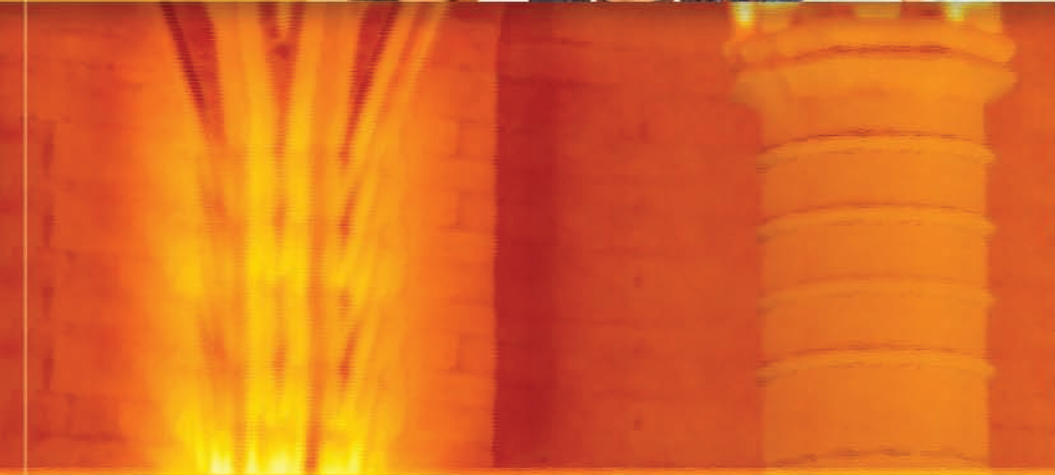


c | CATECHETICAL LEADER



THE ROLE OF THE DRE



IN THIS ISSUE:

Leading from the Second Chair
Dear Catechetical Leader,

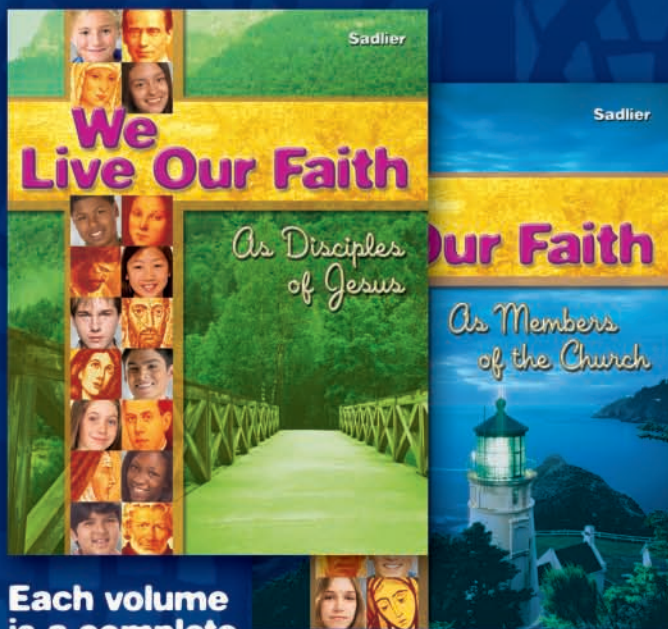
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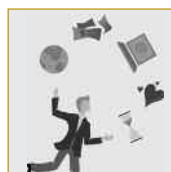
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LIGHTING THE FIRE

Mary Ann Ronan



Engaging this Catechetical Moment, the theme and challenge of this year's 71st Annual NCCL Conference and Exhibition, sets us on the course of discipleship that transforms us to echo St. Paul's confession, "Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

We know there have been other moments in the history of our church where we have been challenged as catechetical leaders, but this moment has special significance because of the vision of the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

When we read in the *NDC* the catechetical signs of vitality, we know each of them because we experience them every day in our dioceses and parishes. We also know the challenges because they too are part of our

ministry. Putting the vision and challenge before a disciple is lighting a fire that cannot be put out...

Whether you feel like a burning ember or a roaring fire, coming to Columbus will spark your mind, heart and soul.

This year's Conference speakers will enhance our knowledge of the *NDC* as well as help each one of us place it in the context of consumerism, the people of diverse cultures that share their lives with us, the cultures of parish life, and the hopes and horizons that call us forward as Catholic catechetical leaders.

Giving spark to our hearts and souls, we celebrate liturgy, prayer, play and conversation with new and old friends. Telling stories, sharing ministry experiences, remembering our deceased co-workers in the vineyard brings all of us together in our need for our Savior and each other.

Pope John Paul II in "Catechesis in Our Time" (*Catechesi Tradendae*) described catechesis as a "remarkable moment in the whole process of evangelization." May Columbus be a "remarkable moment" of discipleship for each of us! ■

*Whether you feel like a
burning ember or a roaring
fire, come to Columbus!*

KEEPING US ROOTED

Neil A. Parent



There is no role more crucial to the success of the ministry of catechesis than that of the parish catechetical leader. Over the years, a number of reports and statements have highlighted the direct correlation that exists between the quality of a parish's catechetical program and the presence of a well-qualified parish catechetical leader. The more qualified the leader, the better the program.

I count as one of the great blessings of my professional career that I served for seven years as the director of adult faith formation for a parish in northern Virginia. It was there that I learned the ministry from the ground up. When I began, I had an advanced degree in theology and a modicum of experience working with adult learners. But it is one thing to have a tool bag full of theory and not much else; and it is quite another to construct a viable catechetical program from scratch. I found that out fast.

One of the great themes we emphasize in catechesis is that spiritual wisdom is more than head knowledge. One can learn only so much from study and reflection. Deeper insights await us over our life span as we repeatedly engage in the sacred rituals of our faith and put our beliefs into action, especially in helping others. The same within a parish community, day-in and day-out, that one begins to understand catechesis at a deeper level.

It was in the parish where I experienced both the possibilities and the limitations of differing and sometimes conflicting approaches to faith formation. It was in the parish where I learned the critical importance of compromise and collaboration in exercising leadership and of how to build effective programs through consultation, planning and attention to detail. It was in the parish where I learned from a visionary pastor that empowerment of the laity for ministry was not only a top priority but virtually the only way a parish can attend to the needs of its people. It was in the parish where I learned that hospitality is at the core of ministry and that heart-felt, expressed gratitude is the fuel that powers volunteer helpers and leaders.

I have a saying: "Once a DRE, always a DRE." I've probably used it hundreds of times in the presence of other religious educators who, like me, came up through the ranks of being a parish catechetical leader. Most of the times when I have used this expression, I found myself pressed into service with others to help set up chairs, pick up

used coffee cups, or put out program materials. An important lesson we learn early on in parish ministry is that no matter who you are or what your position is, you are never too important to do what needs to be done to bring off a successful meeting or learning experience.

But at a deeper level, when I use that expression I am saying that being a parish catechetical leader is so professionally formative that you are never really the same afterwards. Yes, you may have left the ministry and gotten into something else, but you never really forget the lessons you learned in the parish. Those formative experiences will be with you for the rest of your life. And for the better, I might add.

I have been very pleased by NCCL's commitment to parish catechetical leaders since admitting them to membership in the early 1990s. But more importantly I have been impressed with the PCLs' commitment to NCCL, especially in the earliest days when very few of them had access to full membership. Despite those limitations, NCCL's PCL members remained highly dedicated to the organization, often bringing both rich insights and a willingness to work hard on behalf of the organization. Indeed, by all accounts, the Parish Catechetical Leader Forum was the first to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded the new role-based groups. Their open-door policy at the annual conference has been a significant reason why NCCL's parish catechetical membership has consistently grown over the years.

Being a parish catechetical leader is so professionally formative that you are never really the same afterwards.

Today, NCCL's highest elected official, President Mary Ann Ronan, is a parish catechetical leader. Evident to all of us who work directly with her, especially on the board of directors, are the considerable array of skills and insights that she has honed over long years in parish ministry. NCCL is very fortunate to have her leadership, as it is fortunate to have the gifts of all of our parish catechetical leaders. They help keep NCCL firmly rooted in the ground where catechesis is planted — the parish. |

Leading from the Second Chair

by Patricia E. Clement, D.Min.



Winter is always a busy “between time” for parish catechetical leaders. We leap from Ash Wednesday to Passion Sunday, while chasing down the sacramental paperwork for Easter season celebrations. At the same time, we try to anticipate future needs as we prepare next year’s budget proposals. We have so many tasks at hand, that we are tempted to exchange our catechetical leader “hat” for one labeled “Middle Management Bureaucrat.” Unfortunately, this is when our role as catechetical leader is most needed. What better time, then, to take a moment to refocus? Like St. Paul, we must keep our eyes on the goal.

Often, when I need a personal ministry evaluation, my best inspiration emerges from outside the Catholic catechetics box. In this instance, it came from a local Baptist seminary where a professor friend of mine sent me a book entitled *Leading from the Second Chair*, by Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson, a guide for associate pastors in Baptist congregations. The opening chapter contained three statements that relate directly to the role of a Catholic parish catechetical leader:

- A second chair leader is a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the organization.
- Second chair leadership is unique because it is not strictly based on the power and authority of positional leadership.
- Those who thrive [as second chair leaders] find much of their success through influence and relationships. They bring a new perspective to the powerful concept of servant leadership.

SECOND CHAIR LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE CHURCH

Bookstores are filled with how-to guides for corporate leadership, but the concept of second-tier leadership is a relatively new area of study in the business world. In ministry, however, it is a very ancient relationship.

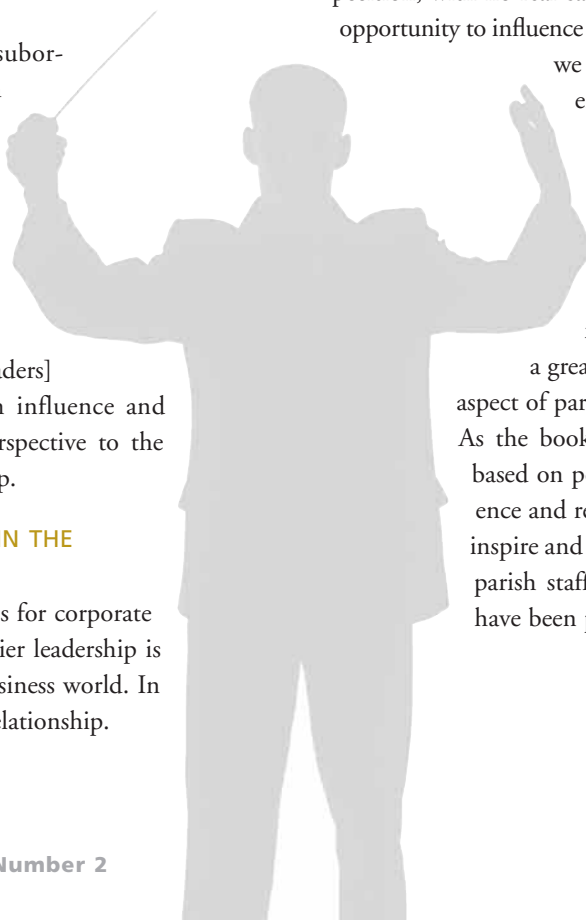
Essentially, everyone in ministry is a second chair leader. Jesus is our first chair. He has the ultimate power. He provides the vision and the message. Whether we are a parish DRE, a diocesan director, a bishop or the pope, we all answer to a higher authority.

THE DRE AS SECOND CHAIR MASTER TEACHER

Perhaps you have heard the story about a king who sent messengers throughout his realm to find the most suitable person to adopt and train as his heir. One servant brought back a valiant knight, famous for defending righteous causes. Another servant returned with a brilliant engineer who had built roads that made it safe for travel and trade. A third servant came forward with a wise and respected judge who had helped to bring peace to the land. At last, a fourth servant arrived with a quiet, simply-dressed woman at his side. As this servant came forward to introduce her to the king, he proclaimed, “This woman is the teacher of the other three!”

As parish catechetical leaders, we serve in the second chair role of *master teacher*. This may in reality be a third or thirteenth parish position, with no real canonical authority, but there is tremendous opportunity to influence the entire community. How much influence we have is largely dependent on how we embrace our call to second chair leadership.

The key word is *leadership*. Most DRE job descriptions list management and programming responsibilities. It is an easy temptation to fall into a management role when authentic leadership is what is really needed. Like the woman in the fable, a great parish catechetical leader can affect every aspect of parish life, including the top tiers of ministry. As the book suggests, second chair leadership is not based on power and authority, but on building influence and relationships. A skilled parish DRE can and inspire and provide resources to the parish council, the parish staff, and even the pastor, if the foundations have been properly laid.



PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS ARE CALLED TO “ECHO” THE MESSAGE

As second chair leaders, parish DRE's are responsible for helping to carry out the parish vision, but we are not responsible for creating the vision — that is the role of the one holding the first chair. In corporate America, the first chair vision-caster would be the company CEO. For Catholic Christians, the vision-caster is not the parish pastor who occupies the first-chair seat, as some might assume, but the true first chair — Jesus Christ.

Second chair leadership is not based on power and authority, but on building influence and relationships.

We have all come to understand that the word *catechesis* comes from the Greek word for *echo*. As the parish master catechist, we are responsible for embracing the vision and echoing Jesus' message to the entire faith community. This suggests much more than serving as a master teacher of doctrine. To echo Jesus' message to a parish means to present this vision to the faithful, provide them with the training necessary to carry out the vision, and to lovingly challenge them when they get distracted and stray away from the vision. It more closely resembles the role of the ancient prophets, who repeated God's covenant call and pointed the way when Israel needed to refocus and reaffirm the covenant.

WHAT IS JESUS' VISION FOR PARISH MINISTRY?

If the parish catechetical leader is responsible for faithfully echoing the “company message,” we must first clearly understand the vision and embrace it for ourselves. We need a clear vision statement or short job description that is easy to articulate and simple to use as an evaluation tool along the journey. Fortunately, we have a divinely inspired vision statement from the very first parish!

Look to Acts, chapter 2;

Date: Pentecost — the Holy Spirit has come. Peter preaches to the gathered crowd. Three thousand people hear the Good News, respond to Jesus as their savior, and are baptized. Instant parish of 3,000! What did they do next?

They devoted themselves to the TEACHING of the apostles, and to the COMMUNAL LIFE, to the BREAKING of the BREAD and to the PRAYERS...those who believed SHARED ALL THINGS in common.

