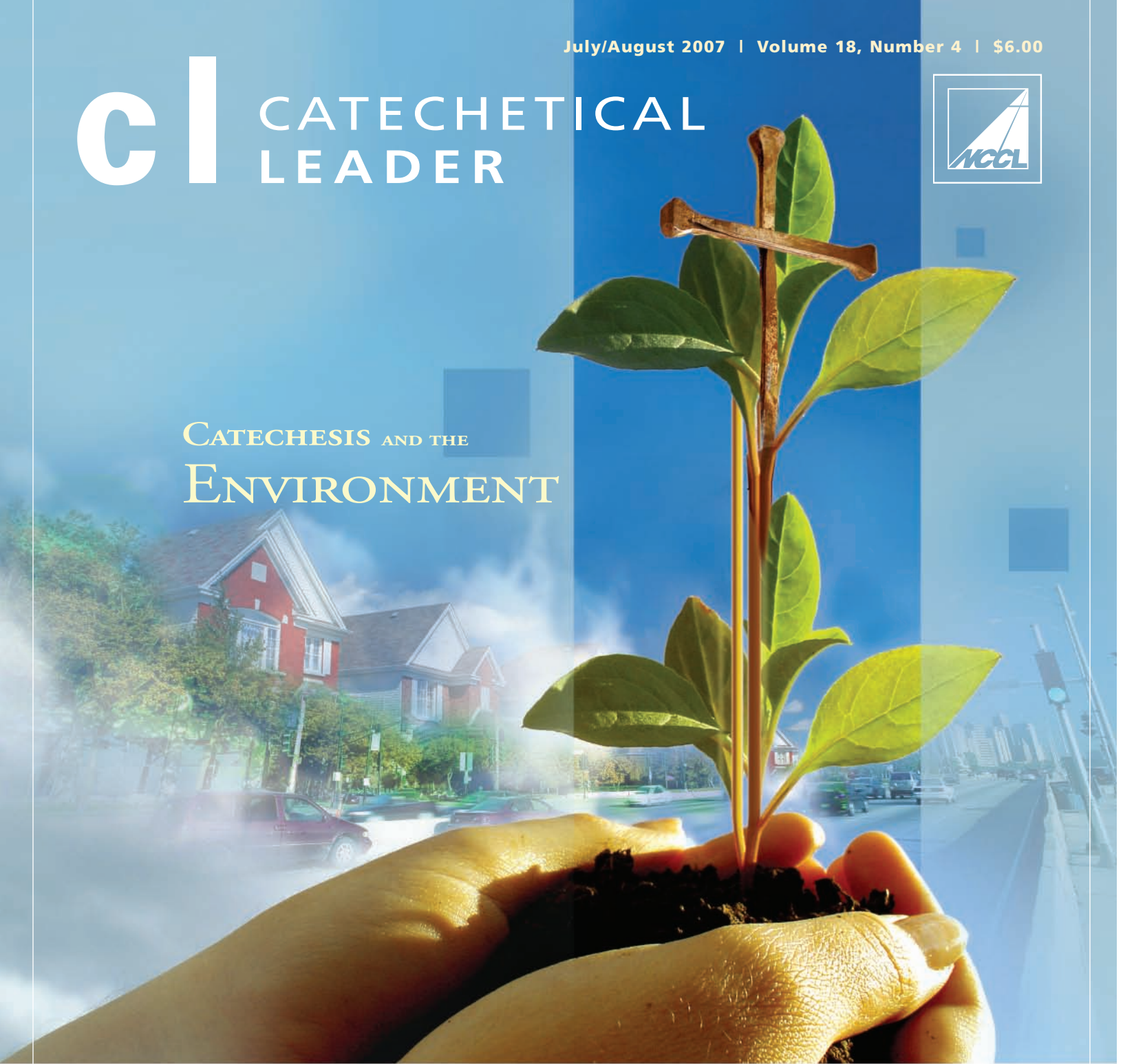


c | CATECHETICAL LEADER



CATECHESIS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



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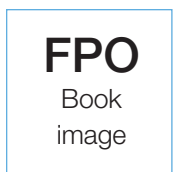
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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

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TELLING OUR OWN STORIES OF ENCOUNTER

Mary Ann Ronan



As some of you may know, I am an adopted child and my earliest memories were of my father telling me the story of my adoption. He told the story with such passion I always said “tell it again”. My parents borrowed a car and drove to Detroit to the Sara Fisher Home to find a baby. My dad said, “We walked among the cribs and I made silly faces and crazy noises and all the babies cried. You were the only one who laughed!” He said I laughed all the way home sitting between my mom and dad.

The ritual telling of my story by my dad taught me so much about being chosen, wanted, and loved — and the gift of joy in the power of story. I only learned later that this was a holy event. Graduate school and the North American Forum both showed me the importance of storytelling, which is so integral to the catechumenate and life-long faith development.

We witness discipleship daily in the saints in our lives.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* says, “The object of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ. Catechesis leads people to enter the mystery of Christ; to encounter Him, and discover themselves and the meaning of their lives in Him” (19B). My father started me on my faith journey by telling me my story. My home was filled with stories about Jesus, saints and sinners; stories that came with rosary, mealtime and people who came into our home.

This year’s theme for Catechetical Sunday — Catechesis: Encountering the Living Christ — centers us on the *National Directory for Catechesis* which calls for the baptismal catechumenate to be an inspiration for all catechesis.

The baptismal catechumenate has its grounding in evangelization: introducing people to Jesus and helping them form a relationship with Christ, then with the church. The journey is a process of individual stories, the life and mystery of Jesus’ story and the folding of our stories into Jesus that leads to being his disciple. As disciples we become grounded in Scripture, the church, and celebration of sacraments. Guided by the Word we are invited into the mystery of Jesus who wants us to eat his body and drink his blood that we like him would be broken and poured out for the world. This discipleship is a life-long faith formation that begins with sacraments and ends with our death into eternal life. We witness this daily in the saints in our lives — grandparents, parents, friends, travelers along the way — who show us how to live and die in the model of Jesus. People like my mother and a young man for whom she was making a novena. He asked her to pray for him as he was making a decision in his life and he promised to pray for her. She died on the eighteenth day of their novena and he found peace in his decision. Both found new life. People like Cardinal Bernardin who assisted the dying during his own journey to death and new life.

As we begin this catechetical year, may each of us as catechetical leaders be willing to enter the mystery of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. May we help our diocese, parish, publishing house, academic setting, and our own families be places of discipleship that mirror the living Christ in the way we reconcile and celebrate. The Gospel for Catechetical Sunday centers us. Sometimes we have been the “searcher,” sometimes the “finder.” Our journey is life-long and life-changing. In the encounter with the living Christ, the face of love leads us to be lost in wonder, love and praise. ■

RECOGNIZING THE ENCOUNTER

Leland Nagle



Encounters can create dynamic memories, as was the case with the apostle Paul or the women who first met the angel at the empty tomb. Some are random while others are the result of a well-planned and executed pilgrimage or a retreat such as Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) where the title of the experience proclaims the desired result. Regardless, the element common to all encounters with the living Christ is that one is changed. One can never be the same.

This year's theme, Catechesis: Encountering the Living Christ, the first to use words from the *National Directory for Catechesis*, has a message for all. Whether one is called to catechize by virtue of baptism or one is called to the esteemed role of catechist, the ability to be faithful to the mission rests with one's ability to recognize an encounter with the living Christ and to be able to share that experience with persons of various ages.

Several weeks ago, Fr. John Hurley asked a group of catechetical leaders what was their first memory of encountering the risen Christ. While many answers focused on sacramental moments or retreat experiences, a few recognized that all of life is sacred and the extraordinary often occurs right in front of our faces, but we often have eyes and do not see and ears that do not hear. Christ wears a million disguises. Nevertheless, if any of the fruits of the Spirit are present, there is a high probability that an encounter is waiting to happen. Be awake and watchful for "what is essential is invisible to the eye," St. Exuperius tells us. "It is with the heart that one sees rightly."

In Anne Lamott's prelude to her latest book, *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith*, she writes:

It had never occurred to me before that you might wake up spiritually as easily in Utah as in Sri Lanka. ...I learned that God was an equal opportunity employer — that it was possible to experience the divine anywhere you were, anywhere you could see the sun and moon rise or set, or burn through the fog.

This is an insight that often escapes many baptized persons. It often accompanies one of the gifts of the Spirit — wonder and awe.

This Catechetical Sunday the local faith community should be invited to share their encounters with the living Christ. It might be the weekly question in the bulletin or a faith-sharing question at an all-staff meeting. It could occur as a table question at coffee and rolls

after Mass or as an invitation at the first fall meeting of every committee and board meeting. Sometimes memories are frozen in the recesses of the mind, locked like an ice cube in a tray and need to be let free in a bowl where the warmth of a community creates common memories.

Once one is engaged it is a small step to being embraced.

Just as the two men said to the women who came to the tomb, "Why do you search for the Living One among the dead? He is not here..." parishioners need to search for Christ within their families and neighborhoods where life abounds. The apostles got the same message. They had watched Jesus lifted up before their eyes and "were still gazing up into the heavens when two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking up at the skies?'"⁴⁶ It's time to get our heads out of the clouds and back to reality. Emmanuel is not just a Christmas word or a theological concept, it is an every day reality — the living Christ is with us.

Encounters have the potential to engage the parties in dialogue. That is the Emmaus story. It is also the story of every catechist. Once one is engaged it is a small step or even a slippery slope to being embraced. "Were not our hearts on fire?" After all, were we not promised that before we were in our mother's womb, we were held in the palm of God's hand? This is the story we tell. A story of love, of an intimate relationship with the living Christ. Without that experience our words are empty; they are like a clanging cymbal or an empty gong.

The challenge of this and all Catechetical Sundays is not only to recognize and affirm those who have answered the call to serve in the esteemed role of catechist but to remind and invigorate all members of the community to live out their responsibility to catechize with enthusiasm and hope, with a heart full of gladness and with a message that is so powerful that it just can't be kept to oneself.

May every encounter with the living Christ so fill you full of wonder and awe that your life overflows with God's love. |

Called To Be Faithful Stewards of God's Creation

Catholic Social Teaching, the Environment, and Global Climate Change

by Walter E. Grazer

Broad public awareness of the environment and its importance first emerged in 1962 after the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, various elements in the wider Catholic community were engaged with this issue but not in a very visible way — or at least their efforts were not well known. The National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Catholic Committee on Appalachia, the Catholic Worker, the Vatican's Permanent Mission to the United Nations and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops were all involved, but a more visible effort and notable public voice only began to mature and take shape within recent years.

For human life to flourish the environment must flourish as well.

Following Vatican II, the church as a global entity became more outspoken on wide range of issues facing the human family. Discernment as a community and reading the “signs of the times” became a hallmark of the church's public persona. Whether it is about ending poverty, promoting development, forgiving debt, bringing hope to AIDS sufferers or urging respect for human rights and religious freedom, the church's voice has grown stronger as it focused light on the moral and theological dimensions of contemporary issues.

Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, was one of those U.S. Catholic leaders reading the signs of the times. At a meeting of the joint Domestic and International Policy Committees in June 1990, he recommended that the United States Conference

of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) take up the issue of the environment. His suggestion led to the first colloquium on the environment ever sponsored by the USCCB five months later.

