive, Suite 400
Cincinnati, OH 45249
1-877-275-4725 | RCLBenziger.com*
f /RCLBenziger @RCLBenziger

Responding to the Holy Father's Call to "Care for Our Common Home" Judith Brusseau



When it came to embedding *Laudato Si* principles in our religious education and faith formation (RE) programs at Holy Trinity, it wasn't a dramatic leap. Solidarity with the vulnerable is ingrained in our Catholic heritage and in our parish's Jesuit identity.

As Pope Francis's encyclical challenged us to transform the way we think about our planet and our vulnerable brothers and sisters, our programs answered that challenge with opportunities for parishioners of every age.

At the most basic level, we began by making "Caring for the Earth and Each Other" the theme of our RE year. We began working with our catechists early in the catechetical year to ensure they would have access to resources to support students and parents. At first, it can seem overwhelming to try to parse the encyclical for children — particularly when it comes to translating the moral dimension into action items. We embedded the idea of caring for our world into our curriculum across all levels, providing realistic ideas and resources that could also translate into family activities.

LIVING OUT OUR CALL TO ACTION

We took something as simple as family mealtime and highlighted it as a way to live out the *Laudato Si* call to action. Certainly, family prayer before meals is an obvious step, but we also taught how serving food to others or simplifying meals even once a week can bring us into solidarity with others.



Taking this idea further, we created a "Find God in All Things" prayer bag for each class. Every week a student could take it home to engage in family prayer. We included some ideas for prayers, a crucifix, and a prayer journal to encourage students and their families to reflect on how

they encountered Christ through their activities.

We started a "greening" effort with our communications this year. Admittedly, this has been painful at times; our parents are used to printed material, but we explain it in the context of environmental stewardship and invite families to join us in our efforts. When we send printed materials home with students, we only send it with the youngest child to reduce waste. Our monthly newsletter to parents became an e-newsletter this year. We offer links to resources for parents. Our survey data shows that parents want more online resources, so we're meeting them where they are.

One of the keys to the success of our education efforts came from having a close relationship with our parish's social justice ministry. Last Christmas, the Families-to-Families project paired up each RE class with a family at the Archdiocese of Washington's Spanish Catholic Center. The children learned about "their" family and provided them with basic household necessities to supplement gifts provided through the parish's giving tree. Understanding that there are families for whom something as simple as laundry detergent is a luxury shows that need exists close to home, and teaches that all families deserve a life worthy of respect. Our middle school students have a monthly sandwich ministry for the homeless, and each month, RE classes provide the noon meal at an interfaith organization that helps the poor and homeless in our area.

On Friday nights during Lent, Holy Trinity ministries offer Simple Suppers highlighting topics such as hunger or reducing waste. The RE program hosts families sharing a supper of mac-and-cheese, inviting all to become mindful of those who have less and highlighting the need to work to alleviate hunger. Additionally, RE students participate in Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl campaign each Lent.

Our Adult Education Faith Formation used the themes in *Laudato Si* in our discussion series this year. We began last fall exploring Pope Francis's stance on environmental degradation and global warming issues. The following month, the presenter discussed the pope's call for a new relationship with the environment as not just a moral exhortation, but the beginning of a new epoch in our understanding of who we are in the world. The third presentation explored how the encyclical calls Catholics to a deeper respect for God's creation and practical ways that we live out our faith.

We've held presentations for families with immediate and practical ideas, such as reducing family food waste. Perhaps the most fun was our "garden challenge," where families take time this spring to interact with nature by starting — or restarting — a garden. Our work is ongoing, but we remain committed to helping our parishioners make our interconnected "common home" a place where compassion and dignity live. ■



Judith Brusseau serves as the pastoral associate for faith formation and religious education at Holy Trinity Parish in Washington, DC. Contact her at jbrusseau@trinity.org.

The Decline of Twitter

Claire M. McManus



Pope Francis celebrated the third anniversary of his papacy by launching his Instagram account. Within 12 hours, he had over one million followers, breaking the record previously set by soccer megastar David Beckham. Instagram moguls convinced him that the broadcasting of images to millions around the world would be a powerful platform for his message of mercy, but the move was also strategic; social media gurus are trending away from wordy platforms like Twitter toward more image-centric media.