Acts 2:42-44

This was Jesus' vision statement for the first parish: a call to conversion followed by foundational pillars to support that conversion. Today's church documents all articulate the same vision in a variety of ways:

- **Evangelization** — we call each other to a personal faith and relationship with Jesus.
- **Word** — we grow in our understanding of that faith through life-long learning.
- **Community** — we support our faith in a parish that welcomes all believers.
- **Worship** — we celebrate that faith through prayer, sacraments and the Eucharist.
- **Service** — we live our faith by serving God's people at home and beyond.

PARISH DRE AS MORE THAN MINISTER OF THE WORD

As the master catechist for a faith community, we are responsible for echoing Jesus' message and reflecting his entire vision for parish ministry, not just the sections related to education.

- We echo the message to the pastor by providing the resources and assistance he needs to fulfill his first chair role of calling God's people to faith and establishing Jesus' vision as the parish vision.
- We echo the message to the parish staff by providing the tools and the challenge needed to regularly evaluate how the parish is remaining faithful to Jesus' vision.
- We echo the message to the pastoral council and parish leadership by providing the training they need to translate Jesus' vision into action.
- And lastly, we echo the message to the entire parish community by providing life-long faith formation for our common role as disciples on the journey.

This is the role of the catechetical leader! We strive to keep Jesus' vision as our beacon, in spite of the distractions caused by the daily management needs that the role requires. We fulfill this role as a second chair leader, supporting the pastor in his first chair role, as well as the other second chair leaders in their ministries. And we do this not by issuing edicts to be obeyed, but by building relationships and influencing others through mutual trust and cooperation.

I believe it is no accident that the phrase “mutual respect and close collaboration” appears dozens of times throughout the new document “Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord.” Those who survive and thrive as second chair leaders do indeed find their success through this style of leadership. They create a new chapter in the concept of servant leadership.

From DRE to DELFF

We are middle management in the baptismal call.

by Jacquelyn Mallory



The adage, “the more things change, the more they stay the same,” holds sway for the catechetical ministry as well as in many other areas of life. Leadership in this ministry has always been and continues to be to proclaim the incarnate God, Jesus Christ who was crucified and raised to new life for our redemption and that of the created universe. For me and many of my colleagues it is *the doing* that has changed dramatically over the past thirty years in this privileged ministry. We’ve kidded our diocesan director about his being the chief ELFF (Diocesan Director of Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation) and we, his colleagues in the field are gnomes. Thirty years ago most of us in the field held the title Director of Religious Education; today many of us provide catechetical leadership with the title Director of Evangelization and Lifelong Faith Formation. This not only a change of title but also a significant paradigm shift with regard to how we understand mission, responsibilities, challenges and companionship in catechetical leadership in today’s church.

MISSION

Catechetical leaders find their mission and method by considering two juxtaposed gospel passages: Matthew 28 “...go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” and Luke 10 “...the Lord appointed a further seventy-two and sent them in pairs before him to every town and place he intended to visit.” Neither passage invites us to stay where we are and maintain the status quo. Both passages have those action verbs — “go” and “make” in Matthew and “appointed” and “sent” in Luke. Bottom line: we are stirred to action on behalf of the reign of God’s peace and reconciliation.

In Matthew it is a group of a dozen minus one whereas in Luke, it is seventy-two sent in pairs. Both groups are assured that the Lord goes with them. Both groups are continuing his mission from the Father with the same enthusiasm (filled with the Holy Spirit) he drew upon to do this privileged work. We, too draw upon the strength of the Spirit *and* one another for the work we do as laborers in the field. In the sending and in community we witness the power of name of Jesus. We, too return to Jesus with an accounting of our work. We too know the reward of having our names written in heaven.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND CATECHETICAL CURRENCY

We are middle management in the baptismal call. We have prepared for the ministry through study, prayer, and ongoing professional development. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone

before us. When we are hired or appointed we have a certain amount of catechetical currency deposited in our account by those who hire us and those who look to us to help them pass on the faith. As we meet needs and build trust further deposits are made to our account. As we expend energy in areas of our ministry we draw down the capital in our account. Annually we should take a look at that account and check our balance. We rely on the diocesan director, our colleagues in ministry and the pastor and staff to give us some perspective on how we are doing.

As Maria Harris, Thomas Groome, Bill Huebsch and others point out — education is lifelong and intergenerational — whole community, if you will. We are called to view all five traditional aspects of the ministry — *kerygma* (message), *koinonia* (community), *leitourgia* (worship), *diakonia* (service), and *didache* (teaching). It is inherent in our baptismal call “go make disciples” in all those places Jesus intends to visit. This speaks to the holistic view of our mission and ministry.

So every so often I consider these questions about the health of my catechetical account:

- What have I invested in intergenerational or whole community catechesis?
- Am I on target to making disciples who themselves go out to proclaim the Good News? What is the aim of catechesis in the programs I direct?
- Do I invest in families and small base communities — those households of faith who are the first to hear the Gospel? Are they encouraged and equipped to accept responsibility for their ministry?
- Am I reaching out to all ethnic groups in our parish neighborhood? Am I focused on maintenance or mission? Is my capital spent before I reach beyond the community to live in justice and peace?
- Are parishioners coming to Christ because they learn of him in the Scriptures and through the liturgical life of the community?
- Am I a change agent? How much capital am I spending or investing in change and conversion in my community? Is the community leadership on board with the pastor and staff of the parish? Are liturgical, social justice, and evangelization ministries full, active and conscious partners with the catechetical ministry and vice versa?



■ How much do I invest in my own spiritual, emotional, and professional development? Have I laughed often? Have I been away on retreat? How do I recreate? What have I read that nourishes and challenges me? What's the quality of my prayer life?

CHALLENGES

As intentional as we are with how and where we spend our capital, it is becoming more difficult to gain a perspective on mission in the demands of an increasingly multi-task ministry. Where once it was enough to run an efficient free standing CCD program with a sacrament preparation program for first Eucharist, first reconciliation, and confirmation; today we are called to do whole community, life-long catechesis with attention to all the sacraments from baptism through marriage preparation and vocation awareness.

Where once the parish was a homogeneous, family, faith-based community with shared values, today we recognize a plethora of ethnic groups and family styles vying for a piece of the American Dream rather than a piece of the Reign of God. Where once we could do “our thing” in catechesis while liturgy, evangelization, and social justice did their thing, today we are dependant upon one another. Where once we could trust that families and the culture itself partnered with us to pass on the faith; today, we must attend to elaborate programs for safe environment; measure qualifications of everyone from the pastor and DRE to catechists, as well as students’ learning outcomes; and negotiate our way through shared custody situations, broken relationships, and overly busy schedules.

Often it falls to us to provide leadership for more than one ministry. We vie for limited resources and personnel. We find it challenging to invite already busy parishioners to respond to their baptismal call and join us in ministry. We empathize with priests who are stretched to the limit ministerially and administratively. It is an ever-increasing struggle to avoid an insidious job creep with its frequently consequential ministerial burnout.

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

I walk with, in and as the Body of Christ on my faith journey. Several years ago when I first began as a catechist, I attended a large catechetical conference. As the participants came forward for

Eucharist at the closing liturgy, I began to hear a din in my head: “The body of Christ. Amen.” The words drove me to thinking about the thousand participants at the conference professing to be catechists in the body of Christ. And this led me to ponder the numbers who make the same profession of faith but who were not participating at the conference but were back “home” in the parish or with their families. Soon I came to the awesome reality of the enormity of the body of Christ across the face of the earth — catechists all, proclaiming to be a part, a member of the body of Christ. It was a powerful faith experience that has come to define my life and ministry to this day. I am a member of the body of Christ.

It is a struggle to avoid an insidious job creep and consequential ministerial burnout.

Within the body, I am mentored and I mentor. I realize this when I participate in deanery or diocesan meetings with my colleagues as well as in the exchanges with them through NPCD and NCCL. I know it to be true when I pray with those who have gone before me in my family and in the communion of saints. I actualize this truth when I study and seek the wisdom of the church found in the magisterium and the writings of doctors of the church or when I study and reflect upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the rich catechetical documents of the past forty to fifty years. I am with companions on the journey when I pray and reflect upon the Scriptures, when I gather with the community for Eucharist, or when I know myself to be sent to love and serve the Lord and others. I am humbled by this reality of companionship in the body of Christ when I am called forth to teach, to forgive, to love, to heal and to evangelize. In all this I know I am sent in companionship to go to every place Jesus intends to visit — to go and make disciples — and I thank our good and gracious God for the privilege to serve as a catechetical leader.

Jacquelyn Mallory is a DELFF at St. Patrick Church in Tampa, Florida. |

The Perfect DRE... and there is such a thing!

by Joyce Guris

"We begin with prayer. Lord, thank you for the gift of ministry...Please help us to recognize your Holy Spirit with us, especially the families... Guide me, Lord, to be compassionate and open...Bless our catechists...Help us, the parish catechetical staff, to develop meaningful curricula and opportunities...Help us to listen well... Help me, Lord, to remember to order the textbooks too!"



Every thing we do begins and ends with prayer... The first role of the parish director of religious education is to be a person of prayer—to be in relationship with the Trinity, to bring the needs of our families to the Lord, to be a witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ to our parish families.

JUGGLING

And then... flow all the other roles. Sometimes I feel like a juggler as I attempt to multi-task: curriculum development; catechist recruitment, formation and evaluation; sacramental programs; implementation of diocesan policies; scheduling; dealing with budgets; producing catechist and parent handbooks, newsletters, carpool plans, and on and on. I love it when I meet someone and they say, "What do you do?" It's so difficult to summarize in a few succinct but meaningful sentences. How about, "I help the Lord form disciples?" That would get most people walking away from me pretty quickly — especially in the grocery store! My job description is three pages long... so after thirteen years of working for the Lord, I say, "I serve as a director of religious education and develop curriculum for children and adults in our church." No one ever asks, "How?" or "Who teaches?" or "Where do you get materials?" But that's okay... usually once they know I work in a church, it opens a conversation for pastoral ministry about their experiences with the Catholic Church, and sometimes from that conversation I'm able to recruit a volunteer!

LISTENING

And then there is our ministry of hospitality, availability and *listening!* On the road to Emmaus, when Jesus walked with the two disciples, he asked *them* what was happening. He knew how important it was to listen to their experience; to meet them where they were. And then he taught them and then they recognized *him* in the breaking of the bread. How quickly we respond and want to problem-solve and teach without listening. So often, our parents and children need someone to listen to their experience before we respond. It's a challenge to just listen! How many times parents have called and demanded to know why their child is ineligible for sacraments... and what



they needed was someone to listen to their story. After they are listened to, they can hear the diocesan policy for sacrament preparation and work toward a solution.

This morning I had a conversation with a catechist about our ministry, and he asked if I was frustrated that we were like itinerant gardeners, planting seeds and not seeing the blooms. Some days, the answer is "Yes!" but then I look at the program and see the young adults who are alumni of the religious education program and are back to volunteer, and that makes me smile from ear to ear, like a very proud grandparent! That's what happens if you stay at your parish long enough — you watch the kids grow up and see the seeds blossom into the most beautiful of trees!

Sr. Paula said that we should teach like Jesus... he blessed the children and taught the adults.

After that meeting, I replied to phone and email messages, met with a hysterical parent about her teenage daughter, met with administration about plans for the new building, created a flyer for the parish bulletin, met with the elementary coordinator about a birthday celebration with the children for the pastor, coordinated calendars with the youth minister, spoke with a parent about issues with her teenage son, and did final planning for this weekend's high school ski trip. To add to the excitement, while I was on the phone with a catechist talking about a student, her house alarm activated and she thought someone was breaking in! She asked me to call 911 and then about ten minutes later, the police discovered that her bird had knocked over a picture which hit the window and activated the alarm, which automatically dialed the alarm company... all in a typical day. Oh, and I did remember to call the textbook publisher for two additional teacher manuals!

Ultimately our role in the parish is to do whatever it takes to invite *everyone* into a relationship with Jesus Christ!

BLESSING THE CHILDREN

We invite by offering activities and programs for everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, to be involved and take ownership in the community. Recently we hosted Matt and Lynn's Excellent Adventure for children in grades 3-6. It was hosted by our elementary coordinator and youth minister and high school teens going on the Mission Trip. Seventy-five children got to come for a lock-in and play games, watch movies, do karaoke, have pizza and build up the community. The children had a blast and met new friends and experienced a sense of belonging and community. After we build community and create a sense of belonging, we can teach. A very long time ago when I was a volunteer catechist attending catechist development, Sr. Paula said that we should teach like Jesus... he blessed the children and taught the adults. I remember thinking, "Then why am I teaching seventh grade students about the liturgy and sacraments?" As the years have passed, I realize what a wise and insightful teacher she was. Yes, we give our children an experience of community and faith, but most importantly we introduce a relationship with Jesus so as they are ready, they will learn about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and our Catholic faith. Without that blessing time, they might never want to learn and grow.

Haven't you learned the most about your faith as an adult and catechist? When I was young and teaching sixth grade, I was captivated by the curriculum and the catechist background information

pages in my teacher manual. I'm confident that in all my years of faith formation, I learned about the Old and New Testament, but it was as a young adult and catechist that it all came together. I became hungry — starving — to know more. For me, one of the roles of the director of religious education is to groom future catechists. I tell all the kids from junior high up that my goal is that they will grow up to be catechists. They will have had the blessing time, and then the true learning time!

I tell all the kids from junior high up that my goal is that they will grow up to be catechists.

We need to assist our catechists first in building small faith groups in the classroom and in utilizing their resources and creativity to develop lesson plans based on the needs of their learners. For some it is cognitive, reading, discussing and learning about Jesus, for others it is experiential and behavioral — being involved in service and discovering him in those we encounter. For others, it is more affective; we need to create opportunities for them to feel the power and presence of Jesus in prayer, on retreats, in classroom activities. I've even had the amazing experience of teens thanking me for making the retreat a requirement! They said they wouldn't have participated if it had been voluntary, and they would have been so sorry to have missed this awesome experience of community and faith and strengthening their relationship with Jesus. (Don't you just love teens like that?)

SUPPORTING PARENTS

A challenging but critical role for the director of religious education is supporting our parents! The church documents emphasize the domestic church and stress that parents are the first and best teachers in the ways of faith. What about all those parents who didn't have a faith-filled example growing up? In addition to meaningful and interactive sacramental preparation parent meetings, there is much we need to do! It is imperative to invite parents to help in the faith formation programs, to meet them where they are and encourage them to get involved in any way! Constantly supply them with the resources they need to be the domestic church... meetings, adult faith formation classes on Catholic parenting, newsletters with ideas and articles about Catholic parenting, suggested activities to do as a family... We also need to be clear about what we are teaching their child and how we expect them to be supporting classroom learning at home. If they don't know we are working on the Apostles' Creed in class, they won't know to reinforce praying it at home.