A year later, in 1991, the U.S. Catholic bishops issued their first major statement on the environment, *Renewing the Earth*. This document linked care for God's creation directly to the Catholic experience. In 1993, the bishops launched their Environmental Justice Program and joined in the formation of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, a formal arrangement among mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, and Jews. These initiatives helped to meet the challenge issued by Pope John Paul II in his *World Day of Peace Message of 1990, The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*, in which he called the environment a “moral issue” reminding us of the “urgent need for a new solidarity” to address the issue. Since then, it has become clearer that we need to address environmental concerns as a matter of faith — our response to the Creator — and as a matter of ethics — our obligations to our neighbor and other creatures.

VALUE ADDED: THE CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION

From the outset in 1993, the U.S. Catholic bishops wanted to create a distinctive Catholic approach as its contribution to the debate about the environment. The bishops' hope was to offer a set of values from the Gospel and Catholic social teaching and a set of experiences to help guide public choices. The bishops saw their engagement as not so much about the greening of the church for outward appearances as about living our faith at a deeper level. But what precisely is that vision and what are the values that the church brings to the discussion table? What is unique about a Catholic approach?



Essentially, there are four values from Catholic social teaching and one cardinal virtue that form the framework for the Catholic Church's contribution. First, we should place the human person at the center of our debate about the environment; second, we must respect the order and integrity of nature; third, the notion of the common good should be the guiding principle for thinking about the environment; fourth, the poor must be front and center of our moral attention and our search for solutions to environmental problems; and finally, the virtue of prudence should guide our political deliberations.

HUMAN DIGNITY

The church's view of the environment is first of all God-centered. It recognizes that God is our Creator; that God created the world, ourselves, and other creatures. The kinship humans feel toward nature derives from a common origin in God. Without a notion of transcendence, as the Compendium on Catholic Social Doctrine reminds us, "a vision of man and things that is sundered from any reference to the transcendent has led to the rejection of the concept of creation and to the attribution of a completely independent existence to man and nature." Such a separation risks our relationship to God, others creatures and among ourselves.

The poor suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation.

In Catholic theology, the human person has a unique dignity, as well as a unique place and role in creation as beautifully portrayed in Genesis in the creation stories. While every creature reflects the Creator, the human person reflects God most clearly. Because each person is created in God's image, each person is valued and loved. A full respect for human life at every stage from the womb until

natural death is necessary to ensure a respect for life and human dignity. It is upon this recognition of respect for human dignity that the principles of Catholic social teaching are constructed.

The church undoubtedly strives to protect the dignity of every person and to promote the common good of the human family, particularly for the most vulnerable among us. Now, the church is recognizing that protecting human dignity and respecting God's creation go hand in hand. As the bishops said in *Renewing the Earth* "Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person, and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation."

We are interdependent with the environment. For human life to flourish the environment must flourish as well. Both John Paul II and the U.S. bishops have drawn explicit links between respect for human life and respect for creation. John Paul said in *The Ecological Crisis*, "The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of *respect for life* evident in many patterns of environmental pollution." Catholic social teaching resists any tendency to pit human beings against nature. "Christian love forbids choosing between people and the planet," the bishops said in *Renewing the Earth*. They urge us to "be genuine stewards of nature and thereby co-creators of a new human world."

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Christian responsibility for creation begins with our appreciation of the goodness of all God's creation. As we read in Genesis, "God looked at every-thing

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THE PASTORAL MISSION: HOW WE LIVE OUT THE GOSPEL

How do we shape the church's pastoral response in an effective manner to address environmental concerns? In the Catholic tradition, citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is an obligation. We are not a sect fleeing the world, but a community of faith called to renew the earth.

The specific mission of the USCCB's Environmental Justice Program is to evangelize and to empower Catholics to "infuse the Christian spirit" into their particular community's view of the environment by exposing the fundamental link between our faith and a concern for the environment

THE VOICE OF THE POOR

In serving the poor, the Catholic community has increasingly focused on environmental justice as a way of lifting up a concern for the environment that best fits our tradition.

- The Catholic Campaign for Human Development provides resources to poorer communities struggling to address environmental health problems.
- Catholic Charities USA trains housing counselors to help low-income mothers learn how to protect their children from household toxic materials.
- Catholic health care facilities that serve many poorer communities are finding ways to reduce the harmful effects of medical waste treatment.
- The National Catholic Rural Life Conference helps farmers — and all of us — understand the impact of land use decisions on farm families and farm labor, the latter being among the poorest of our poor.
- The Knights of Peter Claver and the National Council of Catholic Women carry out local environmental education and advocacy efforts on behalf of the poor.
- The bishops are making a serious effort to link the needs of the poor to care for the earth. There will be no forward movement on global climate change unless the needs of developing nations are taken into account.

SCHOLARSHIP

The church has a rich intellectual tradition. Throughout its history, it has sought to understand the world of its time and engage it. The Environmental Justice Program itself has hosted five Catholic scholars' consultations to encourage research, publication and scholarly debate. One book has been published thus far, *And God Saw That It Was Good: Catholic Theology and the Environment*, and another is underway. A central element of the strategy is to encourage Catholic universities to offer symposia, courses, curricula and special events to explore the Catholic intellectual contribution.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Taking on environmental responsibility will help Catholics develop leadership and live more in harmony with nature, each other, and the poor. While trying to create a distinctive voice that draws on the Catholic tradition, the Environmental Justice Program cooperates with ecumenical and interfaith colleagues through the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. Small grants help parishes, dioceses, schools, and other Catholic groups to address environmental concerns in innovative and creative ways. Among the approximately 175 funded projects are these:

- efforts to develop environmental curricula for Catholic schools
- training for grassroots environmental organizing
- environmental justice projects to help the poor
- prayer gardens

- diocesan leadership conferences on social justice and state and local policy concerns

The regional grants program provides direct support for diocesan and state Catholic conferences and initiatives such as these:

- the bishops' pastoral on the Columbia River in the Northwest
- priests and lay retreats to help address the destruction of the Mississippi delta in Louisiana
- policy briefings addressing land ethics problems in North Dakota
- building an ecumenical approach to public policy in Montana
- fostering a role for the church in mediating disputes between environmental advocates and ranchers in Texas, Kansas, and Oklahoma
- promoting support role for Catholic universities and seminaries who support the Florida Catholic Conference's public policy environmental initiatives
- aiding the bishops and dioceses in addressing water problems in the Rio Grande basin in New Mexico
- addressing urban sprawl problems in the Archdioceses of Hartford and Detroit

The Environmental Justice Program has also partnered through its grants program with other major Catholic organizations to address environmental health issues. One specific example is the Catholic Coalition for Children's Health and a Safe Environment (CASE), a coalition of major national Catholic organizations. CASE members include the Catholic Health Association; the Knights of Peter Claver, the largest Catholic Afro-American organization; the National Catholic Rural Life Conference; the National Council of Catholic Women; Catholic Charities USA; the National Catholic Partnership on Disability; and the Pro-Life and Domestic Social Development office of the USCCB. All of these organizations cooperate in tackling environmental health issues, particularly on behalf of children.

PUBLIC POLICY

Public policy issues provide good opportunities to offer the church's values in the public square. The USCCB, working with local state Catholic conferences, diocesan social action offices, and diocesan legislative networks, diligently addresses a variety of environmental policy issues such as these:

- urban sprawl and brownfields
- children's environmental health
- pesticides and farmworkers
- private property/environmental regulation (the so called "takings" issue)
- sustainable development (development, trade, debt)
- global climate change

In addressing climate change, the USCCB seeks to place the needs of the poor at the center of the debate for moral and practical reasons. The poor will bear the brunt of the impacts disproportionately. The bishops have called for all concerned parties to move beyond partisan and polarized debate and focus not just on their legitimate but perhaps narrow interests, but on the common good.

— Walter E. Grazer

he had made and he found it very good” (Gn 1:31). We humans share this earth with other creatures created by the same God. While humans have a unique role within creation, we have to do this in a responsible way, mindful of Pope John Paul II’s insight from his 1990 *World Day of Peace Message*, that “there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for future generations.” The human family has the responsibility to preserve the beauty, diversity, and integrity of nature, as well as to foster its productivity. Since God alone is the Creator, we are not free to simply do what we want with nature. In the book of Leviticus, we are reminded that we need to give the people and the land rest. It was the prophets of ancient Israel who called the people back to the need to have compassion for both.

THE COMMON GOOD AND HUMAN SOLIDARITY

A compelling moral vision views the environment through the lens of the common good and a sense of solidarity. We need to help people see the environment as a treasured good in and of itself, and one that we humans share in common, and not for the exclusive or disproportionate use by some. Even negative events, like the floating cloud of coal pollution from China that reached the Rocky Mountains a couple of years ago, or Hurricane Katrina, are reminders of our interdependence with our environment and one another. The moral challenge is helping people understand their dependence and interdependence with their environment, with one another, and to create a genuine sense of solidarity. If we cannot help people see their self-interest as part of a larger common good, then it will be difficult to agree on solutions, let alone solutions that are just.

If there ever was a classic example of a common good, it is the environment. We all share its benefits as well as detriments. At the heart of the environment question is the notion that the goods of the earth are meant for all to share. This notion of sharing of the goods of the earth should not be interpreted as an instrumental one — namely, that the only relationship to the earth is one of using its resources. Rather, in our use of the earth’s resources, we must remember that they are meant to be shared, not used exclusively for one group or other. Consequently, none of us can excuse ourselves from the responsibility to care for God’s creation. Since the environment knows no boundaries, it is truly a global phenomenon

requiring a notion of a planetary common good and an ethic of care exercised by the entire human family.

The principle of the common good can be a helpful corrective to the current over-emphasis on individualism. This ancient principle of western political thought needs to be reclaimed in dealing with environmental concerns. The common good demands that all sectors of society have a stake in the outcome and wellbeing of society. Extending the notion of the common good to the planet is not really a giant leap. An elastic concept, the *common good* allows us to weigh and balance various goods. This is a particularly helpful principle in the field of the environment where controversies abound among competing goods — how to protect the environment while allowing for economic development or how to honor property rights while ensuring adequate protection for other species.

THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

In our age, the common good calls for honoring and fulfilling a basic set of human rights that specify the minimum standards necessary to live human life and to participate in society. Some of these fundamental human rights include the right to life, to education, to health care, to work, among others. Pope John Paul II in his 1990 *World Day of Peace Message* extended this basket of rights, calling for a “right to a safe environment” to be included in an update of the Charter of Human Rights (No. 9).

From the perspective of the common good and the need to respect human rights, the poor have a special claim on our conscience. The demand of social justice to share equitably the resources of the earth and the common good’s call for everyone to participate in and shape the common good require that we must pay particular attention to the poor. This concern for the poor lies at the heart of the modern Catholic approach to social concerns and now it lies at the center of the church’s concerns about the environment. Protecting the environment means protecting the poor. Social justice for the poor will be a key to resolving global environment problems.