Business analysts and social media academics are studying this trend because it portends a message much deeper than the fickle commitment of social media consumers. Twitter has yet to make a profit in its ten years since it was first launched. The company failed to add any active American users in 2015. Despite the enthusiasm of some of its users, Twitter is being abandoned and its users are finding a more comfortable fit on Pinterest, Snapchat, or Instagram.

Twitter grew in fame because of its unique limit of 140 characters to express a quick thought or an important update. Its developers originally believed that Twitter would be used as a way to send a quick text message to multiple friends at once. They never expected it to be used to propel a revolution like the Arab spring or to protest the riots in Ferguson, Missouri. Avid Twitter proponents love the quick news feeds and direct access to newsmakers that this media allows. Scholars who study social media see a deeper concern at play.

THE PROBLEM FACING TWITTER

The problem facing Twitter is its very nature. Twitter's design allowed it to be a textual version of an oral comment, except that it can reach a vast and unknown audience instantaneously. What seems like a benign and entertaining form of communication has consequences that the designers may not have anticipated.

Bonnie Stewart, a Canadian academic who studies social media, has a theory as to why Twitter is fading into the back shelves. She dug deep into the research of Jesuit scholar Walter Ong, who studied the transition of human society from orality to literacy, or from talking to writing. "Orality treats words as sound and action, only. It stays close to the 'human lifeworld.' In literate cultures, on the other hand, words are something you look up; language can stray more abstractly from objects and speech can become more analytic." When

the spoken word began to be expressed through such technologies as television and radio, oral communication became removed from its primary audience. Ong described this form of communication as "secondary orality."

What does Ong's research have to do with the demise of Twitter? Stewart describes Twitter as a hybrid of literacy and secondary orality. In a November 2015 *Atlantic Monthly* article she explained, "On Twitter people say things they think of as ephemeral and chatty." The problem arises when their comments become part of the public record. "Their utterances are then treated as unequivocal political statements by people outside of the conversation to be leapt upon and eviscerated by ideological opponents or network peers."

CONTEXT COLLAPSE

This should be a warning to those who rely too heavily on various forms of hybrid social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and texting. Scholars have diagnosed a problem within online communication and named it "context collapse." When we have a conversation with someone we pick up on their facial expressions and body language to judge their reaction to what we are saying. When we write, create a video, or podcast online, our words can be read by anyone, anywhere. Twitter, with its instantaneous feed to millions of unknown followers, has the potential to be a powerful platform for news and ideas

and has proven to be a place to amplify causes and concerns. On the other hand, it can be a vehicle for hateful statements that marginalize and incite to violence. Stewart calls this use of the platform "Tactical Twitter," and indeed, when it is in play, it is more closely watched than any other network.

Adults might find Twitter to be a useful source of news and a place to advertise events, but young people are more interested in following along with their friends' activities without the social commentary. This is why Instagram and Snapchat have become the platforms du jour of the millennial generation. Both Twitter enthusiasts and scholars have come to the same conclusion. Twitter must find a way to separate the public from the private expression of thoughts. Our words — even our retweets — are part of the public record of our beliefs, even if we don't intend them to be. For users that care about their public image, this must be a warning; one's opinions and followings must never stand in the way of the mission to evangelize. ■

Claire M. McManus, STL, is the director of faith formation for the Diocese of Fall River.

Scholars have diagnosed a problem within online communication and named it "context collapse."

Inspiring Faith in Young Adults

Terrie Baldwin



At World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis inspired and welcomed those gathered with the following statement: “The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you.” What an amazing way to welcome youth and young adults to our faith, but to encourage their enthusiasm, creativity, and joy? Considering these three facets, the following suggestions are presented for consideration by parish leaders to inspire and evangelize youth and young adults.