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Dear Catechetical Leader,

by Dan Pierson



Thank you for your letter, which I received last week. Since that time I have been thinking about your question: *Help! Now that I have been selected by the pastor to be the catechetical leader, what are my roles and responsibilities?* Congratulations! In saying “yes” to your baptismal call “to holiness, to community, to mission, to ministry” (*Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*) I am confident that you will find this work meaningful as a parish catechetical leader.

Your letter took me back to 1971 when, after teaching junior high for five years in a Catholic School, I was hired as director of religious education for a large suburban parish. Like you, I was wondering where to begin. With a supportive pastor and the experienced catechists I began my work. In the following summer I began four summers of graduate work. With parish financial assistance I completed a masters degree in religious education at the Institute for Pastoral Ministry at Loyola University Chicago.

As you know, I have been involved in the catechetical ministry for my entire adult life as a catechist, Catholic school teacher, director of religious education, diocesan director of religious education, and consultant and presenter in areas of leadership development and ministry. I truly feel that this has been a call that has offered me a most enjoyable and meaningful life of service. Yes, there were difficult, challenging, and frustrating times. However, I am so thankful that God called me to use my gifts, competencies, strengths, and weaknesses in the formation of faith communities in a variety of settings. As you begin your new position, I pray and wish this for you.

Parishes and pastors are hiring more and more people well intentioned but not familiar with the catechetical process and methods. They have limited knowledge of scripture, church teachings and human development.

I am honored that you have asked me for guidance and direction as you prepare yourself for your new role and responsibilities. Today

THOSE WHO CATECHIZE

Chapter eight of the *National Directory for Catechesis* presents an overview of the role and responsibilities of a parish catechetical leader. While the pastor, priests, deacons, and religious have specific responsibilities, the *NDC* lists seven main areas of responsibilities for you — the parish catechetical leader:

- 1) Overall direction of parish catechetical programs for adults, youth and children.
- 2) Planning, implementation, and evaluation of parish catechetical programs.
- 3) Recruitment, formation, ongoing development, and evaluation of catechists.
- 4) Implementation of diocesan and parish catechetical policies and guidelines, including areas of catechist certification and supervision and administrative policies related to negligence, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and the safety and protection of minors.
- 5) Collaboration with pastor, other parish ministries, and appropriate committees, boards and councils.
- 6) Assistance in liturgical planning.
- 7) Attention to your own personal, spiritual and professional development.

— Dan Pierson

we have more than ever an outstanding community of experienced catechetical leaders, Catholic colleges and universities, books and media. I hope that this letter will provide inspiration and guidance for you to successfully begin the journey.

The recently published *National Directory for Catechesis* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB) is an invaluable source for direction, planning and reference for you in your new position. If you don't have a personal copy, contact your diocesan catechetical office or order one through the publications department of the USCCB.



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Before we explore the specifics of the role of the catechetical leader, I would like to share with you a brief historical perspective of this position. Maria Harris, author of *The D.R.E. Book: Questions and Strategies for Parish Personnel*, explained that two events led to the development of the parish catechetical leader. The first was the International Study Weeks on Catechetics which began in 1959 and the second was the major contributions of Vatican Council II and its *Constitution on the Church*. Together they provided the ferment and foundation of the present day catechetical ministry and the position of parish director of religious education in the United States.

Joseph C. Neiman, author of *Coordinators: A New Focus in Parish Religious Education*, dates the appearance of DREs sometime in the 1960s and suggest 1967 as the official beginning. Thus, we can confidently say that in 2007 we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the position of parish catechetical leader in the American church. Throughout this period the position has carried a variety of titles: director of religious education, coordinator of religious education, pastoral associate, director of faith formation, etc. Today all of these are included in the title *parish catechetical leader*.

In the beginning the majority of positions were held by individuals with a background in seminary or religious life, and women religious. The next group included those who attended both undergraduate and graduate programs in theology, religious education, or pastoral ministry. In recent times we see people with many different backgrounds being selected as catechetical leaders. Those in this group may have served as volunteer parish catechists, people with general college studies who may have held positions in business, customer service, social services, retail, or are at home raising their children and caring for the needs of the family. Eighty-four percent of parish catechetical leaders are women.

For a variety of reasons, parishes and pastors are now hiring more and more people who are well intentioned, but who are not familiar with the catechetical process and methods. They have limited knowledge of scripture, church teachings and the understanding of human development. Many of these people do not have the skills and competencies to effectively carry out the position.

CATECHETICAL LEADER FORMATION

The *National Directory for Catechesis* (p.224) states, “the single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader. Depending on the size and scope of the parish catechetical program, parishes should allocate their resources so that they are able to acquire the services of a competent and qualified catechetical leader (or someone in the process of becoming qualified and competent) or to share those services with another parish.”

In response to this directive the most important responsibility of a parish catechetical leader is to become a self-directed learner and

actively engage in her or his continuing education and spiritual formation. Diocesan catechetical leaders throughout the country are responding to this recent development by creating diocesan formational programs for new parish catechetical leaders, lay ministry formation opportunities, scripture study, conferences, mentoring and individual consultation.

In addition to diocesan catechetical offices I want to let you know about two national associations who are furthering catechetical ministry in this country and offer excellent programs and service for the formation of parish catechetical leaders.

One is the National Association of Parish Coordinators and Directors (NPCD), which is part of the National Catholic Education Association. The NPCD provides individual membership, a national conference, published resources, catechetical assessments, and networking. (www.ncea.org)

The other is the National Conference for Catechetical Leaders (NCCL). It offers individual membership for diocesan directors and staff, parish catechetical leaders, academics, catechetical publishers and individuals who contribute to catechetical ministry. The NCCL sponsors a national conference, develops program planning resources and publishes this journal, *Catechetical Leader*, which appears six times a year. (www.nccl.org)

NCCL has created a self-assessment publication that is based on the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers Serving As Parish Catechetical Leaders*. An initial review of the assessment may appear discouraging and unrealistic to the point that not even the early apostles and disciples would meet all the standards. Don't be discouraged.

The assessment affirms knowledge, practices and strengths and indicates areas for growth and development. Working with the diocesan catechetical director in a retreat or a workshop, participants complete the assessments and proceed to develop a long-range learning plan that is relevant to the role and responsibilities of the position. The plan will include specific areas for study, timelines, learning strategies, and resources.

In addition to taking part in the above process, I encourage you to develop a portfolio that will contain program brochures, yearly catechetical plans, annual profiles, letters and reports, and so on, that represent your accomplishments. A learning journal that includes all learning activities, events, books, readings, workshops, conversations, consultations and conferences, and so on, can be a part of this portfolio.

When you meet with the pastor, a member of a diocesan staff, or a mentor, you will be able to demonstrate what you are learning and discuss areas for future study and formation.

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CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The second area of responsibility of the catechetical leader is curriculum and program development. Colleen Gerke, director of faith formation at St. Maximilian Parish in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati points out that the role of the parish catechetical leader is building an awareness of lifelong faith formation, of the Gospel, the mission of the church, and love of God and to connect this to parishioners' hungers, thirsts, and desires.

Maureen O'Reilly, director of religious education for the Archdiocese of Detroit, sees the catechetical leader as "a spark that energizes the baptismal call of all people, and especially catechists, to God's call and the possibility of seeing light in darkness. Through relationships and program planning, parishioners are empowered and supported to connect faith to daily life."

To accomplish this the catechetical leaders will begin a planning process that ensures the development of all parish catechetical programs. Diocesan offices can assist parishes in total catechetical planning. *Creating a Catechetical Plan: A How-To-Do-It Resource* by Rev. Robert Duggan and published by the NCEA can be used for comprehensive planning.

A PLAN FOR PLANNING

- 1) Identify the need, define the problem and determine what kind of program will best address the needs.
- 2) Set a clear objective, a concise statement that will focus the program and provide specific learning outcomes.
- 3) Create a general plan. Explore strategies and resources that will meet the objective.
- 4) Implement the program. Determine a program design, time, and place. Assign responsibilities for publicity, physical arrangements, and general implementation.
- 5) Evaluate the program. Before implementation, develop criteria that will be used in determining the effectiveness of the program and the accomplishment of the objective.

Following and completing these five steps will assist you and the parish in focusing your objectives and resource to achieve their intended purpose and "to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ, a deeper knowledge and love of his person and message and a firm commitment to follow him" (*NDC*, p. 54).

— Dan Pierson

CATECHIST FORMATION

In my early years as a parish catechetical leader I felt much like a used car salesman when trying to recruit catechists. After reading *1 Corinthians 12*, I was reminded that administration was a significant ministry of the early church. As an administrator it was my responsibility to help others in the Christian community recognize their baptismal call to ministry. Based on this philosophy, catechist recruitment and formation became more meaningful. In my ministry of administration I was calling others to identify their gifts and to explore ways that they could use them in the parish catechetical program.

Don't be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work. Remember that you do not have to accomplish it all in one year.

In recruiting and listening to catechists it became ever so evident to me that they were asking for help — direction, information, training and support.

Kate Ristow, national catechetical consultant for the catechetical publisher RCL, states that the major responsibility of a catechetical leader is first of all to be a listener to the needs and concerns of the people she serves. This includes listening to catechists, parents, and parishioners and then responding by developing strategies and activities that meet those needs. This may include listening to parents regarding a change of dismissal time to listening and collaborating with catechists in developing formational programs or selecting appropriate curriculum materials.

Once your catechists are recruited, it is essential that they receive a minimum orientation before they meet with the students. While a part of this orientation will introduce them to the details of the program, the majority of the time is devoted to explaining the role of the catechist and providing an overview and understanding of how books and resources can be used. At this meeting encourage catechists to commit to ongoing training, education, and formation using a variety of models and resources.

As you prepare for catechist formation, it is time to think outside the box. All of us were educated in a time when the school and classroom was the standard model for teaching and learning. In recent times we have come to understand that learning styles vary and that learning is meaningful when participants are actively engaged. A multi-dimensional approach both in presentation and delivery of catechist formation is the most effective and comprehensive way to proceed.

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Visions and Dreams to Sustain Our Pilgrim Way

by Thomas Groome



It was a great source of renewal when Vatican II reclaimed the image of church as a “pilgrim people” of God, coming down through history, ever moving forward toward the fulfillment of God’s reign — God’s vision and dream for all creation. Though God’s reign comes to meet us as gift, by grace, Christians are covenanted to live as a people of God after “the way” of Jesus; while we pray “thy kingdom come” we must also do God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven.” Indeed we fulfill our covenant responsibilities only by God’s grace — the Spirit now active among us — yet, as Aquinas insisted repeatedly, “grace works through nature,” through us and our human efforts. I propose that nothing is more significant to our faithfulness as pilgrim people of God than the catechesis we do along the way.

Instead of building upon the catechetical renewal of the past hundred years there are too many signs of moving backward.

The Book of Acts recounts Peter’s great sermon in the immediate aftermath of Pentecost — the first in the history of the newborn church (2:14-41). Peter began by quoting the prophet Joel (3:1-5) that in the messianic age, God’s spirit would “pour out on all humanity”; then the “old shall dream dreams” and the “young shall see visions.” (Acts 2: 17). Peter preached that this, and by implication all messianic promises, were fulfilled in Jesus who “received the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth” (Acts 2: 33). Thereafter, the Spirit is assured to the Church, and yet — the covenant again — we must be ever renewing our effectiveness as God’s “universal sacrament of salvation” (*Gaudium et Spes* #45). From our side of the covenant, I propose that the sacramentality of the church is enhanced or diminished according to the catechesis we offer. And because catechists’ work is so much of the Spirit, we have special responsibility to keep alive the visions and dreams of this messianic age, for “without the vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18).

My concern at this time is that our catechetical vision seems to have dimmed and may be soon extinguished. Instead of building upon

the catechetical renewal of the past hundred years, and moving forward as a pilgrim people of God, there are too many signs of moving backward. The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* rightly notes that “the catechetical renewal developed in the church over the past decades continues to bear very welcome fruit” (No. 24). This very fine document of the universal church draws together much wisdom from the church’s long-term and most recent experience as catechist, claiming the ground gained, and breaking toward new horizons. Its key notes are re-echoed for the American context by the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)*. To embrace these two *Directories* would lend a clear and shared sense of direction — of vision. Yet, I encounter people in positions of catechetical leadership — episcopal, pastoral, and publishing — who regrettably only pay lip service to the two important catechetical documents.

TO KNOW OUR FAITH

On the other hand, many people of good will have a genuine concern about contemporary catechesis, most often stated as “Catholics no longer know their faith.” I sincerely empathize with this concern; I even share the vision that underlies it. That Catholics “come to know” their faith has constituted my own vocation as catechist for nigh forty years. This must include a thorough knowledge of our central scriptures and defining traditions, of what and how Catholics are to believe, live, and worship. Catholic Christians should even be able to recite by heart Catholicism’s core beliefs (like the Creeds), its moral codes (like the Commandments), its central prayers (like the Our Father), its ways of worship (like the Sacraments), key scripture passages (like John 3:16), and doctrinal formulas (like the Blessed Trinity). When someone inquires about or challenges an aspect of Catholicism, every Catholic should be sufficiently informed as to represent our faith accurately and with persuasion.

In this post-modern age people are less likely to embrace their faith simply on the height or weight of the authority that teaches it.

“Knowing the faith,” however, must reach far beyond religious literacy. To begin with, and in this post-modern age especially, people are less likely to embrace their faith simply on the height or weight



of the authority that teaches it — even as “the Magisterium” presents “all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed” (*NDC*, p. 74). People are more likely to live it faithfully as they become personally convinced of Catholic faith, come to see for themselves the great spiritual wisdom it represents, make it their own as the bedrock of their lives. The great blessing is that Catholicism has such coherence and persuasion; as Aquinas would argue, the more we think for ourselves about it, the more convincing it becomes.

Then, beyond being well informed and personally convinced, Catholics need identity formation as disciples of Jesus Christ, and “permanent catechesis” (a phrase repeated throughout the *GDC*) for life-long growth in holiness of life. The faith we enable people to “know” — at the marrow bone of their being — should dispose them to love God and neighbor as themselves with all their “heart, soul, mind, and strength” (Mk 12:30). As the Baltimore Catechism summarized so well, our purpose in faith is “to *know, love, and serve*” God in this life so as “to be happy forever in the next.” Thus, the “knowing” we promote should engage people’s heads, hearts and hands, should inform, form and transform — life-long conversion — who they are as disciples of Jesus.