The poor suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation. They live in the poorest housing, in neighborhoods close to toxic waste, and in flood plains, and they often work in industries and occupations with limited health and labor protections. For the poor of the world, the cruel choice too often seems to be between eking out

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Loving Earth

Augustine and Aquinas Weighed In Long Ago...

by Jame Schaefer

Signs of global warming, loss of biodiversity, toxic substances in the air and water, destruction and degradation of forests and other ecological systems, and a plethora of other environmental problems fill the airwaves, television screens, and computer monitors. These alerts to assaults on the natural environment challenge catechists to share with the Catholic faithful the sources in our tradition that might make a difference in the ways we think and act in relation to God's Earth. The good news is that there is much from which to choose. Often building upon biblical texts, teachings by eminent theologians during the patristic and medieval periods attest to the goodness, beauty, sacramentality, and integrity of God's creation. Some reflected imaginatively on the psalms of the Old Testament in which all creatures are portrayed as praising God in their own distinct "voices." Other theologians thought about and treated creatures in their shared environments as companions in life. A few theologians taught that humans should actually love God's creation.

These theological reflections illustrate trajectories showing how the faithful should act on the basis of what they believe. They should value the goodness of other creatures, appreciate their beauty, reverence them because they mediate the presence and character of God, cooperate with them to bring about their common good, respect their "voices" as constituents of Earth who contribute to its harmony, and love them in distinct ways. Some theologians were more explicit by admonishing the faithful to use the goods of God's Earth in morally acceptable ways.

THE FOUNDATIONAL LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOR

Loving creation is a particularly inviting theme in the Catholic tradition during this age of widespread ecological degradation, since it draws upon the deepest and most profound of the three theological virtues. Furthermore, according to some theologians, love motivates the faithful to act in morally virtuous ways (e.g., prudently, justly, moderately, and courageously) whereby they seek the necessities of life for themselves while assuring that other humans have what they need to sustain their temporal life as they orient themselves toward

eternal happiness with God. While many prominent Catholic theologians reflected profusely on God's love for the world, the few that wrote about the love that humans should have for God's creation included saints Augustine (354-430) and Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274). Aquinas especially thought systematically about God's love for creation and ways in which humans can also love the world God created and actively sustains in existence.

Loving other creatures out of love for one's neighbor near and far, now and into the future, may prove to be as materially effective as loving them for themselves.

Foundational to theologians' exhortations to love God's creation is loving God with one's entire heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving one's neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:30-31, Matthew 22:38-39, and Luke 10:27-28). In Romans 13:9-10, St. Paul underscored for the earliest Christians the command to love one's neighbor and insisted that their love for one another would preclude causing any evil to one another.

Patristic and medieval theologians followed the Scriptures by urging their listeners and readers to love their neighbors. Especially significant are Aquinas's reflections on the friendship that humans are capable of extending to one another. Humans can love one another through friendship because they can return love to their neighbors, communicate with them on their experiences of life, wish that their neighbors orient their lives toward eternal happiness with God, and share in the intellectual and beautiful life of God (*Summa theologiae* 1.20.2 ad 3). When one loves one's neighbor with the kind of love that is *friendship*, God is loved simultaneously. Love for one's neighbor assumes the wish that neighbors to choose to orient their lives toward eternal happiness with God.

LOVING CREATION WITH DESIRE

While theologians during the patristic and medieval periods exhorted their followers to love their human neighbors, some encouraged them to also love other creatures and natural phenomena that God created. Augustine attempted an exhaustive list of creatures that humans should love:

Certainly you love only the good, because the earth is good by the height of its mountains, the moderate elevation of its hills, and the evenness of its fields; and good is the farm that is pleasant and fertile; and good is the house that is arranged throughout in symmetrical proportions and is spacious and bright; and good are the animals, animate bodies; and good is the mild and salubrious air; and good is the food that is pleasant and conducive to health; and good is health without pains and weariness; and good is the countenance of man with regular features, a cheerful expression, and a glowing color; and good is the soul of a friend with the sweetness of concord and the fidelity of love; and good is the just man; and good are riches because they readily assist us; and good is the heaven with its own sun, moon, and stars; and good are the angels by their holy obedience; and good is the lecture that graciously instructs and suitably admonishes the listener; and good is the poem with its measured rhythm and the seriousness of its thoughts (*The Trinity* 8.3.4).


Taking another approach to loving God's creation, Aquinas insisted that the goodness of creatures calls forth the love we call *desire* that humans should have for them. Love for their goodness should direct human actions toward preserving the basic good that creatures have: their existence. Of course, as Aquinas pointed out, the desire that humans have for other creatures differs considerably from the desire that only God can have for them as their creator who sustains them in existence. Only God can love creatures so deeply and thoroughly with the love that is desire, Aquinas contended, since God freely willed them to exist and created them out of nothing (*Summa theologiae* 1.20.2). As *imago Dei*, humans are called to strive to image God's love while realizing and cherishing with humility the difference between their love and the unconditional, creative, and sustaining love of God.

LOVING CREATION WITH FRIENDSHIP

Whereas humans can and should demonstrate their love that is desire toward other creatures, Aquinas taught, humans cannot love them in and for themselves with the highest kind of human love—the love that we call *friendship* (*Summa theologiae* 2|2.25.3). Friendship is a unique kind of love that exists among creatures who have the capacity to make and freely execute informed decisions that are geared toward enjoying eternal happiness with God. Irrational creatures do not have this capacity since their natures and operations are different from those of humans.

Catholics can strive to image God's sustaining love by not interfering with the functioning and self-development of Earth's other inhabitants over time and space.

Nevertheless, there are ways in which humans can love non-human creatures *indirectly* with the love we call friendship, according to Aquinas. They can be loved as good things humans wish (1) to preserve for God's honor and glory and (2) to be used by other humans to sustain themselves in temporal life as they seek eternal happiness with God (*Summa theologiae* 2|2.25.2-3). When loving non-human entities as good things desired for one's neighbor in temporal life, they are not loved intrinsically for themselves. Instead, they are loved instrumentally for their use to humans when ordering their lives to God (*On Charity* 4 and 7). Loving other creatures for their use to humans is an anthropocentric and myopic attitude toward relating to the rest of God's creation, especially when we realize that

 species emerged over

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vast time and space from and with other species, and that humans are radically dependent on other creatures for necessities of life. But loving them out of love for one's neighbor near and far, now and into the future may prove to be as materially effective as loving other creatures for themselves.

Lovers of Earth will limit their use to the necessities of life and behold them as means through which they can experience God's presence and discern God's attributes of love, generosity, empowerment, caring, and freedom-giving.

Loving other types of Earth creatures so they are preserved for God's honor and glory reflects Aquinas' faith perspective that the physical, visible creation attests to the presence and attributes of our invisible God. Shared by many theologians throughout the patristic and medieval period, this understanding of the sacramentality of God's creation should carry considerable weight today among Catholics for advocating the preservation of species, ecological systems, and the biosphere of Earth so they can continue to manifest God's presence and character.

Aquinas raised another promising possibility about human love for God's creation when he taught that the entire universe could be loved with the love we call friendship. He reasoned to this position when reflecting on the order of creatures to one another that culminates in humans, an order that he described throughout his works in superlative terms (e.g., the greatest created good, the highest

perfection of the created world, and its most beautiful attribute). Since humans have the capability of enjoying eternal happiness with God, they can also love with friendship the orderly universe that God loves above any one or several kinds of creatures (*On Charity* 7).

Finally, friendship motivates the human person's moral behavior. As a manifestation of one of three theological virtues that God infuses in rational creatures, friendship disposes the faithful to acquire moral virtues that incline them toward temporal goods in prudent, just, temperate, and courageous ways. Living virtuously in relation to Earth's other creatures orients humans toward their ultimate destination in God (*Summa theologiae* 1|2.65.2).

By including others that constitute Earth among those that can be loved, Aquinas widened significantly the scope of this highest kind of love and enfolds love for others that constitute Earth in a triad of love with God. However subsidiary loving Earth's others is to loving one's human neighbors, they can nevertheless be loved with the highest kind of love, one that is both oriented toward sustaining human bodily well-being in the quest for eternal happiness with God and toward assuring that God's many different creatures are preserved for God's honor and glory.

ACTING LOVINGLY

Following biblically-based teachings by Thomas Aquinas, Augustine and other eminent theologians in our tradition, Catholics should seriously consider themselves as called during our time of widespread environmental destruction and degradation to love God's Earth with its diverse constituents. God willed the possibility that species and biological systems could emerge out of the evolutionary process, empowered their emergence through that process, and sustains their ability to function through foundational laws. If Catholics truly desire to demonstrate that they are *imago Dei*, they will strive to image God's sustaining love. They will show their love by not interfering with the functioning and self-development of Earth's other inhabitants over time and space. They will strive to approach species and systems lovingly because God is present to and through the natural environment with its diverse



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species, God lovingly empowers them to function in relation to one another according to their natural capacities, and God lovingly entrusts to rational creatures the responsibility of managing *themselves* so they do not degrade or destroy the natural functioning of species in relation to their habitats, communities, ecological systems and the biosphere. Catholics will also strive to assure that the manifestations of God's loving, caring, generous giving, empowering, and freedom-endowing attributes through biota and abiota — all living and non-living creatures — are not thwarted.

Extending Aquinas's thinking to the functioning of biological systems as they are scientifically understood, faithful Catholics will love them with the love we call desire that they may flourish in symbiotic relationship with their living and non-living constituents, including rational beings who encounter them lovingly in their recreating and self-sustaining activities. The faithful will strive to image God's continuous and uninterrupted care for them through the internal self-sustaining capacity with which God gifted them by avoiding actions that destroy those capacities.

As God loves species and biological systems with the love we call friendship because they are valuable for humans to sustain their temporal lives, faithful Catholics will strive to image God's love for them as sources essential to meet their familial, economic and recreational needs in life. The faithful will show their love by conserving them at the local level and seeking protection for them when necessary at higher levels of decision-making and implementation of environmentally sound decisions that are made. The faithful will follow the maxim of causing no evil to their neighbors near and far, now and into the future by degrading, destroying, or using up the goods of Earth thereby rendering them unavailable for their neighbors in the most altruistic sense.

Catholics will also love other constituents of Earth for their capacity to manifest God's presence and character. Those who love species and systems will avoid actions that degrade them so other humans near and far, now and into the future can experience the presence of God. Lovers of Earth will limit their use to the necessities of life and behold them as means through which they can experience God's

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Catechesis: Encountering the Living Christ

Catechetical Sunday, September 16, 2007

by Daniel S. Mulhall

In 1935 the Congregation of the Council (established at the last session of the Council of Trent in 1563 to oversee the interpretation and norms of that Council, and thus the governing body for catechesis) issued the *Decree on the Better Care and Promotion of Catechetical Instruction*, which included this statement:

In order that the minds of the Christian people may be directed to religious instruction, let a Catechetical Day be established in each parish, if this has not already been done. On this day, let the Feast of Christian Doctrine be celebrated with as much solemnity as possible.

This decree led to what we now know as Catechetical Sunday. This year's celebration marks the seventy-second consecutive year that a catechetical day has been officially held here in the United States. Catechetical Sunday is officially celebrated on the third Sunday of September, although numerous dioceses throughout the United States choose to celebrate the occasion at a different time during the year.

The theme for Catechetical Sunday is chosen each year by the Bishops' Committee on Catechesis. (With the current reorganization of the USCCB, the committee will be renamed in January 2008 as the Committee for Evangelization and Catechesis.) The theme chosen for 2007 is "Catechesis: Encountering the Living Christ" (*Catequesis: encuentro con Cristo vivo.*) The theme chosen for 2008 is "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church" (*La palabra de Dios en la vida y misio_ de la iglesia*).

