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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

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REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL NEEDS YOUR INPUT

Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership

Dear NCCL Members,



This issue of *Catechetical Leader* focuses on catechesis for Easter people. I believe that this theme is especially relevant for NCCL members as we prepare to gather in Las Vegas for our 74th Annual Conference and Exposition. An insight contained in the *National Directory for Catechesis* is that “the spirituality of those involved in the catechetical ministry centers on an encounter with Christ.” Each time we gather to network, share, celebrate, and learn about our catechetical vocation we encounter the risen Christ. He will be in our midst—even in Las Vegas!

During our time together in April there are a couple of issues that members of our Representative Council felt needed your input. These topics will be items of ongoing study and discussion. I would like to invite you to spend some time thinking about them and then share your thoughts with your NCCL leadership team during our conference in Las Vegas. If you cannot meet us in Vegas—please share your thoughts with us electronically.

Young Adults: The Young Adult Initiative sponsored by NCCL enables them to attend the conference as our guests. However, we want to be sure that this is not just a token gesture but an actual way to include young adults as a voice within NCCL. There is a need for ongoing discussion with young adults to find out how they feel connected, or not, to the organization. The challenge of young adult ministry means that we need to develop a vision of how to involve them in the organization. This is a critical item. One representative has said that it is a matter of survival as an organization.

Technology: This topic goes beyond the normal request to “improve the website.” We are being challenged to keep moving into the 21st century by providing more

tech options for catechesis. Technology is becoming more important as we try to find creative ways to gather in an era of slashed budgets and less personnel. Members themselves need to be open to the challenge of becoming more technologically savvy. What does this mean for NCCL?

Bishops: We are blessed to have Bishop Leonard Blair as our episcopal advisor. His role on the Evangelization and Catechesis Committee and the Catechism Committee is significant for our ministry. Bishop Blair is present at the NCCL Representative Council meetings and the Annual

Conference. His presence allows members of NCCL to have an opportunity to provide more of the landscape for the work our bishops are doing. A representative commented that Bishop

Blair was very attentive to our questions, comments, and concerns—even taking notes during some of the representative council discussions.

NCCL, the Organization: Members of the Representative Council had many insights to offer regarding our organization. We are a people full of experience and wisdom and when we are given the opportunity great things can come out of our teamwork. We are our own best resources and problem solvers. We need to widen our outreach and inclusion. We have the best leadership team in place and the right executive director. How can we increase membership and involve more members in NCCL?

These four topics need your input as we gather in April. Your province representative is your voice in our conference. Your leadership team is another resource—we will all be in Vegas—so be sure to let us know your thoughts.

God bless,

Anne
President, NCCL

*We need a vision for involving
young adults in ministry.*

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COME TO THE OASIS

Leland Nagel



The Lord be with you. You are the beloved.

By the time you read this, we should be somewhere around Laudete Sunday, about halfway through our 40 day Lenten journey, which culminates in the Triduum and fifty days of Easter.

It is within those fifty days that we gather in Las Vegas, as an Easter people, to celebrate *Catechesis: An Oasis Amidst Diversity*. One might consider Laudete Sunday an oasis amidst the forty days of Lent

The idea of being an Easter people is not a new one. In the early days of Christianity the great St. Augustine proclaimed: “We are Easter people and alleluia is our song!” More recently, most of us have recollections of Pope John Paul II issuing a challenge: “Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hal-lelujah is our song.” Even our current Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged that living as “Easter people” requires continuous effort. In the Easter Vigil at the Vatican last year, the Pope closed with this prayer, “Yes, Lord, make us Easter people, men and women of light, filled with the fire of your love. Amen.”

In some ways, being an Easter people defies definition. One wonders how it is possible to be an Easter People in the midst of Lent. And yet, every Sunday, including those in Lent, is a celebration of Easter. There is always hope. Death is never the end. It does not have the last word. And so, the resurrection is for every moment of our lives. Our lives are forever transformed by the resurrection. We are the Easter people.

But wait. Lent is not over. As a pastor once proclaimed in his homily, “We live in a Good Friday world.” A Good Friday world is a world full of suffering, inquiries, pain, difficulties, wounds, injustice, anguish, trouble, missteps, hurts, losses and misery. Lent is a time for us to look in the mirror and shine a light on our darkened reflection. It’s not just to put on the rose-colored glasses of Laudete Sunday; it’s a time to emerge from the darkness of stagnation and seek the light of hope.

In her writings, St. Teresa of Avila insisted that self-knowledge was critical for any passage from darkness to light. She wrote, “Knowing ourselves is something so important that I would not want any relaxation ever in this regard.” But who is it that we want to know.

I would like to suggest we come to know the person God created when he formed us in our mother’s womb. It is important that we “Be still!” and listen to the voice of God.

Henri Nouwen once wrote about *the* voice that speaks from above and from within. A voice that whispers softly or declares loudly: “You are my Beloved with whom I am well pleased.” What a voice that is! A voice that is often drowned out by grumblings, complaints, protests, criticisms, and the moaning of gloom and despair.

“Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply. It is like discovering a well in the desert. Once you have touched wet ground, you want to dig deeper.” Lent could be called a search for the oasis amidst the babble of life.

*Listen to the voice that
calls you the Beloved...it is like
discovering a well in the desert.*

Carpe diem! Let’s seize the day—every single day—to be Easter people: magnets of hope, shakers of salt and candles of light in a dark world. And every time we gather together to celebrate Eucharist, we will be charged with the electro-magnetic field of community, we will be seasoned with grace and dipped in the wax of everlasting love. And let us not forget to expect miracles from our God who lives and reigns, not just on Easter Sunday, but now and forever! Amen.

So in the spirit of Henri Nouwen, I will close with his words: “You are the Beloved, and all I hope is that you can hear these words as spoken to you with all the tenderness and force that love can hold. My only desire is to make these words reverberate in every corner of your being: You are the Beloved.”

Come to the oasis. Come hear the voice “from above and from within.” Come join your co-workers in the vineyard for *the* professional development conference for catechetical leaders. Find out more at www.NCCL.us and register at www.NCCL.org. ■

Outside the Box: Mary As Reflecting the Risen Christ



by Rea McDonnell, SSND



How might the risen Christ have been transforming his mother Mary's interior life of faith, hope and love? A life that would include an openness to all, a forgiving, reconciling love. A life, too, that was apostolic, missionary, engaged actively in the growth of the young church community.

To ponder these things might break us out of boxes, ways of thinking and thus feeling, ways of theologizing that have been bounded, sometimes to the point of imprisoning our minds and hearts. God moved "outside the box" in sending Jesus to enflesh God's love and faithfulness. Jesus broke out of the box so often that he was hounded and eventually killed. Because our God acts outside the box, God raises Jesus from the dead, thus destroying death, for the sake of "all those who were living their lives in fear of death" (Hebrews 2:15).

WE ARE SET FREE

Fear of dying is quite universal. Yet there is something worse than death for the human person. That is slavery. *Yesh*, the Hebrew root of Jesus' own name, means to set free from slavery, to set out in the open, to give space. The Israelites coined the word out in the desert when they suddenly realized that even without leeks, garlic and the meat of Egypt, they had something more essential: freedom. They were saved.

Many people expect that saving is about 1) getting to heaven ("Have you been saved?") or 2) being rescued. The origin of the word, however, is that glorious experience of being set free by God's sheer goodness. The Israelites did nothing to merit their freedom from Egypt. As Jews gather at this season to celebrate that the angel of death passed over their homes in Egypt, so at this time Christians celebrate the paschal mystery. We who know Christ risen are set free from the fear of death, and from interior slavery. How shall we come to know Christ more deeply?

"For freedom, Christ has set us free! Let nothing make you a slave again," Paul counsels (Galatians 5:1). Easter is about being set free, as free as Jesus was when lifted "outside the box" and made Lord and Christ. Easter hope is in our hearts. "Were not our hearts burning within us?" the disciples on the road to Emmaus asked. The risen Christ was so outside the box that they did not recognize him until he broke bread with them (Luke 24).

Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels (quoted in *Origins* December 13, 2001), offers an Easter message of hope. He asks, "How in our fearful times can we remain hopeful?" We do live in fearful times, especially fearful for those who are

*Utter transformation is not a privilege
belonging to Jesus and Mary alone.*

poor, who live in war ravaged areas, or in refugee camps." The cardinal continues: "Hope is not located somewhere at the edge of human existence. Hope is its heart." Then he suggests two ways to grow in hope: prayer, and engagement. The first path to deeper hope is "to pray . . . to look forward with a burning heart to the days to come." Secondly, he calls us to commit to action: "Hope never materializes when people do not engage themselves, or do not make decisions or choices."

MARY'S HOPE

Mary's faith, usually meaning trust, is often pondered in sermons, books and the meditations ordinary people enjoy in praying the rosary. Let us look at her hope and her love.

According to St. Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*, after Mary had suffered with her son Jesus in his rejection, torture and death, she was given the greatest and most joyful freedom,

although the scene is not recorded in the Gospels. Jesus met Mary and personally consoled her. How could Ignatius “know” that? Because he prayed the Scriptures with a burning heart and a fervent imagination, and so “knew” Jesus and his mother “outside the box.”

From that meeting, Mary would have been filled with hope, a hope that flows from prayer and engagement. Mary may well have been in the upper room on Easter night in Luke’s Gospel when the risen Christ comes to the Eleven and “the rest of the company” (Luke 24:33ff). That night he commissions the whole group to preach repentance and forgiveness of sin to all nations. Does Mary receive that commission, that hope and knowledge that all were to be forgiven—even his murderers? How does she pray with this hope of the risen Christ, that all are called to reconciliation, that all are called to be one in him? What kind of love begins to grow in her as she lives those fifty days with so many who abandoned her son? Must she pray for those who persecuted her son?

It seems that Mary kept on praying. We next meet her in Acts of the Apostles where the “company” gathers in the upper room to pray and await the Spirit. She waits in hope that the one who began the good work of forming Jesus in her womb will transform her in the power of the risen Christ. The Spirit arrives in great wind and flames of fire. Her hope-filled prayer moves to engagement.

Peter opens the door to speak to the crowd gathered on Pentecost. Yet Mary (and the rest of the company, “120 in all, including Mary and certain women” (Acts 1:14-15), receive the same Spirit, the same mission, the same gifts, the same energy and courage that the Twelve received. What did Mary do with this new inrush of the Spirit, this transforming power? Her hope moved her to engagement.

MARY’S ENGAGEMENT

Did she remain in Jerusalem, as most scholars believe? She was made missionary by the Spirit, and gifted for ministry. Would she have counseled, healed, preached, taught? If in Jerusalem, Mary the catechist would have worked among the Jewish women, proclaiming the arrival of the reign of God in her son’s being raised. She may have led or simply participated in the mystagogia for new disciples, perhaps those who now dared to come to the capitol from the rural areas. The one who had once been formed in her, taking her body and blood, her genetic code and facial features, was now forming her inte-

rior life, her mission to non-believers, and her ministry within the Christian community.

Or did Mary, as legend has it, travel as a missionary to Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern Turkey)? Outside the Jewish restrictions on women, she would have had more freedom to preach and to teach even men, in this secular city. Perhaps she helped Paul, whose conversion tore him from reliance on the Law and Jewish tradition, to understand that women too are gifted by Christ’s Spirit. (For a fuller treatment of Mary’s possible ministry in Jerusalem or in Ephesus, or as catechist even in her old age, see my article in *Catechetical Leader*, May/June, 2009. That article focused on Mary’s relation to the Spirit and the young church.)