WELCOME ENTHUSIASM

In a recent survey by Barna Research on discipleship, millennial Christians are more likely than average to be motivated to grow spiritually because “I am inspired by others and want to be more like them” and “I have been through a lot and growing spiritually will help me” (*New Research on the State of Discipleship* [December 1, 2015]). Based on this research, the young are looking to be inspired by others in the faith community, to have a spark lit within them, to help them discover their passions, listen to their experiences, and connect them with the gospel message. Here are a few possibilities for inspirational exchanges:

1. Engage prayer partners
2. Pair seasoned volunteers with novices for service projects or parish events
3. Create a list of parishioners trained in evangelization and catechesis to be a resource via phone or e-mail for assistance in answering questions and in making connections between real life and faith

ACCEPT CREATIVITY

A grandfather and grandson were at the hospital waiting while the father was in surgery. The grandfather mentioned to his grandson he had forgotten to cancel his cable appointment and began phoning the cable company to cancel. After several phone calls to a multitude of departments, the grandfather said, “I give up. Guess they are going to come.” The grandson, having patiently observed this, pulled out his smartphone and within one minute the grandson announced, “Your appointment is cancelled, Grandpa!” The grandfather was astonished. This parable demonstrates well that just because something has always been done the same way for ages, that doesn’t mean there is not another way to do it, maybe even more efficiently.

When a creative alternative is proposed when working with young adults, consider the possibilities and the consequences.

If it’s a dogma of the church, well, that can’t be changed. But if it’s whether the peas and carrots are on different shelves in the food pantry, perhaps that could.

ENCOURAGE THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

At World Youth Day, Pope Francis also asked us to encourage evangelization in young people and to expect and encourage the possibility of a mess as a result, saying, “I expect a mess. I want a mess in the dioceses! I want people to go out! I want the Church to go out to the street!”

Assist the young in our parishes to evangelize using whatever means available to them. It is well known that young adults love to serve. They are joyful when supporting the “social causes” they are passionate about. Here are a few ways we can encourage their joy:

1. Showcase the good work they are doing and share the events for their causes and their accomplishments on the parish website or social media.
2. Encourage participation with the parish in praying for and contributing to the causes of our younger generations.
3. Individually, find out what the young adult is passionate about, and get them involved in a matching ministry or parish group or organization in the community.
4. Discover their spiritual gifts and natural talents, and get them involved doing what they are already good at.
5. Ask if there is a friend who might want to join them in service.

While these are just a few suggestions, consider how they might be used in your role or parish. Explore these and other possibilities with the pastor and other staff members. Let it be gone the days when there is only a young adult minister responsible for solely serving this demographic.

Together let’s expect a mess! Think back to your younger days: making messes can be fun. Let the whole parish join in on the fun of evangelizing young adults — of bringing them into the faith and love of Jesus Christ to be missionary disciples in the church! ■

Terrie Baldwin is the director of evangelization for the Diocese of Cleveland. Contact her at tbaldwin@dioceseofcleveland.org.

The Year of Mercy

Christopher J. Chapman



The Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis began on December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and will conclude on November 20, the solemnity of Christ the King. These bookend feasts give us some food for contemplation as we meditate on mercy. Indeed Pope Francis states in the “Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy” (“Misericordiae Vultus”) that “[w]e need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy.”

A hallmark of the Year of Mercy is the Holy Doors, which will be available for the faithful. These Holy Doors, now open in churches around the world, call to mind the Blessed Mother, who became *the* Holy Door by which the Son of Man entered the world. Meditating on the Immaculate Conception, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* recalls, “The ‘splendor of an entirely unique holiness’ by which Mary is ‘enriched from the first instant of her conception’ com[ing] wholly from Christ: she is ‘redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son’” (492). It is this great act of mercy for the Blessed Mother that sets the stage for the Incarnation and the life of Christ.

In turn, it is the life of Christ that makes the love of God the Father visible. “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy,” writes Pope Francis in the opening lines of the Bull of Indiction. “Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.”

Moreover, by closing the Year of Mercy on the feast of Christ the King, a progression, or a movement of salvation, is suggested. If Mary is the Door of Mercy that opens the way for Christ, it is his kingship seated at the right hand of the Father that shows us where we must finally reside. We must become like the king if we are to take our place in heaven with him. It is the way of mercy that allows that transformation to take place. The pope points this out when meditating on certain parables of mercy: “Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are” (MV 9).

The pope also reminds us, “Mercy is the very foundation of the church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught

up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy” (9).

In remembering this, we are not to neglect justice, but rather we are to go beyond it. “Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe,” says Pope Francis (21).