As has become a part of the tradition, the USCCB Department of Education has produced a resource to assist parishes and dioceses in the celebration of Catechetical Sunday 2007. This tradition goes back to the early days of the National Center for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (founded in Washington, DC, in May 1935 under the episcopal leadership of Archbishop Edwin V. O'Hara), which prepared sermon outlines and proposed events to encourage dioceses and parishes to celebrate this occasion.

The artwork for the 2007 resource was created by Fran Gregory. The artwork suggests that catechesis serves as a doorway through which Christ is encountered. This doorway opens onto avenue for people into the Church. Surrounding this doorway are symbols that illustrate Word and Worship, Sacraments and Christian Witness, all

means for our encountering Christ through the church. There should be no doubt that all catechesis flows from the church and leads us back to the church, a theme developed in Chapter 4 of the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

Included in the resource kit are a book and a CD-ROM. The book provides suggestions for celebrating Catechetical Sunday in your parish and diocese. Many of the resources contained in the book can also be found on the CD-ROM, making it easier for the user to print articles for distribution. In addition, the CD-ROM contains numerous articles to help the user to continue the theme of Catechetical Sunday throughout the coming catechetical year. These materials are designed to help in catechist formation and to assist parents in their role as the primary catechists for their children. Available at an additional cost are English and Spanish language prayer cards, commissioning certificates, family commitment cards, and the promotional poster.

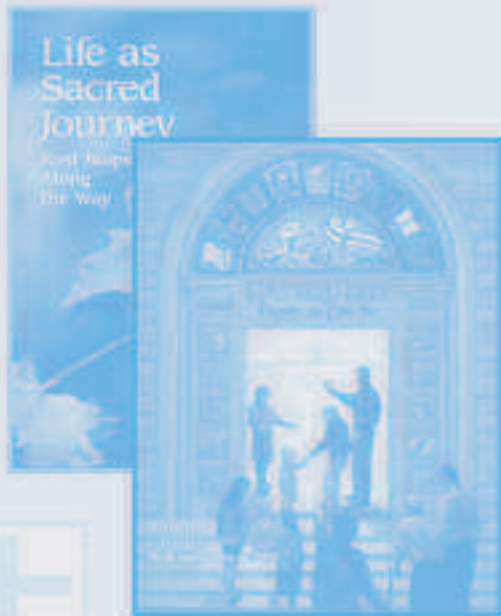
Whether you purchase any of the materials prepared by the USCCB, use materials created by other sources, or make up your own is of little concern to me. What does matter a great deal is that parishes and dioceses set aside a day each year to celebrate everyone who plays a role in catechesis, whether they do so as parents, teachers, catechists, catechetical leaders, secretaries, janitors, aides, pastors, or on advisory boards, committees, or commissions. As Bishop Matthew Brady (the second episcopal director of the National Center for the CCD) wrote in the 1940s "the human tendency to forget, the human interest and human enthusiasm that easily wane, need a periodic goad to keep them alive."

Take this time to commission catechists in the name of the parish or diocese and to thank them on behalf of the entire faith community. Use this day to educate the community about the importance of catechesis and their essential role in its successful implementation. Allow the theme to help you to plan out your calendar for the entire year. Do something to show that catechesis is important to you and to the faith community, to show that catechesis is the way that most people encounter the living Christ. |

Daniel S. Mulhall currently serves as the assistant secretary for catechesis and inculturation at the USCCB. He has been responsible for developing Catechetical Sunday materials since 1998.

Catechetical Sunday September 16, 2007

This year's theme is
"Encountering the Living Christ."



A REMINDER TO ORDER YOUR CATECHETICAL SUNDAY MATERIALS

Parishes are encouraged to honor catechists on Catechetical Sunday and throughout the year. All Catechetical Sunday materials may be purchased from NCCL by calling 1-800-350-7865 or online at www.nccl.org.

Dear Catechetical Leader,

We're picturing a few typical catechists in your parish...

They are harried and hurried and will spend only a **minimal amount of time** looking at the textbook lesson, preparing pertinent activities, and thinking about ways to pray with their classes.

Jesus faced a similar predicament. As he looked over his loyal band of followers, he must have wondered how he would ever get them **from where they were to where they needed to be** as laborers "in the field of the Lord." He invited them to "Come follow me," but it took three years to get them ready.

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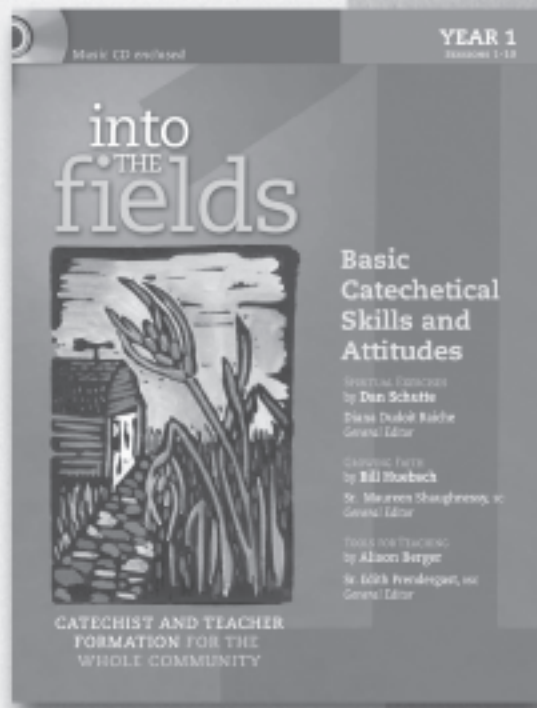
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Helen Johnson

NATIONAL CONSULTANT FOR INTO THE FIELDS





CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

CIRCLES OF SOLIDARITY AND SYNERGY FORUMS AND HOW THEY FUNCTION

by Carolyn Saucier

We meet awkwardly in the stories of our lives,

I invite you to walk the promise of paradox,

I find you dancing the truth of mystery



NCCL's by-laws of 2000 established three distinct conference forums—Diocesan Directors and Vicars Forum, Diocesan Leadership Staff Forum and the Parish Catechetical Leaders Forum—that usually convene at NCCL's Annual Conference. In this issue's Update we open the conversation about forums—their past, present and potential.

—Editor

FPO

Author
photo

When asked, “What is truth?” the great educator, Parker Palmer, wisely responded, “To be in truth, one must be in the conversation.” One must be primed for enlightenment and lively processing of the issues. A most energizing way to be in conversation is the Forum! Typically NCCL's forums — Diocesan Directors and Vicars Forum, Diocesan Leadership Staff Forum, and Parish Catechetical Leaders Forum — convene at the Annual Conference. Members come to learn and share promising ideas and practices in conversation with colleagues from across the country. But I believe we have just begun to crack the potential of the forum model.

What is a forum? It is a gathering place or assembly where participants can learn and grow both spiritually and intellectually through dialogue, discussion, and debate — and have a good time doing so. Even more, forum becomes a dynamic for uncovering truth as new and creative ideas emerge out of the experiences, expertise, yearnings and insights of those present. *Solidarity* and *synergy* are the words I have chosen to capture the meaning of *forum*.

Solidarity is a communion of interests and responsibilities in a group — a unity of purpose. We come with a whole spectrum of needs, gifts and skills, but we are united in our desire to promote the catechetical ministry. In forum conversation no one person is

better or stronger than another — no one is the resident expert. Rather we are interdependent — called to listen attentively, question wisely, resource appropriately — and in this solidarity gain new insight and techniques, spawn new hope and possibilities.

The creativity that happens when presence and purpose are connected is the gift and power of *synergy*. In biology, synergy is the combined healthy action of every organ of a system. In ministry, it is what occurs when discrete yet compatible agents act together to create an effect greater than the sum of the parts — a discovery of a new and larger truth emerging from the energy of self-giving conversation. Often this truth is exciting — but sometimes it can be disconcerting.

The needs of our constituents are so varied, so many wide questions and unresolved issues must be held in a creative tension. Forum conversation — or we might say, *dialogue faithful to a vision* — is no quick or easy task! It is a demanding, paradoxical process rooted in a trained receptivity to the other and requiring an extended period of time. There is no precise agenda — and yet staying on task and focused is crucial to the dynamic. Unity surfaces in our diversity. Ideas build on one another as we actively engage the issue and respond from experience and insight. Our disparate energies become one of community — personal but not individual need. And in this cohesion and openness, we begin to see with new eyes and imagine with new heart. Only then can different possibilities emerge.



continued from page U1

Forums are like a well of living water. Stay with the conversation and go deeper — you will be refreshed and new life will be born. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well? No doubt hers was one of the most heart-stirring and mind-bending — yet soul-transforming — conversations anyone ever had with Jesus.

STAFF FORUM CHALLENGES

The NCCL bylaws describe forums as “constituency-based groups whose members share a common role within the catechetical community.” Herein lies the first hurdle! Diocesan staff are wonderfully heterogeneous — diverse in their expertise and responsibilities. Some minister primarily to adults, others to youth — and still others womb to tomb. Some are more involved in media and technology while others give their energy to evangelization or retentions/recruitment of catechetical leaders.

Thus our mission statement reads: “As Diocesan Staff we gather in our unique perspectives to voice issues and concerns, to share resources, identify gifts and support the mission of NCCL.” *But* forums are not intended as simply a sharing or networking of ideas and practices; they are not analogous to round tables. Networking is an important and necessary level of conversation — but *forum* (as discussed earlier) is the dynamic of unveiling deeper and more resourceful ideas through disciplined conversation. It is discovering in communion new answers to long-standing questions and issues — the dynamic of emergent truth.

Easier said than done! There are many pitfalls — failure to really listen, domination by one speaker, straying off topic or remaining at a superficial level. Questions set a direction for the discussion, but too often we give answers without hearing the deeper questions, without grasping the context, without letting go individual agendas. We must focus our vision but not too tightly — letting go control and giving the process room to work. Ultimately we are called to stand with one another in humility and hope.

I am reminded of the entertaining yet compelling musical, “1776” by Peter Stone and Sherman Edwards. It is a freely adapted but most engaging and witty look at the historical events leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The setting of the drama is the Philadelphia convention and its contentious birthing of the resolve for independence. The signers’ conversation had all the marks of a good forum as well as all the pitfalls. But with passion and perseverance they struggled with the vision and lived the conversation into a new reality.

SYNERGY CIRCLES

As diocesan staff we have been experimenting for five years — with positive results, but on a deeper level with limited success. The question for the Diocesan Staff Forum animating team has always been *how to tap into the diverse resources and meet the diverse needs of*

In forum conversation, no one person is better or stronger than another — no one is the resident expert.

diocesan staff and at the same time maximize the potential of forum conversation.

For the past three years our forum has implemented the model of Synergy Circles. Here is how the process works. First, the animating team gleans from the membership its specific ministry areas of interest or concern. This typically occurs either at the annual forum gathering or a follow-up e-mail requesting ideas for next year’s forum. Ideally we do both. We seek evaluation of the forum experience as well as suggestions for topics and/or process for next year’s forum.

Second, the animating team discerns what seem to be the “top ten” issues and concerns from of all those who responded (usually about 30 to 40%). Several criteria are weighed: frequency, diversity, and range of the topics. A respondent’s passion and need around an issue also influences the choice.