KNOWING WITH THE HEART

According to Albert Einstein, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Instead of either/or, this is a both/and. Imagination actually offers us another way of knowing, with our hearts. If the risen Christ lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25) so does Mary. Let us ask her, alive and fully transformed, to invite us to enter her life imaginatively, that is, empathically and contemplatively.

Our Christian life may have begun as conforming—conforming to parental, educational and priestly rules and expectations. Some of us may have been left somewhat deformed by that religious instruction. Some of us may have acted out of that deformity and so needed reforming. Actually, all of us engaged in ministry today have needed re-forming, that con-version that

*Notice how the humanity of
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turned Paul from striving for perfection in order that he might “know” Christ and him crucified (Phil 3:7-11). Whether we have been converted from our sin or from our goodness, we have needed that re-formation, continually being accomplished, not by virtues, fasting, discipline and law-keeping, but only by the generosity of the risen Christ. “The great God and our Savior has saved us, not by any works of justice that we have done, but according to God’s mercy” (Titus 3:45).

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What saving might Mary have needed? Did her heart and life need re-forming? According to Mark, perhaps so. In Mark 3:21 and 3:31, the family of Jesus comes to take him home because the people of Nazareth are reporting that he is out of his mind. Mary comes along, perhaps because she was wondering whether he was mentally ill or because she was worried about his (or her) reputation. Jesus points to his disciples as his true mother, brothers and sisters.

In Matthew's Gospel, in which Joseph alone receives the annunciation of the baby's birth, Mary is on the scene only as the wife obedient to her husband's visions and dreams. In Luke, she is portrayed as full of faith (questioning Gabriel), and love (traveling to visit Elizabeth some seventy miles away). Yet Luke tells us she had to ponder all these things in her heart. These "outside the box" events (such as outcast shepherds racing to see the new baby, Simeon's words, Jesus' loss in the temple) puzzled her, yet she took them to her heart. She was awakening, being re-formed, from simple peasant woman, wife and mother, to the possibilities for her son, both the blessing he would be to the poor and the scourge he would be to the religious authorities.

When she tells the steward at the wedding of Cana in John's Gospel to "do whatever he tells you," she pushes Jesus outside the box. At the cross, she is surely re-formed as she opens her life to the Beloved Disciple—and eventually to all of the church.

IMAGING TRANSFORMATION

God's raising Jesus from the dead reshapes and transforms not only Jesus but the whole world. The messianic age has begun. The lame walk, the blind see, the whole earth rejoices. A rag-tag group who ran away from him is found by the risen Christ doing their ordinary tasks. And his mother? Where might she have met him? What might she have been doing? Even Ignatius doesn't tell us, but asks us to use our imagination to join her in that first encounter, now that Christ and all creation is transformed.

Let us take a few moments now to picture that scene of the risen Christ meeting his mother. Use all of your senses to see, hear, feel, smell the surroundings. How is Jesus? How is Mary? How do they meet? What happens next?

As her life in the upper room on Easter night pushes her to forgiveness, as her motherly self is emptied as she watches him ascend, as she is filled again with the Spirit in her mid-life, Mary is being transformed. Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace throughout his life until, fully human at the moment of his death, he burst into full divinity. Mary is growing day by day in wisdom, age and grace, becoming more fully human, more fully alive, more fully transformed into the risen Christ.

The paradox: in her youth, she gives him body and blood and in her aging, he gives her his body and blood. O won-

continued on page 7

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drous exchange! As Caryll Houselander writes in *The Comforting of Christ*:

... the Word of love was uttered in her heartbeat. Christ used his own body to utter his love on earth; his perfectly real body with bone and sinew and blood and tears. Christ uses our bodies to express his love on earth, our humanity.

Mary is gradually being transformed into the risen Christ. Some people today ask “What would Jesus do?” Instead, we know that Christ is doing whatever we are doing.

Before Easter, Mary hauls water, makes a fire, bakes, stirs and seasons; she joins the other women to wash clothes, work the common fields; she visits the sick and shut in, shares her faith with the housewives of Nazareth and is changed as well by their experiences of God. After the risen Christ begins to infuse her heart, her whole self, with himself, she may accomplish the same ordinary tasks but with new purpose. Her embodying day by day the risen Christ (fully human, fully alive) is giving God glory (St. Irenaeus).

Notice how the humanity of Mary is, like the humanity of Jesus, transformed. God is not saving souls but persons. Ours is not a spirituality which shuns the body, but incorporates the bodily in our sacraments. In fact the whole earth is groaning with us, waiting for our full freedom as the children of God (Romans 8: 19-23), for as Paul will conclude (v 24), “in hope we are saved.” Every bit of creation is sacred.

BECOMING THE RISEN CHRIST

Our transformation, of being and becoming the risen Christ in 2010 and until our last breath, is a lifelong process. We trust, we hope, we love, we serve. At any moment of our life, in our most exalted experience, in our lowliest function, we can say, with Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” and through me (Galatians 2:20). Like Mary in her youth, her midlife, her old age, we too are embodying Christ.

Although this article and the one I wrote last spring are linked by Mary, with this one focused on the risen Christ and the earlier on the Spirit, Paul would not have us make such neat distinctions. In his *cri de coeur* about how this transformation he experienced and wrote of in Philippians 3 and Galatians 2 took place, he equates the Lord (Jesus) and the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “All of us, seeing the glory of the Lord (Jesus) as though reflected in a mirror, are transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. Such is the influence [flowing into] of the Lord who is Spirit.”



In a well-known prayer, Cardinal John Newman expressed this article of faith and hope: “Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus.” And our Eucharistic liturgy, the most profound instructor in our always deepening interior life with God, proclaims at each Offertory: “May we come to share the divinity of him who emptied himself to share our humanity.” Finally, as John’s letter expresses it: “We are already God’s children and what we are to become has not yet been revealed” (1 John 3:2). This utter transformation is not a privilege belonging to Jesus and Mary alone. Our hope assures us that God will break us out of every box as we reflect and pray, as we engage one another and embody in our daily living and our eventual dying the glorious body of Christ risen. ■

Rea McDonnell is a School Sister of Notre Dame who writes and offers spiritual direction in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has retired from academia and pastoral counseling. Author of 14 books and hundreds of articles, she has taught every grade from second to graduate school. Her recently released book is Into the Heart of Mary, published by Ave Maria Press.

Illuminating the Paschal Mystery

by Robert J. Hater



The year was 1969. As Easter approached, weakness and depression hung over me. Hours seemed like days and days became eternities. An automobile accident had left me weak and confused. The doctors had no answers for my condition. During Holy Week, the pain intensified, and I felt abandoned and without a future. My only consolation was the crucifix, hanging on the wall. During painful moments, I sometimes hit my head on the door, stared at Jesus' broken body, and cried out, "If you can make it, so can I." If I hoped to overcome my suffering, it must be through the cross. At that time the cross, not the words, "We are Easter people and 'Alleluia' is our song," gave me hope.

Christians never canonize suffering but recognize its inevitability.

This painful period initiated in me a profound awakening of God's presence in joys and sorrows. The opening words of Mark's Gospel, "This is the beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . ." describe what happened as I stared at the cross and hoped for eventual resurrection. Although it was not evident then, suffering transformed me. For better or for worse, suffering enters every life. How we cope with it affects how we live or die as persons.

The early Christian community recognized Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection as God's testimony to his love for humanity. Besides bestowing the necessary graces for salvation, the paschal mystery—Jesus' mission of redemption accomplished chiefly through his passion, death, resurrection and ascension—is the paradigm for our salvation, which comes to pass through suffering—Jesus' and our own. Rooted in hope, grounded in faith, and enriched with love, Christians walk confidently through joys and sorrows with a clear vision of why we are here and where we are going. This realization gives us hope.

As I reflect on this period of my life, I ask, "What did I learn to help in the catechesis of children, youth, and adults?" What I learned is connected with Jesus' suffering and resurrection and applies to everyone. I offer the following considerations for catechesis for Easter People.

HUMAN SUFFERING PUTS LIFE PRIORITIES INTO A PROPER PERSPECTIVE.


When a catechist addresses human joys and sufferings, people of all ages perk up. On the other hand, people stop coming if they are bored and catechists often are turned off. After my sickness, I changed my preaching and teaching, using solid theology and biblical insights connected to human experience to address life's joys and sorrows. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives catechists clarity on *what* to teach, but it does not tell them *how* to teach it. Rote learning of basic teachings increases intellectual knowledge, but by itself does not lead to formation or conversion. Catechists must learn what the church teaches, but put it in an interesting way that addresses real life issues, like happiness and suffering. This involves a both/and, not an either/or perspective. Catechists, when basing their teaching on the paschal mystery—Jesus' mission of redemption accomplished chiefly through his passion, death, resurrection and ascension—help the catechized to recognize the shallowness of the secular world's priorities, compared to life and death issues.

HARDSHIPS AND PERSONAL VULNERABILITY POINT TO THE VALUE OF FAMILY AND LOVING RELATIONSHIPS.

Prolonged sickness seems to slow down or stop time. Then, we see the value of family and loved ones who stand by us and give us hope. The crucible of suffering hones real values such as faith, love, and dedication. Catechists are blessed to share God's Word and reflect Jesus' love to staff persons and students experiencing personal and relational problems. Mary, Jesus' mother, is our guide. Her vulnerability at the foot of the cross symbolizes her desire to intercede for us in our struggles. As she stood by Jesus when he was dying, did she also think of other difficult times, like the cold night at Jesus' birth, the flight into Egypt, and Jesus' rejection in the synagogue of Capernaum? Her love for Jesus prepared him to endure the cross. Will she not stand by us? What does God ask in return? Is it not to stand by others? Catechists, remembering their brokenness, are invited to reflect Mary's love in deeds and words.

SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION PUT INTO FOCUS THE SHALLOWNESS OF WORLDLY VALUES.

Society places great importance on material possessions, appearance, and status. We often gauge our actions by what people think. Serious illness can change this. What worth do superficial values have if there is no tomorrow? The net of suffering often changes them. Those who survive suffering know that they can return to the dark hole from which they



emerged. Most students are imbued with worldly values, which are found everywhere—on television, on the Internet, at school, among friends, and at home. Catechists need to challenge students to move beyond them to a deeper level that addresses real happiness that can be found only in union with God. In so doing, students link Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension to the hard times that they, their parents, relatives, and friends experience through divorce, sickness, loss of job, failure, or death.

JESUS' SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION MAKE HUMAN SUFFERING ENDURABLE.

During the long months of my sickness, I often stared at Jesus on the cross. My thoughts differed from the reflections of my boyhood, when I knelt before the large crucifix in the front of St. William's Church. There, I saw the gruesomeness of Jesus' suffering. In my room, I connected his cross with mine. I saw myself on the cross. This gave me the hope that because he made it, I could also. Catechists can make a similar connection for themselves and their students. Without Jesus' crucifixion, human suffering makes no sense. Some students argue that human suffering is a reason for non-belief. They ask, "Why suffering?" Christians never canonize suffering but recognize its inevitability. There is no answer to it except in light of Jesus' life. The contradiction of human suffering reflects the evil of sin, which initiated it into life. Rather than deny God's existence, suffering points to Jesus as the one who overcame suffering and reconciles us. His acceptance of suffering helps us endure and overcome our own suffering.

AUTHENTIC FREEDOM AND NEW LIFE COME ONLY THROUGH THE PASCHAL MYSTERY.