WORKS OF MERCY

And how is this mercy to be manifested in the church this year? While encouraging all pastoral practices in the church to be rooted in mercy, the pope reiterates the many means we already know and encourages us to recommit ourselves to these, starting with the corporal and spiritual works of mercy:

Corporal Works of Mercy

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Welcome the stranger
- Heal the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Admonish sinners
- Comfort the afflicted
- Forgive offenses
- Bear wrongs patiently
- Pray for the living and the dead

In addition to the traditional works of mercy, Pope Francis also suggests the great Christian tradition of pilgrimage and the more recent, but no less powerful, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, given to St. Faustina and us by Jesus himself.

There is no lack of opportunities for us to receive God’s mercy in this extraordinary Jubilee Year. It is up to us, however, to take hold of those opportunities. May the Blessed Mary, Mother of Mercy, guide us along our growth as we attempt to become more and more like Christ our savior, so that we may sit with him, who is Christ the king. ■

“Mercy is the very foundation of the church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy.”

Christopher J. Chapman is director of the Office for Pre K–12 Catechesis for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Do People Care?

Leisa Anslinger



Recently, I had the privilege of being a guest speaker for a course in pastoral leadership at our diocesan seminary. The students are seminarians in their final stages of formation and preparation for ordination. The first evening I was with them, in their second class of the semester, one of the students remarked,

“I hope we are going to be realistic in this course and admit that, at least from my experience, most people simply don’t care about their faith or their parish.”

At first, I was stunned at what seemed a dismal conclusion to reach, particularly for a young man who is preparing to be ordained a priest. In a certain sense, his perception is consistent with the engagement research and many of the studies on the religious landscape in the Western world. The rise in the numbers of the unaffiliated and spiritual-but-not-religious, particularly among young adults, could be viewed as confirmation that people “do not care about their faith.”

Yet, there is also evidence that people *do* care. In the most recent Pew study, for example, 58 percent of Catholics indicated that religion is very important in their lives; another 32 percent responded that religion is somewhat important. Fifty-nine percent of Catholics said that they pray daily, and 20 percent pray weekly. Still, 63 percent of Catholics say they never participate in prayer, Scripture study, or religious education groups. Perhaps people care, but we are failing to engage them in practices that would help them to grow in faith and spirituality, to experience an encounter with God’s love and to respond to that love with their lives.

Father Bryan Massingale shared the story of his sister’s “re-baptism” as a member of the American Baptist Church in a February 1, 2016, article of *U.S. Catholic*. Noting that former Catholics comprise the second-largest Christian group in the United States, Massingale cited the many reasons why some leave including disagreement over church teaching and insensitive encounters with priests or pastoral ministers. He then noted, “But the majority, I believe, are like my sister, who summed up her reasons as follows: ‘I wasn’t getting my spiritual needs met.’”

Massingale’s conclusion is supported in the engagement and religious landscape studies which point to the crucial role of meeting people’s spiritual needs. He goes on to share his

experience at the Baptist church, writing, “As I drove home, I realized how adult-centered this church was. This is in stark contrast to the typical Catholic parish, where a lion’s share of time and treasure are committed to the education of children and teens, and adult faith formation often happens in connection with children. Since then, I have been haunted by a troubling conviction: Our Catholic parish structure is inadequate for supporting the spiritual needs of adult Christians.”

FEEDING SPIRITUAL HUNGER

Is it that people do not care about their faith or that we are not meeting their spiritual and faith formation needs? The evidence seems to point to both conclusions. Some are drifting from affiliation and do not recognize a spiritual dimension, at least at this moment, in their lives. Others know their spiritual hunger and seek spiritual growth and nourishment, yet do not find this within their Catholic parish experience. There is no time

like the present to ask ourselves some important and perhaps difficult questions, beginning with one posed by Pope Francis:

“What is the pastoral plan of our dioceses or parishes like? Does it make the essential visible, namely Jesus Christ? Do the various experiences and features

that the Holy Spirit grants journey together in harmony? Or is our pastoral plan dissipated and fragmented, such that in the end everyone goes his own way?” “Address to Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization” [Oct. 14, 2013]

To this point, is your parish or diocesan structure adequate to support the spiritual needs of adults in your community?

Does your faith community devote resources and attention to forming adults in all ages and stages of life and faith?