At the NCCL Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio, in April of this year the following topics were featured at the Diocesan Staff Forum as synergy circles.

- **Evangelization:** Lighting the Fire of Faith
- Promoting/Using the **National Adult Catechism**
- Exploring **Technology** Opportunities in Catechesis
- **Recruiting and Retaining** Catechetical Leaders
- **Forming Adults in Faith** — Practices and Opportunities
- **Faith Formation through Service and Social Justice**
- **Training Catechetical Leaders:** Mentoring and other Models
- Dancing together: **Ministry and Catechesis to Youth**
- Models and Resources for **Parish-Based Bible Study**
- **Reaching out to Young Adults**

Each attendee was invited to choose the two issues or concerns most germane to his or her ministry and join that particular “synergy circle”. Each circle of chairs was marked with one of the topics. The animators asked that one person in each circle act as facilitator for the group. They also urged all participants to listen attentively, question wisely, and draw upon appropriate resources during the discussion.

And the conversations were off to a running start! One could sense the vibrant energy in the room as well as much *fruitful* interaction. Sharing of concerns, needs, ideas, and resources was abundant. Difficult questions were raised and tentative solutions proffered. Frequently people exchanged e-mail addresses and business cards to keep in touch about an area of interest. At the end of forty minutes

all were invited to choose a new synergy topic; quickly most participants moved to a second circle and a different issue. A few remained with the same issue — so strong was their passion and concern in this particular area.

HEALTHY FEEDBACK

There was much positive feedback from this year's forum. Members valued the opportunity for contacts, sharing ideas and mutual support. But there was also much thought provoking critique. "I was with the Technology group, and we raised almost as many issues as resources in our conversation. While the session was enjoyable, it was a bit of a 'shot-gun' approach — more of a scattered than a focused conversation," said Christopher Weber of ~~Catholic Education Ministries at Mount St. Mary's College in Maryland~~. "I do not think any of the forums are currently functioning as they were designed to function. The original vision of the forums depicted them as vibrant "meeting places" where the constituent groups voiced mutual concerns, supported one another in ministry, and responded to issues of the organization. You simply cannot do this meeting once a year. I am sure that the original designers figured that the rest of the conversations and work of the forums would take place online, through message board, list-serves, conference calls and the like."

Many wide questions and unresolved issues must be held in a creative tension.

Even as forums offer the opportunity and bear the weight of addressing unresolved issues, the dynamic of the forum itself is still in tension. As we look to the future we must live the questions: How do we structure the forum in order to maximize its conversation potential for insight and growth? How can the forum best serve NCCL members and those to whom we minister?

SOME MODELS

I do not offer conclusive answers, but I do have tentative proposals rooted in the solidarity/synergy vision of forums, taken shape through five years experience, and flowing from the wisdom of diocesan staff membership. I offer three models to be rotated in a cycle dependent upon feedback from and need of participants.

- 1) **Use the synergy circles as described above.** Take time to promote a deeper understanding of the meaning and potential of forum conversation as well as its necessary disciplines. Make certain that each circle has a designated facilitator and allow more time for the dialogue — a minimum of an hour.
- 2) **Offer one particular topic in an extended time frame that encourages an interactive dynamic.** Choose an issue or concern germane to many diocesan staff as surfaced through evaluations.

Invite a guest speaker to address this issue with depth and thoroughness. After this presentation, allow for conversation in groups of about five or six so that diocesan personnel can share insights gained as well as struggle with questions of integration or utilization. Close with questions addressed to the presenter or group at large — questions that surface in the smaller groups. (For example there seems to be a lot of interest in the possibilities of technology in ministry at a diocesan level: available options, use of technology with faith formation, collaboration in our endeavors, use of IT personnel, marketing, cost and affordability, and so on.)

- 3) **Offer a joint forum including both diocesan directors and diocesan staff.** Such a plan remains an unresolved issue absorbing much attendant energy. There are many means and levels of collaboration between diocesan staff and directors as well as overlapping areas of responsibility — even as there are significant differences. I am convinced we must carry the tension and live the question unto resolution — always in deep appreciation of the uniqueness of these two ministry roles within diverse diocesan structures.

Perhaps every third or fourth year the two forums could unite their efforts and plan a conversation around a particular issue germane to both groups. This could help fill in gaps of communication, deepen our sense of one other, shape practical strategies, and strengthen our communal prophetic voice for catechesis.

Of course, hospitality is always crucial to forum events. Welcome one another, laugh together, pray together, indulge in chocolate! And in the conversation dynamic listen attentively, ponder in your heart, speak in humility and hope, and surrender to the creative wisdom of the Spirit.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Even as we are experimenting with different strategies for the annual forum, we must also be committed to continuing the conversation through the year. We need to promote greater involvement of the membership both preceding and following the forum event. Computer technology offers multiple avenues — e-mail, message boards, blogs, chat-rooms, lists, conference calls — to mention only a few.

Ultimately, forums hold the potential for inviting us to new horizons. Whatever meaning one arrives at individually, it is through the sharing and articulation of this meaning in conversation with others that real understanding is achieved. And in this communion of understanding — *this solidarity and synergy* — the way to creative integration begins to unfold: "I find you dancing the truth of mystery." ¶

Carolyn Saucier is the mother of six and a facilitator and passionate advocate for adult faith formation, especially through the gift of faith stories. She has been associate director of religious education in the Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri, for fifteen years.

PCL FORUM: WEAVING TOGETHER

by April Dietrich and Michael Westenberg



The PCL Forum has been meeting since 1994. The Forum is a collegial experience, a place where parish catechetical leaders have the opportunity to stretch their understanding of ministry through connectivity with others as well as participation in workshops offered during Forum gatherings. We have discussed issues with one another, we have learned from one another and we have grown in our spirituality and ministry. Each PCL brings to the table a unique aspect of who we are. Those of us who have attended the Forum at the Annual Conference since its beginnings have been blessed by one another in ways impossible to enumerate.

WHAT THE FORUM OFFERS PCLs

The PCL Forum offers us the ability to empower one another in ministry. As a PCL, one's ministry is unique in many ways. The challenges we face, the joys we have are best experienced in community. The community that we have become as PCLs within the structure of NCCL is invaluable. Each one of us brings to the table a wealth of knowledge, experience, enthusiasm and companionship that we need to continue to foster growth in our ministries.

Those who come to the table for the first time or who are new in the ministry bring with them their own experience, their own stories. The questions they ask are often the catalyst for discussions that renew,

refresh and remind the more seasoned PCLs of the wonderful aspects of ministry we share. We also take time to share our joys and sorrows, grieving and celebrating with and for one another. The challenges we face are often a topic of conversation. An excellent example: This year's presentation in Columbus on Survival Skills for PCLs. Patricia Hoyt and Mia Crosthwaite highlighted and demonstrated survival techniques critical to all who minister in the church today. Approximately two hundred attended their workshop for the PCL Forum.

At the Forum we also address the work of NCCL, explaining to first-timers the structure of NCCL and work of the committees. We encourage our participants to join in the work of the organization.

The leadership of the Forum (those who have served or are serving on the representative council) has made an effort to take the pulse of the forum regularly and address the needs of our constituents in our Annual Conference gatherings. We are a grass-roots endeavor. The Forum exists for the PCLs, not the other way around.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

Although we've come far, we have much work ahead of us. We hope to establish new ways of connecting outside the Annual Conference, new ways of addressing the needs of the PCLs at the Conference, and new ways of growing and nurturing our ministries in general.

Communication is going to be a key factor to our future. In our ministry, we have very little discretionary funding to hold symposiums or other gatherings outside the Annual Conference. The leadership team will be looking at different types of technologies that may be able to facilitate ongoing communication between PCLs in the organization. Our hope is to be creative, thinking outside the proverbial box and use the technology at our disposal to better inform and nurture one another. We fully expect to make better use of the utilities on the NCCL website as well as other technologies.

Another key to our future as a forum will be developing our gatherings at the Annual Conference. We hope to continue workshops, discussions and information gathering, but also to develop some grass-roots movement for continuing to nurture ourselves as PCLs as we face the future together. We need to find new ways to gather PCLs' insights regarding all things catechetical. This is one of the ways PCLs' voices can be heard, especially the voices of those who have no opportunity to meet provincially.

Another challenge that we face as a forum is to constantly be a voice of advocacy for those in catechetical ministry. Many of our fold are retiring from ministry; some have passed on, literally dying in their boots; and some have moved into other ministries.

We look around and see how we are aging, and look further to see who will be replacing us at the table. The younger faces are fewer and farther between; those of us who were once "babies" in the ministry are now pushing middle age and the recently middle aged are looking at retirement in the near future. Who will be at the forum table in ten, fifteen, or twenty years? We will continue to advocate for ways to build up our ministry. We will also continue to find ways as a forum to raise consciousness of justice for our ministry. Many of us are paid low wages for the number of hours worked; we have no portability of benefits; and funds to continue our education are often not there. Some of us are being replaced with leaders who lack the common competencies and have little time or energy to put toward obtaining those competencies.

While we recognize that these problems are endemic in the church, not only among PCLs, it is in our best interest as to advocate for a brighter future for our successors in the vineyard.

THE FABRIC OF WHO WE ARE

The opportunity to gather at the Annual Conference will continue to play a key role in the Forum, but we hope that in the future it will not be the only way we connect and gather input. The PCLs who have participated in the Forum have brought to one another wisdom, questions, hope and life. Michelle Harris, a past PCL Forum animator and current member of the leadership for the Forum reflects, "I have always felt welcome in the Conference. I realize that we are still in the midst of change with the possibility of more change to come... I have always felt like there was a place at the table for me as a parish catechetical leader... Even when I had no vote I knew that I had a voice that was carefully listened to and respected. The Forum, as part of the Conference, nourished me as a parish leader with fellowship and information."

The camaraderie that we have experienced through our challenges and changes in the past will not go unremembered; it has become part of the fabric of who we are as catechetical ministers. We will continue to find ways to foster this aspect of who we are as the PCL Forum.

Past, present and future, NCCL's PCL Forum is at its core a gathering of individuals who weave together their experiences, knowledge and challenges into a colorful tapestry. Each thread contributes to the beauty of the picture, which then is a source of joy for all to behold and tells the story of who we were, are and hope to be. ■

April Dietrich is director of adult catechesis at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Frederick, Maryland.

Michael Westenberg is director of religious education and social concerns at St. Matthew Catholic Church, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

FPO

Author
photo

FROM OUR OUTGOING PCL FORUM ANIMATOR

It would seem that we serve at a very “depressed” time for catechesis in our country. On the one hand the latest catechetical documents have placed great importance on the ministry, however “in the vineyard” we see budgets continually cut, job descriptions continually expanding, and professionals being replaced with volunteers. Nonetheless, those who continue in the field are passionate about their calling.

A constant challenge for the PCL Forum therefore is determining how we best support and serve our constituents. From the vantage point of the Forum administration, we would like to see as many PCLs as possible involved in the workings of NCCL business.

Theoretically our membership has a voice in governance of the organization through province reps, although very few provinces are structured in such a way as to elect or nominate a representative, and even those who are face the difficulty of financing that representation. Its unrealistic to think that individual PCLs can afford to absorb the \$1200 - \$1500 cost of attending the fall Council meeting and the Annual Conference.