Freedom involves our potential to actualize ourselves as redeemed children of God, not our ability to do whatever we want. The Holy Spirit shares with us the Father's graces, achieved by Jesus' death. Grace is God's free gift, offered to everyone. Human freedom enables us to accept or reject this gift. Saying "yes" to it puts us on the road to salvation. The "amen" of our "yes" manifests our human freedom, made possible through Jesus' paschal mystery. Catechists relate authentic freedom to the student's ability to choose, with God's help, one's true destiny. Students cry out for spiritual

answers in a relativistic world. Catechetical sessions focus on true freedom, rejecting the false teaching that we can believe and do whatever we want. Catechists help students recognize that we are the most free when we follow the commandments and cooperate with God's grace. In saying "yes" to God, we become free.

DURING INTENSE SUFFERING, HOPE IS A GUIDING LIGHT AND FAITH IS THE ANCHOR.

Without hope, life is meaningless. When we are sick, hope buoys us up and faith provides an anchor enabling us to believe that life still has meaning. By turning our lives over to God, we see that the paschal mystery roots human hope. God's promise of salvation invites us to join Jesus on the cross. In our darkest hour, we nail our sins and suffering on his cross, confident that God's graces will save us. Catechists instill hope when presenting Jesus as a loving God who never abandons us. No matter what this world offers as happiness, our hearts yearn for more. Jesus alone is the answer to loneli-

ness, melancholy, and unhappiness. His resurrection brings hope that God will give us happiness on earth and eternal blessedness in heaven. Catechists help students realize through Scripture, stories, discussions, and illustrations that no earthly achievements or material possessions bring the inner joy won through Jesus' cross and resurrection.

WITHOUT THE NEW LIFE PROMISED BY JESUS' RESURRECTION, SUFFERING LEADS TO DESPAIR AND LIFE IS MEANINGLESS.

When serious sickness besets us, our lives change. The slightest exertion of energy wipes us out. With nothing to alleviate our pain except powerful medications, we sink into melancholy and come to the limits of our endurance. Were it not for Jesus' promise of new life, Christian survivors of serious illness wonder where they would be today. Faith, honed in a good and supportive environment, roots us. Even during trying days, we can believe that we will recover. Loving catechists are great blessings when tragedy besets their families, colleagues, or students. Through patience, faithfulness, and love, catechists show students the bounty of Jesus' love and the evil of sin that nailed him to the cross. Mary did this for Jesus.

*We accept our responsibility
for the world, always keeping
before us what is to come.*

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The Changing Landscape of Adult Faith Formation

by Julianne Donlon-Stanz

I came to bring fire to the earth and how I wish that it were already kindled.
Luke 12:49



The world is changing rapidly in response to global trends such as the increasing use of technology, global mobility and instant communication, and the religious landscape of the United States is being reconfigured by long-term, fundamental changes.

The Pew Forum Study of 2007, for example, noted marked differences between the generations—in how young adults and adults wish to be involved in their religion and the means by which they seek answers to their spiritual questions. The 2009 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) reported that the number of American adults identified as Christians has declined from 86% in 1990 to 76% in 2008.

As a result of such changes, our understanding of adult faith formation should evolve to meet the needs of adults in a changing world. While it is tempting to view demographic studies and surveys as alarmist, they can be a critical tool in shaping adult faith formation methodologies.

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY!

In an age of uncertainty and increasing cynicism we must seize the opportunity to reach out to the marginalized, the searching, and the hungry and to renew the commitment to catechizing, evangelizing, and engaging adults at all stages of the life cycle in fresh ways. Studies from Gallup and the Pew Forum indicate that there is a widespread spiritual hunger in our society—a quest for meaning and for a deeply personal experience of God and of community. For some, these trends will be alarming as we scramble to come up with dynamic programs. However, these studies should enkindle in us the fervent desire to minister with energy and vibrancy, as we confront the problems of living in a world where the landscape of adult faith formation changes so rapidly. Clearly for those ministering in adult faith formation this is a time of unparalleled opportunity and possibility.

THE RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE AND THE PHENOMENON OF PARISH MIGRATION

Unlike those in their parents' generations, many of whom enjoyed the cultural support of Irish, Polish, and Italian Catholic neighborhood enclaves, today's adults (particularly those in their 30s) inhabit locales that are far more socially and religiously diverse than ever before. The United States is an intensely religious society and therefore a highly competitive religious "marketplace." If a church neglects the opportunity to provide service to their adult community then someone else will be happy to do it for them. As Ethan Waters reported in his 2004 book *Urban Tribes*, college-educated young adults often draw support from close-knit communities of friends—from diverse religious or non-religious backgrounds—that form during the ever-increasing years between college and married life. Adults often live, work, share meals, and vacation with these groups and naturally are influenced by their friends' worship habits.

If your parish does not offer diverse and vibrant programming for its parishioners don't be too surprised if your adults "migrate" to another parish and take their friends with them! To stem the tide of "church shopping" amongst adults it is important to empower and equip them with the tools to talk to other adults about their faith.

The good news from studies such as the Pew Forum is that the majority of Catholics surveyed, including young Catholics, continue to identify with the Catholic Church. According to the study, the majority of Catholics are in the category of medium-commitment to church and will remain so. Moving our Catholics from medium commitment to active and full commitment in the church will be a continual challenge for us but is sure to pay rich dividends.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MULTI-PARISHIONAL

A recent friend of mine, when asked to name the parish that she was a member of, described herself as “multi-parishional.” This was a term that I had never heard before and I asked her why and how she exhibited membership of the Catholic Church through multiple parish memberships. She explained that one particular parish offered a monthly get together for adults so she often went there for social activities such as meals and game nights. Across the city, another parish offered evenings of reflection that she enjoyed so much that she joined the parish to avail of these opportunities. At what she called her “home parish” she is active as a catechist and engaged with the youth of the parish through the religious education program.

When I inquired as to how this impacted her tithing habits, she stated that she gave a little bit to each parish depending on which one she attended. To her this was a natural and carefree decision—she did not feel bound by tradition to a particular worship community but preferred to avail herself of experiences at a multiplicity of parishes. In terms of planning and executing ministry at the parish or diocesan level this “multi-parishional” status presents some obstacles but it also presents opportunities for parishes to work collaboratively and regionally to reach adults.

OUR HABITS ARE CHANGING

We can no longer make certain presuppositions about our adult communities as adults themselves are changing their habits in response to the demands of living in a hurried and fast-paced world. Those responsible for adult faith formation can no longer assume, for example, that technology is important *only* to young adults. Recent studies reinforce the fact that the fastest growing demographic on the Internet is adults in their 40s and 50s. As a result of our world changing so rapidly, the manner in which we conduct our ministries will change also. The fastest growing user group on Facebook is women between the ages of 55-65. This puts a whole new perspective on our traditional understanding of the “woman’s club” so prevalent in many of our parishes! Adult faith formation is no longer an isolated ministry within the parish or diocese but is connected to the national and global church community as never before.

WHAT HAPPENS AT YOUR PARISH DOESN'T ALWAYS STAY IN YOUR PARISH!

The explosion of social networking presents tremendous opportunities as we seek to reach out in creative ways to adults but it does also present challenges. At the heart of social networking is a desire to foster the kinds of deep connections that occur when common pursuits are shared and discussed. Social networking offers ease of connection—allowing people to connect from their desktop, cell phone, laptop, or any other electronic device—to people all over the world. At the touch of a button adults can preview a pastor’s homily, watch a live feed of a Mass, or download a podcast of an interesting lecture or class. Emerging studies suggest that adults now place less emphasis on traditional advertising and more faith in the opinion of peer reviews. Advertising your parish event online is much more likely to be successful than posting it in the traditional print media. We live in a “world of mouth” where adults share with each other their thoughts on particular parishes and many of them will openly blog about their experiences online. I have found several references to my friends’ worship experiences on Facebook and My Space, openly posted for the world to see and discuss. Two key questions to consider in relation to social networking are the following: Are you aware of what people are saying about your parish? How can you influence what people are saying and telling others about your parish?

THE MYTH OF THE “HATCH, MATCH & DISPATCH” CHURCH

We have to overcome some misconceptions and myths regarding service and ministry to adults. I overheard a conversation where someone described the Catholic Church as the “hatch, match and dispatch church”! The key moments being identified as baptism, weddings and funerals. Adult faith formation clearly goes beyond providing programs and opportunities for adults to learn about their faith at such key moments. It points to a process whereby the adult who has been evangelized becomes the evangelizer—those who love and live their faith will witness to others. Through adult faith formation our communities should be transformed into evangelizing communities of lifelong discipleship. Unless the church offers active opportunities for adults to understand what Catholics believe and how to integrate the teachings

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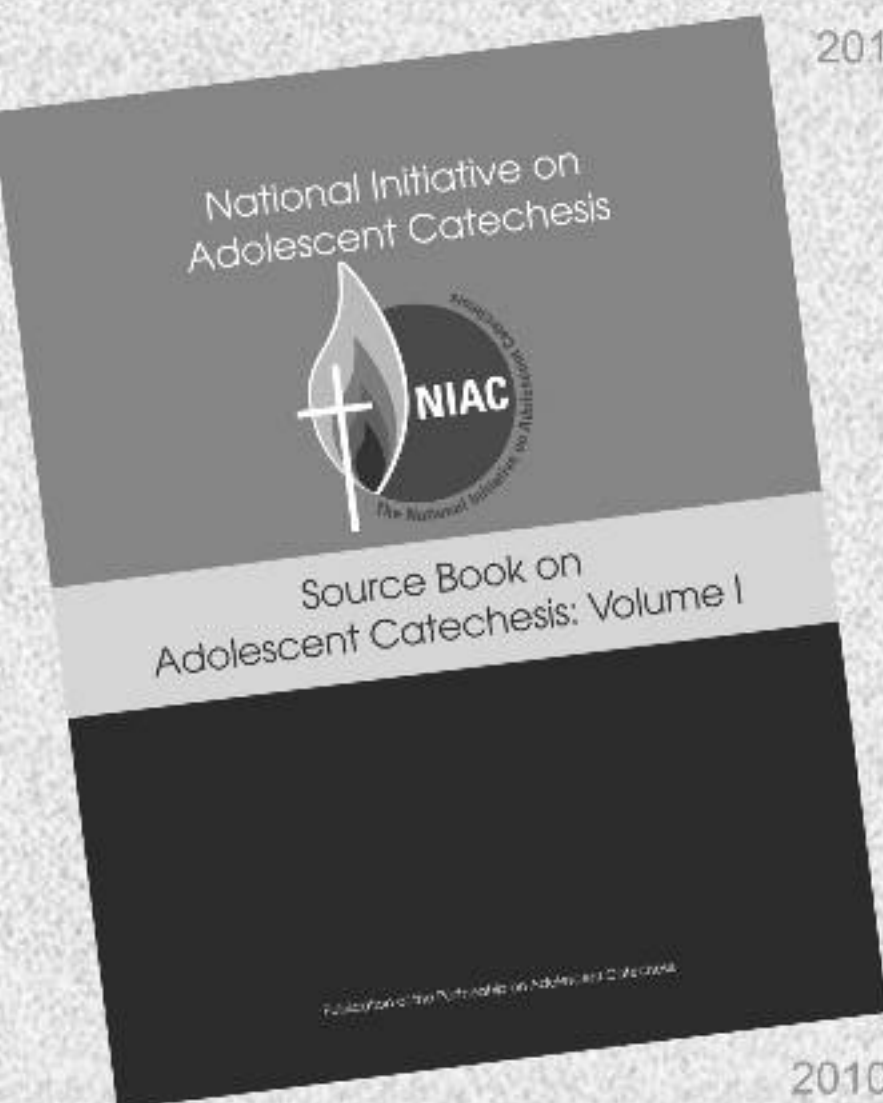
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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



THE GRACED MEADOW

IN THE DESERT, WE CONTINUE TO MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY . . .

by Marc Gonzalez



One of the joys of desert living this time of the year is looking out my kitchen window and seeing the hills west of Las Vegas covered in snow. Of course, the summer is warm here and the same hills have a stark look. As I look at the beauty, I often wonder how the first humans lived here, what the first Europeans found when they arrived, how the environment was changed by us, and how the faith was planted and grew.