A constant refrain throughout both *Directories* is that catechesis should enable people to integrate their faith into daily life. Here contemporary catechesis attempts to counter what Vatican called II “the most serious error of our age,” namely “the split between the faith which many (Catholics) profess and their daily lives” (*Constitution on Church in Modern World*, No. 43). So, catechetical education must reach beyond (without leaving behind) didacticism in knowledge; the very dynamics of our teaching must encourage and form people to bring their lives to their faith and their faith to their lives.

Jesus says in John 17:3: “This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.”

By such knowing, he surely meant more than “knowing about” — as in religious literacy. In fact, Jesus was echoing the deeply relational and holistic sense of knowing from his Hebrew roots. To “know God in Jesus Christ” is to enter into a personal, intimate, relationship, responding to God’s unconditional love by living as disciples of Jesus, in a community of disciples — the Church — and “for the life of the world” (John 6:51). What a gift it is, then, that the *GDC* states repeatedly that the primary intent of catechesis is “to put people... in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ” (No. 80), to “apprentice them to Jesus” (oft-repeated), promoting “full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps” (No. 53). The great mandate of the risen Christ on that hillside in Galilee is ever our defining purpose: to “go make disciples” (Matthew 28: 19).

By knowing God, Jesus surely meant more than “knowing about” — as in religious literacy.

Further, the claim that “Catholics no longer know their faith” presumes some golden olden days when we did. This is a false illusion. Generally speaking, Catholics’ knowledge of their faith has always left much to be desired. For example, a national survey conducted in the early 1960s found that the vast majority of American Catholics had little confidence in explaining their faith to others, that over 80 percent could not name the first book of the Bible, and more than 70 percent could not say who preached the Sermon on the Mount. And even those who learned to recite the catechism answers (would that it were “by *heart*” more than “by rote”) had little

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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

WHEN ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

by Barbara Smith



In a recent article in *Origins*, Capuchin Father David Couturier points out that we in the West have inherited the persuasions of the Enlightenment period and its philosophical framework of scarcity and competition. Couturier, dean of the theology school at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, said our market economy is based on this theory and our American culture wants and needs us to believe in scarcity. There is not enough; there is never enough.

It seems to me that we have been hearing about a vocation crisis in religious life and in regard to priestly vocations for over twenty five years. Dean Hoge reported in one of his studies that between 1970 and 2001 the total number of non-retired priests declined 30 to 35 percent while the Catholic population increased 30 percent. But a decline in general population has been taking place in the Northeast as folks move south and southwest. There are some places in Maine where there are no children because of this movement out of state to find work, and this has had an impact on the school districts that are

facing similar challenges. The numbers tell a story. And yet until — or when — we really feel that pinch on the local level it remains a vague kind of statement. It's when my Mass time is changed or my parish is merged, clustered or even closed that I realize the reality of the numbers.

FACING THE REALITIES

In June 2003 Bishop Joseph Gerry, OSB, then bishop of our diocese of Portland, Maine, put together an ad hoc committee to consider a future crises in terms of the number of priests available for parish service. Maine covers 32,000 square miles and has had 135 parishes and 44 missions. The missions are functional only at particular times of the year, depending on where they are located; for example, near the coast in the summer or in the mountains during ski season. The committee worked hard and long answering difficult questions about staffing. The numbers predicted that by 2010 we would have 60 to 65 priests available for parish service.

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How does clustering support a new evangelization and not merely an administrative shuffling of ministries?

In March 2004, under our newly appointed bishop, Richard J. Malone, a new committee was put together to review the ad hoc work and to make recommendations for implementation. Bishop Malone accepted the recommendations of the eighteen-member committee and wrote a pastoral entitled, “Telling Anew the Story of Jesus”. This pastoral called for a diocesan plan stressing the emphasis on evangelization and the need to look ahead to a future full of hope. It called for parish consolidation in response to the demands of our mission and was a comprehensive diocesan plan. You can read his pastoral on our diocesan website: www.portlanddiocese.net.

The hard work of the clustering began in the parishes in June 2005, with a deadline of one year to come up with plans to show how the parishes in the cluster would be served with *x* number of priests by the year 2010. Geography was a major factor. And throughout the process the bishop asked us again and again to come back to the question: How does this proposed restructuring support and promote a *new evangelization* and not degenerate into merely an administrative shuffling of ministries?

Ernie Lebel, a human resource consultant and member of the recommending committee, was hired to help the parishes in the initial phase of choosing an appropriate model to meet the needs of each cluster of parishes. Facilitators were trained to help local committees conduct the planning effort effectively. There were four models to choose from and each cluster knew how many priests would be available within their group by 2010.

NEED FOR LAY LEADERSHIP

As we prepare for the future we see a strong need for lay leadership formation and education. Our office has established a basic certification program in partnership with the University of Dayton and their on-line courses in the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation for persons in parish leadership (www.vlc.udayton.edu). These courses are supplemented by workshops based on the *National Standards* published in 1996 and presented by our staff. They will be reviewed in light of the recent updated version of the standards.

We also want to support the degree program that St. Joseph's college in Standish, Maine, is beginning this January. The col-

lege is offering a Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology and a Bachelor of Arts in Theological Studies through online education (www.sjcme.edu/theology). The new degrees are designed for people serving — or preparing to serve — in a wide spectrum of Catholic ministries.

As the diocese develops a comprehensive plan for faith formation for children, adults, youth ministers and teachers in Catholic schools, it will be important to have programs available that are geographically accessible throughout the state and of comparable quality.

We have also implemented the “Echoes of Faith” program for volunteer catechists as well as adult faith formation sessions. This is an excellent program to update generous volunteers that may not have had a solid foundation in faith formation for whatever reason. This year they have published a methodology piece for use in working with adults.

Change and conflict are signs of vitality, not rigor mortis.

As the cluster committees met, another diocesan group planned in-service days to help the process along. The pastors, parish catechetical leaders, some other staff and cluster committee members were invited to these sessions. It was very helpful to everyone who participated to see and hear what was happening throughout the diocese. It was motivating for some who were slower in moving toward a plan and supportive for others that were a little further along in planning.

ENLARGING OUR PERSPECTIVE

On two of these in-service days Brother Loughlin Sofield presented his special insights into collaborative ministry. He discussed how to discern gifts and some principles of conflict management. He affirmed the direction in which we were going and encouraged us in the difficult business of identifying and naming needs, wants, and losses. He reminded us that change and conflict are signs of vitality, not rigor mortis. It was very encouraging.

The following year Father Bob Hater addressed the group, raising our awareness of how deeply rituals form us and how changing people's rituals can be deeply disturbing. He connected our history with our present situation and said that like the church of four hundred years ago, the church today in Maine is called to evangelize. Hater showed how remembering the tradition and interpreting the message can lead to living the faith today in our circumstances.

WORKING IT OUT

By June 2006 the parishes in Maine were organized into twenty-eight clusters of parishes. Also in that month the bishop hired Bill Schulz to head the Office of Parish Planning for Evangelization. His job was to continue the work begun in 2004 and to move along implementation in the clusters. One of the first things he did was to help a committee develop job descriptions for a business administrator and a parish life coordinator that would include qualifications, education and remuneration. It is expected that each cluster will hire persons for these positions. This will centralize the administration of the cluster parishes and enable instant communication via e-mail, conference phone calls, and video conferencing.

The parish catechetical leaders will come under the parish life coordinators and in some cases may be the same person. This is still being explored by the clusters. In our ministry area the following questions remain to be answered:

- What will faith formation look like in the cluster?
- Will every worship site have its own faith formation program or will the programs be clustered offering different programs, times and sites?
- Will there be a lead parish catechetical person who will have other staff as assistants or responsible for different ministries such as junior high and senior high catechesis, sacrament preparation, and adult faith formation?
- Should the pastor expect that every program or set of religious education materials used in the cluster be the same?

ABUNDANCE

Couturier, in the *Origins* article, admits there is plenty to discourage and much to test the hopefulness of religion today. But he goes on to say that we have a choice in how we view things. One can come from either a vantage point of scarcity or a sense of immanent abundance.

Abundance is the message of Jesus in the Gospel stories. A few fish, a small mustard seed, a few good men... It is an exciting time as we stand at the end of the "parochial culture" that has shaped our

We stand at the end of the "parochial culture" that has shaped our congregations in the last two centuries.

God of the Past, Present and Future

God of the past, help us to let go of the things that hold us in bondage;
Anger and resentment, lingering doubt and disappointment,
Guilt and failure, and even the dusty laurels of some long gone success.

Help us to entrust our past to you so that we might be free to greet you,
Our God of the present.

Let us be alive to the opportunities of each moment and alert to the Opportunities of this time we share today.

Help us to be awake so that we may savor all the fullness of life
As it unfolds right now.

And Holy God of our future, give us a vision of hope that we might
See beyond the worries and discouragement and problems of today,
That we may grasp the future that you are surely bringing to our
lives And our world.

Help us stretch our imaginations so that we may be open to the
changes
That your future makes possible.

In the shadow of your everlasting presence and providence, we pray,
Amen.

— Frances Sheridan Goulart from *Notre Dame, Indiana*:

congregations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We are at the threshold of a new era but to cross that threshold we have to disengage our diminishment thinking.

Couturier says that we are called in this time and place to believe in the traditional Catholic belief of abundance, which is the theological recognition that God is good, all good, supremely good, all the time and to everyone. This will lead us to new ways of acting, being and deciding how to be church. It's not how small we get that will diminish us but diminishment thinking.

Barbara A. Smith, diocesan director for the Office of Catechetics and Initiation in the Diocese of Portland, Maine, has a BA in elementary education and an MA in theology. She has been in religious education at the parish level and in diocesan service for over thirty years.

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MULTIPLE PARISH PASTORING MODELS

by Mark Mogilka

As the number of priests declines, pastors are being asked to assume responsibility for several parishes at the same time. While terminology differs from diocese to diocese, this phenomena is often referred to as parish clustering. Outlined here are six basic multiple parish pastoring cluster models. While only six models are provided for discussion purposes, in reality there are countless variations on each of these six models.

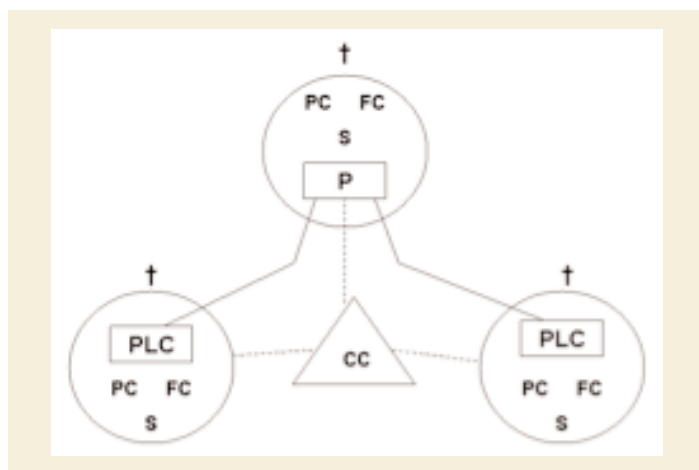
Each model outlined here is shown with three parishes. However, each model could apply to anything from a two parish cluster to a six or more parish cluster. At the present time in the Diocese of Green Bay all six models are operative.

Each model has advantages and disadvantages. There is no “one size fits all” model of clustering. Determining which model will work in a given situation is dependent on such variables as relative size of parishes involved, distance between parishes, culture and ethnic identities, economic and spiritual vitality, parish histories and traditions, leadership skills, styles and presence of pastor(s), presence and support for Catholic school(s), etc.

Ideally the determination of which model should be utilized in a given situation should emerge from a prayerful collaborative planning process that involves parishioners, staff, pastoral councils, pastors or parish life coordinators, and the diocese.

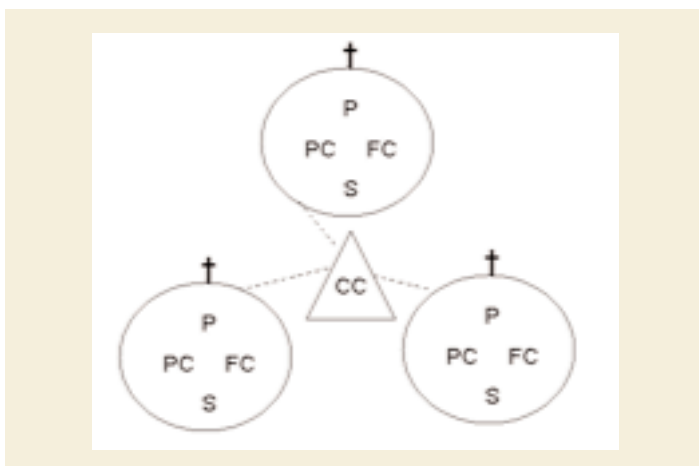
MODEL I — SEPARATE PARISHES — COORDINATED

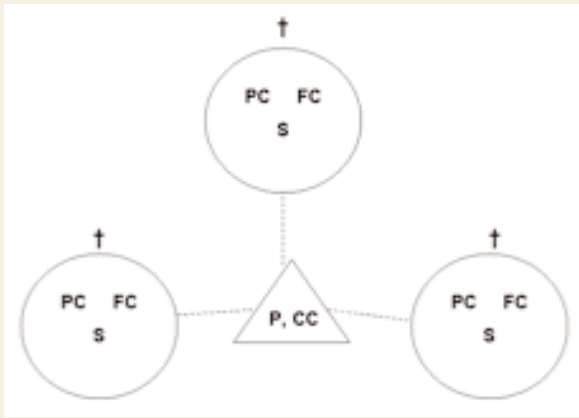
- Each parish has a Pastor (P), Pastoral Council (PC), Finance Council (FC) and Staff (S).
- Cooperation between parishes is facilitated through a Coordinating Council (CC).
- Programs, staff, and resources are shared and planning done through cooperation of pastors and representatives on the Coordinating Council with the support of respective parish leadership, i.e., Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Staff.



MODEL II — SEPARATE PARISHES — ONE PASTOR & PARISH LIFE COORDINATORS

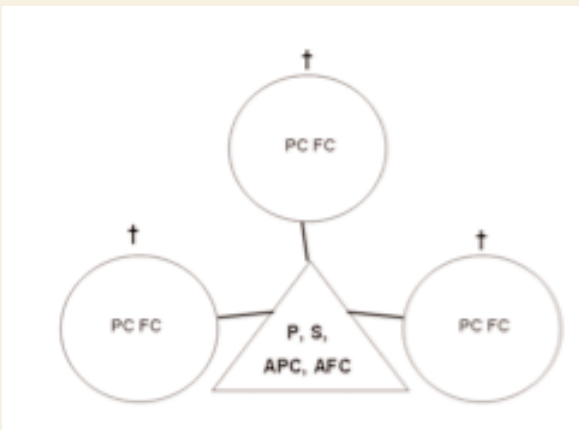
- There is one canonical Pastor for all three parishes.
- Each parish maintains separate lay leadership structures, i.e., Pastoral Council & Finance Council & Staff.
- The canonical Pastor serves primarily in one parish, while Parish Life Coordinators (PLC) lead the other two parishes providing pastoral care in all areas except sacramental ministry (See Canon Law 517.2).
- Cooperation between parishes is facilitated through a Coordinating Council.