The Annual Conference is the one time that we have a large number of our constituents present, and therefore a great time to discuss how to organize. However, our leadership has learned that to spend substantial time discussing province structure and representation is a guaranteed

way to get people moving towards the exits. By the time we get to the Forum meetings in our Annual Conference, we’ve found that people have listened to enough talks and been through enough business meetings. It might be what the Forum needs, but not what the members of the Forum need — right then.

We also need to “lift up” or support the PCLs who come to the Conference. We need to feel renewed and reenergized through spending time with others who share the challenges we do; through meeting people from across the country who have also been called and led by the Spirit into this ministry. We need time to share successes and challenges and tell of our journey through deserts — and the oases we were surprised by. Like the weary sojourners in Luke’s Emmaus story, we need time to share our journey and to feel our hearts burning once again.

We’ve worked at supporting PCLs at our Forum meetings in a variety of ways the past few years. We’ve structured into the Forum agenda a mixing of people from various areas of the country and provided opportunities for those closer to home to get to meet each other. We’ve taken time to pray with each other and for each other. We’ve exchanged contact information so we can extend the conversation beyond just the meeting. We’ve set themes and had discussions of best practices over various topics. We’ve spent time just talking about the needs of practitioners in the field and how NCCL might help.

— Michael Westenberg

FPO

Author
photo

FROM THE NEW PCL FORUM ANIMATOR

So much of what we do as PCLs depends upon communication and connectivity. What I have learned from others during our gatherings has enriched my ministry and my own personal spirituality. Many of us have grown and been stretched by friendships made in the forum. Beyond that, our collective voice has made an impact on other people’s ministries as well as the organization. An example of this: In Houston, I was fascinated that my voice would have an impact on some members at the general gathering during the discussion over NCCL 2000! (At that time, I was under the false impression that I was only a PCL — a notion of which I was quickly cured by the reassurances of both PCLs and diocesan directors and staff.)

That voice is one of the reasons why membership in the Forum is so important. Many of us are in this ministry because we love to effect change and conversion. I personally get a thrill every time that light goes on in someone’s eyes during a presentation. We are all catalysts for change in our ministries, and many times it’s easy to overlook the direct effect we have on people’s lives. The Forum is another opportunity to

have an effect on the catechetical ministry through our relationships with one another as well as with the organization.

One of the best aspects of the Forum is that, in conversation with others, many of us have been made aware of simple revelations about ourselves and our ministries. I have never gone home from an Annual Conference the same person I was when I came. I attribute this experience to the Forum. We have made friends, have learned survival skills, and at times have also been given a comeuppance: what one may have thought was a bad situation could have been worse. As a member of the PCL Forum since 1998, I have great respect for those who came before me, the gifts that they have brought to the Forum, and the way they have shaped it and each other. As the new animator, I have a deep, abiding respect for the past, for the wonderful leaders whose shoulders I stand upon. I have great hopes for our future as a forum as we forge into the future and together face joyfully and boldly the changes and challenges that await us!

— April Dietrich

A BRIEF HISTORY: INCORPORATING THE PCL THREAD

The PCL Forum has been active for approximately thirteen years as an opportunity for parish catechetical leaders to gather, grow, and connect. We have been an invited presence in NCCL from 1991, when the organization was still NCDD (the National Conference of Diocesan Directors, which became NCCL in 1992). Sr. Anne Marie Smith from Phoenix was our first representative to the board, and at that time, there was only one other PCL organization with membership: Steve Meyers represented the Green Bay PCLs. Both Steve and Sr. Anne Marie were at the fall Board meeting. In 1993, Steve was elected to the board and at the fall meeting, there were five PCLs present.

As of April '93, our growing presence included nine PCL organizations, and in October of '94 the first PCL Forum gathering took place. We established a structure for ourselves, terms were defined, a forum facilitator was chosen, and a peer ministry coordinator was chosen. At that time, an orientation packet was designed for the new Representative Council members and the Forum asked the board for a policy on inviting new PCL provincial membership to the Representative Council.

In April 1995 Sr. Anne Marie Smith and Joe Swiss collected information about diocesan associations for PCLs and presented their findings to the Representative Council. By that time our presence had blossomed to twenty-four PCL associations, and fourteen provinces had the ability to send a PCL Representative to the Council. The Annual Conference in New Orleans had a gathering of PCLs that occurred during the conference yet not on the conference agenda. Two issues were raised: the need for DRE round tables and the request to revise the information packet that was sent to newcomers.

The survey results reported in Sr. Anne Marie's letter identified the following needs: transferable benefits between dioceses, certification for catechists, and multicultural materials.

By early 1996, NCCL had thirty-three PCL association memberships, and that year, about three hundred PCLs attended the Annual Conference in Detroit. That year PCLs were also asked to write articles for *Catechetical Update*. The PCL Forum had scheduled time on the Representative council agenda for the first time in the fall of 1997.

In Indianapolis in 1999, the committee for NCCL 2000 was formed with two PCLs included: Janet Martyn and Joe Swiss. The proposal for change overall would also change PCL membership status. In Houston in 2000, the organization gave thumbs up to the proposed NCCL 2000 changes — and the work began.

From the adoption of NCCL 2000, the presence and work of the PCLs who are members of our organization has continued to grow and be felt in many ways. PCLs are a presence in every aspect of NCCL — from the grassroots; through committees, representative council, board — even to the presidency!

Since 2001, the PCL Forum has continued to meet regularly during the Annual Conference.

Special thanks to Michelle Harris for her contribution on the history of the PCL Forum.

Catechetical Update Is Now Available Online

Catechetical Update is a valuable resource for our members. You can now access the pages free of charge from the NCCL website (www.nccl.org) under the “resources” tab. You must login as a member in order to view the page and download the articles.



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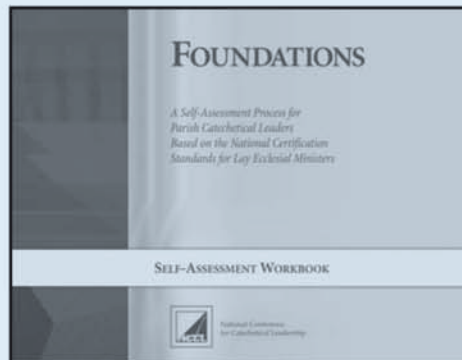
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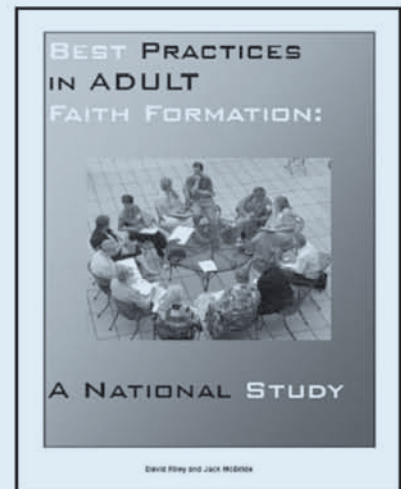
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Best Practices in Adult Faith Formation: A National Study

The Adult Faith Formation Committee of NCCL was asked to develop and implement a national study to examine how parishes across the US give primacy to adult faith formation. This findings of this study were authored by Dave Riley and Jack McBride with the assistance of committee members: April Dietrich, Dan Thomas, and Sr. Mary Caroline Marchal.

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SIGNPOSTS OF RENEWAL

Christianity For the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church Is Transforming the Faith by Diana Butler Bass. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006. Hardcover, 336 pages, \$23.95.

Reviewed by Daniel L. Thomas

FPO

Book
image

Where are the dynamic churches in the United States today? Many would answer, “In the evangelical churches or the mega-churches.” But Diana Butler Bass has a different answer based on her study of mainline Protestant churches done in the last several years. In *Christianity For the Rest of Us*, the latest of several books she has done on these

mainline churches, she presents “Ten Signposts of Renewal” which describe a combination of practices that make these churches the exciting, dynamic places they are.

The book begins by remembering the church as many of us older Christians knew as young people, the “village church” that was the center of the community for Protestants (and for Catholics the center of their lives in a hostile environment). I was reminded of the Catholic community I grew up in during the 1940s and ‘50s.

Bass challenges the picture of “America [as] a singularly Christian nation” that many evangelical Christians present. Her image is of a nation whose “ancient spiritual stories draw from four major taproots, only two of which were Christian: Native American, Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Protestant.” In looking at American churches from the past and today, the images of church she sees are these:

- **A gathering of saints:** Personal salvation is its center, involving a definitive choice between heaven and hell. Boundaries are clear and absolute.
- **A hospital for sinners:** We are sickened by sin, thus need faith, a trust in God.
- **A Christian Rotary Club:** A religious place offers social acceptability and business connections. Everyone is welcome; there are no spiritual demands.
- **A pilgrim community:** Today’s church embarks on a journey together.

It is this fourth image that she has discovered in her recent studies of mainline congregations in which “Jesus is not the way we get somewhere; Jesus is the Christian journey itself, a pilgrimage that culminates in the wayfarer’s arrival in God.” In this book she describes the qualities and practices that characterize those places:

- **Hospitality** — Welcoming Strangers

She quotes Henri Nouwen: “Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.”

- **Discernment** — Listening for Truth

This involves searching as a congregation for what God is calling us to do.

- **Healing** — Entering Shalom

The congregation opens itself to the possibility that physical healings can happen through prayer and laying on of hands. But, in addition, this involves “bringing your brokenness” and seeking harmony, “the overcoming of divisions, hatred, and discord; the mending of that which is broken — a healing or making whole.”

- **Contemplation**

The congregation is open to prayer as listening to God in silence.

- **Testimony:**

“Testimony is not about fixing God’s people. Rather it speaks of God making wholeness out of human woundedness, human incompleteness.”

- **Diversity** — Making Community

- **Justice** — Engaging the Powers

- **Worship** — Experiencing God

- **Reflection** — Thinking Theologically

- **Beauty** — Touching the Divine

The means are music, architecture, and art.

continued on page 16

The final section of the book is entitled “From Tourists to Pilgrims.” Using Trinity Episcopal Church in New York City for a guide, Bass describes the role of the Christian church in today’s world. Trinity is the church that came to the fore as a result of 9/11 because it was nearly destroyed. It became a place for tourists (an image for many in post-modern life), who are “unmoored, nomads in a fractured world, trying to make spiritual and theological sense of the changes — the violence, suffering and war — that have engulfed us.”

The dynamic churches described here call for pilgrims: “Unlike being a tourist, we embark on a pilgrimage, not to escape life, but to embrace it more deeply, to be transformed wholly as a person with new ways of being in community and new hopes for the world. Being a tourist means experiencing something new. Pilgrimages go somewhere — to a transformed life.”

What Diana Butler Bass tells in this book are stories of churches that are on the cutting edge, moving beyond the ways that once worked well but fail to speak to contemporary culture. The book balances theory and practice, providing guidelines for measuring what we need to be about as churches on pilgrimage — to the life shown us by the Christ who lived among us, calling us to the reign of God so beyond all our expectations. |

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A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE: A PARISH GUIDE FOR RENEWAL

by Frank J. Zolvinski

FPO

Author
photo

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. . .”
(Matt: 28:19)

As a diocesan director of faith formation, I find myself involved in a lot of individual parish consultations, working with DREs on a one-to-one basis.