I am reminded that Moses and the Hebrew people wondered in the desert. From photos I've seen over the years, the Sinai looks like southern Nevada: sparse vegetation, a few hearty animals, little water and rough mountains. The desert is such a strong faith image that it warrants a few sentences of reflection.

The desert is a barrier. It keeps away the wicked and it also keeps us limited. Yet the desert is a place of communication (for Moses, Jesus, the prophets). It reminds us of death and hardship. Yet, the desert also provides a refuge for those escaping crowded living situations (in the monastic tradition) and a place for bandits to hide in wait for the next caravan. Most of all, it is a place to meet Yahweh in our wonderings.

Still holding this imagery, we see that humanity has changed the desert to meet its needs. Geography is manipulated to bring water to thirsty towns and farms. We build dams for flood control and to produce electricity. In these current times, we see the near perpetual sunshine as another means to produce electricity, save money and preserve natural resources.

*In Nevada, water is a
basic sacramental symbol.*

The other aspect of desert is water or oasis. They are precious for our survival and more importantly, food for the beasts of burden which help us today as in the past. Protective coverings were, and are, important to protect the oasis from the harsh conditions of the desert. Water is such a precious resource it needs to be protected from robbers, yet it is also a means of hospitality. West of the city are natural springs where shrubbery and trees protect the water from the elements. One of the tributaries to the Colorado River gives life to the desert as it meanders from Utah to Nevada.

Water is a basic sacramental symbol to us. It is needed for life and yet it is also destructive. My sister works for the Army Corps of Engineers as a geographer water resource person. After a trip to Malawi in 2007, she is now convinced that water will cause wars in various parts of the world. In this part of the United States, several states have had conflicts or law suits over access to the Colorado River. Our battles are in court; my sister sees bloodshed.

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MEET ME IN LAS VEGAS

by Christina Flum

Monday, April 19, 2010 4:30 pm - 5:45 pm Learning Sessions

1. *La Construcción Religiosa de la Paz: Respuesta Constructiva a la Diversidad* por Maria-Pilar Aquino
2. *Evangelization Sets Us On Fire* by Fr John Hurley, CSP
3. *Understanding Our Congregations: Dispelling the Myths, Challenging the Stereotypes* by Anthony C. Marchica
4. *Keeping up with the PAC* by Robert McCarty (NFCYM)
5. *Connect, Awaken, and Share: Practical Ways to Engage Parents in the Faith Formation of Their Children* by Tom McGrath and Joellyn Ciciarelli
6. *Catechesis: Shaping Communities of Reconciliation and Hope* by Hostman Ospino
7. *Our Media World: Teaching Kids (K - 8) about Faith and Media* by St. Rose Pacatte
8. *Teens and God: An overview of processes that engage the minds and hearts of Teens* by Kieran Sawyer
9. *Proclaiming Our Story: Around the iCampfire (Telling the Story using YouTube, Vimeo, etc)* by Timothy Welch
10. *Adult Spirituality That Leads to the Reign of God (Part 1)* by Thomas Zanzig

Tuesday, April 20, 2010 11:15 am - 12:30 pm Learning Sessions

11. *Religious Peacebuilding: A Constructive Response to Diversity* by Maria-Pilar Aquino
12. *God Made Everything: Innovative Ideas and Activities for Preschool Faith Formation* by Nikki Ceo and Cathy Joyce
13. *Evangelization Sets Us On Fire* by Fr John Hurley, CSP
14. *Trends in Youth Ministry* by Robert McCarty (NFCYM)
15. *Rural Catechesis: From Coping to Creativity*
16. *What is Your Vision of Catechesis?* by Ken Ogorek
17. *Catequesis: construyamos comunidades de reconciliación y esperanza* por Hostman Ospino
18. *Media Mindfulness: Faith based strategies for navigating media cultures in line with the NDC* by St. Rose Pacatte
19. *Chaste Living: A Look of the Document with Practical Ways to Implement* by Kieran Sawyer
20. *Considerations for Digital Storytelling: Can OUR Story Go Virtual?* by Timothy Welch
21. *Adult Spirituality That Leads to the Reign of God (Part 2)* by Thomas Zanzig

Wednesday, April 21, 2010 9:00 am - 10:15 am Learning Sessions

22. *Presentation and Panel Discussion on Adapting the USCCB Curriculum Framework for Adolescent Materials for Parish Catechetical Programs, Part I*
23. *Aspectos fundamentales de la cultura estadounidense y la catequesis* por Miguel Arias
24. *The Holy Rosary 101* by David Barosi
25. **Morality Update: Bio Ethics** by Rev. Richard Benson, CM
26. *Youth Ministry: Innovative/Practical Ideas that work in Parishes* by Carmen Genantes
27. *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* by Ann Garrido
28. *Coaching Parents to form their own children in the context of parish gatherings* by Bill Huebsch
29. *The Role of Christian Initiation through a Multicultural Lens* by Fr. Steve Lanza
30. *Who are the Men? Engaging Men in the Quest to Deepen their Faith* by Tom McGrath
31. *Adult Faith Formation* by Neil Parent
32. *The Parish Catechetical Leader: Connecting Parents, Schools and Parish* by Jo Rolunno and Cam Mihal



I got in on the early registration for the NCCL and the National Association of Catechetical Media Professionals (NACMP) conferences and have my hotel reservations. I am planning to arrive a few days early to take advantage of the inexpensive hotel rate and to be a tourist . . . Having done some research for the “Things to do in Las Vegas” slide show on the website, I have found some great ideas for filling in free time!

As I make plans I must remember the time difference! When I arrive Wednesday afternoon I am considering the 540-foot ride up the elevator at the Paris Hotel’s Eiffel Tower in order to enjoy the view of the Las Vegas Strip, including the water show at the Bellagio right across the street. Then I’ll come back down and have a late lunch at Mon Ami Gabi (also at the Paris Hotel) a charming French bistro right on the Strip, which offers al fresco dining. Perhaps a stroll over to the Shark Reef—or Dolphin Habitat would be nice. I think I will decide that when I get there!

I better get to bed early because Thursday morning will find me rising bright and early and departing on a Grand Canyon Adventure Tour! (I said I intended to be a tourist, and I may not get out here again.) This tour includes a light breakfast, photo stops at Hoover Dam, Route 66 scenic loop and a deli lunch at Mather Point at the Grand Canyon. I will walk the beautiful (paved) trail 2.5 miles to Yavapai Point and Bright Angel Point and of course have the opportunity to shop at the Hopi House gift store and visit the museum at Yavapai Point which features exhibits on geology. When I arrive back at Bally’s I will probably have a light supper and crash!

Friday is up in the air right now. As part of the planning team, I will probably be busy helping with last minute details. Hoping for some time to go see the Painted Desert and walk barefoot in the sand. Friday evening I will be joining the NACMP group for dinner out on the Strip and an evening visit to the fountains at the Bellagio.

Saturday will find me busy at the NACMP meeting all day and evening—no tourist plans! Our morning workshop is with Richard Drabik—*Digital Storytelling & How to Storyboard a Concept*. The afternoon workshop is with Jeff Stutzman—*Social Networking*. After the second workshop NACMP will have its business meeting and Pizza with the Publishers. This is always a great opportunity to see what new media resources the publishers have developed. I believe I will have to miss this though and attend a meeting for the 2011 Conference Planning Committee. (Yes, we have already begun planning!)

Sunday morning back to the NACMP meeting with our Keynote Eric Groth from Outside da Box, a not-for-profit video production company that creates and distributes short films that help teens know, love and serve Jesus Christ; his address is “Using Media Technology in Ministry.” It should be a great talk! Then I move to another meeting—Representative Council from noon to 5:00. We will conclude that meeting in time for the Sunday Liturgy. Perhaps a stroll on the Strip with friends will follow liturgy if there is no other meeting planned.

Monday the NCCL conference officially opens! Monday morning begins with committee meetings; you will find me with the planning committee. The Conference major addresses build upon one another following the theme of the diversity of our ministry. The first address is with Fr. Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, at 9:15. The title of the Fr. Deck’s keynote is: *Catholic Identity and Diversity: Forming Catechists for the 21st Century*. It is intended to provide us with an understanding of the current landscape including maintaining one’s cultural understandings of God while being immersed in an American culture of church. This sounds like an inspirational beginning to the week.

I will be found, along with all the other participants, at the OSV Brunch after this address. This is always a delightful meal and a good opportunity to hear what is new at OSV.

Wednesday, April 21, 2010 10:45 am - 12:00 pm Learning Sessions

33. Presentation and Panel Discussion on adapting the USCCB Curriculum Framework for adolescent materials for parish catechetical programs. Part II
34. Liturgy 101 (including the New Roman Missal) by David Barocas
35. **Theology Update:** “Caritas in Veritate” (“Charity in Truth”) by Rev. Richard Benson, CM
36. God Made Everything: Innovative Ideas and Activities for Preschool Faith Formation by Nikki Case and Cathy Joyce
37. Ministerio Juvenil: ideas prácticas e innovadoras que funcionan en las parroquias por Carmen Cervantes
38. Latino Culture and Catechesis 101 by Santiago Cortes-Sjoberg
39. Using Technology to Proclaim the Word by Richard R. Drabik
40. “Our Hearts Are Burning Within Us”: The Second Decade by Bill Huebsch
41. The Rite of Christian Initiation through a Multicultural Lens by Fr. Steve Lanza
42. Adult Faith Formation by Neil Parent
43. The Parish Catechetical Leader: Connecting Parents, Schools and Parish by Jo Rotunno and Dan Mulhall

Thursday, April 22, 2010 8:30 am - 9:45am Learning Sessions

44. Catholic Identity: The Catholic Difference and the Difference it Makes by Fr. Louis Cameli
45. Revolutionary Hearts: Engaging Youth in Catholic Social Teaching by Brian Cannon
46. Tools for the iCampfire: Mostly Free and Easy to Use by Caroline Carveney, SSJ
47. Popular Catholicism and Catechesis: An Encounter of Faith and Culture by Santiago Cortes-Sjoberg
48. **Catechetical Update** by Michael Horan
49. Catechesis through Sign, Song and Story by Vallimar Jansen
50. Adult Generations: Ministry Implications by Fr David Loftus and Julianne Donlon
51. In The Beginning was the Word: Doing Beginning Bible Study by Fr. Pat Mullen
52. Rural Catechesis: Sacramental Prep
53. What is Your Vision of Catechesis? by Ken Ogorek
54. Faith Formation 2020 Vision by John Roberto

Thursday, April 22, 2010 10:00 am - 11:15 am Learning Sessions

55. Catolicismo popular y catequesis: encuentro de fe y cultura por Miguel Arias
56. A follow-up to session #44 Catholic Identity by Fr. Louis Cameli
57. Revolutionary Hearts: Engaging Youth in Catholic Social Teaching by Brian Cannon
58. Keeping Up With a Digital Child by Caroline Carveney, SSJ
59. **Catechetical Update** by Michael Horan
60. Catechesis through Sign, Song and Story by Vallimar Jansen
61. Adult Generations: Ministry Implications by Fr David Loftus and Julianne Donlon
62. Understanding Our Congregations: Dispelling the Myths, Challenging the Stereotypes by Anthony C. Marchica
63. **Scripture Update:** Wives Be Submissive To Your Husbands: Dealing with Difficult Passages by Fr. Pat Mullen
64. Rural Catechesis: Dialogue with Publishers of Catechetical Materials and Programs
65. Faith Formation 2020 Vision by John Roberto

Thursday, April 22, 2010 1:30 pm - 5:00pm Optional Session

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Monday continued

The exhibits open at 12:30—usually done with great fanfare; I won't miss this!