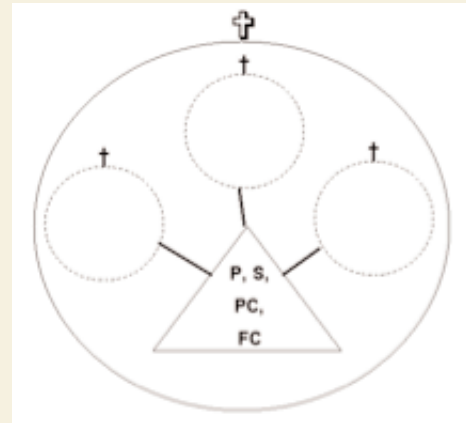
MODEL III — MODEL III — SEPARATE PARISHES — ONE PASTOR

- There is one Pastor who provides leadership and sacramental and pastoral care for all three parishes.
- Each parish maintains separate leadership structures, i.e., Pastoral Council, Finance Council and Staff.
- A greater degree of cooperation between parishes is facilitated through the Coordinating Council.



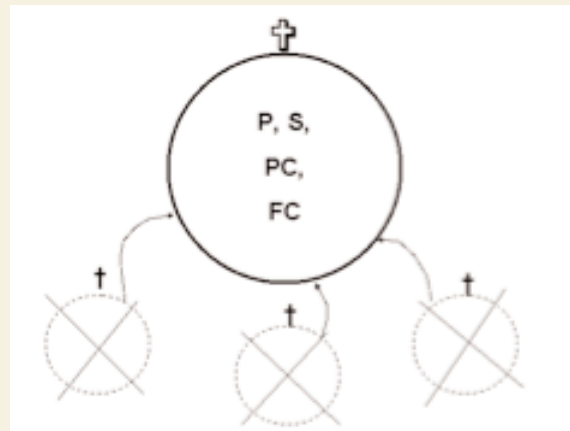
MODEL IV — ONE PASTOR — CENTRALIZED TEAM & COUNCIL

- One Pastor works with one Staff — who may work out of one location in service to all three parishes.
- Individual parishes may have minimal support staff.
- Area Pastoral Council (APC) is primary consultative body for Pastor and has greater decision making influence over Pastor than individual parish Pastoral Councils and Finance Councils.
- APC works closely with an Area Finance Council (AFC) which has a budget and pays salaries of Pastor, Staff, inter-parish programs and services.
- A variation on this model has a team of priests serving several parishes “in solidum” (See Canon Law 517.1).



MODEL V — MERGED PARISH

- All councils, committees, finances, and sacramental records are merged together to create a new canonical parish.
- There is a new canonical parish name. However name of individual churches remain.
- There is one Pastor, Staff, Pastoral Council, and Finance Council that serve three worship sites or churches.



MODEL VI — BUILD & CLOSE

- All three parishes are merged.
- Together they build a new, larger church.
- Existing churches are closed and properties sold to provide funding for building new church.
- New parish has one Pastor, Staff and traditional leadership structure with Pastoral Council and Finance Council.

Mark Mogilka is the director of pastoral services for Diocese of Green Bay. Permission to and utilize the information contained in this article is freely given, provided you acknowledge the author and the Diocese of Green Bay. For more information contact him at mmogilka@gbdioc.org.

OUR LITTLE CLUSTER

by John McKinley, Jr.

Our bishop had asked how we might see our deanery with one — or two — less priests

Just before the Christmas rush I read a 1998 article from *Priest* magazine that dealt with the possible lack of priests in the Archdiocese of Boston. It told how a parish without a resident priest suddenly found itself without any priest at all. The parish tried to get sacramental assistance from the neighboring parishes as well as the diocese, but no one was available. Their pastor was eventually able to return and the parish was once again whole.

FACING THE PRIEST SHORTAGE

It was quite an eye-opening experience for the parishioners to find that they were in an archdiocese with a huge number of priests but there was no one available to assist them. It gave the community an understanding of whose parish it was and that if they wanted to continue as a parish they needed to take an active and participating role in the activities that make a parish function: administration, religious education, liturgy, Bible study, fostering spirituality and taking care of arts and environment as well as outreach and evangelization.

That article recalled to me what our diocese had gone through in the last two-plus years to see that no parish was closed due to the lack of a priest.

Little more than two years ago our bishop had given a challenge to the existing priests as well as the Deanery Pastoral Council. He had asked for input as to how we might see our deanery in the future with one less priest, and then with two less priests. How would we cluster smaller parishes together — or create a large parish with new missions? This was a challenge we here in the Southern Deanery took very seriously. We met one evening with all of the pastors, administrators, deacons, pastoral associates, sisters and representatives from all of our parish councils. We sent

our recommendations to the bishop and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Now two years later we are able to see that some of our recommendations have been put into place. Some of the outcomes have hit close to home.

I am a deacon in the Diocese of Boise, Idaho, which include the entire state of Idaho. I was ordained in 1983 in St. Alphonsus Parish in the small mining community of Wallace, Idaho. My wife Theresa (Terry) and I have been married for thirty-four years and we have three sons. We live in Twin Falls, Idaho, where I have worked as a dairy products salesman, a rotary die cut operator for a box factory, a salesman and a marketing salesman for a washer manufacturing company.

While working these various jobs I participated in every adult religious education program or class that came around. Our diocese decided to train more deacons and they were to not only be trained in the diocese, but they were to graduate from Loyola University of in New Orleans with either a Masters degree or a Certificate in Ministry through a program called LIMEX (Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension Program). This was an opportunity for me to continue my education and perhaps get a small parish somewhere in our diocese. Three and a half years later I graduated with a Certificate in Pastoral Studies. I continued to work outside of the church.

FINDING A PLACE AS DEACON

Five years ago, when we were to get a new parish administrator to work with our pastor and parish, I met with him and asked if we might be able to form a team: I would work for the parish as a pastoral associate and



director of religious education. He agreed and for four years I worked full time with him and the parish in these roles and loved every minute of it. I thought that even if I didn't have my own parish, this was close enough. Then our pastor decided to retire.

This last summer, after the pastor's retirement announcement, I attended the National Association for Lay Ministry's national convention in Cleveland, Ohio. With a group of about a dozen of my co-workers from the diocese of Boise, I attended a presentation that dealt with transitions. When I returned home I would, along with our parish, be welcoming a new pastor and parochial vicar. This had me concerned and a little upset. My job was on the line. I had only worked full time for one pastor and he was now retiring. Would I have a job with the new pastor and his team? The presentation on transitions at the convention was able to calm my nerves as well as prepare me for what was about to happen.

I thought that even if I didn't have my own parish, this was close enough.

When I returned to work I was given the task, along with our parish staff, of moving our parish offices from the old rectory to the parish hall, which was across the street. The new pastor wanted the rectory to be once again the residence for the two priests and transitional deacons who might be in the area. Just as we finished the move, I was called by our vicar general and asked if I would accept an assignment as parish life director for three small parishes in south central Idaho. A dream of twenty years was about to come true. After talking with my wife and praying about this assignment, I accepted the position.

BECOMING PART OF A CLUSTER

On July 1, 2006 I started to work in my new office in Gooding, Idaho. Gooding's St. Elizabeth of Hungary is the largest of the three, located in the center of a triangle with Shoshone's St. Peter's Parish fifteen miles to the east and St. Anthony's Mission eleven miles south in Wendell. Each of these three parishes are made up of unique mix of very different cultural groups. In Gooding we have a very active English-speaking community, a Mexican community of equal size, and a smaller Basque community. In Shoshone we have Basque and English communities with a few Mexican parishioners and in Wendell we have Portuguese and English communities. The majority of the Basque and Portuguese are English speaking and has little trouble in participating in an English Mass. The Mexican folks still need the Spanish Mass, religious education and sacramental preparation.

As I settled in to the new position I had to ask myself, how do I want to be of service to the whole community? Our sacramental minister, a retired priest from our diocese, is with us on the weekends and for other celebrations to provide Mass and sacraments, and our priest moderator is a pastor in one of our neighboring parishes. He assists when needed, mostly to support the sacramental minister and

myself. So from the beginning I have made myself available to everyone for their feasts, festivals, and other celebrations. I attend all of the English Masses each weekend. One of my largest problems is that I do not speak Spanish — if I did that would help.

ONE PLAN; VARIED IMPLEMENTATION

Religious education has been another challenge for our parishes and mission. In Gooding, our largest parish, we had a fairly good program for all of our children. The youth group was well organized with a strong adult leader and a good support team of parents — one of the best in the area. In the mission in Wendell there had been little or no religious education with the exception of first communion preparation. The majority of the children and youth in the other grades either went a neighboring parish or were not involved in religious education at all. In our St. Peter's Parish in Shoshone there was a very strong first communion program, but there were no books and little material for the other children. The youth were encouraged to join the very strong youth group in Gooding.

This fall we revised our programs (with the exception of Gooding's youth program,) and went to a liturgy — based program for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. In Shoshone we meet right after our Mass and break up into three age groups.

At first some were concerned about a parish nurtured by a deacon but were not comfortable talking to me about it.

In the Wendell mission this program is offered to the children as a home-taught course. The materials are easy enough to read that our Spanish-speaking children are able to share the weekend reading stories with their parents. Sacramental preparation is also home taught; every couple of weeks I get to gather with the children and their parents and go over the material and answer any questions they may have. We chose this type of catechetical material not just to serve the children enrolled, but also to have some type of religious education material in the homes for the parents and for older siblings who may have missed the opportunity of getting religion education.

In Gooding we use the same material but it is presented in a classroom setting with catechists. When the other deacon and I preach we use the material from our religious ed program as part of our material for our homilies. It is truly a blessing to have a Spanish-speaking deacon and sacramental minister to work with in our cluster.

ASSESSING PROGRESS

One of the ladies from our Gooding parish came into my office the other day and told me how she appreciated having me in the parish. She said that she was, at first, a little concerned as to how the parish would

continued on page U8

be nurtured by a deacon. She also said that there were others who have wondered the same thing but were not comfortable talking to me about it. Although I have been here for just six months, we have come a long way.

Parish councils are functioning in all of our parishes. In Shoshone and Wendell there has been little change. These two communities have had communion services and no resident priest for years. However one of the challenges in the Gooding parish is that we have had to combine two English Masses into one and move the Spanish Mass from Sunday afternoon to Saturday evening. We are just beginning to come together as a single community for the English Mass, and our Spanish Mass is finally beginning to grow. These changes had to be made to accommodate the schedule of our sacramental minister. In Gooding, the community is feeling much like the parish in the Archdiocese of Boston, experiencing for the first time not having a resident priest. Our sacramental minister is a retired priest with some limitations on the number of Masses he is able to celebrate. But that's okay: we have a priest and he is greatly loved, and part of my job is to schedule our Masses, feasts, festivals and other celebrations around what he can do.

I am a firm believer that whenever anyone is given a new position, ministry, job or returns to an old one, it is to the benefit of the whole community to take part in a commissioning ceremony. And that is what happened in October 2006. Our chancellor and bishop came to Gooding to show support of me as the person they had placed in charge of these three parishes. The bishop presided at our 9 a.m. Mass and officially installed me as the parish life director. Everyone from all three parishes was invited to attend. The three communities accepted and blessed me and we had a grand time.

We have a long ways to go. But with the hard work of all of our parishes, the support of the priest moderator, the sacramental minister, the chancellor and our bishop, we will be able to keep this cluster of three small parishes alive and filled with the Holy Spirit. God has blessed us; he has and will continue to stretch us in many new and different ways. But as St. Paul says, "I (we) can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (us)."

May God continue to bless our little cluster.

Deacon John McKinley, Jr. continues to stretch as parish life director for St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Peter's parishes and St. Anthony's mission, all in south central Idaho.



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REKINDLING THE FIRE

What is the Point of Being Christian? by Timothy Radcliffe, OP. New York: Burns & Oates, 2006. Paperback, 224 pages, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Daniel L. Thomas

In his book, *Secularity and the Gospel*, Ronald Rolheiser reports on four symposia on the subject of being missionaries to our secular culture. He suggests in the book that “we lack a romantic ideal for our faith and church lives. We have too little idealistic fire left.” In *What is the Point of Being Christian?* Timothy Radcliffe, former Master General of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), presents just this in a moving and intelligent exposition of Catholic spirituality which speaks honestly, frankly and powerfully to our secular world. He does not condemn, but challenges. He asks that we Catholic Christians live what we believe in a way that is hopeful, spontaneous, truly happy, courageous, bodily, and truthful. This must be done, he says, in an intentional community that fully respects that differences of its members. His final chapter takes a unique approach to leisure as a way to live in love with mutual respect for the person that each human being is.

The first chapter, ‘I Will Awake the Dawn,’ dealing with hope, points out the difference between having a “road map to the future” and having a story that guides us. The first, he says, is too specific, too precise, too much like the road maps of Hitler and Stalin that twist people into a predetermined way. We see “the clash of two sorts of power...a brutal and dumb power...that [took] Jesus by force” and “another sort of power, which is the power of the sign and of the word.” Our hope of paradise, he says, “is not about the triumph of some dumb force: of armies, of capitalist or communist economies, or of any race or class. It is the ultimate and unimaginable victory of meaning.”

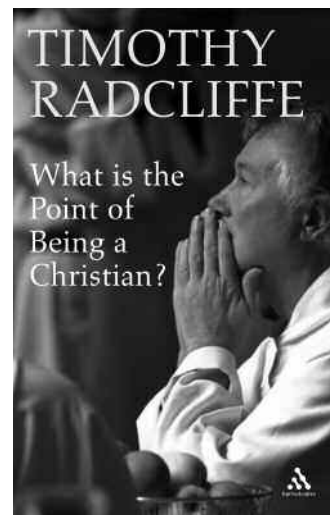
In “Learning Spontaneity,” the second chapter, Radcliffe discusses the call of Jesus to true freedom, “a freedom and a happiness that would make no sense if God does not exist.” In speaking of the church, he says it “will only be a cradle of gospel freedom if we are seen to stand beside people, supporting them as they make moral decisions within the range of what is possible, rather than making decisions for them.” He discusses abortion in this light when he says “It is precisely when we are most confident in the teaching of the Church that we should be most free to listen and to learn, and to open our minds

and hearts to those who have arrived at conclusions with which we disagree.”