Many times it's helping them problem solve, form catechists, develop their own professional goals, handle a disgruntled parent or resolve occasional personnel problems. Our ministry calls us to this type of personal commitment and usually the results have positive outcomes but can be time consuming for a “single person” office.

Every now and then we have an opportunity to see the bigger picture and have a chance to make a greater impact on those we serve in the wider catechetical community.

Anniversary celebrations provide a wonderful opportunity to see the bigger picture and make a greater impact on those we serve.

If we plan creatively and work collaboratively we can draw more people into the process and create a sense of ownership as we move forward. Such was the case as our diocese prepared to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary this past year.

Anniversary celebrations are a wonderful opportunity to recall our collective history, reflect on our accomplishments and to thank God for the blessings received thus far. Our diocese would do all that in a year-long celebration of activities and more. But looking back was not enough; we wanted to use this time more productively and challenge the faithful to look ahead to the future and re-vision where we want to go and who we want to become as a catechetical community of believers. It seemed a perfect time to call people together to dialogue, discuss and chart a renewed direction in faith formation.

Five diocesan offices were involved in developing a reflection booklet to guide parishes engaged in this process. They were the offices of Worship, Parish Life, Religious Education, Peace and Justice, and Stewardship. My task was to provide a theological reflection piece in the area of catechesis and faith formation with a set of study questions that would lead the participants to set goals for parish faith formation.

This guide was to incorporate Scripture and catechetical documents in a manner that would be user friendly and easily understood by the laity. The section on faith formation was short and to the point so as not to overwhelm folks with highly technical jargon. The chapter was written in two parts so that each could be facilitated in an hour and a half session. Study guides were printed in English and Spanish and we provided in-service training for facilitators where needed. We called our program *A Future Full of Hope: A Parish Guide to Renewal*.

Parish groups could meet in a variety of formats, in one to three sessions, for prayer, reflection, discussion and hospitality. The goal was for each parish to identify needs and set concrete goals that would focus and direct the mission of the parish into the future. At the end of six months 95% of our parishes had completed the process and three areas of concern were surfaced. As you might expect, many of the parishes identified adult faith formation as a primary target for the parish education commission. Other issues, such as evangelization and effective youth ministry, were also identified. Clearly our DREs and parish staffs would have their work cut out for them.

Parish commissions and pastoral councils were then challenged to create a plan of action to accomplish their goals in the coming years. Our diocesan offices were committed to helping parishes by providing assistance and resources to complete the process.

The energy and enthusiasm generated by *A Future Full of Hope* was infectious, as parishes shared their ideas and learned from each other. The process created a common sense of mission as we looked to the future as a diocese. Above all, it signaled to us that God's spirit was alive and active in the hearts and minds of the faithful and our parish leaders.

As one of the five diocesan offices involved in this process, I found that I was able to witness parish catechetical leaders take on more responsibility for faith formation. I was encouraged to see parish education commissions empowered to accept their call to become more evangelizing communities of faith as they began to chart their own course for the future. In the end my hope for the Diocese of Gary is that the next fifty years become as fruitful, faithful and exciting as the first fifty. ■


Frank J. Zolvinski is the director of religious education for the Diocese of Gary, Indiana. Copies of A Future Full of Hope are available upon request in Spanish or English. Contact him at fzolvins@dcgary.org or (219)769-9292 ext. 230.

a living today at the cost of jeopardizing their children's future. Special attention and relief from environmental degradation needs to be given to the poor. This calls for us to exercise the virtue of solidarity, which Pope John Paul II defines as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good" (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, No.38).

THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE

A distinctive Catholic approach to the environment calls us to practice the virtue of prudence. Unfortunately so much of the public debate about the environment has been terribly polarized and divisive. In common parlance, prudence is often thought of as caution. But in Catholic theology and moral teaching, prudence is a virtue which encourages the use of reason in a process of reflection and prayerful discernment. It is a virtue that applies both to individuals and the body politic. Prudence is vital to the moral health of the individual and society. Prudence is a civic virtue as well as a moral one. It is intelligence applied to critical problems and situations we face. It allows us to discern the common good in a given situation. Prudence requires a deliberative process in shaping the community's conscience. It helps us identify the principles at stake and helps us adopt appropriate courses of action for the sake of the common good. It is not simply a cautious or safe approach to challenges: "Rather, it is a thoughtful, deliberate and reasoned basis for taking or avoiding action to achieve a moral good," according to the U.S. Catholic bishops in their statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Dioceses, parishes and other Catholic organizations can and do make a contribution to the protection of the environment. There are many examples of activities at diocesan and parish  as well as at the national level in the area of policy (see page xxx.) In all of the examples, the church plays the role of bridge builder not bridge burner. While the church's environmental work has begun in earnest, significant challenges remain.



The first challenge is to stay the course. As consciousness grows about environmental issues, the church needs to remain close to peoples' concerns and offer its support and moral guidance. Catholics have a contribution to make and this will require mobilizing the resources of Catholic parishes, dioceses and organizations. This means continuing to educate and building the church's capacity to act. This is a long-term effort. Therefore, it will require attention and resources. The effort is underway but sustaining it is a significant pastoral challenge.

The second challenge is to come to terms with the church's relationship to science. Environmental issues necessarily involve science and technology. For example, while the basic science of global climate change seems more certain, the political disputes over perceived impacts make it more difficult to sort out the moral implications. Protecting endangered species raises concerns about how to protect other creatures while at the same time there is a need to balance property and economic rights. Nano-technology offers benefits but some are concerned with possible health and environmental impacts

No doubt there is need for greater scientific accuracy and for improved technological development. While we cannot rely solely upon science and technology for answers to environmental concerns, issues of science and technology lie at the heart of environmental public policy issues. The church cannot judge the quality of the science or adjudicate among various scientific opinions. Technology in some instances seems to be developing at such a rapid pace that it is difficult to keep up with the ethical implications. Deciding at what levels noxious emissions ought to be capped is more a matter of prudential judgment than moral principle. Whether we should choose to sequester carbon emissions using forests or underground is not a place for the church to take the lead.

Thus it is critical for Catholic universities, theologians and ethicists to reflect on these policy dilemmas. More thought and writing needs to be done to examine basic environmental issues and environmental regulatory measures in light of Catholic social teaching.



The Catholic contribution could be greater if we could devote more time, attention and debate in Catholic universities, journals, and other forums to the ethics of environmental policy matters from a Catholic perspective.

Finally, helping the poor achieve environmental justice remains a challenging priority. Whether the issue is climate change, depletion of fisheries, the siting of toxic dumps, or urban air pollution, the church must help communities understand that the poor will suffer the most. The developing countries are anxious to improve their economic situation and they have a right to do so. But, they need help not only to do this but to protect natural resources and prevent environmental degradation. Because many environmental issues are often cast as a false choice between saving the environment and saving the economy, the needs of the poor are drowned out in the contentious policy debates. The church has a unique capacity and an obligation to make sure that the voice of the poor is heard and their needs and rights are front and center in any discussions about the environment. We should not allow the right to develop to be played off against the right to a safe environment.

WHAT IT WILL TAKE

Since 1993, the Catholic bishops across the United States have been building a network of concern for the environment. While much has been learned over the past fourteen years, we must recommit ourselves to the journey to make environmental justice an integral part of the lives of the members of the Catholic community. This effort, if fruitful, will express itself in our prayer, thinking, work and investments. We must all take to heart the challenge of Pope John Paul that “today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone.”

While the pastoral mission is easy to state — help the Catholic Church in the United States begin to address ecological and environmental concerns in a more integrated and effective way — its

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pastoral implementation is complex. It requires a consideration of the unique characteristics and organizational structure of the Catholic community. It demands that the mission be approached in such a way that the Catholic community can understand how these environmental concerns relate to their daily life of prayer, worship, and ministry, particularly at the parish and local level. Finally, it means that any effort has to be rooted in Scripture and the church's rich social teachings. Only if all of these elements are integrated into a strategy can we hope to join with the US Catholic bishops and “pray with new conviction and concern for all God's creation: Send forth thy Spirit, Lord; And renew the face of the earth.” **I**

Walter E. Grazer served as the Director of the Environmental Justice Program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops from 1993 to June 30, 2007. Currently, he is a consultant on foreign policy, environment and religion.



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presence and discern God's attributes of love, generosity, empowerment, caring, and freedom-giving. Those who love them will want them to give glory to God and to honor God by functioning according to their natures unimpeded by selfish or thoughtless human actions. When loving biological systems and species on behalf of one's neighbors, the faithful love God and aim their loving actions toward their ultimate goal of eternal happiness with God.

Infused by God with the theological virtue of love and motivated by love that is friendship, Catholics will be aided by God's grace to *live morally virtuous* lives in relation to one another, other species, and biological systems. The faithful will *live prudently* by knowing about Earth others, what they need to flourish, what can be done to ameliorate their degradation, and actions that should be avoided to prevent additional degradation or destruction. They will live *moderately* by limiting their encounters with sensitive and endangered species and biological systems so others can have opportunities to enjoy them. They will *live justly* by respecting needs other species and systems have for unencumbered space within which to flourish and non-degrading ways in which people who live in these areas can interact with them. And, they will *live courageously* by standing firm for measures that protect species and systems out of love for them.

CATECHISTS AS EDUCATORS AND MODELS OF LOVE

The patristic-medieval theme of loving God's creation out of love for God and love for neighbor holds promise for addressing ecological concerns today. Connections can be made between teachings about loving creation and other teachings that permeate the Catholic tradition, especially the goodness, sacramentality, and integrity of God's creation as well as restraining one's use of God's creation to the necessities of life. Catechists are in unique positions to embrace their rich theological tradition and stimulate their parishioners' thinking about loving God's Earth and acting to protect it. Catechists can also choose to serve as models of Earth loving by demonstrating these teachings in their lives. ■

Jame Schaefer, PhD, assistant professor in theology at Marquette University, focuses on the constructive relationship between theology and the natural sciences with special attention to religious foundations for ecological ethics. Read more in her article "Catholic Foundations for Environmental Ethics: A Critical-Creative Approach to Patristic and Medieval Notions," in Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education 24.1 (2004): 31-68.

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BUILDING COMMUNITY, SKILLS AND IDENTITY AMONG CATECHISTS

by Jo Rotunno



The ministry of catechesis is both a privilege and a responsibility. The *National Directory for Catechesis* reminds us that the aim of catechesis is to bring people into communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ. What greater privilege could there be than to help others to deepen their Christian faith? But catechists also have the responsibility to prepare themselves as well as they can so that their efforts will have the best chance of assisting others on their faith journey.

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Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.
- William Butler Yeats

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William Sadlier Dinger, president of publishing house William H. Sadlier, Inc., will receive the Child of Peace Award at the 22nd Annual Child of Peace Award Dinner September 27 in New York City. Together with his wife Maureen Dinger, he will accept the award in recognition of their exemplary commitment to bettering the lives of those in need. All proceeds from the dinner will benefit the Maternity Services Program of Catholic Guardian Society and Home Bureau. Founded in

1925, the program provides over 500 mothers-to-be and mothers and their newborns with access to pre- and post-natal care, free counseling, safe new cribs with bumper guards and mattresses, blankets, layettes, baby clothing, baby formula, assistance with immunizations and other supportive services. It is one of several Catholic Guardian Society and Home Bureau programs designed to help families, children, and individuals with special needs. ■

Parishes are encouraged to honor all catechists on Catechetical Sunday. The lapel pins, posters and all Catechetical Sunday materials may be purchased from NCCL by calling 1-800-350-7865 or online at www.nccl.org.