Dr. Carole Eipers will be giving the second major address at 1:45. Her title is: *Oasis or Mirage: Place Your Bets!* Is catechesis an oasis amidst diversity? If so, how can we learn to expand the experience? If not, what is hindering us? Wow! Carol's presentation ends at 3:15, allowing me over an hour to peruse the exhibits before the first learning session at 4:30.

This decision was not easy; there are so many great learning sessions planned! Off the bat I know I will not be attending the session in Spanish. But there are more than ten more to choose from! Will it be *Evangelization* with John Hurley, or maybe *Our Media World* with Sr. Rose, or perhaps *Proclaiming Our Story* with Tim Welch or *Adult Spirituality* with Tom Zanzig? After reviewing the summaries of these and the other options I will probably be found at *Catechesis: Shaping Communities of Reconciliation and Hope* by Hosffman Ospino; this presentation explores three major challenges that constantly affect the daily experience of many culturally diverse communities: brokenness, transition, and estrangement. I believe this will assist me in my own ministerial setting.

The learning session is over at 5:45 giving me the evening free. It will be a wonderful opportunity for me to meet up with friends from Pennsylvania for a stroll on the Strip and dinner.

Tuesday morning will find me in the Ballroom ready to pray at 9:15 and then listen to Carmen Marie Nanko-Fernandez's major address: *Catechesis: Traditioning Our Catholic Diversity*. She will spend time talking with us about questions like these: How does a catechist become a broker of culture? What can a catechetical leader do to create an environment that supports diversity and gives evidence of their conscious commitment to "embrace the rich cultural pluralism of all the faithful"?

I will take a quick jaunt through the exhibits after the keynote before heading to the 11:15 learning session. Today the choices are just as difficult. *Media Mindfulness* with Sr. Rose, *Chaste Living* with Kieran Sawyer, *Digital Storytelling* with Tim Welch, *Trends in Youth Ministry* with Bob McCarty or any number of others. I have chosen to attend *Rural Catechesis: From Coping to Creativity* facilitated by Karen Pesek This is a forum for dioc-

san directors and diocesan staff who are involved with ministry in rural catechesis. Some of the areas to be addressed are catechist formation, curriculum development, catechetical programs, personal coping skills, and organizational management with limited personnel and resources. This is another very relevant topic to my ministry. After the learning session I will have lunch and perhaps a nap so I can be ready for the Forum gathering at 2:30 and the evening Sadlier event.

So what is a Forum Gathering? It is an opportunity for all diocesan directors, diocesan staff, and parish catechetical leaders to gather with their own constituencies for a presentation and discussion relevant to their particular ministry. It is always amazing how many other people around the country share the same concerns you do!

And what about the Sadlier event; what is that all about? It is the evening that the Sadlier publishing company shows their appreciation to catechetical leaders; they bestow an award to one leader each year at this event. There is always great food, music, and dancing! A do-not-miss event!

Wednesday The day begins with an 8 a.m. NCCL business meeting I will attend with all the other members of NCCL. It is an opportunity for the Board to bring all of us up to date with the organization. The learning sessions are, again, very difficult to choose from! Do I go hear the *Morality Update* with Fr. Benson; *Coaching Parents* with Bill Huebsch, *Adult Faith Formation* with Neil Parent or perhaps *Connecting Parents, Schools and Parish* with Jo Rotunno and Dan Mulhall? There are 11 choices in all! I think I will attend the *Presentation and Panel Discussion on Adapting the USCCB Curriculum Framework for Adolescent Materials for Parish Catechetical Programs*. I intend to attend both sessions of that discussion, though I might sneak into *Theology Update* with Fr. Benson or *Liturgy 101* with David Barocsi, or maybe *Latino Culture and Catechesis 101* with Santiago Cortes-Sjoberg. As you can see it is not easy to choose!

The Awards Luncheon follows the second learning session. This is a perfect opportunity to recognize leaders in catechesis and share a meal. After the lunch I will head to the exhibit hall with everyone else and have dessert as I peruse exhibits and the poster postings.



Vallimar Jansen will present the next major address at 3:15. Her title is *Passion, Power & Presence in Our Diversity: "Walk Together, Children. Don't You Get Weary"*. This address is sure to reignite your passion for the journey of faith, hope and love!

After the general session I will head to the Indiana province meeting. What is a province meeting? It is an opportunity for all those from specific areas of the country to gather and hear about the Representative Council meeting and discuss happenings in each province as well as discuss where the group is going for dinner after liturgy! Liturgy follows the meeting, the perfect way to celebrate our time together, opening the Word and sharing the Eucharist.

After the liturgy the evening is ours. So I will share dinner with friends and probably take one last stroll up the Strip; I am sure I will not tire of the fountain show!

Thursday begins with an 8:30 learning session. Choices again! I am certainly glad we choose before we get to the meeting, since I am sure I would not be able to do so then and there! There are over 10 choices for both sessions this morning. Vallimar Jansen is doing a session on *Catechesis through Sign, Song and Story*; Ken Ogorek is speaking about *What is Your Vision of Catechesis?*; John Roberto will talk about *Faith Formation 2020 Vision*; Brian Cannon about *Catholic Social Teaching* . . . It was really difficult to decide, but I think I will be attending Fr. Louis Cameli's talk: *Catholic Identity: the Catholic Difference and the Difference It Makes*. After a reflection on our foundational identity in Jesus Christ, the presentation will highlight some specifics in terms of the Catholic experience of discipleship: sacramentality, community, tradition, authority, cooperation with God's grace, a complex sense of life, working

for world transformation, pilgrimage and life journey, and universalism. At 10:00 we get to choose again! Is it Fr. Cameli's follow-up? Perhaps catch Vallimar Jansen's talk? Or maybe a *Scripture Update* with Fr. Pat Mullen or the *Rural Catechesis Dialogue with Publishers*. I think I will stroll over to hear Dr. Michael Horan's *Catechetical Update: Lay Ministry and Faith Formation: Co-Workers or Competitors?* This catechetical update session invites participants to consider the strong links and the tenuous tensions between lay ministry, broadly understood, and the ministry of faith formation as practiced and promoted by the members of NCCL.

The Conference Concluding Prayer will be prayed in each learning session room at the conclusion of the talk. Then it is time to say goodbye, check out of the hotel, or have lunch before the 1:30 *Leadership Skill Session*.

I will spend some time saying goodbye to friends from around the country then attend the final meeting of the 2010 Planning Committee. I will be on a plane back to Louisville Thursday evening. I am sure you noticed my plans do not include casinos; I am allergic to smoke; thus I can't spend time in the hotel casinos. Though I think I may have to try a quarter or two at the airport before I leave!

What a whirlwind! I have made myself tired, just writing this article! I am hoping that each of you will join me and hundreds of others from around the country in Las Vegas! If you are so inclined to come early and want to join me Wednesday and/or Thursday drop me an email (dcmnad@sbcglobal.net)! ■

Christina Flum, publicity chairperson for the 2010 NCCL Conference & Expo, is director of catechetical ministry for the New Albany Deanery Aquinas Center in Clarksville, Indiana.



BEFORE EUROPEAN ARRIVAL

Humans arrived here nearly 13,000 years ago. Archeologists and anthropologists from Nevada and California have found evidence of human presence in caves and rock shelters. The first organized group of people in southern Nevada were the Anasazi, who settled near the Four Corners region and down to modern day Overton, Nevada (about 50 miles northeast of Las Vegas). Their civilization lasted about 1,500 years and they developed basket-making and pottery, mined salt from the local hills, and eventually farmed beans and pumpkin and constructed dwellings. About 1,150 BC they disappeared and no one knows why.

The next group of indigenous people were the Southern Paiutes, primarily a wandering people. Some settled near the Virgin and Moapa Rivers, flowing south out of Utah. Like their predecessors, they developed farming skills and did some trade with other local communities. They are present today on one of the several reservations in the state.

A third community was the Shoshone. They are now concentrated in the central and northeastern portions of the state. They tended to be nomadic, hunting birds, and small animals while gathering roots and other plants. A document recognizing their territorial rights was signed in 1863 and they claim sovereignty based on this document. A band lives in the northern part of the diocese near Ely, Nevada.

EUROPEAN ARRIVAL

A Franciscan priest, Francisco Garcés, was the first known European to come into modern Nevada. He traveled north along the Colorado River with some Spanish soldiers in 1776. It was on this trip that the first Mass was celebrated near Laughlin, Nevada. He headed west, arriving at the San Gabriel Mission, east of Los Angeles. There is a plaque commemorating this event in Guardian Angel Cathedral.

Another pair of industrious Franciscans, Francisco Silvestre Velez de Escalante and Antanasio Dominguez, traveled west from Santa Fe, New Mexico, through central Utah and through southern

Gambling has a mixed history in Nevada.

Nevada to California. This route would eventually be called the Old Spanish Trail. Their party was very discouraged at the terrain and climate, and did not explore the area. Over the next several years other explorers would pass by, and at the most, brush the edges of the state.

The first quarter of the nineteenth century found another group of hearty men looking for supplies of animals for the fur trade. These men from Canada, England, and the United States found a harsh terrain not yet mapped. Over the next twenty years various groups would come in and map what they explored. As hearty as they were, the climate proved to be more than they could handle: very cold winters and blistering hot summers and virtually no shade trees. Yet, it is hard to understand how they did not discover local resources used by the native people to cope with the climate.

ADMISSION TO THE UNITED STATES

At the time these men were wondering through Nevada, it was part of Mexico. After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Nevada was part of the territory ceded to the United States. It was shortly after this time that the Mormons started their territorial outreach from Salt Lake City. In 1855 some of their men settled in Las Vegas near a watering hole used by the native peoples. Their first experiences were peaceful but the concept of “private property” was foreign to the natives and misunderstanding ensued. The Mormons’ three years in Las Vegas were difficult: their families were left in Salt Lake City, farming was difficult, and they had bad harvests. In about 1858 they returned to Salt Lake City and to their families.

The Mormon experiment was not an entire failure. Those few who remained did some mining in the western part of the valley and were moderately successful. The Mormons also settled in southern Utah where Brigham Young had a winter home in St. George, Utah.

Settlement continued to grow through the second half of the nineteenth century. The growth of the railroad provided additional opportunities for expansion. Las Vegas was envisioned as a major hub for travel from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles and from Santa Fe to Los Angeles. In 1905 Clark County was formed and in 1911 Las Vegas was incorporated as a city.

MOVING TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Key to the subsequent development of the valley were the springs, supported by an underground river that dotted the valley. The railroad and water made Las Vegas a boom town. People arrived quickly so that certain trades were assigned to certain districts; Block 16 was exclusively for saloons. As in other cities, bootlegging was a popular endeavor during the Prohibition era.