Radcliffe challenges the idea that somehow, like the Puritans as caricatured in our history books, we Christians are not really meant to be happy on this earth. “Christianity is the good news that God created us for happiness, and ultimately for the happiness that is God being God. But we cannot be convincing witnesses to this if Christians are seen as miserable and inhibited.” He goes on, “If the Church is to be a witness to the joy of the resurrection, then we must be liberated from fear. There is too much fear in the Church — fear of modernity, of the complexity of human experience, of saying what we truly believe, fear of each other, fear of making mistakes, of not winning approval. It is this fear that may sometimes extinguish that joy that should puzzle people and make them wonder what is the secret of our lives.”

Courage, says Radcliffe, is what frees us from this inhibiting fear — fear of failure, fear of waiting (which the poor are always forced to do), fear of the future, fear of death, fear of one another, fear of anger. He has this rather interesting thing to say about anger: “One of the roles of those who exercise leadership in the Church should be to encourage those who are angry with them to dare to express it, confident that this will strengthen the communion of the Church. It should be a place where we learn to be angry not blindly but gently and with hope.”

Radcliffe “sings the body electric” as very few Christians do. The Incarnation is about God’s love for the bodily. How do we learn to love the body? “A first step is to see people’s faces....Second, I must learn how to be alone....Third, in every love one may open the space for God to inhabit. Rather than seeing our loves as competing with God, they offer places in which [God] can pitch [God’s] tent... “Finally, we need to pray in ways that



continued on page 18



REKINDLING THE FIRE *continued from page 17*

remind our bodies of who we are.” That is, we need to pray with our bodies and their movement.

“The Kingdom of God is not another place hidden in a remote part of the universe to which one might hope to go home one day. It is the unity of all human beings in Christ,” he says. Thus, “the only community in which I may ultimately flourish and be fully myself is the whole of humanity, gathered together in Christ.” This profound insight he further deepens by his reflection on the essential importance of particularity to achieve this fully. In explaining this insight, he quotes Richard Rohr who says we need “my story”, “our story” and “The Story”.

This portrait of the kingdom is developed further with a powerful portrayal of the “Citizens of the Kingdom” whose concern is to call our world to the practice of justice. “The first duty of Christians is to keep alive the awareness of what is happening to our flesh and blood now, their present suffering, and insist that this is intolerable and unnecessary. The Church is the most global institution on the planet. Wherever there is suffering there is the Church.”

Chapters nine and ten deal with the polarization that is so much a part of today’s Catholic life. He suggests that we have “Kingdom Catholics” and “Communion Catholics” who are unable to talk to one another and supports the Common Ground Initiative as a force in the solution to this problem. “We need places of what the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas calls ‘undistorted

communication.’ These are places in which communication is not skewed by relationships that intimidate or threaten, in which the dignity of all the participants is recognized. We need places in which we can speak without fear and prejudice. We need to be able to get angry with each other and still have the time to be reconciled.”

What is the point of being Christian? The point is God, always and everywhere with us, who calls us to be the deepest, truest, most courageous, most meaning-full and most forgiving and forgiven people that we in the community can possibly be. And how do we evangelize? By being this person and this church. “What the Church should try to build are spaces and places in which people can come to have their sight refreshed and their eyes cleaned.”

This is a wonderful book full of insights and enough aphorisms to fill a daily calendar of several years. It is a book to be explored individually and in small group discussions. It would be a great source for homily ideas, RCIA topics, and adult faith formation discussion/presentations — useful any place where being an adult Catholic Christian is taken seriously. Radcliffe is a person both tentative and full of conviction. He offers a balanced, compassionate and challenging approach to Catholic spirituality. Find the time to wrestle with this outstanding book.

Reviewer Dan Thomas is director of religious education at Corpus Christi Parish in Dayton, Ohio. |

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THE PERFECT DRE *continued from page 9*

So we research, read, collaborate with our staff and catechists, and pray for the Holy Spirit's wisdom and creativity to offer something for everyone.

FINDING BALANCE

The National Directory for Catechesis states that "The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader." It continues to describe the responsibilities (Nos. 224, 226) and concludes with the reminder that we are catechists first. It also emphasizes the

It is imperative to invite parents in...to meet them where they are and encourage them.

need for ongoing personal, spiritual and professional development. I would also add the need to have a healthy balance of ministry, rest, recreation and friendships!

And then we thank our awesome God and pray again to close our day... "Thank you again, heavenly Father for trusting me with this awesome responsibility to help others grow in faith and love. Please help me to always be a reflection of your love. Amen."

And the perfect DRE? It's you and me. God created us in his perfect image and qualified the called! God's blessings in your ministry. Do all that you can, then let go, and let God!

Joyce Guris, M.Ed., is the director of religious education and youth ministry at Transfiguration Catholic Church, Marietta, Georgia. She has taught in Catholic and public schools, religious education and youth ministry for twenty-two years. |



sense that there is a “hierarchy of truths” to our faith, a phrase repeated frequently by the *Directories*. That every question/answer seemed equally important became even more misleading when some minor topics received exaggerated attention and some major ones very little. For example, the original *Baltimore Catechism* had eleven questions/answers on limbo and purgatory and had only one indirect question on the meaning of Easter.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES AND LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

The U.S. Catholic community has well survived the worst crisis in its history, the clergy-sex abuse scandal. Even in Boston, Mass attendance and church giving has returned to previous levels. In comparison to places that have experienced the same scandal in other contexts, some with more traditional modes of religious education (as in Ireland), the continued vitality of American Catholicism is amazing. This must be due, at least in part, to the quality of catechesis our people receive. And though many of our young people today may not have the religious literacy we desire, they may have a “performative literacy” that outstretches previous generations. A recent survey at Boston College indicated that 75 percent of our graduating seniors have volunteered in some kind of justice or compassion work during their college years, and did so out of faith conviction. They might be stretched to distinguish between the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth — as we could — but they have a keener sense than my generation had of the social responsibilities of Christian faith. Let us recognize and celebrate the successes of contemporary catechesis.

To move forward we must become more trusting of each other and more Catholic in approach.

The modern catechetical movement might be dated from the beginning of the twentieth century and what was known as the “Munich Method.” Its dynamics of preparation (getting learners interested), presentation, explanation, and application to life were a significant improvement over the preceding rote memorization; in various patterns, such pedagogy is standard in catechetical programs today. Thereafter there were many different catechetical waves and “movements” (kerygmatic, experiential, liturgical, etc), all making

their own contribution. But we must also recognize that the catechetical renewal has made its share of mistakes along the way. For example, in the aftermath of Vatican II, and as a reaction to the undue emphasis on information and memorization of the previous era, there was a diminution of the content taught and too much emphasis on “the discovery method.”

Some current impasses require a both/and response of catechists instead of squaring off with either/or.

Whatever excesses or deficiencies there may have been during those reactive times, however, have been corrected. Anyone who claims otherwise has not reviewed the mainline catechetical curricula currently available for grades K to 8. The half dozen most widely used series all reflect a thorough catechetical education in Catholic faith — here the *Catechism* has made its contribution — and with engaging pedagogy. All employ a scope and sequence that tells “the whole story” of Catholic faith, presented according to developmental readiness and through a spiral curriculum that catechizes core themes (e.g. Eucharist) at each grade level. Appropriately adjusted to age and context, the same can be said of the mainstream high school and adult education curricula.

REACHING TOWARD THE HORIZON

To move forward with renewed vision, at least two things are fundamentally necessary: that we become more trusting of each other and more Catholic in approach.

First, we need to recognize that all the people committed to catechesis — from the newest volunteers to those who have borne the heat of the day, both bishops and pastoral leaders, scholars and publishers, conservatives, liberals, and centrists — all deeply desire to “hand on” to those coming after us and renew people along the pilgrim way in the full richness of our Catholic Christian faith. We want them to know with conviction, to embrace with enthusiasm, to commit with joy to the “whole story” of Catholic faith and its vision of God’s reign in Jesus Christ. We want to catechize for Christian discipleship that is lived, living, and life-giving for ourselves and for the world as well. If we can trust that all share this great dream, we may move beyond acrimonies that cause paralysis.

Second, we need to be more Catholic. As I've already made clear, this requires great faithfulness in teaching the constitutive truths of our faith. Here I add that we must also be Catholic in our approach. To elaborate adequately would take another essay at least, however I will be addressing this topic in my keynote address at the 2007 NCCL Annual Conference [on Thursday morning, April 26].

One genius of Catholicism is its ability to embrace paradox, to take a *both/and* position instead of deciding *either/or*. So, is it Gospel or law that defines our faith? Well, Gospel but good laws help us to live it. Is God's revelation mediated through scripture or tradition? Well, through both, for together they "form one sacred deposit of the word of God" (*Dei Verbum*, #10). Are we saved by God's grace or our own efforts? Well, by God's grace that empowers and expects our efforts — works through nature. Does reason or revelation hold sway in matters of faith? Well, revelation of course, but we need reason to understand and integrate revelation to our lives. And the list could go on; Catholicism says both/and to the teaching authority of the church and to freedom of conscience; insists that Good Friday and Easter Sunday are essential to the paschal mystery, that holiness requires personal sanctity and commitment to social justice, etc.

One sign of maturity in faith is the ability to embrace paradox.

All of Catholicism's both/and postures should be reflected in how we catechize. There are some current impasses, however, that particularly require a both/and response of catechists instead of squaring off with either/or. So, should we emphasize knowledge of church teachings or relationship with God in Jesus Christ? Well, both are essential. Should our main concern be orthodoxy or orthopraxis? Both are required by our faith. Should we favor didactic instruction or experiential learning? Well both, in their own way, are helpful toward discipleship. Should we teach with authority (as Jesus did, see Mk 1:22) or encourage people to think for themselves? Both are needed for lived faith.

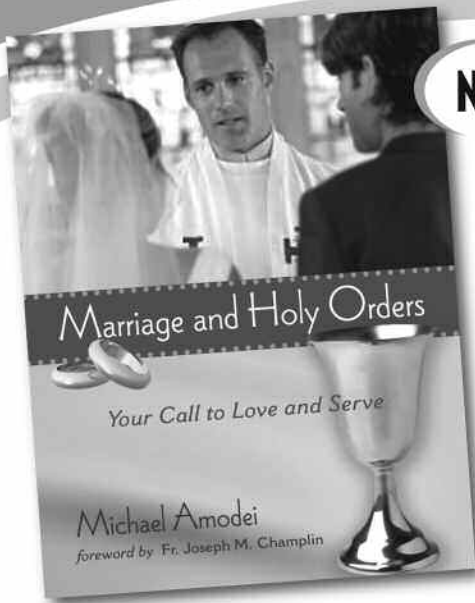
Should we focus on children or adults? Well, on both — in fact on "permanent catechesis" for all. Should the formal curriculum be based on an age appropriate scope and sequence that tells the "whole story" of Catholic faith or on the liturgy and lectionary? Well, the former, I believe, is essential but is greatly enhanced by correlation with the liturgy and lectionary. In catechetical events, should we simply tell people what to think (e.g. about a scripture passage) or ask them what they think themselves (e.g., how it might apply to their lives)? Well, both, for only the whole church can be the arbiter of the texts and symbols of our faith but as people come to see for themselves they are more likely to live it.

And then, as with the blessed Trinity, there are some triads for catechists to embrace instead of choosing between. So, our catechesis should attempt, by God's grace, to inform, form, and transform people in Christian faith; our pedagogy should engage their heads, hearts, and hands, shaping their beliefs, spirituality and morals; we must teach for learning outcomes that are cognitive, affective, and behavioral; we need an intentional coalition of family, parish, and school/program; and the triad list could also go on.

One sign of maturity in faith is the ability to embrace paradox, and isn't our faith strewn with them — a fully divine and human person, his miraculous birth and horrendous death, the provident love of God and the reality of human suffering, a church that is both graced and sinful, and so on. I'm convinced that we are at an urgent moment to push the maturity of catechetical ministry to another level. As we do so, the old will dream dreams again, and the young will see visions; I hope I'm still enough "in between" to do both.

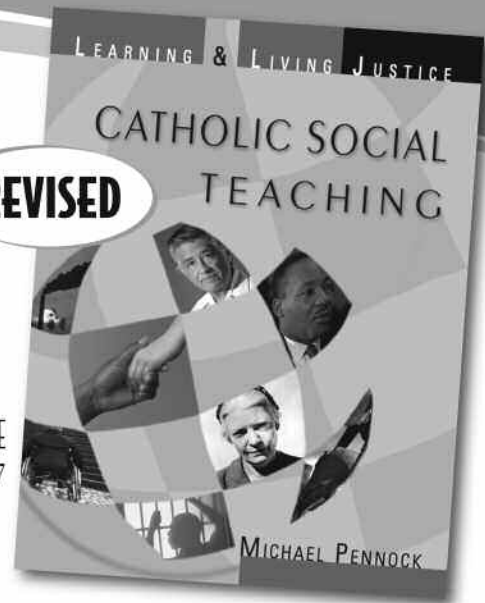
Dr. Thomas H. Groome is director of the Boston College Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry and the author of numerous books on religious education and religion textbook series. |

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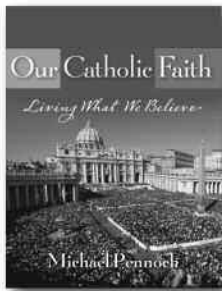
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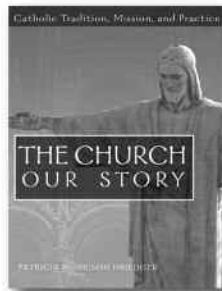


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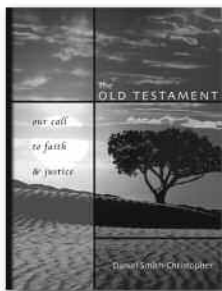
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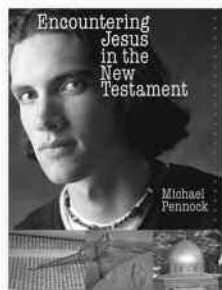
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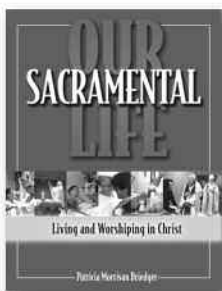
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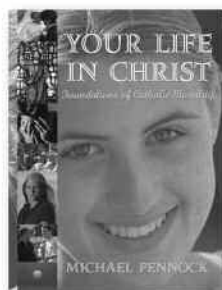
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DEAR CATECHETICAL LEADER *continued from page 12*

Mary Ann Ronan, director of faith formation at St. Paul Parish in the Archdiocese of Phoenix and president of National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, has developed a very successful formation program by focusing the monthly sessions on Biblical understanding, church teaching, spiritual formation and human development.