ECHOES *continued from page 24*

learners in activities that help them understand their Catholic faith a little more clearly and connect its teachings with their daily life.

In the Theology modules to be released over the next six months, your catechists will have access to outstanding American theologians who will introduce them to core teachings of the Catholic faith. The booklet process then leads them in a process of faith reflection so important to their formation. Be sure to examine the new Theology booklets carefully. They have some new features, including questioning strategies that will make these modules more usable for general adult faith formation.

Each module of the new *Echoes of Faith Plus* has two key components — a DVD and a companion booklet. The DVD, best shown in a group setting, contains the four video segments that are used within the module process. The companion booklet holds the process for each module. Catechists will begin their process with a spiritual reflection related to the module theme, then move through the four segments with a combination of personal and group reflection, DVD viewing, and a response activity. They'll also find a follow-up article in each segment and a variety of articles and other resources in the back of the booklet to extend learning. The DVD includes two bonus interviews that can provide content for additional sessions. The new booklets even contain a free CD-ROM

(included with each booklet) to allow for home review of the module content.

Echoes Plus is not only for those who work with young people. The new module for adult faith formation follows the same pattern as the other catechetical modules to assist you in training facilitators who lead adult groups in faith reflection processes. The DVD contains interviews with parish facilitators and catechetical experts as well as classroom footage of adult faith formation sessions. Facilitators will learn why group process is important, what the differences might be among adult learners, and how to lead a process that helps adults both in building faith knowledge and in turning their hearts more completely toward Christ.

I often conclude workshops by reminding catechists of a line by the poet William Butler Yeats: "Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire." Let *Echoes of Faith Plus* help you set your catechists on fire with a love of the Lord and of their ministry so that they can increase the fire of Christian faith in the hearts of their learners. The learners who truly encounter Christ in our catechetical sessions have been given a gift of life — *for life*. ■

Jo Rotunno is director of creative development at RCL — Resources for Christian Living, which produced the Echoes of Faith project for NCCL. She has worked in catechist formation for the past twenty-five years.

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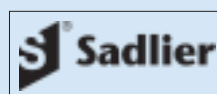


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~~Section: New department (name to come). It will be a regular department compiled by one person (Dan Pierson) consisting of 2 or 3 short book or website reviews . Please save a page near back for this - we'll work out name, headline, etc, and get back to you soon.~~

~~very short introduction to new feature copy to come.~~

~~FPO~~
Introduction ? ? 

The Practical Prophet: Pastoral Writings

Ken Untener, Paulist Press, 2007, 278 pages, \$19.95

Before he spoke, he would purse his lips, shut his eyes tight, and look within.

All around, people would smile. They knew they were in for something good.

They would always get it: in doses of Scripture and tradition held up to shining new light; in exhortations that would discomfort and spur inward reflection; in personal revelations that divulged his own humor, foibles, and humanity. And inevitably all would share new reasons to hope, and new intentions to act.

The Practical Prophet is a carefully selected and edited sampler of the bishop from Saginaw's thinking and writing. Most selections were ultimately delivered publicly, in front of altar or dais or at a piano, his favorite pulpit. Those who remember his talks can retrieve the in-person experiences, the twinkling eyes and head tilts that were part of the delivery. This time they should read to appreciate the craftsmanship of this practical prophet and the depth of his research. All readers can appreciate the careful, sparse construction. Ken's phrasings were so well worked that delivery seemed spontaneous.

Catechetical readers might first turn to the address, "What a Prophet Does and Does Not Do." Though it was delivered to priests and shaped for parish priests, it still has relevance to the person and mission of the catechist. The remaining writings focus on current issues that, prophetically, still stir hearts or stomachs. Ever leaning to themes of social justice and restored right relationships, the thoughts expressed are never far away from the poor and the outcasts. This would be an excellent team-reading book for parish staffs. It could offer a common around which to share pastoral and prophetic hope, new intentions, and new ministerial commitments. |

Dan Gast is director of INSPIRE (www.inspireproject.org), a partnership initiative of Loyola University Chicago and the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Religious Education at a Crossroads: Moving on in the Freedom of the Spirit

Francoise Darcy-Berube, Paulist Press, 1995, 159 pages, \$9.95

Since Francoise Darcy-Berube published *Religious Education at the Crossroads* in 1995, we are continually presented with an increased collection of curriculum, books, resources and media that at times can confuse and overwhelm.

Before we proceed to develop our programs and select corresponding strategies and resources, Darcy-Berube believes that rediscovering that the kingdom, the reign of God, the heart of our faith and ministry would bring us to the spiritual conversion we need to move to a more holistic vision and a pastoral approach to religious education. She quotes Edward Schillebeeckx who stresses that the kingdom or reign of God is the key word in Jesus' message. It expresses the biblical way of describing the divine essence: unconditional and liberating love.

Throughout the book she argues for the need of structural change in our catechetical ministry and considers religious literacy and curriculum design; adult education, evangelization and religious practice; and helping parents be spiritual guides for their children.

In the concluding chapter Darcy-Berube states that she hopes her book will sharpen our awareness of the many positive things that have happened in religious education during the twentieth century and especially since Vatican II. She then challenges us to move on in freedom of spirit and together allow our images to shape our vision for a more holistic practice of catechetical ministry.

This is truly a book of vision and practice. |

Dan Pierson

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

by Megan Anechiarico

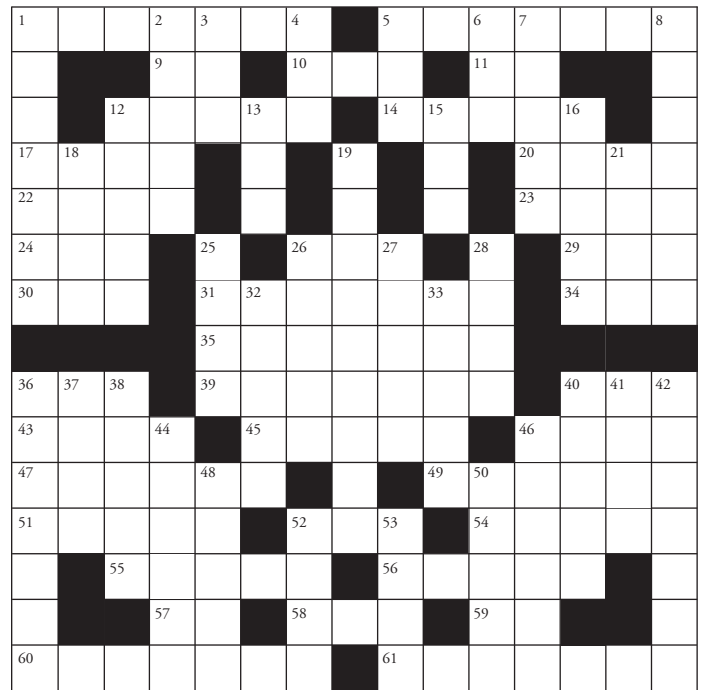
ACROSS

- 1 Use up natural resources
- 5 Maintain natural resources
- 9 Dominican initials
- 10 Compete
- 11 Painful exclamation
- 12 Equitably allocate natural resources
- 14 Environmental element
- 17 Abbreviated Florida city, perhaps
- 20 Academy for Excellence in Teaching and Learning - acronym
- 22 Actress Meg
- 23 Leg joint
- 24 Non-prescription med. - abbr.
- 26 American Academy of Bookbinding - acronym
- 29 And so on - abbr.
- 30 Hope Airport code
- 31 Contaminate the environment
- 34 Characteristic of 14A
- 35 Theme of this puzzle
- 36 Lament
- 39 Stands up for the environment
- 40 Engineering Honor Society letters
- 43 Time periods
- 45 Jumble for pertaining to chords and pitches
- 46 Yesterday in Paris
- 47 Possible abbr. for "sugar carton"
- 49 One guest-starring role
- 51 Jumble for molars
- 52 Spider's snare

- 54 One home for birds
- 55 Reverence creation
- 56 Countries
- 57 Christian abbr. for the Hebrew Bible
- 58 Debt letters
- 59 Economic and political continental cooperative effort - abbr.
- 60 Abuse the environment
- 61 Show consideration for the environment

DOWN

- 1 Annihilate the environment
- 2 Actress Lindsay
- 3 Gov't. office concerned with the environment - abbr.
- 4 First lady
- 5 Stitch
- 6 Drunkard
- 7 Fine-tune
- 8 Fail to care for the environment
- 12 Created dimension
- 13 Color of Mars
- 15 Environmental element
- 16 Rejuvenate natural resources
- 18 Allegory
- 19 Humanity's call to fight against environmental crises
- 21 Head in France
- 25 Rushed
- 26 In the sky
- 27 Villainous actor Victor
- 28 Main points



- 32 Large body of 14A
- 33 Biochemical letters
- 36 Replenish natural resources
- 37 Encourage
- 38 Environmental element
- 40 Created dimension - pl.
- 41 Honey and bumble
- 42 Save the environment from harm
- 44 Educational institution

- 46 Signal that a student knows the answer - 2 words
- 48 50 minutes past the hour, another way - 2 words
- 50 Sugar and candy
- 52 Legal order
- 53 Haze

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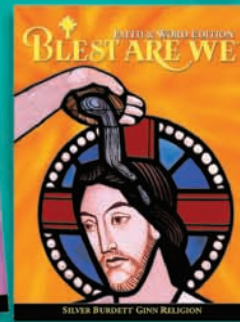
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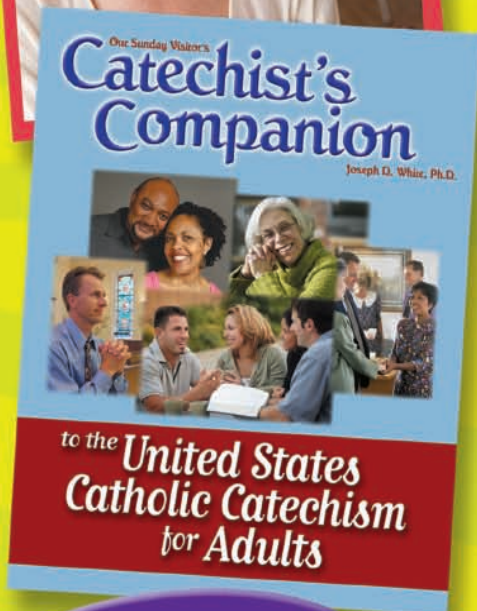
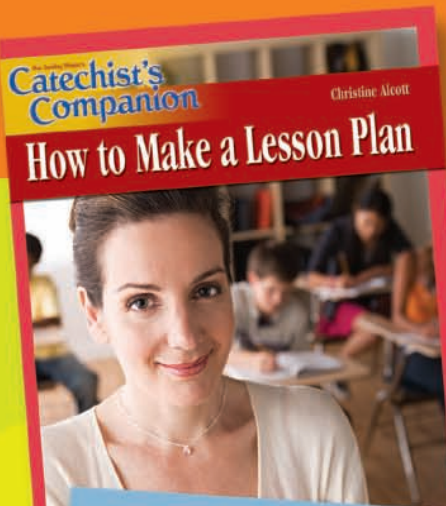


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