Is the adult faith formation that is offered comprehensive, comprised of attention to spirituality and the six dimensions of AFF as outlined in our catechetical documents, or is it solely related to knowledge of the faith and limited to education for parents of children who are in sacramental preparation?

Finally, remember that you have an opportunity to hear from your people about their spiritual needs and growth through the Spiritual Needs Survey, found at CatholicLifeandFaith.net/spiritual-needs-survey. ■

Leisa Anslinger is the director of Catholic Life & Faith, an online resource for helping leaders engage real people in real faith (catholiclifeandfaith.net). Contact her at leisaanslinger@gmail.com.

Is it that people do not care about their faith or that we are not meeting their spiritual and faith formation needs?

Books, websites, and media for the enrichment of the parish catechetical leader

Compiled by Dan Pierson

The Journey/El Camino. Paulist Evangelization Ministries

The goal of catechesis is to help people develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is essential that catechists explore and respond to the challenge of seeing faith “as a personal encounter with Christ.”

The Journey/El Camino is a new resource that allows adults to affirm their personal relationship with Jesus, his community, and his way of life. Using video, prayer techniques from *Lectio Divina*, and specifically chosen Scriptures, participants can articulate more fully the relational basis of their faith.

Part one, “My Encounter with Jesus,” consists of six sessions that are an excellent introduction for the spirituality and formation of catechists.

Find out about *The Journey/El Camino* from Paulist National Evangelization Ministries at pemdc.org/the-journey.

Hope for Common Ground: Mediating the Personal and the Political in a Divided Church by Julie Hanlon Rubio, Georgetown University Press.

In *Hope for Common Ground*, Rubio draws on Catholic Social Thought to explore ways to bring Catholics together. Despite their differences, Catholics across the political spectrum can share responsibility for social sin and work within communities to contribute to social progress.

Rubio expands this common space into in-depth discussions on family fragility, poverty, abortion, and end-of-life care. These four issues, though divisive, are part of a seamless worldview that holds all human life as sacred.

Hope for Common Ground is an ideal book for parish adult faith formation that may include book discussions and presentations on the themes of the book.

Through dialogue and understanding, Catholics and people of all faiths can come together to explore ways that will lead to faithful citizenship and personal responsibility as they live out the Catholic social virtue as presented by the Catholic Church and Pope Francis.

Families at the Center of Faith Formation by Leif Kehrwald, Gene Roehlkepartain, Jolene Roehlkepartain, and John Roberto, LifelongFaith Associates (Purchase at LifelongFaith.com).

Families at the Center of Faith Formation presents a new narrative for understanding families in the 21st century and proposes a new comprehensive approach

to family faith formation that reflects the best thinking, research, and practices today.

The book presents the foundations and practical application of the new faith formation approach through six interconnected elements: 1) families growing in faith at home, 2) families developing the faith of young people, 3) families building a strong family life, 4) parents becoming faith-formers of young people, 5) families participating in the life of the parish community, and 6) engaging families through missional outreach.

A Church on the Move: 52 Ways to Get Mission and Mercy in Motion by Joe Paprocki, DMin, Loyola Press.

Patrice Spirou, assistant director of religious education in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, recommends *A Church on the Move*.

The Catholic Church has reached a critical point, and the time to honestly address the areas where we are falling short is here. *A Church on the Move* discusses 52 problems that we as a people of faith need to overcome. It offers hopeful, realistic, and implementable strategies to help Catholic parishes thrive.

C21 Resources: The Church in the 21st Century Center, Boston College

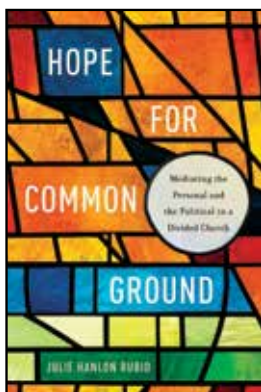
C21 Resources is a compilation of critical analyses and essays on key challenges facing the Catholic Church today. Each issue features original and reprinted articles around a particular theme. First published in 2003, *C21 Resources* is mailed twice a year, free of charge to some 175,000 Boston College alumni and other interested subscribers.