Development continued as the railroad expanded, southern California continued its growth, and improved highways brought additional opportunities to southern Nevada. The planning and building of Hoover Dam was a key factor in Las Vegas’ growth. In the 1920s the Coolidge administration sought ways to improve agriculture in the Southwest and dealt with seasonal flooding and water rights. The largest engineering project to date, a dam, provided a cooperative project between the federal government and several states. In actuality, Hoover Dam is part of a dam system along the Colorado River to control the seasonal flooding. Construction started in 1931, in the depths of the Depression, providing employment to thousands of people. It also led to the founding of Boulder City, where the workers lived and the offices oversaw the project. My mother claims that her father was one of the thousands of workers on the dam.

Gambling has a mixed history in Nevada. It was declared illegal by the territorial legislature in 1861 and affirmed by the state legislature in 1865. However, with mining, railroad towns, and distance, it was a constant form of relaxation for many of the men in the state. Several governors spoke against it yet it continued to thrive. In 1867, the legislature overrode a governor’s veto to legalize some forms of gambling; these forms were taxed.

In 1909, members of the Progressive movement and others managed to pass a law outlawing all forms of gambling, with the activity to stop in 1910. Despite these well-placed intentions, the law was regularly ignored and backroom gambling continued to grow. In the depths of the Great Depression the topic was again raised, albeit outside the legislative chambers. This time it was seen as a way to support local and state government. The law passed in 1931, giving authority to local government entities to license and control gambling activities. Gambling was recognized, also, as a way to draw tourist dollars to Nevada. It also proved profitable to investors.

The history of Nevada’s gambling has its ups and downs. After World War II, criminal elements began to put in their hand at running casinos, which prompted a congressional investigation and reform of the gambling laws. As the century moved on, the gaming industry became a source of employment for many residents, and a gaming institute was formed at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The hospitality industry grew along with gaming and UNLV now has an internationally recognized school of hotel management. As the criminal elements moved out of Las Vegas a new form of management came: the corporate model. Today most of the casinos in Las Vegas and Reno are part of large corporations, although there are a few individuals and families who own their own casino businesses catering to the tourist and local market.

continued on page U8

Another development of the twentieth century came with the nuclear bomb. In 1950, a desert region about 150 miles northwest of Las Vegas was selected as a testing site. Over the next several years nearly forty-five above-ground explosions took place; these events were visible for miles. Several years later some residents noticed a large increase in cancer patients and worried that the radiation exposure was the cause. In 1979 a suit was filed making that claim. Testing continued but had moved to underground sites. President Clinton halted the testing in the 1990s.

The development of the nuclear facility was another contributor in the sustained growth of the Las Vegas Valley. While the operations are much smaller, several residents still work at the test site. UNLV has a study center and museum looking at the impact of the nuclear industry on the Valley. The latest battle being fought is over the Yucca Mountain storage facility for nuclear waste. The current policy is that the storage facility will not work and Congress has reduced the funding over the past few years.

A Franciscan celebrated Mass here the same year the United States was founded.

THE CHURCH IN NEVADA

We saw earlier that Fr. Gracés celebrated Mass here the same year the United States was founded. The presence of the church continued through the years. Before the Mexican-American War, this part of Mexico was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Sonora. After the war, the responsibility fell first to the Bishop of Monterey until 1853 when the Archdiocese of San Francisco was erected. In 1886 the Archbishop formed the Vicariate of Salt Lake City and Nevada fell under its jurisdiction.

In 1908 the first parish in Las Vegas, St. Joan of Arc, was established: it is in the downtown area.

In 1931 Pius XI established the Diocese of Reno with Thomas K. Gorman as the first bishop. Nevada was the last state in the Union to be formed into a diocese—from parts of the diocese of Sacramento and Salt Lake City. Through the years the succeeding bishops founded more parishes and schools as the population grew. Most of the priests serving the diocese were recruited from other parts of the country.

Bishop Norman McFarland (1974-1986) petitioned that the diocese be renamed Reno-Las Vegas to reflect the strong growth in the southern part of the state. After Bishop McFarland was transferred to the Diocese of Orange, California, Bishop Walsh was installed in Guardian Angel Cathedral in Las Vegas as a nod to the continuing growth in Las Vegas. Bishop Daniel Walsh also established offices and his residence in Las Vegas. Several parishes were founded under his leadership, including the Shrine to the Most Holy Redeemer, to serve the tourists in the southern part of the city.

In 1995 the Diocese of Las Vegas was founded with Bishop Walsh as the first bishop and Bishop Philip Stralling in Reno. Bishop Walsh's work included founding parishes, opening schools, establishing a liturgical commission and a catechetical conference, Hispanic ministry, a diocesan youth council, and a full-time vocation director, among other initiatives. The Dominican fathers came to the diocese to be a Catholic presence on the UNLV campus and commence an outreach ministry to those infected and affected by HIV. Bishop Walsh was transferred to the Diocese of Santa Rosa in spring 2000 and was succeeded in 2001 by Msgr. Joseph Pepe, who had been serving in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

Bishop Pepe has continued the work of spreading the Gospel in southern Nevada. Additional parishes were founded, a Shrine of Our lady of LaVang was founded to serve the Vietnamese community, and St. Paul Jung-Ha-Sang parish to serve the Korean community. Several priests were ordained for the diocese and we have six men in formation now. In 2005 the bishop celebrated the first televised Christmas Midnight Mass and the tradition continues today.

Bishop Pepe continues to promote the faith in the Las Vegas area by establishing a lay ecclesial ministry formation program and deacon formation (the first class is scheduled for a June 2011 ordination), opening a new high school, and strengthening Catholic education. Plans are underway to establish new parishes and open at least one new elementary school.

The bishop welcomes various Catholic groups to Las Vegas. He has hosted the annual Cardinal's Dinner and the National Catholic Youth Conference, among other events. As we continue to make straight the way, he is excited that NCCL will be coming to Las Vegas in April to share in our faith life here in the desert and enrich us with the dedication and faith of each of you, my colleagues. We offer each and every NCCL member a warm welcome to the graced meadows (Las Vegas). ■

Marc Gonzalez, D.Min., is the director of the Department of Faith and Ministry Formation for the Diocese of Las Vegas.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN FAITH AND BELIEF

The Future of Faith by Harvey Cox. New York: HarperOne, 2009. Hardcover, 256 pages, \$24.99.

Reviewed by Dan Thomas



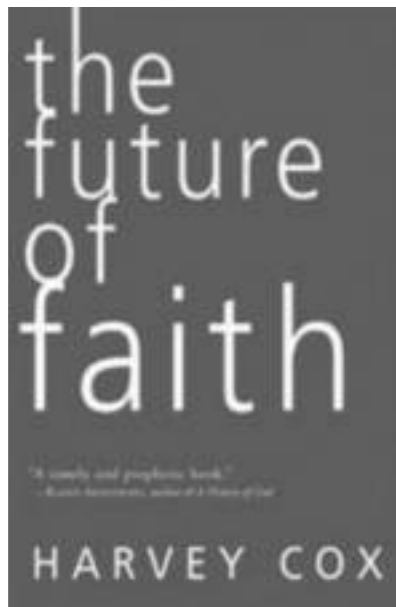
Harvey Cox, in an intriguing and well-written book called *The Future of Faith*, looks at the role of religion in today's world as a rebirth of the Age of Faith (his term for the church of Jesus and his early followers). We are moving, he says, from the Age of Belief into the Age of the Spirit. The "future of faith" is exemplified by the evangelical movement, which is replacing the dying fundamentalism of hierarchical, "creed-bound," and patriarchal churches. "So much Christian theology and preaching has fastened on to the need for faith in Jesus that the faith of Jesus has often been ignored," Cox says.

The breadth of Cox's experience is captured by his stories of trips to Rome for a conference sponsored by the Secretariat for Nonbelievers and a later visit there with then-Cardinal Ratzinger; his meeting with liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez in Cuernavaca, Mexico; lecturers on Islam and Buddhism who came to Harvard; and his work with evangelicals, out of which came his book *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality*.

His distinction between faith and belief is the central theme of this work. Faith is his word for the experience of mystery and awe captured in the myths, rituals and stories which lead to a thirst for justice and peace, called in the words of Jesus "the Reigning of God." Creeds are poetic statements that hint at but never fully capture the mystical experience of the God shown us in Jesus the Christ.

"Belief, on the other hand, is more like opinion . . . Beliefs can be held lightly or with emotional intensity, but they are more propositional than existential." Belief in Cox's sense, brings catechisms "replacing faith in Jesus with tenets about him." The key event in this process, he says, was Constantine's decision "to commandeer Christianity to bolster his ambitions for the empire."

His three truths about the early church are these: "There never was a single 'early Christianity', there were many . . . it was . . . subsequent generations who invented 'apostolic



authority' . . . [The early Christian movement was] a self-conscious *alternative* to the empire."

There is a wonderful section in Chapter 3, "Ship Already Launched" that describes the "three main foci" of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The Hebrew Cycle presents God as "a God of *promise*, always pointing people toward the future"—a God who "favors the little guy." This cycle "begins with creation and ends with the renovation of the world into a commonwealth of *shalom*, a place of justice and peace."

The Christmas Cycle tells of "Jesus and his family as refugees. Mary and Joseph [as] not married . . . Jesus's [sic] teaching and his activities [demonstrating]

his habitual favoritism toward the poor, the sick, and the socially outcast, [promising] an age of peace and goodwill." It tells us that "the Kingdom of God is something that happens in and to *this* world."

The Easter Cycle tells the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. It begins "with Jesus leaving the relative safety and remoteness of Galilee and traveling to Jerusalem, the hub of Roman imperial power in the eastern Mediterranean and its elite Judean collaborators." This cycle tells us "the life lived and the project he pursued . . . did not perish at the crucifixion, but continued in the lives of those who carried on what he had begun."

Chapters 4 through 8 give a liberal/progressive church history, which summarize the key elements of the three ages: the Age of Faith (the first two centuries), the age of Belief (the third through the early twentieth century), and the Age of the Spirit (the twentieth and twenty-first centuries). He does admit that the Age of Belief is not all bad, citing figures like Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, and the like. But it is not a good time for the Christian church because of its emphasis on heresy, hierarchy, patriarchy, and creeds.

continued on page 14

"Living in Haunted Houses" (chapter 9) is a challenging plea for *intra-faith* dialogue bringing together "the 'fundamentalist wings' in our own and other traditions, especially since a lot of the religious animosity that sometimes flares into violence today occurs within religious groups, not between them." "We need to face in three directions: toward other faiths, toward the 'other wing' in our own tradition, and toward the complex political context of our fractured world."

Chapter 10 summarizes the fundamentalist position: "Fundamentalists have always regarded their beliefs as under attack, and therefore have engaged in counterattack . . ." Chapter 11 is a wonderful description of the questions raised when the fundamentalists talk about the Bible as inerrant. Cox asks the question, "Which Bible?" Chapter 12 hints at the future of faith by discussing the Community of Sant'Egidio and the windows of St. Praxedis which picture the "bishop (?)" Theodora. Chapter 13 gives an outstanding summary of the essence of liberation theology and Chapter 14 summarizes the gifts that the Pentecostals bring to the future of faith.