Since we are now immersed in a culture of technology that can provide for the delivery of content and resources in a variety of ways, other parishes are exploring alternatives. These include the internet, video assisted instruction, websites, weblogs (blogs), podcasts, web-based programs for assessment, websites for social networking, email, instant messaging, and participation in online groups for discussion, and so on. As we consider all of the possibilities we must not forget the book. Thanks to Johann Gutenberg and the invention of movable type, the book has been the primary model for distance education for the past 550 years.

WAYS TO USE RESOURCES

Parish catechetical leaders throughout the country are using the traditional resources and the new technology for catechist training and formation. I offer the following examples as catalysts that will motivate you to explore the possibilities.

- 1) Select a book of the year and give a copy to each volunteer. Encourage them to read it and arrange for discussion at catechist's meeting.
- 2) Provide each catechist with a subscription to *Catechist* and/or *RTJ-Religion Teacher's Journal*. Point out articles of interests.
- 3) Send a weekly email to all catechists. This can be an info spurt — two or three items — that include inspiration, practical suggestions, links to websites, and announcements.
- 4) Create a personalized packet of articles by grade/theme for all catechists. Choose articles from Catholic magazines, chapters from books, *Catholic Updates*, video/DVD, or lists and descriptions of websites
- 5) Encourage catechists to maintain a learning journal, which is an informal way that they can record their thoughts, ideas and reflections. The journal will help catechists evaluate their learning experiences and provide them with insights for further study. Encourage catechists to share their journals so you can affirm what they have learned and offer suggestions for further study. A learning journal can be any notebook in which an entry includes date, the learning event, and reflective comments.

— Dan Pierson

In addition to independent and distance learning strategies, catechetical leaders will continue to provide gatherings for discussion and formation.

As you begin serving as a catechetical leader in your parish, I hope that these reflections and recommendations will prepare you for successfully fulfilling your responsibilities. Don't be discouraged and overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work. See the big picture, prioritize the needs, and take the first steps. Remember that you do not have to accomplish it all in one year. It just isn't possible. A bibliography of books and of resources for both catechists and catechetical leaders is available on my website, www.faithalivebooks.com.

Faithfully yours,

Dan Pierson

...who is a catechist and catechetical leader, emeritus, in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, founder of faithAlivebooks.com, and coauthor with Susan Stark of What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist.

TOWARD PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Working with the pastor, catechetical leaders set the tone for the whole spectrum of faith formation in a parish — from infancy to mature adulthood. Catechetical leaders have the privilege and challenge of identifying, inspiring, and motivating catechists, always looking for creative strategies and new ways to share the faith according to the cultural issues of the day. While we recognize the generous service of volunteer catechetical leaders over the years, full-time professional catechetical leaders make a huge difference; their educational training and certification offers assurance of solid awareness of the church's tradition as well as an appreciation of catechetical methodology and awareness of the best ways to share the faith with adults.

From the diocesan perspective, there are always the challenges of forming and credentialing good catechetical leaders and encouraging parishes to make the choice to hire certified catechetical leaders. From the parish level, I know full well the constant expectations that are directed toward the catechetical leader; these expectations are further increased when the parish has a school. These days, almost every case is unique and the catechetical leader and his or her staff need to be able to spend lots of time in patient listening and in shaping an appropriate course of action for people seeking faith formation in all different circumstances.

While the job is very demanding, it is also extremely rewarding!

Msgr. John Zenz

Archdiocese of Detroit

Moderator of the Curia

Diocesan Director of Religious Education (Emeritus)

FORMING A NEW GENERATION OF WITNESSES

by Jo Rotunno

As we approach the 2007 NCCL Conference in Columbus, I am happy to report that nine modules of *Echoes of Faith Plus* are complete or nearing completion, including the brand new module for adult faith formation released last fall. We've had a few bumps in the road along the way, but for the most part it has been a smooth though fast-paced ride. The summer and fall of this year will offer no respite, as we embark on the renewal of the five theology modules.

AN UPDATE

The Catechist series of three modules was completed in February. One innovation to the Roles of the Catechist module that is part of this series involved reconstructing the fourth segment of the module. This segment, entitled "Witness for Justice," was significantly updated to focus on the relationship of charity and justice and to help catechists learn how to empower their learners to continue the work of bringing the Reign of God. We are grateful to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development for their guidance in the development of this segment, and for making video footage from their archives available to us to enhance the video component.

The second series in *Echoes of Faith Plus*, the Methodology series, is now nearing completion. This series now includes the Introduction to the Learner module, as well as the four modules addressing strategies for specific grade level groupings: Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, and Grades 7-8. The Introduction to the Learner module provides the context for all the methods and strategies that follow. How do humans grow cognitively, psycho-socially, morally, and most importantly, how do they grow in faith over a lifetime? The four segments of this module give the catechist and excellent overview of this landscape. Catechetical leaders have told me they enjoy offering this module to catechists ahead of the Methods modules, since all methods must be accommodated to the readiness of their learners.

The four Methods modules each provide a brief summary of human growth and development for catechists who might view one of these modules without having seen Introduction to the Learner. The wonderful demonstration footage of grade level catechists in action is still a part of these modules. The original Methodology videos had only three segments, but in *Echoes Plus* you will find a full video component for each of the four segments of the module. You now will find on this module an excellent interview with Amy Florian, who spoke with us last spring about the importance of ritual and celebration in the catechetical setting.

USING ECHOES WITH PARISH CLUSTERS

One motivation for creating *Echoes of Faith Plus* has been an understanding that the needs of American parishes are changing. The fact that this issue of *Catechetical Leader Update* is devoted to parish clusters is evidence of that. Fortunately, the flexibility of the new *Echoes Plus* makes it especially useful for such parishes.

In the past, small parishes often encountered difficulties in catechist formation since they often had only one catechist per grade level, or even combined grades under one catechist at some levels. It was hard to provide sufficient specialized training for a catechist who was the only one teaching at her grade level. Parish clusters often ease that difficulty. You may now have several catechists per grade who can join to process the appropriate Methods module, and who can companion with and learn from one another as the months go by.

Often, of course, clustering parishes is a difficult experience emotionally. Parishes with a deep sense of identity built up over generations suddenly find themselves part of a new whole that is not readily recognizable or comfortable. I believe that the formational aspect of *Echoes of Faith* can be an asset. Catechetical programs must go on in spite of these often wrenching transitions. Inviting a newly formed cluster of catechists to join together for several mornings or evenings of reflection on their faith and their ministry, using perhaps the Person of the Catechist or the Prayer and Spirituality module, could help you to form a stronger sense of community and shared purpose among them.

However your parish decides to use *Echoes of Faith Plus*, remember that it offers you much more than information. It is a truly formational process and it invites your community of catechists to embark on a lifelong journey into this most important ministry of the church. It reminds them that they are only the newest members of an ancient body of catechists, a long line of witnesses stretching back into the ministry of Jesus himself. With the constant guidance of the Spirit and a commitment to ongoing formation, your catechists can hold their heads high as they take their places and build upon the work of those who came before them. As Jesus himself said, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, for I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

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

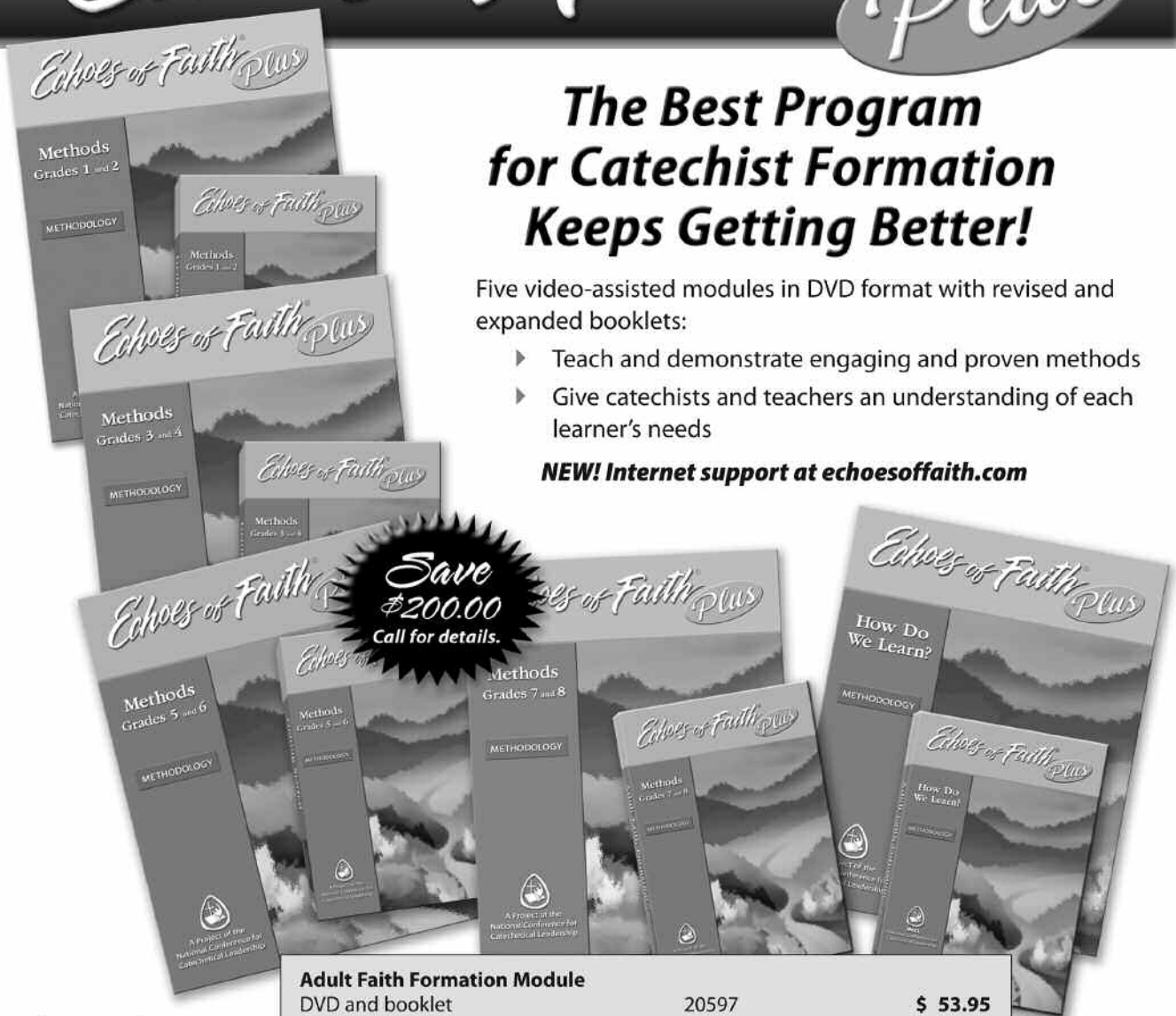
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THERE AT THE CREATION

by Ed Gordon

Neil Parent was there at the creation of the modern catechetical movement, the adult religious education movement, and NCCL.

The late sixties and early seventies were a turbulent time in the country and especially in the Washington, D.C., area. The war in Vietnam was raging and the protests against it were rising. The fallout of the protests against *Humanae Vitae* still reverberated on the Catholic campuses in the area.

LIVING IN EXCITING TIMES

At the same time, these were exhilarating times for catechesis. Catholic parishes were beginning to understand some of the new directions called for by the Council and by changing demographics. A new generation of diocesan catechetical leaders were helping parishes move from the old CCD model of formation to a more vibrant approach expressed most vividly in the new catechetical materials pouring forth from the National Center for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and from the various publishers. A new role began to emerge in the parishes: the director of religious education — the DRE. It was a role born of necessity. The shift in Catholic populations from the cities to the suburbs swiftly overran the ability of the parishes to provide a Catholic school education for all Catholic children (always more a dream than a reality!)

It was in this period that Neil Parent became the director of adult religious education at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Community in Alexandria, Virginia (at that time part of the Richmond diocese). Anyone who knows Neil senses that he has a certain laid-back quality!

This may reflect his

West Coast origins — he was born and raised in the Los Angeles area. By the

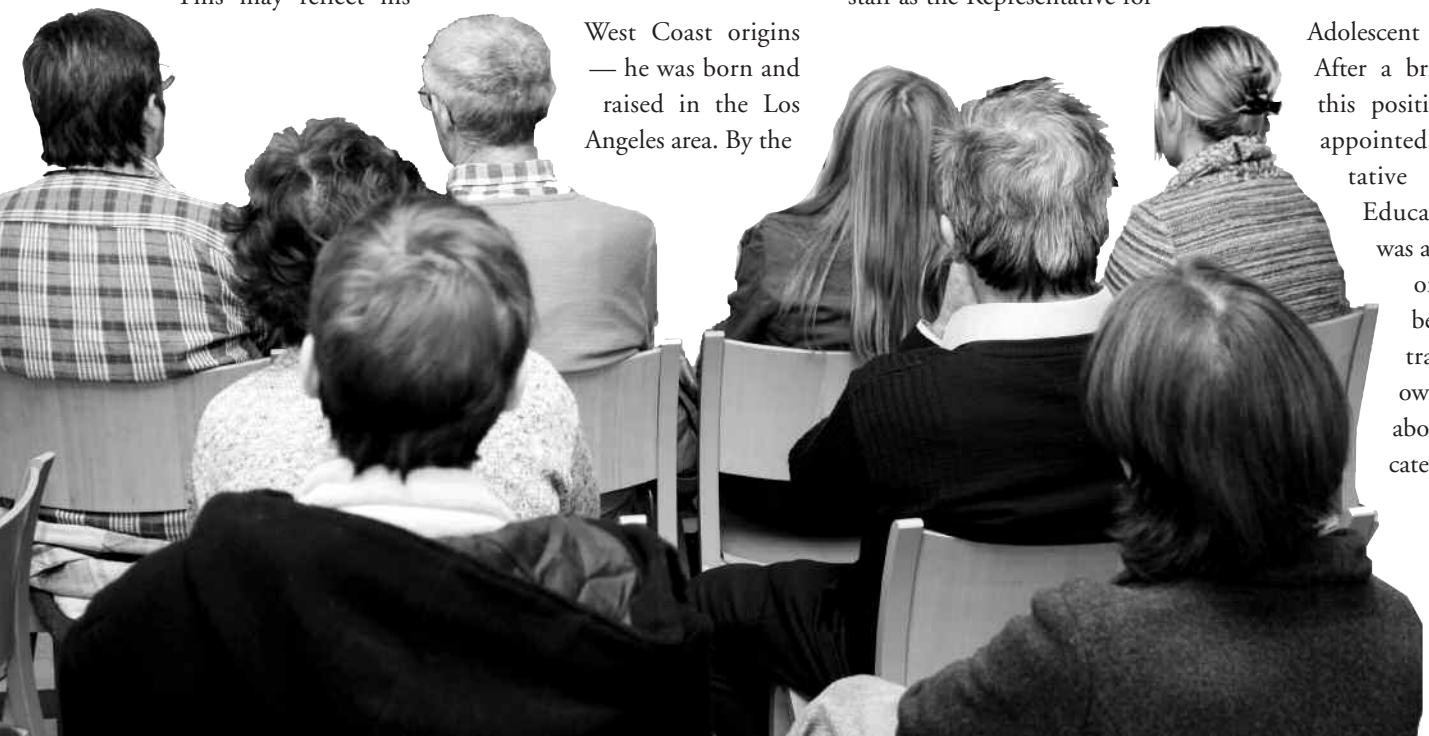
time he arrived at Blessed Sacrament, in 1971, he had already been a manager with Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, served a tour with the United States Coast Guard, studied for the priesthood with the Paulist Fathers, and worked as a manpower development specialist for the U.S. Department of Labor.