Previous issues are available in electronic format via Issuu or as an enhanced PDF that allows for printing and sharing of individual articles.

For a free subscription, send an e-mail to church21@bc.edu or call (617) 552-0470.

The Spring 2016 issue focuses on the Treasure of Hispanic Catholicism and is edited by Hosffman Ospino, director of graduate programs in Hispanic ministry at Boston College. ■

Dan Pierson has served as a diocesan director of religious education. He is the founder of eCatechist.com, faithAlivebooks.com and Faith Alive Books Publishing. He is co-author with Susan Stark of Reflections from Pope Francis: An Invitation to Journaling, Prayer and Reflection (Tarcher/Penguin, 2015). Contact him at pierson.dj@gmail.com.



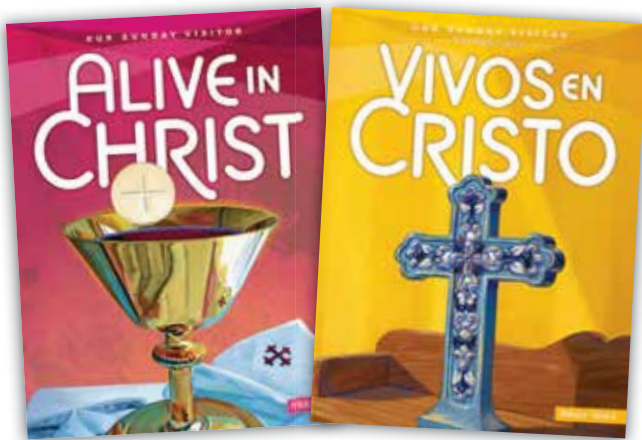
Children listening for God's voice.
Catechists excited to return year after year.
Parents making faith the heart of their homes.

You can make it happen. We made it easy!

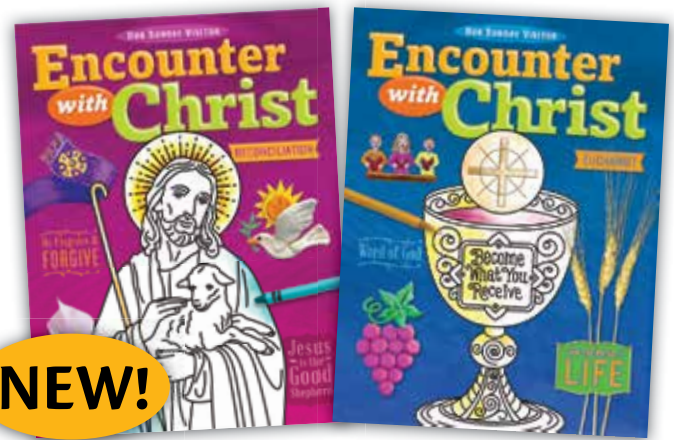
Our Sunday Visitor combined the best educational methods and research available today with advice from catechetical leaders, pastors, catechists, and parents to create curricula and resources that will transform your parish faith formation program.

Parish • School • Bilingual • Home • eBook

Sacrament Preparation for
Reconciliation and Eucharist



Aligned with the divine pedagogy—God's own way of teaching us, *Alive in Christ* Curriculum for grades 1-8 presents the faith in developmentally appropriate ways while equipping families with the tools necessary to communicate the truths of the faith to their children.



Encounter with Christ for Reconciliation and Eucharist will transform the way you prepare children and their families to celebrate the Sacraments. Catechist- or parent-led sessions focus on the role of the Holy Spirit, and intentionally call families to active participation in the Sunday liturgy and parish life. **Available fall, 2016**

“We need resources such as these for the New Evangelization to be truly vibrant in the 21st century.”

—HOSFFMAN OSPINO, PH.D., Assistant Professor of Hispanic Ministry and Religious Education at Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry

Our Sunday Visitor provides the best curriculum and faith formation tools on the market today for preschool through grade 8 with *Allelu!*, *Faith Fusion*, *Alive in Christ*, *Vivos en Cristo*, and *Encounter with Christ*.

Call 800.348.2440 ext. 2173 to order your **FREE** samples of *Alive in Christ* and *Encounter with Christ* or discuss a specific catechetical need with one of our product specialists.

OurSundayVisitor