This is an important book by a significant thinker whose experience of the contemporary religious world is both wide and deep. The questions raised here are valuable ones that we who are wrestling with the future of church need to face. One of the "failures" of this book is answering the question of belief understood

in the sense of beliefs that come from our hearts and change our lives. Here is a hint at Cox's answer: "During the first two centuries, a period of unparalleled growth and vigor, the only 'creed' Christians had was not an inventory of beliefs. It was a straightforward affirmation: 'Jesus Christ is Lord,' which was more like a pledge of allegiance. It meant, 'I serve Jesus, not some other sovereign.' This also meant Christians placed loyalty to Jesus above loyalty to Caesar, which eventually stirred up fateful trouble. But the dispute was not about a clash of creeds; it was about a clash of loyalties. It was about two different ways of life."

The church of the future (the global South?) is much like the church of the New Testament. It faces a pluralist world with an experience of the Lord of life. It is made up of numerous and diverse communities wanting to bring justice and peace to a broken world. It is under the threat/challenge of "an American empire of consumption" that demands total allegiance. The response is the two calls that Jesus issued: the call to conversion and the call to holiness. This is the catechesis we are called to: a faith formation that changes the way people live by contact with the Jesus who is Lord in a call to live the reigning of God. Just like the church of the first and second century. ■

Dan Thomas is director of evangelization and catechesis for St. John the Baptist Parish in Tipp City, Ohio.



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Challenge for Easter People

by Jessica Coblentz



I tend to think about Easter the way most people do, I imagine. I am moved by the Stations of the Cross, Christ's devastating death by crucifixion, and the miraculous, joyful resurrection. Yet in a divergence from my usual Easter reflections, this year I am pondering a component of the Easter story I have overlooked in years past.

It was only recently that I realized a striking trend among the first Easter People: every Gospel narrative contains tales of confused disciples who struggle to recognize and respond to the resurrected Christ in their midst. In Matthew's Gospel, Mary Magdalene and the disciples pay homage before Jesus' resurrected body, but it arouses fear in Mary and doubt among the disciples (Matt 28:10, 17). Mary Magdalene does not recognize Jesus' resurrected body at all in John's Gospel (John 20:14-16). Famously, Thomas does not recognize the body of the resurrected Christ until he sees the wounds of the crucifixion (John 20:19-29). Those who see Jesus' resurrected body in Mark's Gospel recognize it, but nobody believes their witness accounts. For this, Jesus upbraids those who do not believe (Mark 16:10-14). In Luke's Gospel the resurrected Jesus holds a lengthy discussion with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, but it is not until Christ breaks bread with them that they recognize Jesus' body. Once they do, it is said to have vanished immediately (Luke 24:13-35).

There was something about Jesus' Easter body—God's resurrected body—that consistently evaded these early followers, and this observation has me wondering: Are we, the Easter People of today, victim to the same tendency as these disciples? Do we fail to recognize Christ in our midst, missing the miracle of Jesus among us? How might this affect the role of the catechist in ministry with Easter People?

As a 23-year-old Catholic working in ministry with my young adult peers, I find these questions particularly challenging. Many young adults struggle to recognize the resurrected Christ in our church today. Some statistics reflect declines in traditional Catholic religious practice and belief, and many people are especially concerned by the seeming absence of young adults in parishes. In other words, it seems that many people—perhaps especially those of the younger generations—are finding it difficult to identify the life-giving presence of Christ in the practices and doctrines of the

Catholic tradition. As catechists, we are challenged to encounter these Easter People the way Jesus did the first disciples, patiently working to enable to the recognition of Christ in the traditions, practices, and beliefs of our church.

Meanwhile, I think catechists are also challenged to reconsider our own abilities to recognize the resurrected Christ today. As Catholics we believe that the church is the living Body of Christ, yet when encountering fellow Catholics—many young adults, for example—who do not engage and express their faith in ways that are familiar to us, it is often easier and more comfortable to expect them to conform to our notions of a Catholic life rather than trying to recognize them as the resurrected Christ in our midst, just as they are. When the particular concerns, trials, and cultures of young adults are often left out of homilies and parish programming, we potentially overlook an opportunity to engage a community that is the body of Christ, manifested in a new way for a new generation. The body of Christ is resurrected in young adults today—are you trying to recognize Jesus in this generation?

The Gospel stories of the first Easter People lead us to a ten-

The body of Christ is resurrected in young adults today—are you trying to recognize Jesus in this generation?

sion that we, the Easter People of today, must embrace as catechists. We are called to assist others in recognizing the body of Christ in old ways and new ways—in the more familiar practices and teachings of our ancient faith, and in the new manifestations that it takes in new generations of Catholics. This makes the task of catechesis a complicated one—but one that we must learn to embrace as the Easter People of God.

Jesus has risen! Alleluia! Alleluia! Do you recognize the resurrected Christ today? ■

Jessica Coblentz is the pastoral associate for young adult ministry at the Paulist Catholic Center in Boston, and a former intern in young adult ministry at the Office of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She is currently a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School.

Passionate Catechetical Pioneers

by Karen M. Pesek



As a diocesan director you know you are doing rural catechesis when . . .

- You wake up before dawn to drive four hours on a winding rural road to give a regional training and eight people show up. Everyone who should be there is present.
- When you arrive at a parish for an evening presentation, the door is unlocked and you know to go in the kitchen to pour water through the coffee pot and there will be homemade goodies on a plate.
- You keep food and survival gear in your car.
- You can drive for miles on a state highway and not meet another car.
- You are given vegetables to take home during harvest season.
- The pastor is called “preacher” by the local townsfolk.
- You just landed on a remote airstrip outside a native village in the Alaskan wilderness and it is minus 20 below zero.
- After Mass you find an anti-Catholic Chick Publications tract on your windshield.

The NCCL rural catechesis committee, formed in 2007, is for anyone interested in rural catechesis. Recently, the committee has discussed how to define the term “rural catechesis.” This discussion has generated a lot of energy and enthusiasm. We are still exploring this issue, but it is helpful to note that much of rural catechesis takes place in home mission dioceses. According to the USCCB Secretariat for Home Missions, these are the characteristics of a home mission diocese:

- Low assets that limit diocesan pastoral programs and the support a diocese can give its parishes
- Few Catholics within the diocese—typically, less than 10% of the total population
- Difficult terrain, extreme weather, and great distances—as many as 50 miles—separating isolated parishes and missions

- A severe shortage of priests, deacons, and skilled pastoral workers for mission churches
- Poverty, high unemployment, and low wages
- Few or no Catholic institutions—religious houses, schools, colleges, hospitals, retreat centers—to support evangelization and religious education
- A growing number of Hispanics and members of other racial/ethnic groups in need of pastoral attention
- Unfamiliarity with, lack of interest in, or even outright hostility toward Catholicism or religion in general in the local culture

Approximately 90 of the 200 Latin- and Eastern-rite dioceses in the United States (about 45 percent), are unable to provide for their people without help. And yet, there are other dioceses who do not fit this description, or who do not participate in the home mission funding program, and still consider themselves as providing rural catechesis.

Ministering in a rural area or parish can be simultaneously the most challenging and most rewarding experience of a catechetical leader's career. In these places we serve parishioners who sometimes do not have an adequate education and sometimes struggle with poverty. The church is fragile in these areas. Catholics are few. It is a unique type of ministry in a variety of geographic settings. We are passionate about serving the varied needs of these far-flung rural parishes. In an effort to support one another, the committee is offering the following learning sessions at the 2010 Annual Conference and Expo (see box on page 17). If any of these descriptions of catechetical ministry resonate with your experience, please join us! ■

Karen M. Pesek is director of the Office of Religious Education and Safe Environment Coordinator for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri. She is a member of the Rural Catechesis committee and past chair of the Leadership Discernment committee. Contact: kpesek@dioscg.org.

NCCL Conference: Rural Catechesis Workshops

Tuesday, April 20, 11:15 am to 12:30 pm

Rural Catechesis: From Coping to Creativity

This is a forum for diocesan directors and diocesan staff who are involved with ministry in rural catechesis. A facilitator will initiate a dialogue with the participants. Some of the areas to be addressed are catechist formation; curriculum development; catechetical programs; personal coping skills; organizational management with limited personnel and resources.

Thursday, April 22, 8:30 am to 9:45 am

Rural Catechesis: Sacramental Preparation

The facilitator will initiate a sharing of resources and programs in rural areas with a focus on the sacraments of reconciliation, Eucharist, confirmation and Christian initiation of children who have reached

Thursday, April 22 *continued*

catechetical age. Some areas for discussion will be creative ways of doing retreats, parent meetings; family, sponsor, and parish community involvement; catechesis for multiple age groups; and catechesis for persons with special needs.

Thursday, April 22, 10:00 am to 11:15 am

Rural Catechesis: Dialogue with Publishers of Catechetical Materials and Programs

The facilitators will initiate a dialogue with participants and publishers on what kinds of services, materials, and resources are needed today for catechesis in rural areas. Participants are invited to bring samples of best practices, resources, and creative ways of obtaining funding for rural catechesis.

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Ring Out the Old, Ring In the New (Digitally)

by Caroline Cervený, SSJ



A new decade—yes! As we begin this time together, let's stop for a moment to remember the technologies that are quickly disappearing:

Film cameras: The Eastman Kodak Company announced on June 22, 2009, that it will discontinue sales of Kodachrome Color Film this year, concluding its seventy-four-year run as a photography icon. In recent years, photographers are turning almost exclusively towards digital capture that can be shared quickly and easily with others via services like Snapfish, Photobucket, and other online digital services.

Telephones: According to Marshall Brain, founder of HowStuffWorks, "The entire telephone industry has been transformed in the past decade. In the year 2000, just about everyone had a land-line connection to the local phone company, and then had an account with one of the big long distance carriers (AT&T, MCI, Sprint, etc.) to handle non-local calls. Many people today have no connection to the local phone company at all, and the concept of long distance has largely died. Most telephony is now handled by your cell phone or your internet connection." Cell phones are now mini-computers that we call Smartphones, easily accessing our email, YouTube videos, and more.

Answering machines: The little boxes with their cassette tapes have pretty much disappeared. In their place are voice mail systems that come with your cell phone plan or your telephone service. Once again, all digital services!

Cassette tapes and . . . : Remember walking around with your cassette tape players? We had a way to easily record talks, interviews, and more. We easily played the cassette in our cars and stereo players. Today, we are using MP3 players, which easily capture digitally the sounds that surround us in our daily lives. We are now capturing podcasts that are downloaded via our computers to our MP3 players. A few tapes are still around for camcorders, but more and more the tape is replaced by flash memory. DVD players are still common for video, yet streaming video and flash memory cards are becoming very common.

The record store: Does it exist today? No! MP3 players (iPods and more) now dominate the distribution of digital music. The need to go to a physical store to buy music died, and record stores have disappeared.

Compact discs: Once regarded as the best way to capture music and more, these too are disappearing. Music albums may survive. However, more and more digital music is being purchased on an individual basis—one song at a time.