During the early seventies, many of the programs we take for granted today were initiated in parishes — not without some struggles. Parent participation in sacramental preparation, catechist formation, early youth ministry efforts and fledgling adult education programs challenged everyone to think and act differently. Being so close to Washington and the Bishop's Conference, which was playing a leadership role in the changing face of catechesis, Neil had an opportunity to see and be part of the new moment in catechesis. The *General Catechetical Directory* published in 1973 pointed the way forward. The consultation process for the national directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, marked the first time the U.S. bishops consulted widely on a document and was a model of collaboration. Neil involved all of his catechists in this process and modeled collaboration in his parish. He also took on his closest collaborator, marrying Lynn Meushaw in 1973, and began to raise his family. Three girls were to bless the Parents: Elena, Denise, and Diana.

NURTURING ADULT EDUCATION

In the late 1970s Neil moved to the United States Catholic Conference staff as the Representative for

Adolescent Catechesis. After a brief time in this position he was appointed Representative for Adult Education and was able to focus on what had become central to his own thinking about faith and catechesis. The



need to focus on adults had been a growing awareness in Neil and among many religious educators. The *GCD* has been one of the first ecclesial documents to place adult catechesis at the center of the ministry. However, the seed planted in the *Directory* would take decades to germinate and sprout. Neil became one of the persons who nurtured the seed.

He had begun to prepare himself for this new ministry by studying adult education at George Washington University, where he received his MA in adult education. He soon put this knowledge to work for the bishops. One of his initiatives was the founding of the National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education (NACARE). This committee was established to provide support to the Bishop's Committee on Education, which at that time had responsibility for all education. NACARE brought together the best adult education minds in the church. Early membership reads like a who's who of the development of the field: Jacques Weber, Jane Wolford Hughes, Maureen Shaughnessy, John Elias, Tom Downs, Jack Zaums Maria de la Cruz Aymes, Matt Hayes, Dan Mulhall, David Thomas and many others who began to slowly move the adult into the mainstream of catechetical thought.

In 1984, under Neil's guidance, the USCCB sponsored a major symposium on adult religious education and the parish. It also published five volumes of *Christian Adulthood* and several other works on adult learning, which fed the growing need for adult religious education materials. Each volume contained articles on theoretical foundations, programs, resources and professional development and leadership. In 1986, the Department of Education published *Serving Life and Faith: Adult Religious Education and the American Catholic Community*. In some ways this is the grandparent for *Our Hearts Were Burning*. It gave religious educators a tool to use in the parish to help everyone grasp the importance of adult religious education (The term they used in the document).

In this same period, NACARE working with Tabor Publishers, produced *Priming the Pump*, a video enhanced program on program planning for adult religious education teams. This program never had the distribution it deserved. When one reads it, it remains totally relevant. Someone who was intimately involved in the development

of the program once said, "What people needed was a Chevrolet and we gave them a Cadillac!" Despite Neil's own predilection for driving vintage cars, when it came to the products he produced, Neil always strove for the very best he and his committees could produce.

TENDING THE GROWTH OF NCCL

Beginning in the late 1960s, the National Conference of Diocesan Directors (NCDD), the predecessor organization to NCCL, became structurally tied to the Bishops' Conference. In the early eighties, it and several other organizations, including CYO and Campus Ministry, were spun off. The diocesan directors of religious education decided that they wanted to remain a separate and independent organization and hired Sr. Suzanne Hofwebber as the first Executive Secretary of the new organization. She was followed several years later by Michael Lebrato.

The late 1980s were exciting but difficult years for NCDD. Money was tight and the board of directors gave its Executive Secretary little latitude to operate. After all, it was an association of directors. When Lebrato resigned in spring of 1990, the NCDD board approached Neil about becoming the Executive Director, which he did that December. At the same time, the organization's leadership knew that changes needed to be made. So, in 1991, after much consultation and discussion, new bylaws were presented to the membership for a vote, thus creating the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership. The new bylaws enabled the Executive Director to exercise greater initiative in leading the organization.

So it was that Neil took up the task of creating the modern organization we know as NCCL. Over the past sixteen years, much has changed. The membership has been opened to parish catechetical leaders, publishers and academics, more than tripling the size of the membership. The annual meeting has gone from a nice little gathering for diocesan staff to a larger, more creative event for more than 800 participants who collaborate in the catechetical ministry. *Catechetical Leader* has become a true professional journal. The staff at NCCL has increased to three full-time professional persons and NCCL is now seen as the leading organization representing the

continued on page 28



catechetical ministers and the discipline of catechetics. NCCL has made major efforts to include the Eastern churches and the emerging Hispanic catechetical leadership in its membership and leadership.

No one should be fooled. These changes have not been without risks or without pain. Nor did Neil bring about these changes — and many others — on his own. NCCL has always depended on its elected leaders and its dedicated members to do much of the work of the association. And, Neil has had dedicated staff working with him.

GOOD STEWARDSHIP

Staffs change, new leaders are elected, members move in and out. The constant for the past sixteen years, however, has been Neil Parent. He has held up the vision of a broad-based professional association

dedicated to excellence, dedicated to serving its members and the church. Neil isn't that old, but he was there at the creation — the creation of the modern catechetical movement, the creation of the adult religious education movement, and the creation of NCCL. We give thanks for his leadership and we celebrate his accomplishments. Neil has been a great steward and a careful gardener who has nurtured those seeds planted in the years after the Council. Our greatest gift to him will be to continue what he helped bring to bloom and encourage even greater growth.

Ed Gordon, secretary of education and director of religious education in the Diocese of Wilmington, is a colleague and long-time friend of Neil Parent. |

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LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR *continued from page 5*

A NOTE TO FIRST CHAIR LEADERS

Jim Collins, a management expert, has done extensive research on corporate leadership. In his book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap – and Others Don't*, He concludes that there are basically two styles of first chair leaders.

For a parish to succeed and grow, second chair leadership must be established, trusted and allowed to lead.

The successful first chair leader is the corporate CEO who embraces the company vision, makes it his own, and then empowers a team of second chair leaders to carry out that vision. This process broadens the leadership base and leads to continued growth and success.

On the other hand, the unsuccessful first chair leader operates as “a genius with a thousand helpers.” This leader identifies himself or herself as the source of the corporate vision and creates a team of assistants for completing tasks. Since this leader is the direct source

of the corporate vision, the leader’s ego is attached to the vision. This makes it extremely difficult for the first chair leader to trust anyone in the second tier positions to carry out the vision or to function as responsible leaders. Collins’ research concludes that this style of first chair leadership usually fails to have any long-term sustained success.

This helps explain, to some extent, the rise or fall in parishes that occasionally takes place when there is a change in pastor. For a parish to succeed and grow, second chair leadership must be established, trusted and allowed to lead. And we all must remember whom we ultimately look to as our first chair vision-caster: Jesus Christ.

Dr. Patricia Clement is a catechetical leader from the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. For over twenty-five years, she has worked with teams in parishes, schools and campus ministry to discover creative ways to incorporate faith formation into every aspect of church life. She is currently serving as the parish DRE for St. James parish in Hopewell, VA. You can reach her at st.jameschristianformation@verizon.net.

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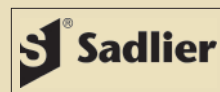


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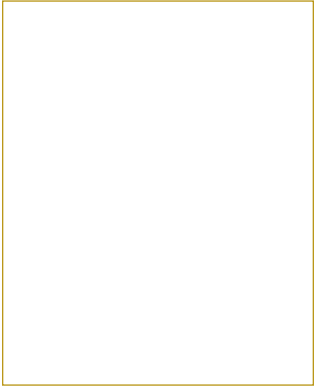
BISHOP SYLVESTER RYAN

Bishop Sylvester Ryan of the Diocese of Monterey, who served as NCCL’s episcopal advisor for six years from 1992 to 1998, recently retired at the age of 75.

A native of Avalon, on the Island of Catalina, California, Bishop Ryan earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from St. John’s Seminary in Camarillo in 1953 and was ordained to the priesthood May 3, 1957. He served in a variety of pastoral settings in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles including parishes, high schools and colleges, during which time he earned a master’s degree in religious education from Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, in 1971. He served as rector of St. John’s Seminary from 1986 to 1990. He was ordained a bishop May 31, 1990, and installed as Bishop of Monterey on March 19, 1992.

Bishop Ryan also chaired the bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee on Stewardship for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and he served as president of the California Catholic Conference from October 1997 to April 2004.

As NCCL’s episcopal advisor, Bishop Ryan was an active participant at Representative Council meetings, at the annual conference, and at other events at which NCCL was a sponsor or co-sponsor. He was especially helpful to NCCL leaders as NCCL transitioned through the process of adapting to its new bylaws and expanded membership. An engaging speaker, he was particularly eloquent when speaking on the relationship between catechesis and liturgy, especially in terms of the RCIA.



JACK J. MCBRIDE

Our colleague and friend, Jack J. McBride, died on Thursday, February 1, at age 53.

From 1986 to the present Jack served the Diocese of Madison as the associate director for the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. In June 2006, Jack was presented the Distinguished Service Award by the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), in recognition of his dedicated and selfless service to the catechetical mission of the church. Jack had served as the chair of the NCCL’s Adult Formation Task Force. In addition, he served as a consultant to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education, a group he also chaired. Jack was a charismatic man who touched the hearts of all the people around him, especially NCCL members.



CLUSTERS

by Megan Anechiarico

ACROSS

- 1 Clustered guides
- 6 Clustered pastors
- 11 Inactive
- 12 Bit of gossip
- 14 Call a game break - abbr.
- 15 Clustering verb
- 17 Chromium's symbol
- 18 3.14
- 19 One singer performance - pl. var.
- 20 Egg prefix - var.
- 21 Peruse
- 23 Clustered employees
- 25 Weapons - Italian
- 27 Compound formula for gadolinium selenide
- 28 Mythological half-man, half-goat creature
- 29 Electromagnetic Compatibility - abbr.
- 30 Korean board game
- 32 Shoe width size
- 34 Claim legal damages
- 35 Clustering characteristic
- 38 Rowboat paddle
- 39 Serpent
- 40 Unemployment insurance fund - abbr.
- 42 Future Teachers of America — abbr.
Musical recording — abbr.
- 45 Student response to instruction — abbr.
- 46 Portfolio

- 47 Moral code
- 50 Possible phonetic alternative for "you sin"
- 51 Ionium symbol
- 52 Spring month
- 53 SW opposite
- 54 Scooby Doo's TV channel - abbr.
- 55 Clusters
- 56 Indefinite article
- 57 Female name meaning "joy"
- 58 The Iliad or the Odyssey
- 60 Clustered pastoral service
- 61 Clustered new creation, perhaps

Down

- 1 Clustered worship service
- 2 Tokyo, formerly
- 3 Gore or "Weird" Yankovic
- 4 Choose
- 5 Large evergreen tree
- 6 Cleanse
- 7 Risk Management Agency - abbr.
- 8 Smidgen
- 9 Before
- 10 Clustered justice ministry
- 13 Clustered new creations
- 16 Religious initials for an order of monks
- 17 Clustered new creation
- 18 Clustered parish council
- 22 Clustered catechetical ministry
- 24 Fanatic
- 26 Clustered information service

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- 31 Actor Baldwin
- 52 Folk singer Guthrie
- 33 French summer
- 55 Separation
- 36 Acad. degree
- 56 Atmosphere
- 37 Radium symbol
- 59 Plutonium symbol
- 38 Clustered administrative services
- 41 Clustered money council
- 44 Actress Genevieve
- 45 Twilight
- 48 Clustered hope
- 49 Pertaining to the hipbone

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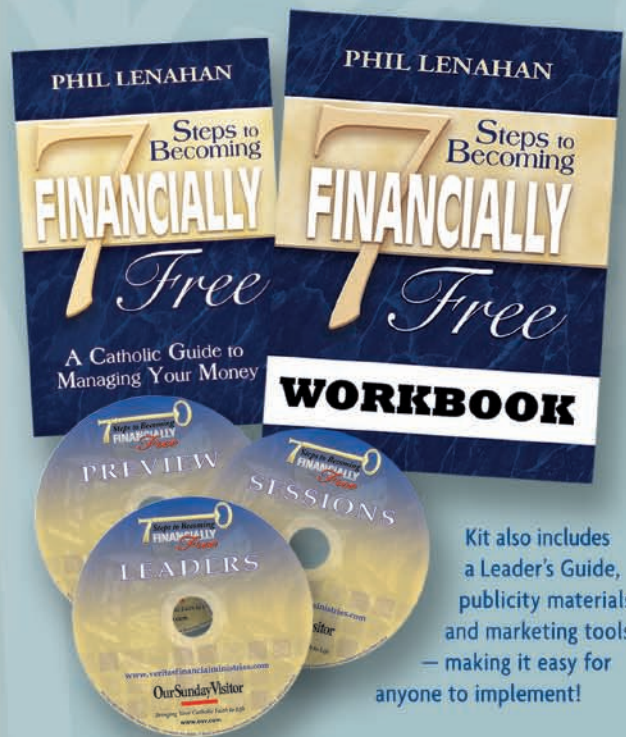
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