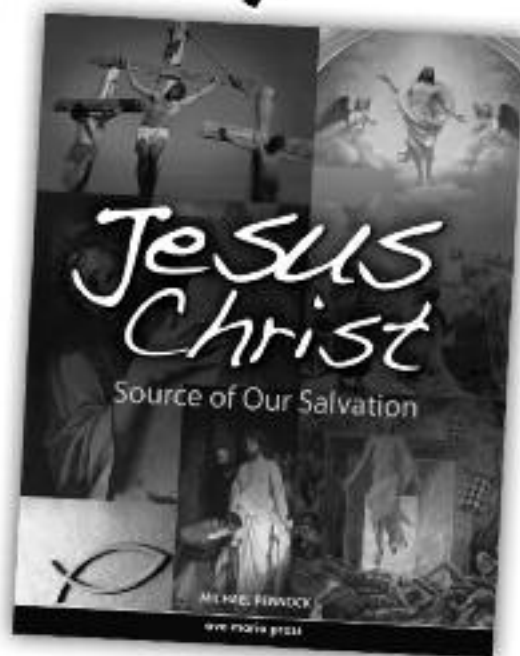
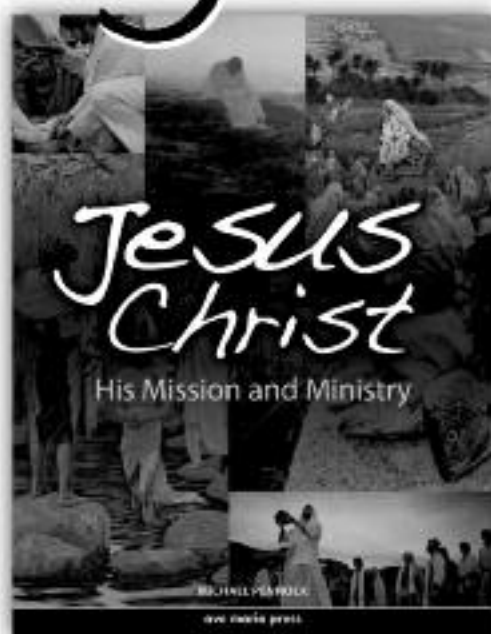
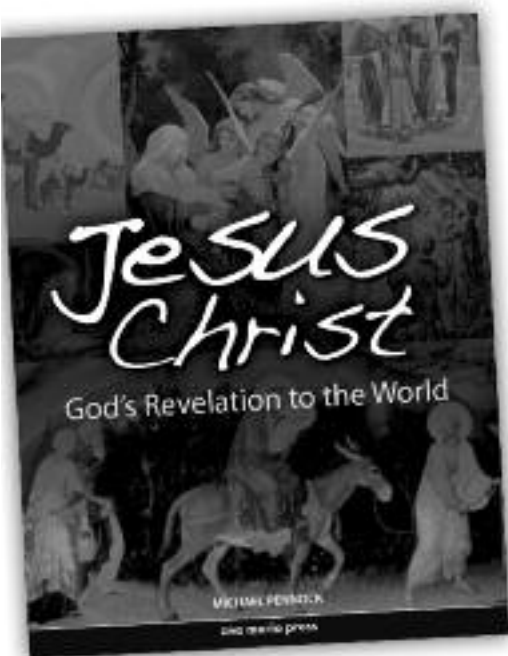
As we take time to remember these disappearing technologies, it becomes very clear that we are living in a Digital Age with digital tools and digital natives, who are being raised with what we are still becoming comfortable with!

I recently purchased an iPhone. What a wonderful tool to have in hand! I now carry in my pocket: my phone, address book, email contacts, calendar, camera and photos, voice recorder, calculator, note pad, iTunes, video camera, calculator, weather and stock reports, clock (with international zones), and any application that I may want to add to this tool. Previously I needed a fairly good-sized briefcase to carry these items with me. Today, all of these tools are found on a 4.3-ounce tool that is easily carried in a pocket or purse. Our digital natives are very comfortable with tools like this and their world is a digital one! Smart—you bet!

At our organization's recent Interactive Connections Conference in Orlando, the first faith-based educational technology conference, ten high school students (representing approximately 120 students from schools in Sydney, Australia and St. Petersburg and Orlando, Florida) showed how new technology can be used to foster friendships and create a digital project that can be shared across the world. They participated in the Global Connections project, "Global Church, Global Ministry," initiated by Interactive Connections and the Catholic Education Office in Sydney, Australia.

continued on page 24

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Catechists Teaching Catechists: Ideas for Catechesis to Young People

by Jo Rotunno



A few days ago I was watching a cooking demo on the Food Network. I think I'm a pretty good cook and I've been cooking for over forty years now, but every time I watch a cooking show I get a new idea. I like to watch the techniques that really good cooks use, and I usually learn a new one, even for a dish I've been cooking for years. When I saw "Julie and Julia" recently, that wonderful movie reminiscence on the career of Julia Child, I suddenly realized I'd been making scrambled eggs all wrong since I was a teenager.

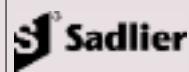
Cooking up a good lesson plan is a similar exercise for a catechist. Smart catechists know they can never have too many ideas, and that they can always learn a new way of executing a favorite activity they've been using for years. And just as with a cooking show, there is no substitute for seeing a good catechist demonstrate how to make an activity work in a catechetical setting.

That is one of the great strengths of *Echoes of Faith*. On seven different videos in this catechist formation series, you can see outstanding catechists execute good catechetical sessions, then

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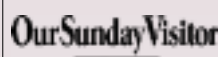
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hear them explain why what they are doing is important. Let me remind you of a few of the outstanding catechists whose classes are depicted in the *Echoes* videos. In the "Methods for Grades 1 and 2" video, a Florida catechist makes the simple statement, "Learning is discovering." She then conducts a lesson in which children are actively engaged in a process of discovery from beginning to end, building meaning through their activities and her gentle dialogic teaching.

In the very first video of the series, "Getting Started," catechists see a Native American catechist welcome intermediate grade students to the first catechetical session of the year and ask them to share their summer vacation experiences. None of us who have seen this video will ever forget the catechist's spontaneous caring response when a young girl begins to cry as she recalls spending a month with her grandparents as her parents were separating. The students observe a loving response that reminds the girl and all of them as well of the enduring love of a caring God in difficult times.

In the "Methods for Grades 7 and 8" video, catechists see a Catholic school teacher offer an outstanding activity-based experience for her junior high students that both engages their interest and imagination and engages them in the social teaching of the church. The "Getting Started" video shows an outstanding catechist working with a group of high school students, and his lesson plan still stands as my model of what a successful catechetical session can be. His mix of brainstorming, dialogue on Scripture, creative activities, and ritual prayer around the theme of forgiveness is one of the best sessions I have ever observed. Catechists cannot help but be inspired by his passion for the ministry of catechesis.

New catechists, experienced ones, and those who think they've seen it all can be energized by watching these classroom demos. Don't deprive your catechists of the *Echoes of Faith* experience! ■

Jo Rotunno is director of catechist and professional development for RCL Benziger. Echoes of Faith is a joint endeavor of NCCL and RCL Benziger.

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IF WE ARE WITHOUT FAITH, SUFFERING LEAVES US WITHOUT ANSWERS AND SHOWS HOW LITTLE WE REALLY KNOW.

Suffering is a great indication of human limitations. Scientists and doctors, working to discover a cure for sickness, disappointment, or despair, will never succeed completely. There is no magical panacea for suffering on this side of heaven. On earth, we are imperfect products, knowing only a tiny sliver of life's meaning. Logicians tell us it's a mistake to form absolute conclusions based on imperfect evidence. No amount of reasoning can fathom the mysteries of life, death, God, and human finitude. Only faith offers us adequate clues. Wise catechists point to the limitations of all earthly realities, encourage students to turn their hearts and souls to God, and probe the mystery of why we are here.

SUFFERING MAKES IT EASIER FOR US TO UNDERSTAND HOW A COMPASSIONATE HAND AND LOVING HEART BLESSES HURTING PEOPLE.

Often, the people we want to visit us when we are sick never come. We may conclude that they don't care or that they don't know how to treat us. After we recover, we remember those who encouraged us without offering answers, for there are no answers. In their concern, such friends may invite us to join them at a movie, in their home, or for dinner if we are able. Their compassionate hands and loving hearts teach us that personal support doesn't come from an attractive personality or a sharp mind alone, but from a caring, loving spirit. In such people, we feel the living enfleshment of Jesus. Like them, catechists have numerous opportunities to echo the Good News in flesh and blood to students, parents, catechists, and others in ministry. In so doing, they bring alive the lessons they teach. Easter encourages catechists to reflect on Jesus' suffering and death in light of their calling to teach Jesus' love and forgiveness in words and deeds.

JESUS' RESURRECTION SPELLS THE END OF MEANINGLESS AND ENCOURAGES US TO EXAMINE LIFE'S REAL MEANING.

We catechize not for time but for eternity. Everything is seen in light of our final goal—eternal happiness. This does not make this present life unimportant. The earth is our home and we live here. At the final judgment we will reconnect with our earthly roots as we experience a new heaven and a new earth. While on earth, life can be meaningless only if we fail to see it in light of our final goal. With this goal in the forefront, we accept our responsibility for the world, always keeping before us what is to come. Eternal blessedness, promised by Jesus' resurrection, means that no experience is meaningless. Catechists reinforce the basis of human happiness, connecting it with Jesus' resurrection, the source of all happiness. They support troubled colleagues and students indicating that "this too will pass." We are destined for more—ultimately for eternal life that Easter promises. ■

Rev. Robert J. Hater, PhD, is professor emeritus at the University of Dayton and professor of pastoral and systematic theology at the Athenaeum of Ohio. His most recent book is What Catholics Can Learn from Evangelicals, published by Visual Dynamics Publishing.

of the church into their lives, adults will go elsewhere to feed their spiritual hunger.

JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF GOD

The bishops in the document *"Our Hearts Were Burning"* reflect that "in Jesus the disciples caught a glimpse into the heart of God." We, too, who bear responsibility for adult faith formation are called to bring adults into the heart of God. All adult faith formation efforts should be Christo-centric. We are called to walk side by side with the adults of our parishes as they speak of their joys, hopes, sufferings and doubts. We are called to minister in new and unexpected ways, to assess our local culture and to find ways to reach out as never before. A creative example of this is the outreach that two priests in the Diocese of Green Bay offer to men. They lead a "Bowhunter's Retreat" prior to the hunting season in Wisconsin, capitalizing on the fact that in Northeast Wisconsin hunting is incredibly popular, and weave spirituality and catechesis subtly into the retreat.

As church we are called to nurture one another in our faith journeys by worshipping together, learning together, serving together in love and life within a community of faith. Faith formation of adults always begins and ends with Christ—the alpha and the omega. It is to and through Christ that we will renew our commitment to each other and to the church. Let the light of Christ in our hearts radiate love to our community of adults! ■

Let us do our part with creativity and vigor, our hearts aflame with love to empower adults to know and live the message of Jesus."

Our Hearts Were Burning, No.183

Julianne Donlon-Stanz left Ireland in 2001 and is currently the director of adult faith formation and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin. She enjoys leading retreats and teaching classes and infuses her ministry with her love of Celtic spirituality. She can be reached at Jdonlon@gbdioc.org.

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I listened to the presentation by students who used today's digital tools to interview priests for a project that focused on the Year of the Priest. They linked their digital projects together using Google Earth. I invite you to visit the results of their project at <http://stage.cccsw.catholic.edu.au/2010/globalchurch.kmz>. What I heard in their presentation is that they deepened their faith because of the conversation, met their priest for a wonderful interview, and were delighted to share their story with their peers and the whole world via social networking tools.

This project is an example of Pope Benedict's call to ministers and educators to use the new technologies in the cause of evangelization. As we become more immersed in this digital world, we will find ways to connect our youth to one another and to their faith. ■

Caroline Cervený, SSJ, D. Min., president of *Interactive Connections* (www.intconnect.org), specializes in online catechist/ministry formation and the applications of new media to adult and youth evangelization and formation. She would like to hear your comments at c.cervený@verizon.net.

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